The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided Electorates, Left-Right Politics and the Pull towards Restrictionism

Amber Jane Davis

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute

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Department of Political and Social Sciences

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Abstract

The rise of anti-immigration parties across Western Europe has put enormous pressure on mainstream parties to adapt their competitive strategies. This thesis tests the hypothesis that mainstream parties have reacted to the rise of an anti-immigration party by taking up more restrictive immigration positions.

Previous research on the impact of the rise of an anti-immigration party on immigration positioning is sparse, and centres mostly on the supply side of the political market using one-dimensional left-right explanations, which generally do not provide a satisfactory framework to explain party movement. This thesis is based on a spatial two-dimensional model of political competition and combines analyses of the demand and the supply side of the political market. Focusing on the cases of the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK in the time-period 1987-2010 it shows that parties ultimately respond to electoral pressure when choosing their immigration strategy. The thesis has three main findings. Firstly, voters perceive their parties to have too liberal immigration preferences, causing a persistent anti-immigrant gap to exist. In combination with high divisiveness of the immigration issue for mainstream party constituencies the anti-immigrant gap provides opportunities for an anti-immigration party to emerge strongly in multi-party systems. Secondly, the electoral market on immigration is characterised by conflicting incentives, which makes successfully reacting to an anti-immigration party very difficult, especially for traditional mainstream parties. Thirdly, patterns of political competition on the immigration dimension reflect these conflicting incentives. On the one hand, the high divisiveness of the issue at party level urges mainstream parties of left, centre and right equally to depoliticise. Accordingly, parties tend to compete with relatively liberal immigration positions in the absence of a credible threat by an anti-immigration party. On the other hand, a correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension on the demand side of the political market at party system level creates a pull towards restrictionism, which is stronger for parties on the right. Once an anti-immigration party presents a credible threat parties indeed react by moving their immigration position closer to that of the anti-immigration party following a left-right logic, sometimes dramatically so. The party system strongly impacts the dynamics of indirect impact: in the UK mainstream parties never lose the initiative on immigration to an anti-immigration party.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The rise of anti-immigration parties across Western Europe has put tremendous pressure on mainstream parties to devise strategies to keep the upper hand in political competition. In Flanders, Vlaams Belang (VB) became the second largest Flemish party in the 2007 federal elections, and may have become the largest if CD&V and N-VA had not teamed up in a winning cartel. In the Netherlands, the party of Fortuyn, LPF, became the second largest party in the 2002 elections, while the party of Geert Wilders, PVV, emerged as the third largest party at the elections of 2010. In response, mainstream parties have frantically tried to redress this power balance, and dismiss the claims that they, as the anti-immigrant rhetoric goes, have ‘lost touch’ with the people. One of the central problems they face is how to handle the issue of immigration. According to anti-immigration parties, the political mainstream has been a ‘soft touch’ on immigration. It has enforced too liberal immigration policies, which have led to ‘mass immigration’, doing nothing to address the people’s concerns about immigration and immigrants. In response, anti-immigration parties argue, their party has risen to voice these concerns, confront this discrepancy and pressure mainstream parties to reconsider these too liberal positions.

One of the parties that have most vigorously claimed to fulfil this role in the political system is VB. It has proudly proclaimed itself to be a ‘whip party’ ever since the party was founded and argues that not a single vote for VB is a ‘lost vote’, even if the party is forced to remain in opposition as a result of the cordon sanitaire. The official party stance on the issue of political effectiveness states that:

“As Vlaams Belang has shown, a party can also play an important role in opposition. After all, Vlaams Belang is a whip party, chasing other parties ahead and trying to set the agenda. Even those who do not agree with our policies have to admit that our party should be merited for bringing attention to issues that have been shamelessly neglected for years by the political elite of this country.” (Vlaams Belang, n.d. (own translation)).

By using its ‘whip’- the share of voters that vote for VB because of its immigration policies, the party allegedly ‘chases’ other parties into submission on the immigration issue. VB’s political opponents adamantly deny that VB has such influence. By ostracising VB, they argue, they have effectively removed VB’s opportunity for fulfilling this role. The cordon functions as an effective barrier to VB's political bullying.

In the Netherlands, political parties no longer enjoy the luxury of ignoring the presence of an anti-immigration party. After two decades in which Hans Janmaat was unsuccessful in gathering support for his policies, a new spokesperson for the ‘silent majority’ took the stage. Pim Fortuyn’s rise (and death)
took the Dutch political elite completely by surprise. Fortuyn was not particularly charmed by the ‘whip party’ idea and would have far preferred the post of prime minister to that of party leader of an ostracised opposition party. In the run-up to the 2002 election he proclaimed: “I will become this country’s prime minister and if I don’t, I’ll be it anyway!” (Camps, 2001). Nevertheless, one could easily argue that Fortuyn managed to transform the immigration debate in the Netherlands through the same mechanism VB takes pride in. ‘Fortuyn’s revolt’, as it would come to be known, would be interpreted by Fortuyn’s supporters as a disciplining of an unworldly and self-absorbed political elite by the electorate at large. It also made a country, which used to pride itself on its tolerance and open-mindedness, painfully aware of underestimated electoral dissatisfaction. In recent years the party of Geert Wilders has filled the void left behind by Fortuyn, intensifying the debate on immigration and the integration of immigrants. Wilders has propelled the debate to a new extreme, proposing taxes on wearing the Muslim headscarf, dubbing beards worn by Muslim men ‘hate-beards’, and suggesting ‘tens of millions of Muslims’ should be deported from Europe, because they allegedly threaten European security and values. Despite, or perhaps thanks to, his outrageous discourse PVV managed to attract 15% of the vote at the 2010 elections. The party went on to support the minority right-wing government, occupying a pivotal position in political power.

The situation in the United Kingdom is markedly different, and is often cited as a case in which anti-immigration parties are present, but have failed to rise to significant proportions (Eatwell, 2000; Ignazi, 2003). To present the National Front, the BNP, and most recently UKIP have remained a marginal force in British politics. At the same time, and contrary to the experiences of the Flanders and the Netherlands (until Fortuyn), political competition over the immigration issue has been fierce ever since Enoch Powell’s ‘rivers of blood speech’ in 1968 in which he alluded to racial warfare and called for the repatriation of immigrants. Although the Conservative Party denounced his statements and Powell lost his ministerial position as a result, more moderate versions of his rhetoric have re-surfaced at later times. In Flanders and the Netherlands, similar openly populist immigration-related appeals would have been unthinkable, in mainstream circles.

Drawing on the experiences from these three cases, this thesis examines the political dynamics of immigration politics. It tests the hypothesis that the rise of an anti-immigration party alerts political elites to the neglect of public opinion on the immigration issue and will urge them to adapt their policy positions to address the anti-immigrant threat. The hypothesis pre-supposes that parties have created a cross-party consensus on immigration, which can be sustained since they are shielded, to an extent, from anti-immigrant pressures.

The hypothesis follows from a spatial explanation of the rise of anti-immigration parties which holds that the convergence of mainstream parties’ policy positions in the centre of the political spectrum has opened up ideological space on the fringes, which can be utilised by new parties to mobilise voters (Abedi, 2002; Kitschelt & McGann, 1997). Previous research of this theory has focused on the clustering of parties
along the ‘backbone’ of political competition: the left-right dimension, which is mostly interpreted in socio-economic terms, and the results have been less than satisfactory. There is little evidence of a decrease of polarisation on the supply side of electoral competition in left-right terms (Keman & Krouwel, 2005), and the position of anti-immigration parties on the left-right scale turns out to be ambiguous (Lubbers, 2001; Norris, 2005). The emphasis anti-immigration parties place on the on the issue of immigration, one that defies left-right characterisation (Canovan, 2002; Mudde, 2000; Taggart, 2004) suggests that a one-dimensional left-right explanation falls short of capturing the phenomenon of anti-immigration parties. This thesis proposes that analysing the clustering of political positions on a separate dimension of political competition, the immigration dimension, provides a more promising avenue to analyse the niche in which an anti-immigration party emerges, as well as the impact such a party has on political competition and political space. Such a scenario in which a cross-party consensus on immigration exists that might be challenged by an anti-immigration party is often explicitly suggested by the literature on anti-immigration parties (Andeweg, 1996; Betz, 2002; Norris, 2005), but to date lacks empirical analysis. The political dynamics that result from such a set-up are at the heart of this thesis.

Central Themes of Research

The thesis centres around three main themes:

(1) The ‘gap’ hypothesis which poses that party positions on immigration do not correspond with voter preferences; and that parties cluster together on the immigration issue in a liberal cross-party consensus allowing a niche to emerge for the anti-immigration party;

(2) Constraints on party movement, which make it difficult for mainstream parties to position themselves on the immigration dimension, allow an anti-immigrant gap to emerge and impact party strategy in reacting to an anti-immigration party; and

(3) The indirect impact of the anti-immigration party: mainstream party strategies in reaction to the rise of an anti-immigration party. How parties choose to try to close the gap between mainstream party positions and voter preferences, and the impact of this strategy on immigration policies proposed by mainstream parties.

An important aspect of this study is the simultaneous focus on the demand and the supply side of the political market. Combining a longitudinal analysis of voter demand on immigration as well as party supply of immigration positions will make a significant contribution to understanding how the political market on immigration works.
**The ‘gap’ hypothesis**

The rise of anti-immigration parties has to be interpreted in the context of ever-weakening ties between parties and voters, one of the phenomena most troubling contemporary democracies and unnerving political parties. From relative stability in the 1950s and 1960s, which saw close ties between party and voter, the 1970s marked the beginning of the unravelling of these ties. Voters no longer automatically ‘belonged’ to a particular political party that articulated their particular needs, allowing the floating vote to be born. As a result political competition between parties increased, and new dimensions of political competition emerged, as did new parties, to accommodate these modern voters. In addition, voters became increasingly dissatisfied with political parties and the political system in general. Whereas formerly political competition had centred mainly on the clash of interests organised by political parties, in the post ‘70s era new parties emerged which criticised incumbent political parties per se. Many disillusioned voters no longer felt parties acted in their interest. Rather, they accused mainstream parties of being self-serving and disconnected. A variety of parties, including anti-immigration parties have voiced these concerns. But although the protest element is unmistakable in anti-immigration parties’ rhetoric these parties cannot be reduced to mere ‘protest parties’ as is sometimes assumed. Van der Brug et al. (2000) show that voters for these parties agree to a similar degree with the policies their parties put forward, as do voters for other parties. A ‘protest’ voter is no different from a voter for mainstream parties, when it comes to policy. For anti-immigrant voters, this logically implies that the immigration issue is a source of discontent. Although it is problematic to assume a dichotomous distinction between the motivation of protest and substantive arguments that drive a voter to vote for anti-immigration parties, the immigration issue matters when it comes their vote. Mainstream parties have lost these voters’ trust in their ability to handle the issue well. To mobilise these votes, there needs to be a substantial gap between mainstream parties’ proposed policies and their own preferences in the eyes of voters. Such a gap forms the niche in which an anti-immigration party can emerge. This gap is the first central theme of this thesis.

There are two ways to conceptualise this anti-immigrant gap. The first conceptualisation focuses on the supply-side of the political market, and is based on the objective policy positions of political parties in political space. It assumes perfect information in the political market: voters are expected to react to parties’ policy positions as stated. Similar to the concept used in the previously mentioned studies on the polarisation of the left-right dimension, clues for the existence of an anti-immigrant gap can be derived from the absence of choice and polarisation on the issue. If parties cluster together, offering very little choice on immigration policy, and effectively severely narrowing the electoral market on immigration, voters are more likely to feel misrepresented. An anti-immigration party can then mobilise this discontent. The literature on immigration politics suggests that such a scenario is very likely to exist. The issue is preferably kept out of the equation of electoral politics and decided on away from public scrutiny, creating a policy reality that is often more expansive and inclusive than public opinion would endorse (Freeman, 1995; Guiraudon, 1997; Joppke, 1998). Depoliticisation, consensual decision arrangements and liberal
policy outcomes, suggest a political market in which parties cluster together rather than provide real alternatives for voters. Migration scholars also emphasise that, bar becoming police states, West European democracies simply cannot control immigration to the degree the public may demand (Castles, 2004; Legrain, 2007). For electoral politics, this creates a situation that would answer to the ‘gap’ hypothesis on explaining the rise of anti-immigration parties.

The second conceptualisation of the anti-immigrant gap focuses on voter perception of the gap, and drops the assumption of perfect information. If parties put forward similar policy positions, this will not in and of itself open up an ‘anti-immigrant gap’, unless the electorate perceives a discrepancy between their own policy preferences and party positions to exist. Conversely, parties may put forward highly varied and restrictive policy positions, but unless voters believe these positions, and also perceive parties as putting forward such satisfactory immigration policies, an anti-immigrant gap may emerge. No matter what parties objectively do and say, ultimately, the assessment of whether an anti-immigrant gap exists is up to voters, not parties. The anti-immigrant gap will only disappear once voters perceive policies to be in line with their interests, implying voters will not necessarily react to political manoeuvres by mainstream parties immediately or at all, even when actual policy changes are implemented.

Combining these two lines of enquiry in a longitudinal setting will shed new light on the nature and dynamics of the anti-immigrant gap. Is the anti-immigrant gap a temporary phenomenon of parties and voters disagreeing with each other, in which an anti-immigration party serves to ‘reset’ the supply of policy positions? Or is the anti-immigrant gap a more permanent divide between parties and voters, which cannot easily be repaired by mainstream party response? In the first case, party positioning and voter perception will go hand-in-hand: if parties choose to put forward highly restrictive immigration policies to address an anti-immigration party voters will respond by perceiving a smaller gap. In the second scenario voters will be more reluctant to trust mainstream parties’ immigration responses, and may dismiss such moves as untrustworthy.

**Constraints on party movement**

The second central theme of the thesis concerns constraints on party movement on the immigration dimension. Constraints on party movement may account for the presence of an anti-immigrant gap and help explain the expected effect of the rise of an anti-immigration party on mainstream policy positions. If political parties propose policies that are deemed too liberal by voters, the question rises: why? Whom for? Fighting for ideals in politics is all very well and nice, but these ideals cannot exist in a vacuum for long. Unless they resonate with a pivotal part of the electorate, their staying power will be minimal. Barriers to entry for a new political party are a crucial factor in understanding the existence of ‘gaps’ in the political market. In the absence of a competitor parties can successfully negotiate a gentleman’s agreement to pursue policies that may not be approved of by the electorate at large. And once such a competitor does

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emerge, parties may choose to try to minimise the effect of political competition on the issue by collaborating in a cordon sanitaire, as is the case in Flanders. The question remains why political parties would go to such lengths. Parties often justify the depoliticisation of the immigration dimension with normative arguments. I argue that normative arguments may provide the context for such strategies, but these have to be supported by electoral conditions to be sustainable.

A key electoral constraint on party movement is divisiveness. If an electoral issue divides a party’s electorate, it becomes a far bigger challenge for parties to position themselves optimally in political space. Such divisiveness could manifest at party system level, when a new challenger upsets existing dimensions of competition affecting the entire party system, or at party level, when it affects one or more specific parties more than others. At party system level, divisiveness will manifest if the new issue challenges the backbone of political competition, the left-right dimension. If the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are uncorrelated dimensions, meaning that the electorate’s left-right preferences and their immigration preferences are uncorrelated, parties across the political spectrum are likely to be divided on the immigration issue, and will collectively favour competing on other dimensions of competition. This line of reasoning corresponds with what Inglehart (1971) emphasised: the cross-cutting nature of new policy dimensions relative to the left-right dimension mobilised by newer parties with new, value-based issues. If this is the case, the rise of an anti-immigration party will shake up existing political constellations considerably. The immigration issue will open up a two-dimensional policy space in which political parties will have to compete radically differently compared to competition on the one-dimensional left-right dimension. The distribution of voters in this two-dimensional policy space will determine winners and losers. In this scenario, depoliticisation of the immigration issue and the clustering of political parties on immigration is a rational strategy, seen that all traditional parties stand to be torn apart if the issue is competed on. An anti-immigrant gap is the ultimate result.

At party level, divisiveness might vary from party to party, depending on voter preferences within party constituencies. Parties of the left, especially, are said to be divided as the immigration preferences of their working class voters and their voters from immigrant origin, who have allegedly more liberal immigration preferences than their native-born peers, are said to be at odds with each other (Messina, 1987, 1998; Money, 1999a; Saggar, 1998). There is some evidence, which supports the notion that the immigrant vote is becoming increasingly important for political parties of the left. In the Dutch local elections of 2006, for example, roughly 80% of immigrants voted for the social democratic PvdA (Tillie & van Heelsum, 2006). In cities with large immigrant communities, most notably Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht this vote has certainly been felt, potentially constraining indirect impact in policy areas immigrants care about (Tillie, 2006). But although parties such as Labour and PvdA may be associated with the immigrant vote it remains to be seen whether this is a tangible electoral constraint at national level, due to the relatively low share of the immigrant vote. The recent leadership crises in parties of the centre and right also question the notion that divisiveness is a palaver of the left alone. In the Netherlands, both VVD and
CDA have endured acute crises centred on the immigration issue, concerning leadership, party positioning on the issue and strategy towards the anti-immigration party. It appears that despite the immigration issue’s image as a right-wing issue, right-wing parties have considerable difficulty in navigating the issue well.

**Indirect impact**

The third central theme of this thesis concerns indirect impact: the effect of the rise of an anti-immigration party on mainstream parties’ policy positions. Indirect impact differs from direct impact. Direct impact is defined as resulting directly from access to executive or legislative power, whereas indirect impact refers to the co-optation of anti-immigrant policy positions to re-win the voters lost to the anti-immigration party, or to challenge the party’s future gains. If the anti-immigration party grows sufficiently large it will be able to influence policy by entering government or becoming a strong force in parliament, thereby producing direct impact. Direct and indirect impact can be considered communicating vessels, even though there is not necessarily a direct inverse relationship between them. If the immigration issue is neglected by mainstream parties, there are opportunities for the anti-immigration party to grow strong and gain access to government power; while if anti-immigrant policies are co-opted, or so the theory goes, the anti-immigration party’s position is likely to weaken, decreasing direct impact, but increasing indirect impact. This trade-off between direct and indirect impact has been a highly disputed theme within and amongst political parties when deciding how to react to an anti-immigration party.

The hypothesis put forward in this thesis poses that once an anti-immigration party activates political competition on the immigration issue other parties will react to the anti-immigration party’s presence by co-opting restrictive immigration policy positions, thereby re-connecting with public opinion on the issue. From this perspective, anti-immigration party strength cannot easily be captured in terms of votes, seen that mainstream party response may simultaneously diminish anti-immigration party strength in terms of votes, while increasing anti-immigration party strength in terms of political and policy impact. The ‘whip’ analogy used by VB is an accurate metaphor. Indirect impact depends on the extent to which an anti-immigration party can ‘whip’ the mainstream parties’ perspective on immigration into place. The larger the whip (the potential share of the vote), the larger the potential impact.

In the model presented, these patterns of indirect impact have their roots in voter opinion on immigration. Depending on the distribution of voter opinion, the rise of an anti-immigration party has the potential of transforming political space. The correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension is at the heart of how this transformation takes place, and determines whether parties are similarly or differentially impacted. If left voters on average have more liberal policy orientations, such as a high value placed on multiculturalism than right voters, immigration politics is more likely to follow a left-right logic. In this case, it makes sense for a party on the left not to cater to the median voter, but...
specifically to the median left voter, with more liberal preferences. Conversely, if this correlation is less pronounced, the whole party system is affected more equally, and parties will have more equally strong incentives to react to an anti-immigration party by co-opting policy positions. To analyse this possibility, the theory presented here breaks with those scholarly accounts that silently assume that the left-right and the immigration dimension of political competition run parallel in all policy areas, automatically producing a larger impact on the right party than on the left party (Harmel & Svaasand, 1997; Heinisch, 2003; van der Brug, Fennema, & Tillie, 2005). Instead, this assumption will be empirically tested.

As this short introduction shows, the anti-immigrant gap, constraints on party movement and indirect impact are intimately connected. The analysis of all these components of immigration politics taken together will allow for a better understanding of the dynamics unleashed once an anti-immigration party rises, and the effect of such a rise on the party system, as well as on individual parties and immigration policy.

**Research Design**

**Case selection: the countries**

The country cases selected include two relatively similar cases, the Flanders and the Netherlands, and a very different case, the UK. The comparability of Flanders and the Netherlands is perhaps best captured by Lijphart's notion of 'consociational democracy' which refers to the relationship between political culture and social structure (Lijphart, 1969). The degree of competitive or co-operative behaviour between political elites, an important variable in our argument, is the most important characteristic of the typology of democracies Lijphart devised. Flanders and the Netherlands were the prime examples of consociational democracies, characterised by divided societies, but co-operating elites. Despite the fact that the party systems of these countries differ to an extent, the consociational element of these political systems creates strong similarities making Flanders and the Netherlands suitable comparative cases.

More precisely, Flanders and the Netherlands share a culture of elite co-operation and a party system with relatively low entry barriers. For the dynamics studied here, these features imply the potential for a large anti-immigrant gap as the result of elite co-operation, matched with an equally large potential for an anti-immigration party to enter the stage of political competition and becoming a major (ostracised) player. In this context, consociationalism takes on a different meaning than originally devised by Lijphart. Elites no longer accommodate in order to represent distinct sections of society, but in order to deter unwanted newcomers and safeguard their own positions and ideologies. The cordon sanitaire against VB, and similar informal measures against CD in the Netherlands can be interpreted as such strategies. These patterns of co-operation, their persistence and breakdown, are key for analysing mainstream party responses to the rise of an anti-immigration party and its impact on parties’ political platforms. The rise of Pim Fortuyn,
which caused the cross-party consensus to break down in the Netherlands stands in stark contrast to the position of VB in the Flemish case in which the cordon sanitaire continues to hold strong. A second broad category of variables that can be treated more or less as constants when comparing the Flemish and Dutch cases are its immigration history and experiences. Both countries fit the ‘post-guest worker regime’ typology (Joppke 1998). The same applies to a similar colonial past, although the immigration following de-colonization logically stemmed from different areas. Asylum and family reunification have been the most important immigration categories in both the Netherlands and Flanders since the late 1970s.

While the comparison of the Netherlands and Flanders allows us to control for the independent impact of the institutional set-up, such as the party system and the principal characteristics of immigration in these countries, the extension to the British case allows us to test the argument in a radically different case. The UK case features both high barriers to entry, and high political competition among the principal political parties as a result of its majoritarian electoral system. The cross-party consensus on immigration which in our argument produces an anti-immigrant gap, the rise of the anti-immigration party and subsequent indirect impact as a result of mainstream party response, might not occur in the first place seen the competitive nature of political elite interaction in these systems. Voter and party preferences are expected to stay more closely aligned. On the other hand, there are fewer opportunities for anti-immigration parties to emerge. The first-past-the-post electoral system creates such high barriers to entry that even without co-optation anti-immigration parties stand no chance. Due to the electoral system, indirect impact is more likely to be felt at local level (BNP) or European level (UKIP), giving indirect impact a spatial dynamic that might ‘trickle upwards or downwards’ into national politics and policy. The absence of a strong anti-immigration party at national level in the UK indeed suggests that the dynamics of indirect impact have taken a different form in comparison to the Flemish and Dutch cases.

**Case selection: the parties**

The research project takes all parties in the selected party systems into account, subject to the availability of empirical data, to present a complete overview of political dynamics. The anti-immigration parties analysed in-depth include CD, LPF and PVV in the Netherlands, VB in Flanders, and BNP and UKIP in the UK. These parties are very diverse. Some have links with militant extreme right movements and are openly racist, or have had such links and ideologies in the past (BNP and VB). Others combine an appeal against immigration with an appeal against Islam (LPF, PVV) or against the EU (UKIP). The main ideological feature these parties have in common is their fierce plea against immigration, which is central to their ideology and which allows for labelling these parties anti-immigration parties (Fennema, 1997; Fennema & van der Brug, 2006). For the purpose of measuring indirect impact as defined here, this characteristic allows for a similar treatment of these diverse parties. Within the theoretical framework proposed here it is these parties’ positioning on immigration that matters for the indirect impact on other parties’ immigration positions, not so much their ideology as a whole, their extremism or their historical
background. These factors are likely to play a role in choosing a general more cooperative or more hostile strategy towards the anti-immigration party, but do not interfere with the mechanisms of indirect impact with regard to party positioning on immigration.

The main absentees in this analysis are the Walloon parties, making for a solely Flemish as opposed to fully-fledged Belgian analysis. There are a number of theoretical and practical reasons to leave them out. Firstly, federal politics in Belgium is characterised by a deep linguistic divide between electorates and parties, making an analytical separation justifiable. VB, as a Flemish party competes only for votes with other Flemish parties, rather than with Walloon parties. At the same time, the Walloon anti-immigration party Front National is notoriously weak and unstable, and is unlikely to have a substantial effect on political competition (Coffé 2005). Secondly, this divide extends to the policy substance of immigration politics, in which Walloon parties, following the French assimilationist approach, to a large extent resist the classification of immigrants, or foreigners of any kind, preferring an approach based on socio-economic classification. As an effect of dividing the issue up over all other related policy areas the dynamics of ‘immigration politics’ are depoliticised and obscured- complicating analysis. The Flemish approach resembles the (former) Dutch system of multiculturalism, which not only recognises, but also promotes the diversity of cultures and group identities, and has been severely attacked in either country by anti-immigration parties. The multiculturalist approach also has benefits for analysis: the availability of empirical data explicitly monitoring (former) immigrants, and sentiments towards immigration.

**Time frame**

The time frame of the study runs from 1987 to 2010. The starting date of 1987 is chosen, since the 1987 elections pre-date the rise of immigrant parties in all countries. In Flanders, VB was founded as early as 1978, attracting around 1% of the votes at federal level, but it wasn’t until the late 1980s that the immigration issue was made a focal point of VB’s ideology and its election results steadily increased to around 8% in the mid-90s and to 12% in the early 2000s. In the Netherlands, the anti-immigration party CD first appeared in 1989 with one seat; enjoyed its peak performance in 1994, winning 3 seats, and disappeared in the election of 1998. The following elections, those of 2002 were dominated by the dramatic success story and tragic death of Pim Fortuyn, who although already deceased, won 26 seats in parliament, after less than a year of being an active politician. The party of Geert Wilders first competed in the 2006 election winning 5,9% of the vote; and continued to grow attracting 15,5% of the vote and 24 seats in 2010. In Britain, finally, BNP was founded in 1982 as a merger of the New National Front and the British Movement. Its electoral successes at national level have been rather modest, climbing from a mere 553 votes in 1987 to over 560.000 in 2010 amounting to 1,9% of the vote. At the local level electoral success arrived in 1993, when the first BNP councillor was elected in Milham (London). UKIP, the newest British anti-immigration party, which blames both Europe and the national government for the lack of control over immigration, was founded in 1993. Its largest electoral success occurred in the 2009
European election, when it took 16.5% of the vote, overtaking Labour. At national level, votes have increased from 0.3% in 1997 to 3.1% in 2010.

With the end-point of analysis being 2010, we have a time frame encompassing six general elections in the UK, and seven elections in both the Netherlands and Flanders. This time period allows us to distinguish patterns of competition over time, not just from one election to the next, but in political competition over decades. In contrast with studies that focus on a shorter time-span (Pellikaan, de Lange, & van der Meer, 2004), it has the great advantage of analysing the fundamental patterns of competition, compared to a snapshot of one election or two successive elections. Patterns of immigration politics are dynamic, but structural features of political competition. These structural aspects can only be distilled by a longitudinal analysis covering a sufficient number of elections.

**Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is comprised of five chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework used, which is based on a spatial two-dimensional model of political competition. The main argument will be presented in which indirect impact depends on constituency preferences and ideological constraints, and differs across parties and policy areas. Furthermore, the argument will be embedded in the existing literature on immigration politics and anti-immigration parties. An important element of the theoretical model is its two-dimensionality, allowing parties and voters to have independent preferences on the left-right and the immigration dimension. This two-dimensional model, which builds on the work of Roemer (Lee & Roemer, 2006; Lee, Roemer, & van der Straeten, 2006; Roemer, 2004; Roemer & van der Straeten, 2004, 2006) and Money (1999a, 1999b) captures many dilemmas of immigration politics that a one-dimensional model cannot address. To start with, voter distribution along the immigration dimension relative to the economic left-right dimension, may pose serious problems for political parties. Choosing the so-called ‘policy bundle’: the optimal combination of a left-right and an immigration position for vote-seeking, may be rather more complicated than a simple left-right scenario suggests. In addition, the trade-off between elite ideology and vote seeking may further burden political parties once the presence of an anti-immigration party pressures political parties to adapt their policy positions. To understand these dilemmas of political competition, the chapter discusses a variety of topics including: models of immigration politics in one and two-dimensional policy space, institutional barriers to entry for new parties, the role of anti-immigration parties in activating new dimensions of political competition, party strategies revolving around votes versus ideology, and the importance of the immigrant vote. Four distinct hypotheses can be deduced from this theoretical framework, which will be discussed in turn.

Chapter 3 and 4 of the thesis focus on the demand side of the political market on immigration. Using election surveys and other data on public opinion, this part of the thesis analyses the driving forces
underlying the dynamic of indirect impact, which become relevant for political parties once an anti-immigration party emerges.

Chapter 3 focuses on the anti-immigrant gap, the most important precondition for the dynamics of indirect impact by an anti-immigration party. The chapter comes to striking conclusions. For starters it shows empirically that a perceived anti-immigrant gap indeed exists, and that the immigration issue is in potential capable of creating extremely volatile electoral dynamics. Parties on the left and centre of the political spectrum are most strongly affected, while parties on the right are more likely to benefit from these dynamics. The chapter also shows that left-right considerations play an important role in the mind of voters. Voters generally don’t perceive mainstream political parties as a clustered ‘liberal elite consensus’, but rather as belonging to a ‘shifted scale’. Mainstream parties are perceived as having too liberal immigration preferences relative to voter preferences, but still ordered according to a left-right logic. Finally, the impact of the party system on patterns of political competition is pronounced. In the two-party system under consideration, the UK, a pattern of ‘pre-emptive co-optation’ can be detected, wherein the Conservatives have managed to successfully position themselves as the party closest to voter opinion on immigration. There is no ‘gap’ of any significance left for an anti-immigration party to exploit. In the two multi-party systems, the Netherlands and Flanders, the gap between voters and parties is far more pronounced, leaving more room for an anti-immigration party.

To understand the political dynamics resulting from the anti-immigrant gap the chapter discusses and empirically analyses three important assumptions: whether public opinion can be considered exogenous, that is: independent from elite cues; whether elite opinion is more liberal towards immigration than general public opinion; and whether the immigration issue has been fully absorbed by left-right dimension in the mind of voters.

Chapter 4 focuses on the constraints on party movement in reaction to an anti-immigration party. The chapter shows empirically why successfully reacting to an anti-immigration party is so difficult, especially for traditional mainstream parties. Most importantly, it shows that parties have conflicting electoral incentives in reacting to an anti-immigration party. On the one hand, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension at party system level invites politicisation of the issue along the traditional left-right dimension, and urges political parties to present differential immigration programmes and defect from a liberal elite consensus. On the other hand, the high divisiveness of political constituencies at party level urges mainstream parties to depoliticise the immigration issue, as their party may be emptied out at both liberal and restrictive ends by other (often newer) parties taking up position strategically. Parties of the traditional right are under most pressure as a result of the rise of anti-immigration party, as their high levels of voters with highly restrictive immigration preferences pulls them towards taking up restrictive policies, while they grapple with the difficult situation of simultaneously satisfying their more liberal voters. Parties of the left are equally divided compared to parties of the right, but less fiercely pulled
towards restrictive positions. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, their divisiveness is not rooted in
the presence of their ethnic minority voters. Rather, their constituency is on the whole divided. The
unambiguous winners of the politicisation of the immigration issue are the left-liberal and the anti-
immigration parties. Once the immigration dimension becomes salient, these parties, through their
positioning at the liberal and restrictive end of the immigration dimension respectively, consolidate the
transformation of political space into two dimensions, utilising the potential for the transformation of
political space originating from voter preferences. The chapter also shows that these political dynamics are
far more pronounced in our multi-party systems, while the patterns of competition in the UK’s two-party
system are rather more amorphous and considerably more catch-all in style.

Chapter 5 analyses the supply side of the political market on immigration: party movement over time in
response to anti-immigration party. Using a content analysis of party manifestos for all parties in our three
cases in the period 1987-2010 party movement on immigration and immigration-related issues will be
analysed. These patterns can be interpreted as strategic moves in the presence or absence of political
competition with an anti-immigration party. For Flanders and the Netherlands, the analysis shows how
parties have reacted to the rise of an anti-immigration party, while for the UK the analysis shows how
parties have positioned themselves in the relative absence thereof. Most importantly, the chapter
empirically confirms the dynamics as presented in the theoretical chapter: (1) in the absence of an anti-
immigration party parties tend to prefer relatively liberal immigration policies; (2) parties (ultimately)
respond to the rise of an anti-immigration party using co-optation techniques; and (3) indirect impact
depends on the left-right profile of the political party. These very general observations are present in all
cases, although specific patterns of political competition differ considerably per case. In Flanders, this
patterns concerns depoliticisation in the centre of the political spectrum, coupled by polarisation of the
extremes. Mainstream parties of the left and centre prefer strategies of isolation and only respond to an
anti-immigrant threat with co-optation once they threaten to lose their combined pivotal position. In the
Netherlands we see depoliticisation followed by dramatic politicisation and co-optation after Fortuyn, a
pattern that ebbs and flows depending on the level of the anti-immigrant threat. In the UK, finally, the
pattern observed is that of depoliticisation followed by pre-emptive co-optation. The analysis of party
manifestos is complemented by an analysis of political and policy developments per election to interpret
the discussion on indirect impact in a broader context.

Chapter 6, the conclusion, combines the empirical evidence from the country cases and aims at
synthesising the main findings.
CHAPTER 2

The Dynamics of Indirect Impact

Abstract

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the thesis as well as its main hypotheses. The main argument poses that the rise of an anti-immigration party alerts political elites to the neglect of public opinion on the immigration issue and will urge them to adapt their policy positions to address the anti-immigrant threat. The preconditions for this dynamic include a clustering of party positions on immigration, which produces a gap between voter and party preferences; and barriers to entry, which to some extent preclude the access to political competition and government power for new parties. It will be argued that once immigration becomes a salient electoral issue, political parties shift their policy positions to better reflect the demands of their voters. Additionally, elite opinion plays a role in determining policy, irrespective of constituency preferences. A two-dimensional spatial model of political competition will be presented, in which the correlation between the immigration dimension and the left-right dimension determines indirect impact, while the divisiveness of the immigration issue for parties’ constituencies constrains party movement. The distribution of public opinion on a range of immigration related issues determines both the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension and the divisiveness of the immigration issue; and forms the basis for the dynamics of immigration politics and indirect impact.

Introduction

The 1980s and 1990s presented Western Europe with a number of immigration related challenges, and can be characterised as a period in which asylum and the integration of ethnic minorities became political priorities. In this context, the rise of anti-immigration parties can be interpreted as the electoral reaction to a perceived lack of response to, and control over problems surrounding immigration (van der Brug, 2003; van der Brug & Fennema, 2003; van der Brug, et al., 2000).\(^1\) Political parties will likely try to address the electoral threat the anti-immigration party poses by reacting to its underlying driving force: public opinion on immigration. Betz (2002) makes this argument most specifically. He argues that voters have used their vote to respond to an immigration reality they do not approve of; that political parties have adapted their policies accordingly as part of a strategy to address the anti-immigrant threat and an attempt to reverse its...

\(^1\) An alternative view is that of the ‘protest vote’ (Betz, 1994; Mayer & Perrineau, 1992) which is shown to be lacking (van der Brug et. al. 2000; van der Brug 2003; van der Brug & Fennema 2003). Andeweg (1996) combines the two, arguing that fears and frustrations about the government’s handling of immigration converge with more general feelings of protest and dissent regarding the lack of integrative capacity of the party system, producing a lack of trust in the governing parties, or the political elite in general.
electoral fortunes; and that anti-immigration parties in turn have taken credit for the outcome of the process: more restrictive immigration policies.

This chapter advances a theoretical model to capture this phenomenon, which is labelled indirect impact: the co-optation of anti-immigrant policy positions by mainstream parties as a reaction to the presence of an anti-immigration party. It differs from direct impact on policy, which results directly from the executive power of the anti-immigration party (see for example: Heinisch 2003, and Schain 2006 for a discussion). Nevertheless, direct and indirect impact can be considered communicating vessels. If the immigration issue is neglected by mainstream parties while an anti-immigration party has emerged, there is a higher chance of the anti-immigration party growing strong and gaining access to government power which allows the chance to directly implement restrictive immigration policies; while if anti-immigrant positions are co-opted the anti-immigration party’s position is likely to weaken, decreasing direct impact, but increasing indirect impact. The model advanced builds on earlier work by Money (1999a, 1999b) and Roemer (Lee & Roemer, 2006; Lee, et al., 2006; Roemer, 2004; Roemer & van der Straeten, 2004, 2006), which applies two-dimensional models of political competition to immigration politics, while informed by the more recent work of Kriesi et. al (2008) and Bornschier (2010) which emphasises the two-dimensional nature of current West European party systems and the role of policy co-optation on the success of anti-immigration parties.

In a nut-shell, the argument presented poses that (1) the cartelisation of parties on the immigration issue causes a mismatch between voter and party preferences, which provides a ‘gap’ for an anti-immigration party to rise, (2) the rise of the anti-immigration party leads to mainstream party response, and (3) mainstream party response depends on constituency preferences.

The rest of the chapter will be devoted to developing the theoretical argument. Firstly, I review some earlier theoretical papers on indirect impact and the politics of immigration using spatial models of political competition. Secondly, I develop the theoretical model based on a two-dimensional model of political competition, distinguishing between the left-right and the immigration dimension, in which the correlation between these dimensions determines political dynamics at party system level. At party level, the divisiveness of the immigration issue adds to the incentives and constraints for parties to compete on the immigration dimension. Thirdly, I discuss the preconditions for the dynamics of the model: the cross-party consensus, in which party preferences do not match voter preferences; which survives because of barriers to entry to political competition and the ability of parties to refrain from competing on the immigration dimension. Finally, I present the hypotheses and provide a brief conclusion. The hypotheses cover the general dynamics of indirect impact, the existence of a cross-party consensus on immigration as a response to divided party constituencies, differential impact across parties, and the role of the immigrant vote in constraining (left) party movement.
Earlier Work

One-dimensional models of spatial competition: a critique

Although a spatial model of political competition is often implicitly present in the literature on anti-immigration parties, research that explicitly analyses the process of strategic interaction as a result of an anti-immigrant threat based on a spatial model is mostly lacking. The work of Harmel and Svåsand (1997) is a notable exception. Harmel and Svåsand have explicitly formulated and tested the hypothesis of indirect impact based on a spatial model of political competition and examine the influence of the anti-immigrant Norwegian and Danish Progress parties on the ideological platform of their conservative neighbour parties. They make the distinction between direct and indirect impact and argue that these are the two most important ways for parties to impact the party system. The first is to become successful enough to assume the status of a major player in the system (direct impact); the second is to influence the major players, while remaining in the minor league (indirect impact). They limit their analysis to the latter, the indirect impact of these parties on left-right issues, most notably taxes, scope of government and individual freedoms, concluding that new anti-immigration parties have had a significant impact on their respective party systems. They also conclude that established parties will only change their ideological identity when the established party is faced with electoral losses, which they can attribute to the new party.

As is the case in Harmel and Svåsand’s model, spatial modelling of political competition in reaction to an anti-immigration party is often conceptualised as a dynamic along one dimension, with the left-right dimension as the principal dimension of competition. Implicitly or explicitly, it has often been assumed that anti-immigration parties, which have also been labelled ‘extreme right’ parties compete for votes primarily with their ‘neighbouring’ party on the left-right dimension, most often a conservative or liberal right-wing party. The indirect impact of anti-immigration parties is thus normally assumed to be largest on the party ‘closest’ to the anti-immigration party (Harmel & Svåsand, 1997; Heinisch, 2003), which limits political competition as a result of the rise of an anti-immigration party mostly to the right of the political system.

A similar prediction would follow from Kitschelt’s (1997) model. Kitschelt proposes a spatial model of political competition with two issue dimensions to capture the phenomenon of anti-immigration parties. These dimensions are perceived to be connected and integrated, both on the demand and the supply side of political competition. In his influential account on the rise of anti-immigration parties Kitschelt conceptualises the emergence of what he calls the ‘radical right’ as a reaction to structural changes in societies into the phase of post-industrialism, which created a new value-based axis of political competition: the New Politics Dimension. On one side of this dimension, ‘libertarian’ postmodern parties have emerged (Inglehart, 1977), which base their ideology on post-materialist liberal values, while ‘authoritarian’ radical right parties have emerged on the other extreme of this dimension. Although Kitschelt conceptualises these dimensions as orthogonal, he argues that the main axis of political
competition has rotated from left-right to left-libertarian - right-authoritarian. In such a scenario in which the left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration dimension, political competition can once again be reduced to one dimension.

Whether a one-dimensional model can indeed describe political space in Western Europe remains highly contested. Kriesi et.al. (2008) fiercely reject this claim. In their empirical work, which analyses six West European party systems, they unambiguously find that two separate dimensions, the economic; and value dimension structure both the demand and the supply side of political space. They argue that due to the process of globalisation, the value dimension has become increasingly important in explaining political competition, and that this dimension is unambiguously distinct from the economic dimension. Bornschier (2010) echoes these findings. Van der Brug and van Spanje (2009) firmly disagree. They argue that Kriesi et. al.’s methodology, which uses newspapers as its primary source of data, distorts the perception of political space. In a direct offensive they juxtapose Kriesi et. al.’s findings with their own, based on expert surveys in 14 countries from which they conclude that political space is more aptly described as one-dimensional than as two-dimensional, and that the left-right dimension is the principal dimension of political competition.

No matter the shape of the supply side of the electoral market, in order to study and understand the indirect impact of an anti-immigration party it imperative to distinguish between two dimensions of competition, because the demand side of the political spectrum cannot aptly be reduced to a single dimension of political competition. The studies by Kriesi et al. (2008) and Bornschier (2010); as well as van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) all confirm this finding. Surveys also show that the realignment thesis, in which parties and voters have integrated economic and value preferences does not hold on the demand-side.2 Relatively few ‘extreme-right’ voters consider themselves ‘extreme-right’. Moreover, voters considering themselves ‘left’ or ‘far-left’ also vote for ‘extreme-right’ parties. For these voters too, their value-based preferences appear to be a more powerful indicator for their vote, than their economic preferences.

Ivarsflaten (2005) argues exactly this point when she poses that ‘the left-right dimension blurs the tension in the electorate between economic issues and other cross-cutting policy dimensions’, and calls for a separation of these dimensions when studying the success of anti-immigration parties. Her research shows that economic left-right issues divide the electorate of anti-immigration parties, while the immigration dimension unites them. This suggests that voters for these parties are ready to discount their socio-economic priorities to achieve more restrictive immigration and cultural protectionist policies. From this perspective, the right-wing self-identification of voters which has been found in studies on the anti-immigrant vote (van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie 2000, van der Brug and Fennema 2003) is more likely

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2 NIPO 1992. These results concerned votes for the Dutch CD.
to be an indication of the voter’s immigration preferences; than of his economic preferences. Only if the left-right and immigration dimension are separated can this distinction been made visible.

The same schism appears on the supply side of the political market when anti-immigration parties are singled out. The positioning of anti-immigration parties on the economic ‘far right’ side of the political spectrum remains contestable, despite the fact they are often labelled far right parties. A two-dimensional spatial representation of policy positions can illustrate this phenomenon. For the Dutch case Pellikaan, de Lange and van der Meer (2004) show that, despite the fact that parties seem to be roughly ordered around a single diagonal dimension of competition, the LPF was considerably less right-wing than the liberal party VVD in the 2002 elections, and can be considered centrist on economic issues. On the immigration dimension, however, the LPF was on the extreme end of the political spectrum. For the Dutch case this phenomenon has become even more pronounced with the rise of Geert Wilders’ PVV, which has swiftly moved towards more leftist economic positions compared to CDA and VVD, blocking many of their plans for economic reform. These findings illustrate that the label ‘far-right’ does not primarily refer to the right-wing economic policies of anti-immigration parties. Indeed, many ‘extreme right’ parties defy description in left-right terms and consider themselves ‘left nor right’ (Fennema, 1997), while some consider themselves centre or left-wing (Ignazi & Ysmal, 1992). Kitschelt’s second dimension, the value dimension, appears to be more important to conceptualise these parties than the economic dimension and conversely, the economic positioning of these parties contributes little to their ‘far right’ status.

The two-dimensionality of the demand side of the political spectrum, and the unique positioning of the anti-immigration party herein has important consequences for political competition for mainstream parties. Mirroring the argument that the immigration dimension unites anti-immigrant voters; this thesis poses that the immigration dimension divides mainstream parties’ constituencies. Although the equilibrium outcome on the supply side may show mainstream parties ordered following left-right cues on either dimension, as van der Brug and van Spanje (2009) argue and as will be confirmed in our empirical analysis of chapter 5, this ordering does not say anything about the underlying tension produced by competition on these two dimensions in the electorate at large and for specific parties’ constituencies. To aggregate the preferences of a divided electorate parties will gravitate towards the preferences of their mean voter, but may lose many of their voters if the variance of voter preferences within their constituency is high. The extent to which the left-right dimension also determines voters’ immigration preferences, and the dividedness of specific party’s constituencies, indicate how much of a political problem the immigration issue is likely to become for parties.

**Two-dimensional models**

The evidence presented suggests it is useful to separate the left-right dimension from the immigration dimension for analytical purposes. The separation of dimensions creates a two-dimensional model of
political competition, which implies that political parties compete for votes on separate issues, rather than an aggregated set of issues. The separate dimensions allow voters to form their preferences on immigration independently from preferences on the left-right scale creating a model of political competition in which a correlation between left-right and immigration is possible, but not assumed. As a consequence, the ‘fixing of dimension reality’ by parties (Riker, 1986) becomes a crucial battle over votes, since it determines the equilibrium outcome of political competition at any given time. If political dimensions are cross-cutting they divide the parties’ electorates, making them unattractive for parties to compete on, since no coherent ideology is possible that satisfies voters across the board. In these cases, the prioritisation of one dimension over the other determines party ideology, with the second dimension likely to be blurred to disguise conflicting preferences. To use Schattschneider’s words: ‘The question is always: Which battle do we want to win most?’ (1960, p. 65)

Figure 2.1. A Model of Dimensionality and Voter Choice

Figure 1 presents an illustration of how dimensionality might influence voter choice. The voter depicted in the picture has leftist socio-economic preferences, while he has restrictive immigration preferences. If the left-right dimension were to be the main dimension of competition the voter would vote for the Left Party. The Left Party, which in the figure has liberal immigration preferences may however lose his vote to the anti-immigration party, once the immigration dimension becomes the main dimension of competition. Three factors determine the outcome of this process: firstly the policy positions of the voter relative to the parties, secondly the dimension(s) relevant for political competition and thirdly the relative salience of these issues to the voter.

Two authors have specifically used similar two-dimensional models of political competition to analyse immigration politics: Money (1999a, 1999b), who focuses on the impact of the immigrant vote and the anti-immigrant vote on mainstream party positions on immigration; and Roemer (2004) who has
examined the impact of racism and anti-immigrant voting on redistribution. Both authors focus on the interdependence of these dimensions of political competition, and the impact of this interdependence on political and policy dynamics. These authors emphasise that the immigration issue has the potential of upsetting conventional left-right electoral alignments, while the immigrant vote under certain conditions constrains the mainstream party on the left from taking explicit anti-immigrant stances. This interdependence of dimensions, based on the correlation of voter preferences on these dimensions, is also at the centre of this thesis. I will first discuss Money’s and Roemer’s work in its original context, and subsequently point to a number of issues raised by their work, specifically relevant to the theoretical framework proposed here. These cover the meaning and consequences of the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension, and the subsequent impact of this correlation on indirect impact.

In ‘Fences and Neighbors’ (1999a), as well as subsequent work on the Australian One Nation Party (1999b) Jeanette Money presents a two-dimensional model of political competition on immigration based on electoral incentive structures. She poses that mainstream parties prefer competing on the economic dimension, since this prevents them from losing votes to anti-immigration parties. This preference for the economic dimension is intensified by the fear of electoral punishment by immigrant voters if the immigration card is played. Moreover, the immigration dimension is a risky one, since it potentially divides parties’ electorates. Parties avoid these troubles by strategically selecting the dimension of competition. If, however, mainstream parties are urged to compete on the immigration issue, parties are differentially constrained in responding to anti-immigrant sentiments. If the potential group of voters who could punish mainstream parties for advocating restrictive policies is large and pivotal, these electoral incentives create constraints on the ability of mainstream parties to respond to restrictive public opinion. Money argues that left parties are generally more vulnerable to these pressures than right parties, since they attract a large share of the immigrant vote and are as a result at higher risk of antagonising voter constituencies as a result of the politicisation of the immigration issue. She also argues that specific policy areas matter. Since ethnic minorities will be most concerned about their own rights, the left party can appeal to a large electorate by proposing both restrictive immigration policies, thereby appeasing ‘general’ public opinion while also proposing liberal integration policies, thereby appeasing immigrant voters. Right parties are less constrained by these cross-cutting forces since they do not generally cater to the immigrant vote, and will propose restrictive policies on both immigration and integration.

Roemer’s work (2004) emphasises the importance of the combination of party positions on either dimension, and the subsequent results for policy. Roemer examines the interconnectedness of the left-right and immigration dimension, and more specifically the relationship between racist voting and redistribution. His paper (with Lee: Lee & Roemer 2006), on the United States, emphasises that once the black vote became pivotal for the Democratic Party it put constraints on the Democrats’ ability to propose racist policies. The Republican Party then monopolised the racist vote, which had an impact not
only on policies pertaining directly to race, but also decreased the total degree of redistribution. Two mechanisms are responsible: the policy bundle effect and the anti-solidarity effect (Lee & Roemer, 2006). The policy bundle effect is a result of the limited combinations of policies political parties can propose (see the discussion above and figure 1). If a voter has racist policy preferences as well as a preference for redistribution he is forced to choose between either of the two. If he chooses to vote on the race issue, he will achieve an undesired (negative) effect on the redistribution issue. The anti-solidarity effect is the result of the perception that race and state dependency are tied up. Racist voters, for this reason, will oppose redistribution to the poor, and the loss of voter compassion in turn causes political parties to be less redistributive than otherwise. For the European cases Roemer covers in subsequent papers, France and Denmark (Roemer & van der Straeten, 2004, 2006), he substitutes the American racist vote, with the European anti-immigrant vote, using the same model. These papers conclude that anti-immigration voting may indeed diminishes redistribution and the size of the public sector as a result of the coupling of right-wing economic and anti-immigrant stances by parties on the right, but that the mechanisms are weaker than in the US depending on the economic positioning of the anti-immigration party. For France, they argue that the policy bundle effect specifically will likely be insignificant due to Le Pen’s moderate positions on the economic dimension. Unlike mainstream parties, Le Pen offers voters the choice of coupling centrist economic policies with an anti-immigrant stance. In Denmark, the anti-immigration party couples anti-immigrant appeals with right-wing economic positions, keeping the policy bundle effect intact.

Roemer’s and Money’s work highlights a number of points that should be taken into consideration when modelling the indirect impact of anti-immigration parties. Firstly, for our analysis, the policy bundle, as Roemer calls it, is at the centre of inquiry. As we have also seen in Ivarsflaten’s (2005) empirical work, if the policy bundle of a mainstream party matches the voter’s preferences on economic issues, but not on immigration, the voter might defect to an anti-immigration party if the immigration issue is sufficiently salient. Conversely, assuming that the rise of an anti-immigration party will initiate political competition on the immigration dimension, parties will rethink their policy bundle as a result. The subsequent change in policy positions constitutes the indirect impact of the anti-immigration party.

Secondly, the equilibrium shift can be conceptualised as a simple vote-seeking opportunist strategy; or one in which different party factions fight among themselves about the course of action to take. Roemer’s model emphasises the conflict of interests between those party strategists that can be considered as ideologists, who closely guard the party’s ideological drift, coherence and responsibility, and the opportunists who care primarily about vote maximisation, responding to public opinion and finding the party’s winning strategy in the short run. By highlighting the decision making process within the party, the latter approach helps explain different policy equilibriums under equal conditions. This is useful since it provides an ideological explanation for constraints on party mobility.
Thirdly, the two-dimensional models of Roemer and Money provide the general insight that voter distribution on the immigration dimension relative to the economic dimension matters. If there is a strong correlation between the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension, left parties will maximise their share of the vote with relatively liberal immigration preferences, while right parties will maximise their share of the vote with relatively restrictive immigration preferences. This would also suggest that most anti-immigrant voters are right wing and that only a small share of left voters would defect to the anti-immigration party in the first place. If, on the other hand, a correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension is absent, in other words, if the immigration dimension crosscuts the left-right dimension (as Money argues is the case), left and right parties are equally (un)constrained by their electorates. In other words, if there is a distinct electorate that favours both liberal and leftist; or restrictive and rightist (or any other combination of) policies on any specific policy area, the party in question is expected to provide this particular combination of policies.

Fourthly, both authors argue that the immigrant vote may constrain mainstream left parties’ positions on immigration. Roemer makes this case for the U.S., but argues it is absent in Europe, while Money has argued the immigrant vote constrains left party movement in Australia, France, Germany and the UK. Not only the correlation of the left-right and the immigration dimension, but also the distribution of public opinion within the constituencies of these parties determines the outcome of electoral competition over the immigration issue. The higher the divisiveness of the immigration issue for a party’s constituency, the less favourable the issue will be for a political party in political competition.

Fifthly, and finally, policy areas matter. Assuming that public opinion is generally negative on immigration, but specific constituencies have more liberal immigration and integration preferences, this will have to be reflected in party strategy if not losing these votes is important to the party. In Roemer and Money’s work, this mostly concerns a specific immigrant constituency, but it could as easily concern a specific left-liberal or right-liberal vote. Money has argued that immigrant minorities care most about their own rights as individuals and as members of a particular minority rather than about the rights of immigrants in general. Political parties constrained by an immigrant minority will have to take into account these policy preferences. Those policies directly of interest to the immigrant constituency will remain liberal; while those that are not will be determined as a result of majority preferences. Integration policies, or the granting of political, social and cultural rights, are expected to be most important for the immigrant vote; while asylum and illegal immigration are the policy areas least constrained by the immigrant vote. Immigration in the latter categories is not tied to any particular immigrant constituency, while increased numbers of immigrants might undermine any privileges the minorities at present enjoy. The native

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3 The distinction between immigration and integration was first made by Hammar (1985) and differentiates immigration policies, which are concerned with alien admissions from integration policies, which are concerned with alien rights after entry.
majority will only tolerate the costs of these privileges, if they are relatively minor in scope. In other words: minorities’ integration needs may only be continued to be met if immigration is limited.

The Argument: How Indirect Impact Works

The main phenomenon examined in this thesis, the indirect impact of anti-immigration parties, is easily captured in a visual representation. After presenting the argument in its simplest form, I will present the theoretical underpinnings of the model and some qualifications.

Indirect impact can be conceptualised as the result of political competition on an issue dimension previously neglected by mainstream parties as a reaction to the rise of an anti-immigration party. Seen over time, the process has three phases.

In the first phase, a gap emerges as a result of the mismatch of voter and party preferences, and the clustering of parties on the immigration issue. The gap provides an opportunity for an anti-immigration party to emerge. This scenario assumes that voters have exogenous preferences, which are skewed towards the restrictive side of the immigration spectrum, and that parties have reasons to not respond to voter demand. Institutional barriers to entry to political competition, but also behavioural ones, such as the active exclusion of anti-immigration parties from political power by incumbent parties, are a precondition for being able to limit political competition on immigration and maintaining a cross-party consensus.

In the second phase an anti-immigration party emerges, taking advantage of the neglect of public opinion on immigration. The rise of the anti-immigration party alerts the mainstream parties to the salience of the immigration issue, challenges the cross-party consensus, and causes them to re-think their electoral strategy on the issue. The likelihood on an anti-immigration party entering depends on the size of the anti-immigrant gap, as well as barriers to entry, which determine the openness of the party system to new competitors.
The politics of immigration 3

The final stage concerns the falling apart of the cross-party consensus through the co-optation of policy issues, as a result of electoral competition on the immigration issue, bringing party strategies and public opinion closer together. Parties may still have reasons, ideological or electoral, not to move their policy positions as far to the restrictive end of the dimension as the anti-immigrant party is situated. Nevertheless, the immigration issue as presented by the anti-immigrant party has been co-opted and re-worked to better match voter preferences.

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Argument

Modelling party behaviour

In our model, parties’ behaviour as a reaction to the presence of an anti-immigration party is conceptualised as the result of bargaining between party factions. Similar to party characteristics used by Roemer (2004) political parties are assumed to be constituted by politicians who determine policy in the party; and party adherents: those voters who feel an allegiance with the party and prefer that parties’ policy to the policies of the other parties. The politicians come in two types: the ideologists, who are inherently conservative, and prefer gradual incremental change to satisfy specific voter constituencies and preserve party ideology; and the opportunists, who will throw caution to the wind and pursue any policy that seems electorally promising in the short run, also if this compromises earlier promises made or political lines pursued. Internal bargaining produces an outcome, reflecting the struggle between these forces. The differentiation between these two factions introduces an element of agency into indirect impact, which is important in order to understand why parties may not react to an anti-immigrant threat immediately.

Parties are often internally divided when it comes to reacting to an anti-immigrant threat, as a result of the trade-off between short-term vote-seeking and long-standing ideology. Parties’ choices are also informed by party adherents’ preferences. These preferences, which inform party strategists, are restricted to the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension. The distribution of public opinion on these two preference dimensions determines the range of optimal policy solutions for particular parties. Finally, parties’ choices are informed by non-electoral constraints, which we call ideological constraints. These are important for immigration politics, as will be explained in a later section. Ideological constraints add a normative dimension to party positioning. In this model we assume that ideologists within the party will be more susceptible to these arguments than opportunists. Ideologists will want to prevent rash changes in party positioning not only because they are risk-averse and favour ideological stability, but also because such changes may have negative normative implications.
There are thus two responses possible to the challenge of an anti-immigration party, which depend on whether ideologists or opportunists dominate party decision making, and on the distribution of voter preferences. The first is a strategy of isolation, in which party ideologists insist on freezing the cross-party consensus (assuming that such a consensus exists before the rise of the anti-immigration party), and for ideological reasons refuse to budge in reaction to the anti-immigration party. Agreeing on a cordon sanitaire is the strongest manifestation of such a strategy. Alternatively, parties might be tempted to defect from the cross-party consensus and co-opt certain parts of the anti-immigration party's policies. In this case, the party opportunists are stronger and the voter is chased after with fervour.

**Essential preconditions: barriers to entry & cross-party consensus**

The dynamics of indirect impact are driven by two key preconditions: first, barriers to entry and access to political power allow political parties to choose policy positions that do not match voter preferences and allow them to compete on those issue dimensions they prefer; and second, a (perceived) liberal cross-party consensus on immigration that deviates from public demand exists, and political competition on immigration is limited.

The first precondition, barriers to entry, has become an important focus of research in the literature on the rise of anti-immigration parties, the main hypothesis being that in political systems with more open arrangements of party competition, anti-immigration parties will emerge stronger and more easily, while in party systems with institutional arrangements favouring the incumbent parties, anti-immigration parties will stand a lesser chance of becoming successful (Carter, 2005; Norris, 2005). This hypothesis suggests that there may be a large anti-immigration demand that is not translated into votes, seats and policies as a result of barriers to entry.

The institutions mentioned to act as barriers and impact the rise of anti-immigration parties include the electoral system, as well as ballot access, campaign finance and access to the media. Though anti-immigration parties exist in majoritarian systems, such as in the British case, they are often relatively small and weak. Proportional representation, as in the Flemish and Dutch cases, is seen as a necessary condition for anti-immigrant success at the polls. Whether this is also the case for the indirect impact of these parties is debatable. In two-party systems political competition over the pivotal vote is far stronger, which suggests that parties will try to prevent an anti-immigrant gap from emerging in the first place; and that any cross-party consensus will likely be weak. If immigration is indeed a salient issue for voters, and is skewed towards the restrictive side of the immigration scale, parties are more likely to react to this immediately in two-party systems. Instead of waiting for indirect impact to occur, there is 'pre-emptive co-optation' in the struggle over the pivotal vote. At the same time, it is easier to control the political agenda in a political configuration in which two parties dominate political competition. As long as parties think they may win elections on other, more palatable issues, parties in a majoritarian system may agree to
ignore the immigration dimension. Once they start doubting this, however, objections to playing the immigration card will be easily trumped by the ambition to win elections in a winner-takes-all set-up.

The second precondition for the dynamics of indirect impact is the clustering of parties on the immigration issue, creating a niche for the anti-immigration party. Our argument is based on the notion that the convergence of parties of the left and right facilitates the rise of anti-immigration parties. Such a theory was formerly presented by Kitschelt and McGann (1997), has been echoed elsewhere (Hainsworth, 1992) and tested empirically (Abedi 2002, Keman & Krouwel 2005, Norris 2005), with mixed results. In contrast to these previous studies, the specific focus of research here is party clustering on the immigration dimension, as opposed to left-right clustering. For the reasons mentioned previously, distinguishing between the left-right and the immigration dimension is highly important. Although for two of our cases, the Netherlands and Flanders, the clustering of political parties and consensual elite decision making is considered a general feature of the political system, as captured by Lijphart’s (1969, 1977) concept of consociational democracy, while the UK has a radically different competitive set-up, one could argue that immigration has a separate status favouring depoliticisation if at all politically feasible regardless of the political system.

Conventional wisdom holds that mainstream parties prefer to prevent immigration from becoming an electoral issue, ensuring the status of immigration as one of those issues ruled by ‘liberal elite consensus’ (Freeman 1995, Guiraudon 1997, Joppke 1998, Perlmutter 2002), which is more liberal than public opinion would permit. Furthermore, immigration scholars have emphasised that immigration has produced highly unlikely coalitions in favour of and opposing certain policies, and potentially divides parties’ elites as well as their electorates providing extra incentives for the depoliticisation of the issue (Tichenor 2002). Guiraudon (1997), for example, shows empirically that partisanship does not matter, when she argues that immigration policy making in Western Europe has taken place behind ‘gilded doors’. Despite negative public opinion, immigrant rights were expanded in the last two decades of the 20th century. She finds no consistent pattern in the relationship between partisanship and immigration policymaking: left and right parties were equally likely to propose, support and implement liberal policies.

Cross-party coalitions in immigration politics have often been interpreted as pre-emptive attempts to eliminate the immigration dimension from electoral competition, reflecting divisions within political party elites and party constituencies (Minkenberg, 2001; Tichenor, 2002) as well as overt attempts to eliminate the immigration dimension as a reaction to an anti-immigrant threat (Schain, 2006). Governments have often actively attempted to defuse the immigration issue by founding non-partisan commissions to advise them on immigration matters. Such commissions have been an important tool for the depoliticisation of the immigration issue and sustaining the cross-party consensus. In France in 1997, for example, the Jospin government appointed a commission for this specific purpose. Similarly, in Germany commissions were
formed in 1980, 1986 and 1991 to develop bipartisan recommendations and to restrict the scope of the
debate (Perlmuter, 2002).

The existence of a cross-party consensus as discussed above, suggests but does not automatically prove
the existence of an anti-immigrant gap. In the end it is voter perception, which determines whether such a
gap exists. Empirical studies indicate that voters have voted for anti-immigration parties for immigration-
related reasons (Coffé, 2005; van der Brug & Fennema, 2003; van der Brug, et al., 2005), thereby
providing indirect evidence of such a perceived gap between mainstream parties’ immigration positions
and public opinion among parts of the public, as well as imperfect competition on the immigration issue
among mainstream parties. Whether due to an actual or a perceived cross-party consensus, a niche comes
into existence for the anti-immigration party to exploit.

**Indirect impact: Votes versus Ideology**

If there are votes to be gained on the immigration issue, why do political parties refrain from political
competition on this dimension and ‘wait’ for the rise of an anti-immigration party before they react to
public opinion on the issue? Often ideological, rather than electoral constraints are mentioned by political
parties in justifying the depoliticisation of the immigration issue and the non-reaction to an anti-
immigration party. The memory of WWII plays an important role in the discourses surrounding the
immigration debate, with mainstream parties accusing anti-immigration parties of Nazism or fascism, or
more generally pointing at parties’ lack of moral responsibility. In Flanders, where Vlaams Blok had
historical ties to fascism, installing the cordon sanitaire was shrouded in such moral reasoning, with party
leaders urging parties and voters to act and vote in line with their moral conscience. In the Netherlands,
despite the absence of such historical links, parties, especially those of the new left, also associated the
anti-immigration parties of Wilders and Fortuyn, and their attitudes towards Islam, with Hitler’s attitudes
towards Jews. Surrendering to these parties, in word or deed, would be reminiscent of surrendering to evil.
These constraints on parties can be considered ideological constraints, where parties refrain from
competition with an anti-immigration party to not cave in to racist and negative campaigning on
immigration. Within our model, party ideologists would be responsible for imposing these constraints.

Apart from these specific moral constraints, indirect impact is also constrained by a more general notion
of ideological stability, which ensures that parties do not change colour at each and every challenge, which
would lead them to lose their ideological integrity. Harmel and Svåsand’s research (1997) on indirect
impact features such an ideological component: they model parties as inherently conservative
organisations that have a limited capacity to integrate new issues into their ideologies. These assumptions
fit well with the performance theory of party change (Janda, 1990), which poses that parties will only
change in response to bad elections. In its turn, the performance theory of party change builds on the

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Davis, Amber (2012). The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands,
Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute

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seminal work of Downs (1957) which emphasises the importance of ideological immobility for parties’ credibility in the longer term: “Ideological immobility is characteristic of every responsible party, because it cannot repudiate its past actions unless some radical change in conditions justifies this.” (Downs, 1957: 110). Accordingly, the notion of ‘relevant threat’ is central to such a theoretical framework. Ideological immobility will persist until the direct threat to the electoral well-being of the party forces it to change; and change will result only if the anti-immigration party can reduce the party’s uncertainty as to what is the right move. Only if this condition is met, will the incumbent party consider changing its ideological position.

This thesis adopts this framework, but adds that the extent to which and the patterns in which parties react to an anti-immigration party can be to a certain degree predicted. These patterns of competition are determined primarily by electoral incentives and constraints. This thesis argues that, although parties may have ideological reasons to not engage with an anti-immigration party, electoral motives are, ultimately the driving force behind immigration politics.

**Electoral incentives: left-right preferences versus immigration preferences**

At party system level, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension determines the electoral incentives for co-optation. If voter preferences on the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are not correlated, in other words, if the left-right and immigration dimension are orthogonal dimensions, both parties on the left and the right of the political spectrum will have equally strong incentives to co-opt restrictive immigration policies. If, however, the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are positively (or negatively) correlated, parties on one side of the political spectrum will have a stronger incentive to adapt their policy positions when an anti-immigration party rises.

Interestingly, the absence of a correlation between the left-right and immigration dimension leads both to similar pressures to co-opt policies, but also to more favourable conditions for cartel formation and persistence. If parties know that their optimal policy positions based on voter demand are equal, there are fewer incentives to defect from the cartel, since after the other party catches up the vote shares are equally uncertain. In consequence, in the absence of a pressing anti-immigrant threat, there are no incentives to defect in the long run and the parties are likely to stay put. If, however, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension is stronger, parties of the right may defect earlier, since they know their constituency will approve of such a move, thereby safeguarding and possibly increasing their share of the vote. Parties of the left, with different constituency preferences, cannot change policy positions to the same degree without electoral losses. Turning the argument around: choosing a policy position that does not correspond with voter preferences is costless in terms of votes if the left-right and immigration dimension are orthogonal dimensions, making it easier stay within the agreed-upon liberal cross-party
consensus. In a nutshell: whether indirect impact affects the whole party system or primarily parties on the right is hypothesised to depend on the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>No Anti-immigrant Threat</th>
<th>Anti-immigrant Threat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orthogonal</td>
<td>Stable cross-party consensus</td>
<td>Indirect impact across the political spectrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel</td>
<td>Unstable cross-party consensus</td>
<td>Indirect impact on the right-wing party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1. Immigration Dimensionality and its Effects on Indirect Impact

The empirical evidence with regard to the reach of indirect impact and whether it affects the whole or only parts of the party system is limited and has mixed results. Van Spanje (2010) argues that the rise of an anti-immigration party affects the entire party system. He finds an impact on immigration positions of both parties of the left and the right in a study that includes 11 West European countries. Pettigrew (1998) comes to a similar conclusion, arguing that despite limited direct impact, anti-immigration parties have affected the entire political spectrum on immigration in Europe, as well as the United States and Australia. Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers (2002), also find an impact on parties across the whole political spectrum. In their quantitative cross-national study on the rise of anti-immigration parties they stumble across an unexpected phenomenon. Their research finds a correlation between a restrictive immigration climate, which they define by the extent to which all parties in a particular country have restrictive immigration preferences, and support for extreme right parties. They argue that this effect could be the result of stronger anti-immigration parties influencing the positions of political parties. The immigration positions of social democratic parties (!) contribute most to this effect.

Heinisch (2003) argues the opposite case, and poses that indirect impact depends primarily on the responses by the mainstream right-wing party ‘closest’ to the anti-immigration party in a one-dimensional political space, citing Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands as examples. Since the main right-wing party offers policy competence, as well as a more moderate version of the anti-immigration party’s programmatic suggestions it is likely to (re-)capture the anti-immigration votes. So despite a taming of the discourse in the course of the process of co-optation, parties on the right are affected most. Minkenberg (2001) confirms this for the Austrian case, when he argues that indirect impact can be felt directly in right-wing government policies. The ÖVP changed its policy position on family reunification and labour immigration, for example, to match those of the anti-immigration party FPÖ.

Finally, specific policy areas may elicit diverse reactions from political parties. As discussed in a previous section, Money (1999a) has shown for the UK, that immigration and integration attitudes of political parties differ. Left and right parties endorse restrictive immigration policies equally, claiming that clamping
down on immigration will facilitate the integration of present immigrants; while integration strategies differ. Givens and Luedtke (2005) find empirical evidence that supports a similar claim in France, Germany and the UK. Assessing 125 laws within a 12-year time-span, they conclude that partisanship is not a significant predictor of the restrictiveness of immigration control laws, while partisanship is the only significant predictor of immigrant integration laws (the other variables being unemployment, GDP growth, immigration figures, asylum figures and issue salience in newspapers). The empirical question remains whether parties position themselves like this as a result of ideological or of electoral incentives.

**Electoral constraints: divisiveness**

At party level, electoral incentives and constraints may differ from those at party system level. The divisiveness of the immigration issue for a party’s constituency determines whether a party is heavily or not-at-all constrained in reacting to an anti-immigration party, and whether taking up an ‘optimal’ position and politicising the immigration issue is easy and worthwhile. If parties have highly divided constituencies on immigration they will be less fortunate in exploiting this issue politically compared to parties whose voters have more similar immigration preferences. Naturally, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension at party system level has links to the average divisiveness at party level, but due to parties’ ideological profiles divisiveness per party may differ substantially. ‘Older’ parties of the left, centre and right, which mobilise primarily along the left-right axis, reflecting traditional political cleavages are logically more likely to have a split electorate on immigration than ‘newer’ parties which have emerged along the ‘value’ dimension.

Parties of the right are often perceived as being less divided compared to those of the left. As immigration is often considered to be a ‘right-wing’ issue, which parties of the right handle more competently than those of the left, it is easily assumed that voters for right-wing parties are less divided on the issue, and show a smaller variance of immigration preferences than constituencies of parties on the left. Whether this is indeed the case is an empirical question, and not at all self-evident. At the elite level, parties on the right too faced intense quarrels over choices regarding more liberal versus restrictive immigration positions (Fermin, 1997; Minkenberg, 2001). In the Netherlands, this schism first proved nearly fatal to VVD, involving a fierce battle for VVD leadership between a more liberal and a more restrictive candidate on immigration. Later, it proved a lethal issue for CDA, which was and remains highly divided on cooperation with PVV, and the pressure this party exerts to keep immigration policies highly restrictive. This divide may be equally keenly felt in the electorate of these parties.

One of the reasons divisiveness is often intuitively perceived as more pressing on the left, is the presence of an immigrant vote, which goes primarily to parties of the left. The immigrant vote is, as a result, considered an electoral or ideological constraint on left party movement (Money 1999a, 1999b). In the UK, Labour’s reputation in the field of race relations is famously tied to the presence of immigrant voters.
Anti-immigration parties have tried to exploit this issue, by focusing attention on this alleged divide, and by branding left parties ‘immigrant parties’. Geert Wilders, for example, has argued repeatedly that PvdA favoured a liberal immigration regime to benefit from immigrant votes\(^4\). This thesis asks whether this divide is indeed felt more strongly on the left, based on an empirical analysis, and whether the immigrant vote is an important part of this divide. If so, left parties will have more difficulty reacting to an anti-immigration party than parties on the right.

To sum up: this thesis poses that electoral constraints can explain parties’ reluctance to compete on the immigration dimension. Firstly, parties may have no incentive to move towards more restrictive positions as a result of the weak correlation between voters’ left-right and immigration positions. As long as the anti-immigration party is relatively small and the immigration and the left-right dimension are orthogonal dimensions - left-right preferences and immigration preferences do not correlate with each other - there are few electoral incentives to change policy positions. Since the optimal policy position would be roughly equal for both the left and the right party, the cross-party consensus would simply move across the political spectrum, with vote-shares remaining equally uncertain. This suggests that as long as party ideologists insist on policy stability, and the immigration dimension is not the main dimension of competition, there are very little incentives to change. Although a move towards more restrictive positions on immigration could win back voters from the anti-immigration party; it would not add to a certain win or loss of votes in party competition between the mainstream parties. Ideological immobility persists, since up to a certain point there is no certain electoral pay-off as a result of a move; while the ideological and moral costs may be high. If the correlation between these dimensions is stronger, parties of the right have stronger incentives to defect from the liberal elite consensus, and immigration politics will more strongly follow a left-right logic.

Secondly, parties may desperately want to avoid competing on the immigration issue as a result of a highly divided electorate. If mainstream parties have constituencies that are more or less equally divided on immigration, none of these parties will have the upper hand once immigration becomes a salient issue in political competition. If, however, a party has a less divided constituency than a rival party, it may exploit this position initiating an offensive on the immigration issue, leaving its divided rival to grapple with its internal divide.

\(^{4}\) For example: Algemene Beschouwingen, 17 September 2008: “We could have swum in money, but instead we follow the dream of the left to import half the Islamic world. The more votes for the left, the better. Sometimes I think they must be taught while still on the airplane: vote for Wouter Bos (PvdA), and we will give you benefits” (own translation).
Some Qualifications

Endogenous public opinion
A first qualification of the model concerns the origins of public opinion. Scholars such as Schain (2006) have suggested that voters take (part of) their cues from anti-immigration parties. His argument poses that the principal struggle over immigration concerns the portrayal of the immigration issue, in which parties on both the left and the right are faced with the difficult task of choosing between co-optation of ideas, thereby acknowledging and reacting to the public’s concern over immigration but simultaneously ‘proving the anti-immigration party right’ and risking further radicalisation of the public; or opposing and excluding the party’s terms of reference thereby potentially risking further alienation of the public. Public opinion is assumed to be an endogenous variable. Schain’s argument implicitly applies an opinion leadership theory to the interaction between political parties and public opinion, in which people do not form prior stable preferences, but rely on political elites to explain and interpret social, political and economic phenomena for them (Key, 1966; Zaller, 1992). By doing so, political parties perform a crucial role in shaping public preferences. On the contrary, the theoretical model presented here is based on spatial theory of party competition, which generally assumes voter preferences to be exogenous. Parties react to voter preferences, but do not influence them.

If we would allow for endogeneity of public opinion, the anti-immigrant gap becomes volatile and unpredictable. Political parties can no longer assess whether moving towards restrictive immigration positions closes the anti-immigrant gap, or widens it by further encouraging restrictive public opinion. The empirical evidence shows some evidence supporting the opinion leadership thesis (Ivarsflaten, 2004b) and accounts of immigration politics emphasise the dilemmas opinion leadership brings, in which parties are torn between responding to voter demand, and ‘a fear of reproducing prejudice’ (Tichenor, 2002). These fears are often argued to be the prime reason for upholding the cross-party consensus. Freeman (1995), for example argues that strict boundaries demarcate the limits of legitimate discussion on immigration. They serve to preserve the ‘liberal consensus’ on the core of immigration policy across the political spectrum. Political parties generally do not wish to challenge these boundaries, despite negative public opinion.

For the application of our model, the opinion leadership model warns against a too simplistic interpretation of the empirical evidence that might follow from the assumption that voter preferences are exogenous, and I will have to take the possibility of (partial) endogeneity of public opinion into account. At the same time, endogenous voter preferences would strengthen incentives for parties to depoliticise the immigration issue. The complex nature of public opinion on immigration may reinforce this finding. Although public opinion polls show a generally restrictive public when asked in the abstract, public preferences change once the consequences of restrictive immigration policies become concrete, especially...
in individual cases. Publics do not generally support the actual forced deportation of immigrants for example, despite general restrictive attitudes (Ellermann, 2006). As a reaction, parties will prefer to keep immigration out of public debates, not wanting to put themselves in a position in which voters radicalise, while simultaneously holding contradictory preferences, which would render finding an effective political strategy increasingly impossible. The issue of exogenous versus endogenous voter preferences is further dealt with in chapter 3.

**Political rhetoric versus policy reality**

A second qualification, which needs to be made concerning the argument presented here relates to the difference between the policy positions of political parties and the actual policy outcome of the political process. In the theoretical model presented above no difference is assumed between party strategies and actual policies. This assumption will have to be relaxed in the empirical application. Immigration policy is a policy area notorious for its gap between stated goals and actual outcomes, because economic interests as well as legal norms are often in conflict with restrictive rhetoric (Czaika & de Haas, 2011). In addition, the implementation of immigration policy is shared by different policy actors and policy venues, which are not always transparent (Lahav & Guiraudon, 2006). Examples include the turn towards restrictive immigration policies by governments in Western Europe since the 1970s, while courts invoked residence and family rights for immigrants (Joppke 1998). Similarly, Guiraudon (1997) shows that parties may use closed policy venues to circumvent voter preferences, thereby creating possibilities for two-faced policy positions: those communicated to the voter; and those actually enacted. This situation, in which talk and action are split, and divided over multiple actors, could produce opportunism among political parties, enabling them to use restrictive rhetoric to mobilise voters on the immigration issue, while simultaneously relying on the intricacies of the policymaking and the legal process, which is to a large extent shielded from anti-immigrant pressures to produce more liberal policies.

For the dynamics of our model of political competition this distinction may produce a divergence between the anti-immigrant gap as measured at the supply side of the political spectrum by analysing party positions, and the anti-immigrant gap as perceived by the public. The latter is the most crucial measure, as it is this gap that drives voters to vote for an anti-immigration party. If we assume perfect information, voters won’t fall for this trap in which politicians want voters to believe their policies are more restrictive than they in fact are. The dynamics of the model will remain intact, except for the last feedback loop in which co-optation of more restrictive rhetoric should lead to a closing of the anti-immigrant gap. If voters have no reason to believe parties’ positions, the anti-immigrant gap will remain intact, despite party movement.

For the empirical analysis, which is based for a large part on a longitudinal content analysis of party manifestos, the distinction between rhetoric and policy reality might present another challenge. One could
argue that at elections in years during which restrictive policies were implemented, parties will put forward less restrictive policy positions in their manifestos, simply because immigration reality has already become restrictive. Political and policy reality are assumed to be directly correlated. It is doubtful whether political dynamics follow these rules. Stated party positions are designed to communicate an intention to the voter and primarily reflect the positions of political parties amongst each other, rather than positions in relation to policy reality. As a reaction to the anti-immigration party, mainstream parties will move even further towards restrictionism, irrespective of their original position. Party manifestoes remain one of the most direct ways of communicating future policy intentions to the public, and it is likely parties will emphasise and change their positions if this is crucial for their electoral success. The gap between political rhetoric and policy reality may grow as a result.

Finally, the relationship between policy dynamics and the political process needs to be addressed. The argument presented assumes that changes in society will first affect public opinion and voter demand, which will subsequently result in changing or alternatively in unresponsive party positions, closing or enlarging the anti-immigrant gap. In the empirical application this assumption will have to be relaxed, seen the direct effects of societal developments on party positions. Perlmutter (2002) for example, argues that attributing changes in German asylum policy in the 1990s to the influence of the anti-immigration party REP is a misrepresentation of affairs. Instead, he argues, the driving force behind policy change included the increasing numbers of foreigners and increasing anti-immigrant violence. Nevertheless, Perlmutter mentions a decline in faith in the parties’ competence to handle the issue as a driving factor for policy change, which corresponds with the mechanisms of our theoretical model. The anti-immigration party is primarily a vessel for discontent, connecting public opinion with political action.

\section*{Conclusion}

This chapter has presented the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis. A two-dimensional model of political competition has been presented in which an anti-immigration party rises as the result of the clustering of political parties on the immigration dimension; and the reaction of mainstream political parties to the anti-immigration party is determined primarily by the immigration preferences of their constituencies. As the previous discussion has shown, there are many ideological reasons why political parties may not choose optimal immigration policy positions in the vote maximising sense, either before or after the rise of the anti-immigration party. This thesis does not focus so much on these ideological constraints but mainly analyses electoral ones, and argues that immigration politics cannot be fully understood without taking electoral incentives into account. Despite ideology, the presence of a cross-party consensus on immigration may simply point at potential electoral losses over the issue among mainstream parties until an anti-immigration party emerges to scoop up these votes. The rise of an anti-immigration party will force parties to take up policy positions closer to the anti-immigration party, to
some degree or another. It is important to note that this process of indirect impact is (self-) constrained and depends both on elite preferences within the party, and on constituency preferences. The outcome of the struggle between opportunists and ideologists in the party elite determines the extent of policy co-optation, with electoral incentives playing a key role in which faction wins. These electoral incentives responsible for indirect impact are considered two-fold: the correlation between the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension is considered to be the main driving force behind patterns of co-optation at party system level; while at party level the divisiveness of the immigration issue for particular parties determines electoral incentives to exploit or depoliticise the immigration issue. The immigration – integration dichotomy may also determine differences between indirect impact on left versus right parties. As the literature shows, left parties have been consistently more in favour of liberal integration policies, while simultaneously promoting restrictive immigration policies. Nevertheless, a dispute remains over the driving factors behind this difference. The first explanation holds that this difference reflects constituency preferences, and it might specifically reflect that left parties attract a large share of the immigrant vote. The second explanation holds that ideological, rather than electoral constraints play an important role. If the immigrant vote is non-pivotal, and left voters are on average equally restrictive compared to right voters, there are no electoral reasons to represent minority interests for the main party of the left. Party elites may impose their own, more liberal, preferences trumping those of the electorate.

The next chapters will test this argument. Chapter 3 analyses the alleged cross-party consensus on the immigration dimension, which is a precondition for the anti-immigration party to emerge: parties are expected to take up immigration positions that are considered too liberal by voters. Chapter 4 analyses the incentives for party movement in reaction to an anti-immigration party by mainstream parties: the correlation of the left-right and the immigration dimension on the demand side of the political market; the divisiveness of the immigration issue for parties; and the role of the ethnic minority vote. Finally, chapter 5 analyses actual party movement on the immigration dimension, and can answer whether supply side patterns match demand side expectations.
CHAPTER 3
Trump or Joker? The Anti-immigrant Gap and Playing the Immigration Card

Abstract
This chapter analyses the most important precondition for the existence of the dynamics of indirect impact: the presence of an anti-immigrant gap. The key factor contributing to this phenomenon is voter perception that parties take up more liberal stances towards immigration than they would prefer them to. The larger this gap, the larger the potential for an anti-immigration party to rise and to impact party positions once political competition on the immigration dimension is triggered. Whereas the assumption that such an anti-immigrant gap exists is widely shared in the literature it is mostly left implicit. This chapter aims to empirically analyse this gap to explain the dynamics of immigration politics. In measuring the anti-immigrant gap the principal point of reference used is voter opinion on voters’ own and party positions, as well as more specific party adherent opinion, with election studies providing the primary data. The chapter shows that a persistent anti-immigrant gap exists, which is especially large for parties on the left and centre; and that the left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration issue to a large extent. A ‘shifted scale’, in which voters consistently consider themselves to be more restrictive than their parties causes immigration to be an issue with the potential to severely upset the established patterns of political competition.

Introduction
Tony Blair summed up the case of immigration politics succinctly when he addressed the Lower House in December 2000, in a reaction to the claim that he had accused Conservative William Hague of ‘playing the race card’: “I am not suggesting that the right honourable member is a racist. I am simply suggesting that he is an opportunist.” The mere existence of the vocabulary of ‘playing the immigration card’ and ‘playing the race card’ shows that the immigration issue has a separate status from other issues in electoral competition. The issue is regarded a trump card for parties seeking cheap electoral gain based on underlying illiberal preferences of the electorate at large. Resisting immigration card politics is, as such, considered to be a virtue, seen the self-constraint parties allegedly show in abstaining from benefiting from these specific anti-immigrant sentiments. This normative dimension of immigration politics, deservedly, gets a great deal of attention: responsible political parties should question themselves as to what extent they should present a tough anti-immigration programme. Party responsibilities extend further than vote-seeking, both towards their own societies and ethnic minority communities; and within an international context. That being said, the other direction in which the immigration card can be played, and is played by mainstream
parties, is often overlooked. Accusing anti-immigration parties of racism and the stirring up of dangerous anti-immigrant feelings, playing the ‘racist card’, is an equally emotional appeal to reject these discussions, without acknowledging and addressing the real or perceived problems at hand.

In Flanders these dynamics have been part and parcel of politics since the rise of VB, with the ‘racist’ card institutionalised in the cordon sanitaire, functioning as a shield between popular opinion and government power, and effectively separating votes from policy influence on moral grounds. The ideological component of the cordon, which is subordinate to the vow to refrain from forming governmental alliances with VB, consisted of the denunciation of VB’s 70 point programme, a programme which VB party leader Dewinter himself has renounced (though not unambiguously) after the law suit that led Vlaams Blok to rename itself Vlaams Belang in 2004. Spurred on by the courts, Dewinter made VB into a ‘moderate’ party by doing so. With the life expectancy of the cordon sanitaire steadily decreasing, mainstream parties reflect on their chosen strategies and worry about life after its fall (Mudde, 2004). In the process, politicians accuse each other of fuelling the electoral success of VB by having allowed the cordon sanitaire to isolate elite action from public opinion to such an extent that voting for VB has become a justifiable or at least understandable act. Simultaneously, parties have come to acknowledge that the cordon in itself, with all its normative connotations, created a taboo around the immigration issue making it near impossible for political parties to address. Tying votes back to governing will threaten established policies and coalitions in Flanders, with the immigration issue presenting an on-going electoral threat.

In the Netherlands the ‘racist card’ was effectively used for years against the anti-immigrant Janmaat, but it failed miserably against Fortuyn in the 2002 elections, bringing to the surface the fragile links between elite and popular opinion. In the name of the electorate at large, the late Pim Fortuyn charged the ‘liberal political elite’ with the failure of the Dutch multicultural society, which was showing cracks in the face of the aftermath of decades of receiving guest workers and refugees. These elections left the Dutch political elites in a state of shock. In the run-up to the elections not only a politician, but also a long-held paradigm on how to approach and integrate ethnic minorities, and in a broader context: a long-held paradigm on how political elites should interact with each other and with the public had not survived. Popular pressure had arrived like a bolt from the blue, forcing political elites to reconsider party positions and strategies. In the post-election rituals reflecting on mistakes in party strategy, immigration, and especially immigrant integration featured high on parties’ lists. In first instance parties across the board admitted that a tougher -or ‘more realistic’- approach towards immigration and immigrant integration was desired, a coveted way

5 As senator Marc van Peel (CD&V) noted on how mainstream parties choose counterproductive policy measures in reacting to the VB: “migrant voting rights, the ‘Snel Belg Wet’, policies to deal with illegal migrants. Both SP.a and VLD have chosen the wrong track. It won’t lead to any good” (own translation) (van Peel, 2004).
6 See for example: de Boer, Axwijk, B. Jacobs, ter Horst, & Trappenburg (2002)
of admitting to co-optation of some of Fortuyn's policies. A few years later, however, with VVD continuing with tough measures and rhetoric, first as an after-reaction to Fortuyn, later as a reaction to the new anti-Islam party of Wilders, PvdA and CDA started to grumble, this time attacking VVD with the ‘racist’ card by suggesting that the VVD too had become illiberal and anti-democratic.7

Political parties in the UK, finally, have been highly aware of the potential electoral effects of playing the immigration card for decades. In British commentary on immigration politics, playing the immigration card is considered a more or less natural attribute of the Conservative Party, more so than a strategy used primarily by parties on the fringe of the political spectrum such as BNP (see: Saggar, 2000, pp. 175-202). This legacy dates back to 1964 when a Conservative candidate, Peter Griffiths, used the slogan: “If you want a nigger neighbour vote Labour” (he won the seat), followed by Conservative Enoch Powell’s infamous ‘rivers of blood’ speech in 1966, in which he warned for ‘racial warfare on the streets of Britain’. The issue moved on from race to immigration in the 1970s with Mrs Thather’s rhetoric on Britain being ‘swamped’ by alien cultures, emphasising the duty to listen to and act upon the electorate’s fears concerning immigration. Closer to date Labour has tried to take the Conservatives on by echoing these concerns – Labour Minister David Blunkett used the infamous expression of asylum seekers ‘swamping’ local schools, a statement for which he was much criticised. Both parties attempted to rule out the race card, most notably in the 1997 and 2001 pledges signed by all party leaders (though not by all Conservative MPs) ‘not to use the race card’, and to discipline any candidate acting in a way ‘likely to stir up racial prejudice’. In the 2005 elections these considerations were pushed to the background, with the Conservatives initiating a fierce asylum debate as will be discussed in detail later on in the chapter.

Despite the institutional particularities that influence political competition in each of these cases there is a commonality that characterises immigration politics: parties (generally of the extreme right, followed by parties of the right) playing the immigration card; and parties (generally of the left, though initially across the whole political spectrum) playing the ‘racist’ card by reacting in shock and horror once this happens, sometimes to such an extent that they try to institutionally shield themselves from such pressures.

The explanation for this dynamic put forward in this chapter steers clear from the normative debates on the issue, finding a solution based -simply- on votes, by empirically confirming the classic assumption that, in the eyes of voters, parties across the political spectrum, have too liberal policies when it comes to immigration. This chapter shows that as a result, the immigration issue is in potential capable of completely transforming the political landscape, especially so in the Dutch and Flemish cases.

7 Agnes van Ardenne (former minister for overseas aid, CDA), for example argued that VVD MPs Mark Rutte and Henk Kamp “violated the rules of a liberal democracy” and should quit politics, since they agreed with Geert Wilders on questioning the loyalty to the Netherlands of Labour’s ethnic minority MPs Nebahat Albayrak, Ahmed Aboutaleb and Khadija Arib (Hoedeman, 2007).
Immigration creates highly volatile electoral dynamics affecting all parties, especially those on the left and the centre of the political spectrum, both at the mass electoral level and at the level of party adherents. This increased volatility is highly undesired by political parties, which are already losing their grip on their traditional electorates (Mair, Müller, & Plasser, 2004). For this reason alone, depoliticisation of immigration is sought after especially by parties of the left and centre. In this set-up of voter and party opinion levelling the ‘racist card’ at anti-immigration parties or mainstream parties of the right that dare adopt hard-line policies on immigration is one of the tools to reach this aim of electoral stability. Simultaneously, parties on the right are more likely to stand to benefit from volatile immigration dynamics, while being less likely to suffer from high voter volatility, providing them with an incentive to play the immigration card in the traditional opportunist way and defect from the liberal elite consensus. Nevertheless, parties on the right do not always succeed in closing the gap between their positions and those of their electorate showing that for them too immigration can be a risky issue.

Most importantly, the chapter shows empirically that a persistent gap exists between voters’ self-positioning and the positioning of parties. This finding is a crucial pre-condition underlying the dynamics of indirect impact as hypothesised. In addition, the chapter directly addresses and to a large extent refutes the ‘null-hypotheses’ posed by strands of the literature which present theories - opinion leadership and left-right scale absorption - that would undermine these dynamics by challenging some of the assumptions made in this thesis: (1) that voter opinion can be treated as exogenous, (2) that in the eyes of voters, parties have divergent preferences from their own, and (3) that voters form their preferences on the left-right and immigration dimension independently. The preconditions for indirect impact to occur would be practically cancelled out if voters would primarily follow elite (party) cues and if the left-right dimension had completely absorbed the immigration issue on both the demand and the supply side. The chapter tests these theories against the empirical evidence. At least two key assumptions seem to be confirmed: there is no question that an elite-voter gap exists and it does not appear that voters take cues from their own political parties to form their positions on immigration - if voter opinion is impacted, it is impacted primarily from outside from outside the traditional partisanship bonds. Whether voters form their preferences on immigration issues independently, however, come into question. It seems that the left-right dimension has to some extent absorbed the immigration dimension.

Structure of the chapter

The first part of the chapter presents the two alternative hypotheses: the anti-immigrant gap hypothesis as presented in a previous chapter, and a ‘null-hypothesis’ based on the loosening of the key assumptions of the theoretical framework presented in this thesis, and briefly discusses the evidence in the literature to date pertaining to them.
Firstly, the elite-voter opinion gap is discussed concerning which a broad though not uncontested consensus exists in the literature. Political elites are considered to hold more liberal preferences than the public as a result of institutional constraints (Joppke, 1998), education and political socialisation (Hagendoorn & Nekuee, 1999), and prejudice and misinformation among the mass public (Nadeau, Niemi, & Levine, 1993; Sides & Citrin, 2007; Sigelman & Niemi, 2001). Some scholars argue, however, that the direction of attitudes of the left and right is similar at mass and elite level (Lahav, 1997, 2004).

Secondly, borrowing from the literature on mass opinion, the assumption that voter preferences can be considered to be exogenous, as the thesis presented here holds, is put to the test by presenting an alternative hypothesis – that voters follow the leadership of the parties they adhere to in order to form their opinions. Elite opinion leadership theory argues that voters tend to align themselves with their ‘own’ elite’s preferences (Converse, 1962; Zaller, 1990, 1991, 1992). The issues of preference formation and party trust are deliberately raised to show that they help explain attitudinal portraits reinforcing, rather than cancelling out the dynamics that drive potential co-optation dynamics.

Thirdly, the impact of the left-right dimension on immigration politics is discussed. On the one hand, immigration can be considered one of the new politics issues which divides electorates along a new cleavage, separating liberal voters who are more likely to be open to immigration and denounce too strict integration requirements as they hamper individual freedoms, from the traditional working class who demand to be protected from the perceived economic and cultural threats immigration and immigrants bring (Citrin, Green, Muste, & Wong, 1997; Ivarsflaten, 2004a; Quillian, 1995; Sides & Citrin, 2007). On the other hand, the left-right dimension is renowned for its absorptive capacities, and many issues, though initially seemingly ‘unsuited’ for left-right politics, have been redefined to fit the traditional frame (Inglehart & Flanagan, 1987; Knutsen, 1998).

Fourthly, two competing scenarios for immigration politics are presented based on the theories of the anti-immigrant gap versus elite opinion leadership and left-right absorption. These scenarios would predict entirely different dynamics of immigration politics and indirect impact.

Fifthly, relevant empirical evidence to date is discussed, which focuses mostly on the links between partisanship and immigration preferences. The empirical evidence points towards a small but significant correlation between partisanship and immigration preferences. By itself this evidence is not sufficient to confirm or disconfirm the existence of the anti-immigrant gap, an assumption that is often left implicit. This void is filled by the second part of the chapter, which consists of an empirical analysis of the anti-immigrant gap in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK.

The second part of the chapter is empirical and, after a short discussion of the data used, analyses per case whether an anti-immigrant gap exists, analysing which of either immigration scenarios comes closer to
empirical reality. The analysis focuses on the size and shape of the anti-immigrant gap: (1) the extent to which parties are perceived as having more liberal preferences than its constituents; and (2) the impact of left-right considerations on these patterns. Accordingly, two important dividing lines of the analysis are: the dividing line between political elites and the public; and the left-right dimension, dividing both parties and publics. It will be shown that both have an important impact on immigration card dynamics.

The conclusion tries to generalise from the cases under discussion, and presents the ‘shifted scale’ argument, which comes closer to empirical reality than either of the two extreme scenarios presented in the first section of the chapter. An anti-immigrant gap exists and persists, but left-right dynamics play an important role. Two additional lines of inquiry addressed in the conclusion are longitudinal dynamics, or the interplay between supply and demand dynamics; and the cross-national comparison in which the competitive dynamics of the party systems at hand are discussed.

**The Anti-Immigrant Gap & Indirect Impact: Three Crucial Assumptions**

The dynamics underlying the main hypothesis put forward in this thesis, which states that parties will change their immigration positions as a reaction to the rise of an anti-immigration party rests on three assumptions regarding public opinion: first, that public opinion on immigration is exogenous, secondly that elite opinion is more liberal towards immigration than public opinion (at least in voter perception), and thirdly that voters’ left-right preferences do not necessarily correlate with their immigration preferences: voters form their preferences on separate issues independently.

**The mass–elite opinion gap**

Of these three assumptions, the second is the most widely accepted one. A wide range of research holds that a gap exists between elite and voter preferences on immigration. Broadly speaking there are three strands of explanations of why political elites have more liberal preferences towards immigration than the public, the first two focusing on the liberal preferences of the elite, while the latter focuses on the more restrictive attitudes of the public. The first explanation, as will be more extensively discussed in chapter 5, argues that political elites work within the constraints of liberal democracies, which set the parameters for accepted ideas, policy and discourse (Joppke 1998). Liberal institutions, with the concept of individual rights at their core, balance and constrain the majoritarian pressures of democracy, as do economic pressures which keep the door to immigration at least slightly ajar.

The second argument holds that educational levels account for the difference between elite and mass preferences on immigration. To start with, those with higher educations tend to have more liberal preferences in general, as well as more liberal preferences towards immigration in particular, than those with less education (Hagendoorn & Nekuee, 1999). Selective recruitment, by which individuals with
higher educations end up in the political elite whereas individuals with lower educations form the mass of political followers, consolidates the mass-elite opinion gap. The literature on political tolerance further argues that socialisation among political elites plays an important role in erasing expected differences in tolerance based on individual level personal characteristics (Sullivan, Walsh, Shamir, Barnum, & Gibson, 1993). As such, not only formal, but also informal institutions appear to shape the liberal bias of political elites.

The third argument explaining why publics are more restrictive than elites poses that a elite-mass gap exists as a result of differences in information levels, in which the political elites, as part of their mandate, have higher knowledge of the facts concerning policy issues at hand, while the general public lacks this knowledge leading to a systematic overestimation of immigrant numbers and their impact on the public purse (Nadeau, et al., 1993; Sigelman & Niemi, 2001). Using ESS data, Sides and Citrin (2007) confirm that popular perceptions of immigration are largely inaccurate. Not only do publics consistently overestimate the degree to which their country is a popular estimate for immigrants as compared to other countries (80% of respondents believe their country receives the same, more or far more immigrants than other countries), they also substantially overestimate the percentage of immigrants in their country. For the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium these overestimations approximately amounted to a factor of two-and-a-half, with respondents estimating the size of the foreign-born population at between 22-25%, with actual levels hovering around 8-10%. For specific groups, such as asylum seekers, these overestimations are even larger. Misinformation tends to lead to more restrictive attitudes, since perceived immigration levels are closely tied up with threat perceptions (Quillian 1995). If immigrant numbers are perceived to be high, opposition to immigration and policies that benefit immigrants increases (Theiss-Morse, 2003). Indeed, Sides and Citrin (2007) confirm this thesis.

Voter preferences & the left-right dimension

The first and third assumption, exogenous voter preferences and the independence of left-right and immigration attitudes are more contested. The leading literature on the origins of mass opinion argues that the public follows elite cues when forming its opinion, which would make voter opinion endogenous (Converse 1962, Key 1966, Zaller 1992; on immigration and anti-immigration parties see: Ivarsflaten 2004b); while party politics scholars argue that the left-right dimension has absorbed new issues such as immigration, which would lead left voters to have more liberal immigration preferences than right voters (Knutsen 1998). Combined, these phenomena would arguably lead to the shrinking or even the disappearance of the elite opinion gap and make a liberal elite consensus on these issues more difficult to reach and maintain. Voters would position themselves close to their parties, while little confusion would exist as to how parties should position themselves, seen that that left-right positioning could serve as a point of reference. The next section discusses these arguments, directly challenging the assumptions of preference formation exogenous to political cues and independent from left-right considerations, which
would undermine the predicted dynamic of indirect impact by an anti-immigration party. They serve as the ‘null hypotheses’ of this chapter.

**Opinion leadership: the role of parties**

At the heart of any discussion on the relationship between political change and public opinion lies the question of how ideas are diffused among mass publics and channelled back into the political process. An influential school of thought in this regard is that of elite opinion leadership, which argues that opinions are formed according to exclusive elite-public channels of communication in which party followers primarily accept the messages as communicated to them from their ‘own’ party elite. The fore-runner in this field of research was Converse (1962) with his work on belief systems. Converse argued that publics shaped coherent belief systems by following elite cues as to what issue positions would belong together. These belief systems are designed by association rather than by critical reflection, with the public using fixed cognitive shortcuts to position themselves, without challenging the underlying ideological framework or testing the policy statements made by political elites against it.

More recently, applying this approach to the study of political parties and partisanship, Zaller (1990, 1991, 1992) argues that political parties can be regarded as political elites that influence the individual’s opinion on policy issues by providing an ideological handhold for publics. If political parties support a policy across the board, the public will incorporate these messages, resulting in a convergence of mass and elite opinion. Alternatively, if parties are divided on the issue across partisan lines, publics will take their cues from the party whose partisan values most closely reflect their own, resulting in a divergence of opinion along partisan lines, but convergence of mass and elite opinion within the parties’ rank and file. The partisan assessment of trustworthiness of sources lies at the heart of this phenomenon. Whereas individuals are quick to discard any information coming from a source that is a priori valued negatively, cues coming from a positively valued source are readily accepted. Similar to the argument made by Converse (1962), statements used in political communication are generally not critically reflected on by the public; rather they are adopted or rejected based primarily on the perceived trustworthiness of the messenger (McGuire, 1969; Zaller, 1991). An obvious, but important, additional condition for opinion change to occur at all, emphasised by both Converse (1962) and Zaller (1991), is a minimum level of political awareness – if publics are to take cues from political elites, they should at least be exposed and to a certain level attentive to these cues. As will be discussed later, this condition will be met in the empirical testing of these theories for the immigration issue by focusing on party adherent opinion as well as voter opinion at large.

**Left-right ideology and preference formation on ‘new’ issues**

An important implication of the elite opinion leadership thesis, since it argues that mass opinion is shaped in accordance with partisan views, is the emergence of divergent party platforms along party lines, with

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Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism

European University Institute

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voter demand following party supply. This implicitly assumes the absorption of the immigration issue by the left-right axis, despite the issue being one of the classic cross-cutting new politics dimension (Inglehart 1977; Kitschelt & McGann 1997). On the supply side of the political market expert surveys indeed show that new issues such as immigration have been absorbed by the left-right dimension (Inglehart & Flanagan, 1987; Knutsen, 1998). In this light it is not surprising that the label ‘anti-immigrant’ or ‘anti-immigration party’, and ‘extreme right party’, though each with its own more specific connotations, have been used more or less interchangeably (Fennema 1997). Similarly, parties on the right have the reputation of being ‘tough on immigration’, while multiculturalism traditionally belongs to the concepts of the left. Despite the fact that traditional ideologies do not offer much of a coherent frame of reference for immigration politics the left-right dimension offers a cognitive short-cut for determining party positions.

Nevertheless, and this should be emphasised, the issue does not fit easily into one-dimensional political space, seen that economic and cultural concerns can be diametrically opposed (Zolberg, 1999), not to speak of the problematic relationship between economic and cultural liberalism, protectionism and the left-right dimension. Whereas the traditional working class might be afraid of losing its jobs, or, as public opinion research shows is more important, be afraid of a dilution of national culture and an attack on its way of life as a result of immigration (Ivarsflaten 2004a, Sides and Citrin 2007) – liberals both on the left and the right might favour open borders and promote multiculturalism, for economic, humanitarian or cultural reasons. In this sense, large parts of the electorate might resist the left-right simplification, since for immigration it might not serve their interests, nor correspond to the values they hold dear. In other words: even though the immigration issue appears to have merged into the left-right frame on the supply side of the political market, the extent to which voters follow these cues on this particular issue is contested.

The Anti-Immigrant Gap versus Opinion Leadership and Left-Right Absorption

The discussion above shows that the elasticity and absorptive capacity of the left-right dimension concerning new issues, combined with the strength of party identification based on left-right ideology to a large extent determine how voter opinion is shaped, to what extent an anti-immigrant gap exists, and how

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8 The term ‘anti-immigrant party’ has in more recent publications mostly been replaced by ‘anti-immigration party’, seen that all these parties primarily share their opposition to immigration, while an objection to immigrants is mostly, but not always present (Fennema & van der Brug, 2006)

9 A working group commissioned with analysing the ideological course of PvdA after their defeat of 2002 noted: “The political principles of social democracy do not provide a conclusive foothold pertaining to questions such as immigrant integration, which leads to a wide range of opinion, ranging from the aim of immigrant assimilation to strong multiculturalism. The spectrum of opinion within the PvdA, is, for this reason, rather broad and undefined” (own translation) (de Boer, et al., 2002)
parties and voters engage in immigration politics. The two extreme scenarios are depicted in figure 1 and 2 representing immigration scales in which a score of 1 indicates liberal and a score of 5 indicates restrictive policies.

![Liberal Elite Consensus & Anti-Immigrant Gap](image1)

*Figure 3.1. Modelling the Liberal Elite Consensus and the Anti-Immigrant Gap*

The first scenario, based on the liberal elite consensus theory as presented in this thesis, and the failure of left-right divisions to structure immigration dynamics, poses that all parties, whether left or right, are perceived as being too liberal, while party adherents on average have restrictive immigration positions, irrespective of their left-right preferences. This scenario shows a large gap between party positions and voter preferences which provides a political space for an anti-immigration party to emerge, or for parties, in fact for any party, to 'play the immigration card' to snatch voters of the left, right and centre. Assuming that immigration is an important issue for voters, immigration might turn traditional left-right politics on its head. Once an anti-immigration party rises, all parties are expected to reposition themselves in an attempt to close the anti-immigrant gap.

![Opinion Leadership & Left-Right Absorption](image2)

*Figure 3.2. Modelling Opinion Leadership and Left-Right Absorption*
The second scenario, inspired by the elite opinion leadership theory and the evidence of the dominance of left-right politics, which will serve as the null hypothesis in this chapter, depicts a political landscape dominated by the left-right dimension, which has fully absorbed the new issue, immigration, on both the demand and the supply side of the political market. Not only are parties perceived as having divergent preferences, with left parties perceived as liberal and right parties as restrictive, party adherents follow these elite cues, self-identifying with left-liberal and right-restrictive positions respectively. This scenario provides little room for new parties to emerge, except on the fringes of the political spectrum where an extreme left and an extreme right party could cater to militant multiculturalists and racists respectively. Also, in the case of such a party emerging, its impact on political competition would be minimal seen that voters have a double bind, with the left-right dimension serving as a guiding principle to partisan attachment.

As the figures show, the extreme case of opinion leadership presents a radical divergence from the liberal elite consensus theory. If the opinion leadership and the partisan-ideology link are the driving forces behind immigration attitudes, much of the dynamics of indirect impact as hypothesised in this thesis would be undermined. Firstly, it would lead to a convergence of elite and public opinion, which would a priori extinguish the anti-immigrant gap. Secondly, if partisanship and immigration preferences are closely linked, indirect impact would only affect parties on the right of the political spectrum, as much of the literature assumes (Harmel & Svåsand, 1997). Voters (and parties) on the left would have more liberal immigration preferences than those on the right and there would be little direct competition for votes with the anti-immigration party. Moreover, a liberal elite consensus would be less stable, since parties would be able to predict and mirror their voters’ preferences more accurately. In the absence of a correlation between partisanship and immigration attitudes, the distribution of preferences, and the resulting vote share would be more variable and less certain respectively.

The next section addresses current empirical research on the anti-immigrant gap, concerned with the political elite-voter connection, partisanship and immigration attitudes. Two questions are important: To what extent does partisanship influence immigration attitudes?, and to what extent does correlation between partisanship and immigration attitudes point towards an elite-voter link?

**Immigration politics: evidence to date**

McLaren (2001) put Zaller’s elite opinion leadership theory to the test for the immigration issue in a cross-national comparison using Eurobarometer data, concluding that political party cues and elite debates regarding immigration (at the national level), are helping form voter opinion. She argues that in cases in which immigration is seen as a divisive issue along partisan lines at the national level, publics are also divided, while in cases in which parties agree on immigration, this is not true to the same extent.
Concerning immigration politics in Flanders, the Netherlands and the UK, McLaren considered Flanders (in her study: Belgium) a prime example of a case in which immigration divides political parties, as well as the Netherlands, though to a lesser extent, while Great Britain was considered a case of party convergence on immigration. McLaren’s analysis finds a small but highly significant correlation between left-right self-placement and immigration attitudes: in countries in which parties collude on immigration the correlation coefficient is smaller; while in countries in which parties are divided, the correlation is larger. Even though McLaren, strictly speaking, does not solve the questions the leading or lagging debate concerning public opinion on immigration poses: the fact that dividing lines in the electorate occur reflecting elite divisions might also point towards an elite listening particularly well to its constituents; she does argue convincingly that partisan stances matter, albeit with only small differences between partisans on the left and right.

Sides and Citrin (2007) confirm the finding that partisanship influences immigration opinion especially once individuals increase their attention to politics. Using data from the 2002-2003 ESS, they argue that there is a significant interaction between political ideology, the frequency of political discussion, and attitudes towards immigration. Testing the effect of political awareness, they find that even when respondents report that they never discuss politics, the marginal effect of ideology on attitudes is statistically significant. Among those who discuss politics frequently the influence of ideology on immigration attitudes increases threefold. Both findings support the mechanism as described by elite opinion leadership & left-right absorption theories.

Another strand of research confirming this position can be found in the work on elite opinion at EU level by Lahav (1997, 2004), who argues that partisanship matters for immigration and that the gap between elite and public opinion on immigration is not that large. A clear link between partisanship and immigration is found in her data on elite opinion which show that MEPs from European party groups on the left are more favourable towards increased immigration and the extension of immigrant rights than MEPs on the right, despite their own claims that immigration is a ‘totally new’ issue, which cannot be integrated in a left-right approach. Despite the fact that the left-right dimension is considered an anachronistic tool inadequate to structure policy positions, their self-placement on the immigration issue shows a clear left-right pattern. Her second claim, that the disjuncture between elite and public opinion is not as pronounced as many scholars contend, follows from the direction of public and elite attitudes, which show similar characteristics.

Based on these strands of research it seems reasonable to expect that partisanship plays some role in preference formation on immigration. For the empirical results this is expected to have implications for the relative positioning of parties and voters on the immigration dimension. Firstly, voters, similar to experts, are expected to position parties on the immigration dimension as if it is a left-right dimension. Secondly, they are expected to position themselves on the immigration dimension, as if it is a left-right dimension. A further question arises as to the absolute positioning of parties and voters on these scales. If
voters take elite cues (McLaren 2001, Sides & Citrin 2007), they are likely to position themselves similar to their parties in terms of absolute scores; if not (Freeman 1995) they will position their parties further away.

In the next section the question whether a partisanship-attitude link exists, and to what extent it points towards elite-mass convergence or an anti-immigrant gap will be assessed empirically. Rather than directly comparing elite and public opinion on immigration, which would give a comparable attitudinal portrait presenting the ‘objective’ gap between voters and political elites, voter opinion is taken as a reference point, for the main reason that the anti-immigrant gap is a perceived gap. For political competition the actual immigration preferences of elites, which might indeed be more liberal or relatively similar to those of the public, are of little importance. The indicator that matters is how these preferences are perceived by publics at large: do publics believe that their political elite hold similar positions to their own when it comes to immigration? If not, the gap creates fertile ground for an anti-immigration party, and playing the immigration card becomes an electoral opportunity for some, and an electoral risk for other parties.

Besides focusing on average scores of party and self-positioning, the empirical analysis will specifically focus on the self- and party positioning by party adherents. Using party adherent positioning satisfies conditions important for Zaller's theory of elite opinion leadership: party adherents by definition have a certain level of political awareness making them more susceptible for elite cues; they have a specific political elite to turn to for these cues; and they are more likely to trust the cues from these elites. Combined, these attitudinal portraits will show whether an anti-immigration party is likely to find a foothold among voters, and to what extent mainstream parties are likely to reposition themselves to address the anti-immigrant threat.

**Data**

Starting from a proximity model of political competition and using individual-level data, it is possible to assess whether parties come close to approaching voter preferences on immigration related issues. The data providing the empirical evidence for the existence or absence of a perceived anti-immigrant gap come from the Dutch Election Studies 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006 (NKO 1994, NKO 1998, NKO 2002, NKO 2006); the Belgian election studies 1991 and 1995 (BNES 1991, BNES 1995); the British election study 2005 (BES 2005) and YouGov and Mori polls. Please refer to Annex 1 for all details on the data used as well as a complete list of opinion polls used in the section on the UK.

For the Dutch and Flemish cases detailed data are available to assess the gap between voters’ own and perceived party positions on an immigration dimension. The Dutch and Belgian election studies are highly suitable for this purpose, since they include questions specifically asking respondents to position
themselves and parties on an immigration dimension on a variety of immigration related issues (asylum and integration in the Netherlands; immigrant rights in Flanders).

For the UK, in the absence of similar data, the British Election Study 2005 asks respondents which party they believe ‘handles asylum and immigration best’. Strictly speaking, these data do not give insight into policy positions in political space. Rather, they are driven by valence considerations. Even if parties would hold similar positions on the issue, voters might expect one party to deal better with the problem than the other, because of the party’s distinct issue handling reputation, or because of the incumbent party’s record at that specific point in time (Petrocik, 1996). Nevertheless, issue trust is likely to be correlated with the extent to which voters agree with the party’s policy: it is reasonable to assume that voters position the party they trust more to handle the issue closer to themselves on this specific topic than the party they trust less. Put differently, it would be difficult to argue that even though voters disagree with a party’s policy, it trusts the party to handle the issue better. Nevertheless, acknowledging the difficulty of generalising on the basis of these data, public opinion polls are used to assess more accurately what voters think of party positions, as opposed to their capability. They add to the body of data provided by the BES by asking voters to what extent they agree with specific policies put forward by parties, and whether these policies might impact the respondent’s voting decision.
Results – The Netherlands

Asylum

Figure 3 presents the general political spectrum on asylum as perceived by Dutch voters, as well as the mean voter’s self-placement. Voters are asked to position themselves and the largest parties on a scale from 1-7, in which a lower score indicates more liberal policies - a score of 1 means ‘admit more asylum seekers’-, while a higher score indicates more restrictive policies - a score of 7 means ‘send as many asylum seekers back as possible’.

The figure shows a relatively straightforward left-right line-up, in which parties are not perceived as being clustered together, but as having distinct asylum positions, ordered using a left-right logic. These figures show that VVD is not perceived as being part of a liberal elite consensus on asylum. Whereas GroenLinks, PvdA, D66 and CDA are perceived as having positions that are liberal or neutral, VVD clearly has a perceived position on the restrictive side of the asylum scale. The mean voter is positioned between CDA and VVD, though considerably closer to CDA. Between 1998 and 2006 voters perceive mainstream parties to have moved towards more restrictive policies, and this movement is perceived as especially large for CDA and to a lesser extent PvdA. VVD is the odd party out, and is perceived as having moved towards more liberal asylum policies in 2002. The voter himself became considerably more restrictive between 1998 and 2002, and his position remained constant between 2002 and 2006.

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10 Data on D66 and LPF were not included in NKO 2006. Data on GroenLinks were not included in NKO 2002 and 2006.
To assess the degree to which voters are dissatisfied with their parties’ asylum policies, which might present openings for an anti-immigration party, figure 4 presents the satisfaction rate of the Dutch public with parties’ asylum policy positions at the time of the 1998, 2002 and 2006 election, based on all respondents. The percentages reflect the fraction of respondents placing themselves in the same category compared to where they position political parties on asylum. The data do not say anything about actual satisfaction with the problem-solving capacity of parties on these issues; rather they inform us about the perceived positioning of parties and voters in political space.

The first thing that strikes the eye from figure 4 is the perceived left-right scale in the data. Dutch voters are more likely to perceive parties on the left as ‘too lenient’, while they are more likely to perceive parties on the right as ‘too restrictive’ – even though the ‘about right’ category of each party receives around 20-25% of the overall electorate. Concerning the largest mainstream parties, PvdA is perceived as too lenient by around 60% of the respondents, CDA by around 45% and VVD by around 20%, whereas the too restrictive scores amount to around 19% for the PvdA, 28% for CDA and between 50-60% for the VVD. A substantive part of respondents position themselves close to the anti-immigrant LPF. In 2002, 17% of respondents report to agree with LPF policies on asylum, and 4% finds them too lenient.

Secondly, the percentage of voters judging that parties are too lenient grows between 1998 and 2002, while the percentage of voters perceiving parties as too restrictive falls. Apart from CDA, which receives a
stable assessment over time, all parties are perceived to be more lenient relative to voter positions in 2002 as compared to 1998 (PvdA +5%, D66 +7%, CDA -1%, VVD +9%), with ‘about right’ scores falling slightly for parties on the left, while rising slightly for parties on the right (PvdA -4%, D66 -1%, CDA +1%, VVD +2%) and ‘too restrictive’ scores falling (PvdA -1%, D66 -6%, CDA 0%, VVD -11%). The largest shift in perceptions happens regarding VVD. While voters on average considered the VVD a too restrictive party in 1998 these rates drop considerably in 2002. The emergence of LPF may have caused voters to rethink their perceptions of ‘too lenient’ and ‘too restrictive’. While VVD used to be the most restrictive party in the Dutch party system, this changed dramatically with the rise of LPF. This shift, in which voters increasingly perceive parties as being too lenient is to some extent reversed in 2006 compared to 2002 (PvdA -5%, CDA -6%, VVD -3%).

Figure 5 calculates the same scores for party adherents and their positioning respective to their parties. Following the elite opinion leadership hypothesis party adherents are expected to have more similar preferences to their party elites than the public in general. Indeed, we see the ‘about right’ score rising from around 20-25% among the general public to 30-40% among party adherents. At the same time, the left right pattern disappears, with party adherents across the board positioning themselves as more restrictive than their party, especially those following PvdA and CDA. The two parties escaping this pattern are VVD and LPF. VVD adherents tend to either be satisfied with their party’s policy position, or perceive it as too restrictive. LPF adherents tend to agree with the LPF’s position, indicating that asylum is one of the issues that bring together its electorate. The general pattern, in which party adherents perceive...
their parties to have too lenient asylum policies, is consistent with the elite-mass gap thesis. When party adherents, as well as the general public, perceive their parties as being too liberal on immigration, an anti-immigrant gap emerges, which is made visible in figures 6 and 7.

![The Anti-Immigrant Gap NL](image)

*Figure 3.6. The Anti-Immigrant Gap, Asylum, the Netherlands 1998-2006*  

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11 Data on GroenLinks 2002-2006, D66 2006, and LPF 2006 were not included in NKO.
Focusing on party adherents’ positions, as they feel more strongly connected to particular parties and are likely to be more knowledgeable about these parties than the average voter, figure 6 shows where party adherents perceive their party to reside on the immigration spectrum, as well as where they position themselves. Figure 6 confirms that party adherents of the left and centre especially, consider their parties to be too lenient on immigration, and that an anti-immigrant gap exists and persists. Figure 7 summarises the gap between party adherents of the largest mainstream parties and the anti-immigration party LPF; and the positions of the parties they follow, by subtracting the party adherent self-placement scores from the party adherent scores on the positioning of their own party, and standardising the score to fit to a 10-point scale.

As figure 7 shows, party adherents of PvdA are most dissatisfied with their party’s asylum position in all three elections, followed by the adherents of CDA. D66 does better in 2002 than 1998 in matching its adherents’ preferences, while VVD and LPF are slightly too restrictive in the eyes of their followers. Judging from figure 3, party adherents perceive their parties moving towards more restrictive party positions in the 1998 – 2006 period, but voters too have moved towards more restrictive positions, with the remaining gap between voter and party positioning closing only marginally. More specifically, PvdA is perceived to have moved slightly towards more restrictive policies as perceived by the general public and adherents alike, while adherent positioning moves towards restrictionism in 2006; CDA is perceived to have moved substantially towards restrictive policies while adherents move too; and VVD is perceived as moving slightly towards more liberal policies in 2002 and more restrictive policies in 2006, while adherent self-positioning remains stable. The aggregate picture is relatively stable: mainstream party adherents of PvdA and CDA are consistently unsatisfied with their parties’ too lenient asylum policies, while adherents of VVD and LPF consider their parties’ policies too restrictive.
Integration

In the 1994, 1998 and 2002 election studies respondents were also asked to position themselves and parties on an integration scale on which a score of 1 indicates that ethnic minorities in the Netherlands should be able to preserve their own customs and culture, and a score of 7 indicates they should adapt completely. This question relates directly to the Dutch tradition of multiculturalism, built around the concept of integration with the preservation of migrant customs and culture. The political spectrum on integration, as perceived by voters is depicted in figure 8.

Figure 3.8. Perceived Integration Positions, the Netherlands 1994-2002

Figure 8 shows a left-right line-up similar to figure 3, in which PvdA and D66 are considered to have liberal policy positions, CDA is considered to have a centrist position, VVD is considered restrictive and LPF is considered to have highly restrictive immigration positions. There is no evidence of a clustering together of parties, although it is clear that the mean voter considers himself moderately restrictive, and is sandwiched between CDA and VVD. In the eye of voters, parties have moved considerably on the integration issue between 1994-2002. All parties except D66 are perceived as having taken up more restrictive positions. The largest move is that of CDA, which for the first time takes up perceived restrictive positions in 2002. The mean voter also moves towards restrictive positions.

Despite the move towards more restrictive integration positions, voters remain unsatisfied with parties’ policy positions, especially of those of the left and centre. Figures 9 and 10 present the satisfaction scores of all respondents and those of party adherents.

Data on GroenLinks were not included in NKO 1994
Figure 3.9. General Satisfaction with Party Positions on Integration, the Netherlands 1994-2002

Figure 9 shows similar patterns to figure 4 on asylum: a clear left-right scale can be perceived with left parties considered to be too lenient, and satisfaction rates of ‘about right’ hovering between 20-30% for each party. An important difference is the extent to which the mainstream party on the right, VVD, is perceived as being too lenient. Far before the rise of Pim Fortuyn, who put immigrant integration at the centre of his political discourse, a full third of the Dutch public believed that parties across the political spectrum, including VVD, were placing too much emphasis on the preservation of migrant cultures. The figures remain relatively stable in the 1994-1998 period, apart from the VVD for which the ‘too lenient’ figures drop from 33% to 23%, and the ‘too restrictive’ rise from 44% to 53%. At the 2002 election the general public shows an even greater dissatisfaction with the multiculturalist policies of GroenLinks, PvdA and D66 (‘too lenient’ scores: GL +7%, PvdA +6%, D66 +11%), while they express greater satisfaction with the policies of the CDA and the VVD (‘about right’ scores: CDA +6, VVD +5). 30% of the electorate agrees with the integration policies of LPF in 2002, and 10% considers the anti-immigration party to be too liberal.

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism. European University Institute DOI: 10.2870/4016
As expected, the scores of party adherents on integration, as depicted in figure 10, show higher satisfaction levels than those of the general public, with ‘about right’ scores growing from 20-30% to 30-50%. The same pattern can be detected as found with regard to the issue of asylum: party adherents of the left and centre (GroenLinks, PvdA, D66, CDA until 2002) who are dissatisfied with their party’s position tend to consider their party too liberal. Even though this group does not hold an absolute majority among the larger mainstream parties they come close with scores approaching 50%. On the right (VVD) party adherents are more satisfied, and ‘too restrictive scores’ balance out ‘too lenient’ scores. A full 72% of LPF adherents agree with their party’s integration policy, making it the most satisfied constituency.

Dissatisfaction among party adherents of the left and centre leads to an unmistakable anti-immigrant gap as is depicted in figures 11 and 12. Party adherents agreed more with party positions on integration of the party directly to their right than with their own party. For 1994, this involved D66 and PvdA adherents positioning themselves closer to CDA, and CDA adherents positioning themselves closer to VVD. In 1998, GroenLinks adherents preferred the policies of D66, PvdA and D66 adherents preferred CDA, and CDA adherents preferred VVD policies. In 2002, finally, GroenLinks adherents preferred PvdA policies, D66 and PvdA voters positioned themselves closest to CDA, and CDA voters preferred VVD policies. These findings indicate that if, hypothetically speaking, integration had been the only important issue on the political agenda, parties across the board would have lost many of their stable and most loyal voters.
As figure 12, which depicts the difference between where party adherents positioned themselves and their parties on average, standardised to fit a 10-point scale, shows, dissatisfaction with parties’ perceived integration policies was large especially among PvdA and CDA adherents, as well as among the adherents of D66 in 2002, who perceived their parties to have too lenient and multiculturalist preferences compared to their own. Similar to the asylum gap, the integration gap is relatively stable over time. The gap closes slightly in 1998, with parties perceived as becoming slightly more restrictive, while party adherents became more liberal. In 2002 this is reversed with all parties perceived as becoming slightly more restrictive (PvdA and VVD) or substantially more restrictive (CDA), and party adherents making a similar shift (VVD) a larger shift (PvdA), or a slightly smaller shift (CDA). Movements of parties and adherents alike are towards restrictionism, with the resulting gap remaining relatively stable.

![The Anti-Immigrant Gap NL](image)

*Figure 3.11. The Anti-Immigrant Gap, Integration, the Netherlands 1994-2002*
The integration gap is larger than the asylum gap. Adherents on the right (VVD, LPF) tend to be satisfied with their parties’ restrictive integration policies, while they are critical of too strict asylum policies. At the same time, adherents on the left and centre (PvdA, D66, CDA) are even more dissatisfied with their parties’ perceived multiculturalist preferences, than they are with their parties’ asylum preferences which are considered too liberal. Overall, approaches to multiculturalism consistently appear to lead to more public dissatisfaction than asylum.

**Discussion**

The Dutch results present some interesting findings. To start with, it is abundantly clear that voters use partisan cues on a left-right scale to establish their own position on immigration; and that they do the same when positioning parties. This finding affects the assumption of independent preference formation on the left-right and immigration scale. The correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension indicates that immigration has at least to some extent been absorbed by the left-right dimension. As a result, there is no such thing as a perceived uniform cluster of parties, the infamous ‘liberal elite consensus’. GroenLinks, D66 and PvdA are generally considered as liberal, CDA as neutral, and VVD and LPF as restrictive. Nevertheless, on the demand side the spread of voters of both left and right parties has a clear skew towards restrictonism, which indicates that the immigration and the left-right dimension are far from a single integrated demand-side dimension running from left-liberal on one end to right-restrictive on the other.

Secondly, despite the left-right pattern, party adherents of all parties of the left and centre position themselves further towards restrictive policies than they position their parties, to such an extent that they tend to prefer the perceived positioning on immigration of the party to their right, than the party they report to follow. Even voters who report to follow a specific party, suggesting a level of similarity between
self-perceived voter and party preferences, judge their own parties’ policies as being too lenient. Parties appear to have the wrong policy mix according to their adherents. Party policies on the economic left-right dimension can still be assumed to be close to their own preferences, but immigration policies are clearly too liberal. Concerning integration this ‘mistaken’ perceived policy mix would substantially affect vote shares of all parties except the mainstream party the furthest on the right, VVD, if integration would be the only election issue. This threat of a massive floating vote provides a strong incentive for all parties except those on the right and the anti-immigration party to depoliticise immigration. Playing the immigration card is a recipe for instability, tempting the mass public and party adherents on the left and centre of the political spectrum to rethink their voting decisions.

Thirdly, the data show that the anti-immigrant gap on both asylum and integration is more or less stable over time. This is not the result of a static self- or party perception on the part of voters; generally speaking it indicates that voters perceive both themselves and parties as having moved towards more restrictive positions over time, with parties of the left and centre never succeeding to catch up with their voters. Parties do not manage to close the gap in voter perception between voters’ own and their parties’ perceived positions. In Chapter 5 questions as to whether voter perceptions match supply side dynamics will be answered and further discussed. For now, the sustained gap indicates that either: (1) parties on the left and centre did not move sufficiently to satisfy their voters or (2) that for additional reasons such as trust in the ability of parties to handle the issue voters do not take party moves seriously, and do not register changes in party positions as viable or reliable. In the last case the use of the left-right dimension as a cognitive short-cut might prevent parties from the left and centre from ever catching up with their voters: seen that voters indicate that the left-right and immigration dimension are related, a left party with restrictive positions might not be credible in the eyes of voters.

Fourthly, by choosing the integration of migrants as his main issue, Fortuyn seems to have tapped into the most important immigration-related problem facing the Netherlands in the eyes of voters, compared to for example asylum. The size of the integration gap and the skew in public opinion on the integration of ethnic minorities away from multiculturalism provided fertile ground for his rhetoric which tied every immigration related problem to integration. Only after the successful integration of current migrants, if ever, would new immigration be beneficial to the country. Although VVD, recognising the problem of integration as a political opportunity, had used the same line of argument from the beginning of the 1990s onwards, accounting for its more restrictive perceived position by voters, it had not managed to exploit the issue to the extent that Fortuyn did, possibly as a consequence of intra-party divisions on the issue.

Fifthly, and finally, within the limits of the spatial approach, the position and limited electoral success of VVD competing with LPF suggest that VVD’s policy mix concerning other issues than immigration is likely to have prevented voters of voting for VVD. The data show that whereas PvdA and CDA were perceived as being too lenient, this was not the case for VVD, and had not been the case since the early
90s. According to voters, VVD was not part of the too liberal political elite. Still, LPF easily managed to open up the discussion on immigration and integration, resulting in a large shift of the vote, where VVD failed to do the same. Within the proximity approach one might argue that the VVD’s right-wing positions on economic issues might have been problematic for voters, and may have deterred them from voting for VVD. Switching to LPF, which had centrist economic policy positions would not have involved this trade-off between immigration and economic preferences.

This simple argument of policy proximity has to be complemented with an argument on the nature of immigration politics in the Netherlands in the 1994-2002 period, as this is arguably a more important factor why voters defected to LPF. Consensual politics, in its effects on both agenda-setting and political reputation, might have seriously hampered the ability of the VVD to present a credible radical line on immigration. To start with, even if the VVD was perceived outside the liberal elite consensus with regard to its positions, it was well within the liberal elite consensus in political practice, especially since the mid-90s when the party entered a purple coalition with PvdA and D66. In fact, by entering the purple coalition in 1994 and continuing it in 1998, both PvdA and VVD agreed to a type of consensual and depoliticised politics that excluded heated debates over issues such as immigration. Moreover, this record in government certainly did not help the party’s credibility once Fortuyn, who benefited from his outsider status, entered the scene. Public opinion research shows that voters were far more lenient towards Fortuyn’s statements than towards other politicians: he could exaggerate and present contradictory arguments and infeasible plans, which even if recognised by the public did not harm his popularity (van Dijk & Oppenhuis, 2002). The parties previously in government, on the other hand, could only lose the argument: their plans had proven to be ineffective: hardly a recommendation for a further mandate. This line of reasoning, which does not adhere to the strict rules imposed by the spatial approach, suggests that voters may have trusted LPF more on the issue of immigration than they trusted VVD.
Results Flanders

Immigrant Rights

The Belgian election studies 1991 and 1995 included one question suitable to directly measure the anti-immigrant gap asking respondents to place themselves and parties on a scale from 0-10 on the issue of migrant rights. The question specifically concerned the expansion or restriction of the rights of ‘Turks and Moroccans’, with a 0 score indicating that migrants should have ‘the same rights’ as natives, and a score of 10 indicating that migrants should have ‘fewer rights’. Voter perception of the immigration spectrum, based on this question is depicted in figure 13.

Voters perceive a very stable immigration spectrum, in which parties are roughly ordered in a left-right fashion. Three party blocks can be distinguished, with Agalev, CVP and SP as the parties viewed as those intending to expand immigrant rights with scores between 2 and 4, PVV/ VLD and VU as those wishing to maintain the status quo or slightly restrict immigrant rights with scores between 5 and 6, and finally VB with a score of 9 wanting to severely restrict immigrant rights. The mean voter positions himself further towards the restrictive end of the immigration spectrum than it positions any of the mainstream parties. On average he positions himself closest to PVV and VU policies, with a stable score of 6 in both years, though with decidedly more restrictive positions than he perceives these parties to have. Despite his restrictive immigration preferences, the mean voter is much closer to PVV/VLD than to VB. There is no collective liberal elite consensus to be detected, except for SP and CVP that are perceived as having practically identical positions on immigrant rights in 1995 and being clustered together. Other parties are not part of this consensus, and are considered to have differentiated positions.
Figure 3.14. General Satisfaction with Immigrant Rights Positions, Flanders 1991-1995

Figure 14 and 15 confirm this picture: parties on the left are perceived to be more liberal concerning immigrant rights, while parties on the right are perceived to be more restrictive. Nevertheless it’s abundantly clear that voters consider their parties too liberal on immigrant rights, regardless of the specific party. An impressive 50% of the electorate considers the mainstream parties on the right, VU and PVV/VLD too liberal on the issue of immigrant rights. These are remarkably high figures. VB can count on support for its restrictive policies from 16% and 14% of the electorate in 1991 and 1995 respectively while 9% of the electorate considers VB policies to be too liberal. These scores appear to be consistent over time, with no major shifts in public opinion on the assessment of the positions of these parties between 1991 and 1995.

Party adherents, in figure 15, are hypothesised to be more supportive of their preferred parties’ policies. Support indeed rises, but not overwhelmingly so, with scores ranging from 13% (SP) to a maximum of 29% (Agalev) among mainstream parties. Adherents of VB are far more satisfied with 36% to 41% agreeing that VB’s immigrant policies are ‘about right’. But even though the party receives higher satisfaction scores on the issue than any of the other parties, VB adherents are also divided on the issue of immigrant rights. Half of its adherents (compared to 75 -77% of the electorate at large) consider VB policies to be too restrictive.

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute
DOI: 10.2870/4016
Figure 3.15. Adherent Satisfaction with Immigrant Rights Positions, Flanders 1991-1995

Figure 16 and 17, which depict the anti-immigrant gap, also confirm that although party adherents might perceive their party to represent their interests on certain issues, immigrant rights is not one of them. Contrary to what the elite opinion leadership thesis would suggest, party adherents tend to position their parties with even more lenient scores than the general public does, thereby increasing the gap between perceived party and adherent positioning. Taking these scores as a reference point, all mainstream parties, except VLD in 1995, would lose their adherents to the adjacent party on the right, if immigrant rights were to be the only issue on the agenda at that election. More specifically, based on the mean party scores, in 1991 Agalev adherents would consider switching to SP or CVP; SP adherents would opt for VU; CVP adherents would shift to PVV; and PVV adherents would find their best policy match in VB (also, VB adherents would switch to VU). Similarly, in 1995, the issue of immigrant rights would urge Agalev adherents to vote for SP; and SP, CVP, and VU adherents to switch to VLD. These figures show that the issue of immigrant rights has a large potential for destabilising the existing patterns of party adherence, and increasing the volatility of the electoral market.

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
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DOI: 10.2870/4016
Figure 3.16. The Anti-Immigrant Gap, Immigrant Rights, Flanders 1991-1995

Figure 3.17. The Anti-Immigrant Gap Summarised, Immigrant Rights, Flanders 1991-1995
Figure 17 shows the ‘absolute’ gap on a 10-point scale between party adherent self-positioning and their positioning of parties. In 1991, adherents of CVP and SP, followed by those of PVV and Agalev are on average the least satisfied with their parties’ position on immigrant rights. Party adherents of VB, on the other hand, perceive their party’s policies to be too restrictive. Apart from VU, whose adherents became more restrictive in this time period resulting in an anti-immigrant gap in 1995, and minor shifts concerning the other parties, the anti-immigrant gap appears to be relatively stable. CVP manages to close the gap slightly by becoming more restrictive, SP’s gap stays stable as a result of both party and adherents becoming more restrictive, and PVV/VLD does slightly better because its adherents ease their own position on immigrant rights. VB, finally, appears reflect its adherents’ preferences better in 1995 as a result of an increase of restrictiveness of party adherent opinion. On the whole, the persistent gap shows that adherents do not agree with their parties’ policies, and that the issue of immigrant rights does not belong to any of the mainstream parties’ stable and safe policy issues.

Discussion Flanders

The Flemish results echo the Dutch results concerning the function of the left-right scale, the position of party adherents relative to their parties, the stable anti-immigrant gap, and the absence of a generic liberal elite consensus. The results present a different picture with regard to the status of the large mainstream parties SP, CVP and PVV/VLD. On the whole, the empirical results show that the left-right dimension matters for immigration politics. Voters position themselves and parties along the immigration dimension as if it were a left-right dimension. Moreover, there is a ‘shifted scale’ meaning that party adherents on average tend to position themselves as having more restrictive preferences than they perceive their parties to have. As a result, the political spectrum is filled across the whole dimension. This indicates that in the mind of voters, the liberal elite consensus does not consist of a clustering of parties that have depoliticised the issue of immigrant rights to such an extent that policy positions are blurred. Rather, all parties are perceived as being too lenient on immigrant rights with respect to their ‘own’ electorate. Voters’ self-positioning and their positioning of parties appears to be relatively stable. These results suggest that voters do not primarily take their cues from their own political elites. On the contrary, they distrust their elites to perform according to their preferences on this particular issue.

These characteristics make immigrant rights a volatile electoral issue. The data show that the politicisation of the issue would potentially lead to an upheaval of the existing voting patterns based on left-right preferences, with PVV/ VLD and VB being the two main parties benefiting. Less than 30% of the Flemish vote is positioned at scores lower than the mid-score (where voters position Agalev, SP and CVP), while 15% is situated in the middle (where voters position the VU), 30% at the mainstream right (PVV/VLD) and over 20% at the restrictive fringe of the political spectrum (VB). With these scores in mind, it becomes clear that the cordon sanitaire, which encourages the depoliticisation of immigration-
related issues, does not exist on the basis of ideological censure and condemnation alone. In addition it stabilises the electoral politics, by preventing a potentially massive shift of voters to the right, thereby protecting the votes of the left and centre.

The Flemish results also show that despite the absence of a perceived collective liberal elite consensus, voters do perceive an elite consensus to exist involving SP and CVP. Party adherents and the general public alike perceive these parties as being practically identical when it comes to immigrant rights. Agalev is decidedly not part of this perceived consensus, as it is perceived as being even more liberal, nor are the other parties, which are perceived as being more restrictive. This perceived consensus may be the result of these parties forming a coalition and working together in government from 1988 onwards first under Martens, and later under Dehaene, allowing these parties to merge in public perception. The cordon further reinforced the stability of this pact, with parties being able to avoid political competition on the immigration issue. As a result, these parties had to deal with the largest anti-immigrant gap in 1991, and were joined by Agalev and VU in 1995, forming a group of parties with very large anti-immigrant gaps.

Some interesting observations can also be made concerning the third of the large mainstream parties, the liberal PVV/VLD. As we will see in chapter 5, PVV/VLD is the only party effectively defecting from the cordon sanitaire based on its stated party positioning. In its party manifesto the party takes up highly restrictive immigration positions, peaking in restrictionism in the 1995 election. From a spatial perspective such a move makes perfect sense and can be interpreted as an attempt to close the anti-immigrant gap and preventing the party from further losses to VB, while simultaneously attracting anti-immigrant votes from the Flemish left and centre. But judging from the results in this chapter in which PVV/VLD adherents consider PVV/VLD to be far too liberal, defecting substantively from the cordon sanitaire by co-opting restrictive policy positions has not convinced voters of the PVV/VLD’s real intentions. The most obvious explanation is that the cordon remains firmly in place at an organisational level and in policy practice. The cordon reinforces the perception that parties desire a clear distance from the VB’s restrictive policies in practice, despite parties’ stated policy positions. As such it prevents an insurmountable barrier for mainstream parties to present a credible hard-line on immigration politics. Coalition dynamics and consensual decision-making may further compound this perception. Unfortunately the Belgian election studies do not include questions to analyse what happened with the anti-immigrant gap after 1995. It would be interesting to know what happened to perceived party positioning after 1999, when VLD entered government and led a coalition with SP and Agalev. The party’s ‘revealed preferences’ as part of a coalition government may have severely influenced its reputation and made its hard-line stances on immigration even less credible.
The Conservatives have a reputation of successfully owning the immigration issue, which suggests that they have aligned themselves close to their own constituents’ preferences, as well as to the preferences of those in the floating vote, while Labour tends to suffer from the image of being a ‘soft touch’ on immigration (Saggar, 1992, 1998, 2000, 2003). Based on evidence from the 2005 elections, in which asylum played a key role, the next section empirically explores the electoral dynamics underlying the immigration issue in UK politics. Firstly it analyses whether using immigration for electoral spoils is a rational strategy for the Conservative Party. Two questions are crucial to answer this question: firstly, whether voters perceive a clear difference between Labour and the Conservatives – for this BES data will be discussed which show to which extent one party is considered ‘better’ than the other on handling the issue-, and secondly whether party adherents and voters who perceive immigration as important align themselves closer to their own party, than to the others. Secondly, the role of the anti-immigration parties BNP and UKIP will be discussed. It will be shown that voters trust these anti-immigration parties to a far lesser degree on immigration than they trust the Conservatives, despite the fact that they agree with (some of) their policies. The analysis of the UK is not strictly comparable to the previous sections analysing the anti-immigrant gap in the Netherlands and Flanders, as British election studies do not use similar question formats.

The 2005 asylum debate

After decades of relative silence, the immigration issue (and more specifically: asylum) steadily made its way back into Britain’s top three of ‘most important problems facing the country’. Whereas until 1999 immigration was mentioned by fewer than 10% of the electorate in opinion polls measuring the salience of issues, by 2000 the issue was mentioned by 20% of the electorate, by 30% of the electorate in 2001, and approaching 40% in the period from 2002 to 2006 (Ipsos Mori 2006). In these later years of high salience the Conservatives appear to be the party with policies best resembling public attitudes. According to political surveys by Ipsos MORI, the Conservatives have a considerable lead over Labour when asked which party has the best policies on asylum. In four consecutive opinion polls in the period September 2003 – August 2006, the Conservatives always come out on top with a lead between 5% and 18% of the electorate. Despite considerable fluctuations the Conservatives are definitely considered the stronger party.

Looking more closely at the 2005 elections this pattern in which the Conservatives are best able to handle asylum is corroborated by BES and public opinion poll data. In the run-up to this election Labour was criticised for fuelling a ‘moral panic’ by implementing controversial asylum policies ‘to appease a fearful white electorate’ (Robinson, Andersson, & Musterd, 2003). But in spite of tough policies, Labour had not managed to portray itself as having asylum under control. Figure 18 shows the perceptions of voters...
concerning the competence of the two major parties on asylum. On average, voters think Labour has done ‘fairly badly’, while they expect a Conservative government to do better, though expectations can hardly be called exuberant with an average Conservative score of ‘neither well, nor badly’.

An interesting contrast appears, however, between Labour and Conservative adherents. Whereas adherents of both parties think their own party would handle immigration better than their opponent would, the difference between them in absolute terms is striking. Labour adherents only perceive a marginal difference between their own party’s performance and the expected performance by the Conservatives neither of which they assess as satisfactory, while the Conservative adherents think the Conservatives would do better than ‘fairly well’, while they denounce Labour as having done ‘very badly’. Liberal Democrat adherents appear indifferent on average: they perceive Labour as having done ‘fairly badly’ but do not expect the Conservatives to do much better.

Figure 19 shows the distribution of preferences, showing the share of respondents considering one party or the other better suited to handle asylum. On the whole, the Conservatives have a clear lead, with 56% of respondents considering them more capable, and only 26% preferring Labour. When we look at party adherents, an interesting pattern appears. The consensus among Conservative adherents is unambiguous: 93% think the Conservatives do better. At the same time, Labour and LibDem adherents are split. 33% of Labour adherents expect a Conservative government to do better on asylum, while 40% of Labour adherents prefer their own party. Liberal Democratic adherents are split in the middle: 38% trusts Labour to better handle asylum while 40% trust the Conservatives. These figures indicate that asylum is a safe
issue for the Conservatives, with party adherents supporting the party, while the issue allows them to tap into other parties’ core constituencies. Needless to say, the issue presents a considerable risk to Labour, with up to a third of Labour adherents and probably more of those whose partisan linkages are weaker considering the Conservatives the better option.

![Graph](image)

**Figure 3.19. Satisfaction with Party’s Handling of the Asylum Issue, UK 2005**

*Source: BES 2005-2006*

Naturally, the reshuffling of votes on the basis of the immigration issue will most likely occur among those voters who are worried about immigration and immigrants, and the perceived failure of policies government parties have put in place. Using data from the BES 2005, it was possible to analyse which parties this specific group of respondents would find best capable to deal with the immigration problems they are worried about. There was a large group (1236) of respondents mentioning immigration in general as the most important problem facing Britain, while a smaller group (345) specifically mentioned asylum. According to respondents mentioning asylum seekers as the most important problem facing the country the Conservatives are the best party to deal with it (29%) followed by ‘no party’ (15%), with a shared third position for Labour and the BNP (10%), and UKIP coming fourth (8%). A similar picture arises from respondents who mentioned immigration in general as the most important problem facing Britain. The Conservatives lead with 40%, followed by the BNP (12%), Labour (11%) and UKIP (7%). The ‘no party’ category gets 11% of responses.

If we look closer at whether party adherence influences party preference on immigration, taking the larger group of respondents who mentioned immigration in general, Conservative adherents (207) have far more trust in their party handling immigration effectively: 77% of Conservative adherents say that the Conservatives are the best party to handle the issue, followed by the BNP and UKIP (6% each). Not a single Conservative adherent worrying about immigration trusts Labour to do the job. For Labour, the...
picture looks less hopeful: of Labour adherents concerned about immigration (171) 33% think Labour is
the best party to handle the issue, followed by the Conservatives (15%), BNP (8%) and UKIP (4%). A
considerable 18% of Labour adherents fears that no party is equipped to handle the issue, compared to
only 4% of Conservative adherents who have lost trust in parties’ abilities. These figures show, again, that
the Conservatives have little to lose from raising the immigration issue. They might lose votes to BNP and
UKIP, but Labour stands to lose about the same, so it does not alter the overall balance of power.
Moreover, the Conservatives will lose zero voters to Labour, while they can expect quite a few new
recruits the other way round.

Despite no specific data being available for the UK on how voters position parties, the above figures
should be interpreted in a context in which voters largely consider immigration laws too lenient. A full
80% of respondents in a YouGov poll (YouGov/ Mail on Sunday 2004) answered that the Labour
Government’s policies on immigration and asylum were ‘not tough enough’, with 10% answering it had
the balance ‘about right’ and only 4% answering that policies were ‘too tough’. A similar 80% of
respondents agreed that the government’s policies to keep immigration under control were not working,
that the government was being dishonest about levels of immigration into Britain, and that laws to limit
immigration should be much tougher. Not only were Labour’s policies perceived as ineffective, trust in
Labour leadership showed a similarly bleak picture. Tony Blair, who in the run-up to the 2005 election
claimed he would take personal charge of immigration policy got ‘no’ or ‘not much’ trust from 67% of
respondents, while he got a ‘fair amount of trust’ to get the problem under control from 30%. In addition,
only 20% of voters trusted government figures that showed a recent reduction in the numbers of asylum
seekers arriving in Britain, with 73% not trusting this information. A third of respondents said that
political scandals concerning immigration would make them less likely vote Labour. Labour’s immigration
profile can thus been summed up as that of a party perceived as incapable of getting asylum under
control. The Conservatives get a better rating with voters showing greater confidence in them getting
asylum under control. 24% trusted the Conservatives to ‘get the balance about right’, a figure more than
twice as high as the trust they displayed in the Labour Party to do this, even though a fair amount of
respondents (31%) expected the Conservatives to be too lenient too.

Part of the ‘balance’ voters expect the Conservatives to restore, would have to come from stricter
immigration policies proposed by the Conservative Party leader at the time, Michael Howard. Howard,
who actively sought to tap into the negative climate on immigration, proposed a range of policies
including the withdrawal from the 1951 Geneva Convention so the UK would be able to legislate its
independent asylum laws; the processing of all asylum claims abroad; and strict annual quotas on the
annual number of refugees and economic migrants. Voters were asked whether they supported or
opposed some of the specific policies he proposed, the results of which are presented in figure 20
(YouGov/ Mail on Sunday 2005).
Withdraw from the 1951 UN refugee convention so the UK can legislate its own asylum laws

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<th>All voters</th>
<th>Conservative voters</th>
<th>Labour voters</th>
<th>LibDem voters</th>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
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All new asylum applicants to be immediately removed to processing centres abroad and dealt with there

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<th>Conservative voters</th>
<th>Labour voters</th>
<th>LibDem voters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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Strict annual quotas on the number of refugees and economic migrants

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<th>All voters</th>
<th>Conservative voters</th>
<th>Labour voters</th>
<th>LibDem voters</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</table>

Figure 3.20. Voter Agreement with Michael Howard's Immigration Law Reform Proposals

As the figures show, over 50% of respondents supported Howard’s policies, while 20-30% opposed them. When including partisanship, the proposed policies can count on large majorities in the Conservative camp, while they cause a split in Labour’s constituency with roughly the same proportions supporting and opposing. For LibDem constituents a similar antagonism exists. While the alienation of Conservative voters by proposing too restrictive policies is kept to a minimum, the Conservatives can thus appeal to a large share of the Labour and LibDem vote, without those parties being able to make a similar move on these policies. In this respect it is interesting to note that over 70% of respondents agreed that Howard was right to raise the issue, and 79% agreed that he was not behaving in a racist manner by doing so. The classic Conservative appeal that the political expression of anti-immigration sentiment is a legitimate and necessary function of a political party had been successful.

Where does the overwhelming presence of the Conservatives when it comes to immigration, both in terms of propagating policies the public agrees with, and getting at least a larger share of trust than its main competitor Labour leave the anti-immigration parties BNP and UKIP? Do they present a threat at all, urging the Conservatives even further towards restrictionism? To start with agreement with anti-immigrant policies, a 2006 YouGov Survey shows that large shares of the electorate agree with policies proposed by the BNP (see figure 21 top bar: these respondents were not told the proposed policies were BNP policies) (YouGov/ Sky News Survey 2006). Strongest support can be found for the priority for British families in public services such as housing (83%) the clamp down on asylum (77%) a complete immigration stop (59%), and slightly lower levels of support for the abolishment of the right to family reunification (52%). Even the most extreme policies such as ‘government encouragement’ of migrants and their offspring to leave the country, and race as the dividing factor between ‘more’ or ‘less British’ citizens can count on some levels of respondents’ support (29 and 16% respectively).
Interestingly, the support rates drop considerably when the interviewer mentioned that these were policies propagated by BNP (see figure 21, bottom bar). Whereas voters have hard-line ideas on immigration, they swallow their words when confronted with an indication of how extreme these ideas, seen that they are articulated by an anti-immigration party, apparently are. This is even more true considering voting behaviour: whereas 37% of respondents who were not made aware of the fact that these were BNP policies answered they would seriously consider voting for a party propagating these policies, this dropped to 20% among respondents aware the party they would consider voting for was BNP. Despite these figures being high relative to actual vote shares, they are remarkably low when compared to the policy match between voter and party preferences.

![Figure 3.21. Voter Agreement with BNP Policies](image)

These figures, of an electorate susceptible to anti-immigration appeals that does not particularly warm to an anti-immigration party, are further sustained by the extremely low levels of the electorate mentioning BNP as having the ‘best policies’ on immigration as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Only one in ten voters worried about immigration expects BNP to offer solutions. UKIP fares slightly better, probably as a result of its more moderate profile, and its strategic appeals that intertwine British independence from the EU, with immigration. Ipsos/MORI research conducted for UKIP, though admittedly in the run-up to European, not general elections, showed that a third of the electorate would be inclined to support UKIP if it were the ‘only moderate party campaigning on leaving the EU and putting an end to unlimited EU immigration’ (Ipsos/MORI Research 2004).

In the UK, the lack of trust in the mainstream parties to get immigration under control does not feed into a greater support for parties on the fringes of the political spectrum. According to the figures collected by
YouGov 1 in 5 voters would consider voting for the BNP based on (some of) their policies, with actual results far removed from this figure (YouGov/Sky News Survey 2006). In terms of policy, it might not be an understatement to say that the Conservatives are rapidly approaching BNP positions on issues such as asylum, which the public cares about, winning these anti-immigrant votes. At the same time the public is likely to be repelled by the overt racism, anti-Semitism and general extremism of the BNP, issues they do not have to worry about when voting Conservative. An additional explanation, which helps explain the virtual absence of trust in the BNP as well as UKIP among the general electorate to solve the immigration problem is likely to be the British electoral system. If it is that difficult to get into parliament, let alone government, outsider parties remain fringe parties for longer: for ever potentially, and it is not surprising that voters perceive these parties as hopeless when it comes to their ability to actually solve voters’ problems. This is the final element of why immigration is safe territory for the Conservatives: the odds of losing votes to the fringes, or having to cooperate with an anti-immigration party are negligible.

**Discussion United Kingdom**

Based on the data presented in this chapter, the British profile of the anti-immigrant gap could be represented as pictured in figure 22. Despite the absence of data, this scenario is plausible for the following reasons. First, and easiest, we have a tight match between the Conservative Party and Conservative adherents on a restrictive position. This conclusion is supported by the general and policy-based opinion data as presented in the chapter, which show that Conservative adherents agree to an astonishing degree with their parties' policies. Secondly, we have Labour with a liberal position, based on around 80% of the electorate judging the party as ‘too lenient’. Labour Party adherents are split, as to whose policies they prefer, and cause a disjuncture between party and voter preferences.
As figure 22 shows, the British electorate does not perceive a liberal elite consensus to be in place. To start with, there is no perceived clustering of parties. The perceived difference in expected policy performance is pronounced. Labour is not considered to have brought immigration under control, even by its own adherents, while the Conservatives are expected to do better with more restrictive policies. Secondly, the gap between voters and parties driving indirect impact is not present on the right of the political spectrum. Voters in general and Conservative adherents all the more so, tend to trust and agree with the Conservative parties on immigration, with the extreme parties agreed with to some extent, but hardly trusted at all. This suggests that the Conservatives have positioned themselves in accordance to majority opinion, with a combination of extremism and institutional constraints dwarfing the threat and size of anti-immigration parties. On the left, however, Labour is in trouble. Part of its split electorate might defect to the Conservatives, showing that despite an increase in restrictive policy measures it has not managed to shake off its image of being a ‘soft touch’ on immigration.

Mainstream parties are unlikely to lose many of their votes to anti-immigration parties if immigration becomes a contested issue. The immigration issue might nevertheless directly affect electoral outcomes in crucial swing-constituencies, especially seen the Conservative dominance of the issue. As the evidence presented shows, the immigration issue is likely to result in a Conservative win in both Labour-Conservative swing-seats, and in LibDem-Conservative swing seats. Immigration appears to be one of the issues on which the Conservatives can safely bet to attract voters while losing none of those that would already vote Conservative. The Conservatives have positioned themselves as a majority of voters would like them to, while the risk of losing to an anti-immigration party is minimal, and not lower than the risk for its main opponent to lose to the anti-immigration party. The only real risk the Conservatives run, seen the lack of confidence voters have in parties in general to solve their immigration related problems, is to campaign on an issue they will not be able to deliver on once in office. That, however, might not be seen as a particularly relevant concern for an opposition party.
Conclusion

The anti-immigrant gap analysed in this chapter determines whether parties, in the eyes of voters, ‘got it right’ on immigration, how strong the incentives are to reposition themselves in accordance with voter opinion once immigration becomes contested in the political arena, and how vulnerable parties are fighting over immigration votes. The larger the gap between voters and parties, the larger the potential impact of the anti-immigration party on mainstream parties’ policy positions.

When voters are asked to describe the forces at play in immigration politics, their collective response shows a number of characteristics, summarised in figure 23. The empirical results show a ‘shifted scale’, in which voters consider themselves to be more restrictive than their parties, but in which relative voter and party positioning follows a left-right logic. A substantial perceived anti-immigrant gap exists between voters and parties, especially on the left and centre of the political spectrum. On the right of the political spectrum parties are either perceived as being too lenient (PVV/VLD in Flanders), about right (VVD and the Conservatives) or too restrictive (VVD on asylum). At the same time, left-right considerations play a major role for voter self-positioning and for the positioning of parties. On average, partisans on the left consider themselves, and parties on the left, to have more liberal immigration-related preferences than partisans on the right, who position themselves and their parties with more restrictive positions.

The ‘shifted scale’ directly challenges the elite opinion leadership thesis with potentially far-reaching consequences for electoral competition, since it is left-right orientations, rather than policy-specific cues voters react to. In other words, the left-right orientation found in the data on both sides of the political
market does not lead to the conclusion that party-voter agreement runs along partisan lines. While voters of the left are more liberal than voters on the right in relative terms, in absolute terms they prefer the policies of the right. In this set-up, playing the immigration card directly benefits ‘the neighbouring party on the right’, and has the potential of severely destabilising traditional left-right partisan allegiances of voters who find immigration an important topic. The absolute gap between voters and parties can as a result undermine the partisan link once immigration becomes a dimension of political competition.

The empirically found left-right scales also influence the perceived shape of the ‘liberal elite consensus’. Despite the presence of an anti-immigrant gap the perceived conspiracy theory of a clustered liberal elite consensus ruling collectively in the interests of minorities, while taking advantage of an undifferentiated defenceless public, as anti-immigration parties would have it, is not shared by voters at large. Although voters perceive green, social democratic and sometimes also Christian democratic parties as having liberal preferences towards immigration and immigrants, they clearly perceive parties of the right as having restrictive preferences. Moreover, the mainstream party the furthest on the right is generally perceived to have more restrictive preferences than the average voter (Flanders is the exception). Insofar as a liberal elite consensus exists in the mind of voters, it is the parties of the left that are to blame, not the parties of the right. Voters perceive clear differences between parties, shattering the classic liberal conspiracy thesis.

The impact of this political set-up for the dynamics of indirect impact are the following: firstly, the most important precondition for the dynamic of indirect impact can be confirmed: a large immigrant gap exists for parties of the left and centre, with a smaller gap or no gap existing for parties on the right. Secondly, indirect impact is likely to affect all parties across the political system, since all have a divergent position from their core electorates, with VVD and the Conservatives being impacted to a far lesser degree. If parties do not reposition themselves when the immigration dimension of political competition is activated they are likely to lose a great deal of votes to the party directly to their right. Thirdly, a liberal elite consensus does not exist in the strictest sense: there is no clustering of parties or voters. Left-right considerations play a role both on the demand and the supply side of the political market. Indirect impact will cause a shift of political parties across the political spectrum towards more restrictive policies without upsetting the relative left-right ordering of parties.

A striking finding is the fact that the anti-immigrant gap appears relatively stable over time. Supply-side dynamics apparently do little to impact the positioning of parties in the mind of voters. This (absence of) interaction between the two sides of the political market will be disentangled in the conclusion of the thesis. For now, it suffices to say that the relatively stable gap over time suggests that voters either do not register supply-side changes - they simply use the left-right yardstick as a cognitive short-cut to determine how to position parties, while equating left parties with too permissive positions; or they do not trust their parties’ moves, as a result of parties’ reputations built up over time. In either case, the only short-term remedy for parties of the left and the centre is to play the ‘racist card’ to try to discredit the party using...
immigration for electoral gain, and to refocus competition on other political dimensions to prevent immediate vote loss. Whether these are effective solutions remains debatable.

The main difference between our cases is the status of the party of the right. While attitudes towards the parties on the left are similar in all cases, on the right the anti-immigrant gap may or may not exist, depending on the specific case. The Conservatives in the UK with their extreme positions are far closer to voter opinion, and hold the trust of a large part of the electorate. This situation partly shows that in a more competitive party system there are larger incentives for ‘pre-emptive’ co-optation, which allows for the political expression of discontent on immigration through mainstream channels; partly it shows that institutional barriers to entry, both to the parliamentary arena and also to government, discourage trust in an ‘outsider party’. The government-opposition dynamics further sustain the possibility of ‘opposition within the mainstream’. The resulting position for the Conservatives is a strong one, in which they can only win, not lose votes on immigration.

VVD is the other party that appears to have a relatively small anti-immigrant gap. But VVD’s position relative to the anti-immigration party is markedly different compared to the Conservative’s. In the Netherlands, anti-immigration votes appear to go primarily to LPF and PVV, which indicates that voters trust anti-immigration parties more (and mainstream parties less) on taking control on the immigration issue, as their electoral victories of 2002, 2006 and 2010 attest to. VVD only just managed to become the largest party in 2010, but fears to be overrun by PVV, a fear the Conservatives do not have to contend with as the British public consider anti-immigration parties close to irrelevant. The obvious explanation to explain this difference between the status of the Conservatives and VVD is the electoral system, which is so much more open in the Netherlands. New parties not only have a chance of winning at elections, due to coalition-building they also stand chance to become part of government coalitions. A vote for an anti-immigration party in the Netherlands may force mainstream parties to take these parties seriously, while in the UK, a vote for an anti-immigration party is mostly a wasted vote.

The main Flemish party of the right PVV/VLD is the only party on the right with a considerable anti-immigrant gap. The cordon sanitaire might play an independent role in creating this perceived gap, since it explicitly separates vote-seeking from office-seeking and policy-influence, and makes election promises on immigration less credible. By openly distancing itself from VB by means of the cordon, PVV/VLD loses its competitive edge for anti-immigrant votes, no matter how restrictive its stated policy positions. Both the Flemish and the Dutch cases show that the outsider party tends to get the benefit of the doubt on immigration in multi-party systems: possibly because of a better policy mix when taking into account economic preferences; or because of the decreased capacity for mainstream parties in multi-party systems to create a real opposition dynamic. In multi-party systems fringe parties can provide a clear signalling function, absent in two-party systems; while trust in mainstream parties of the right to successfully implement proposed restrictive policies in coalition governments appears to be low.
For parties on the left, the analysis is more straightforward. No matter which party system, parties on the left are considered to have too liberal immigration preferences. Partly these perceptions correlate with the relatively liberal policies left parties indeed hold, partly they might be a reflection of left parties' reputations (real or perceived) of catering to the immigrant vote, or of being a ‘soft touch’ on immigration in general. The most evident example of left parties not being able to shed this reputation, is that of Labour in the UK, which put forward tough policies on asylum in the run-up to the 2005 election, but was not believed by the public at large. Previous policy outcomes, as well as preconceived notions of credibility on handling immigration might be the decisive factors for this effect. As a result, parties of the right can use the immigration issue as a trump card, especially in two-party systems; while parties of the left are severely constrained in using the same tactics.
CHAPTER 4

Constraints on Indirect Impact: Moral Politics, Public Attitudes and the Ethnic Minority Vote

Abstract

This chapter analyses the constraints on party movement as a reaction to the rise of an anti-immigration party. As identified in the theory chapter, the model of political competition advanced here posits that parties are primarily vote-seeking organisations with ideological constraints that will adapt their positions to voter preferences on issues once these issues become important for political competition. The existence of an anti-immigrant gap, as empirically proven to exist in the previous chapter, urges mainstream parties to change their policy positions. This chapter assesses a variety of electoral constraints on parties to change immigration positions, conceptually distinguishing between immigration as a cross-cutting issue relative to the left-right dimension, and as a divisive issue for party constituencies. Firstly, an analysis is made of the constraints on party movement at party system level based on the distribution of immigration preferences. The correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension is hypothesised to impact the collective and differential constraints on parties to move closer to anti-immigration policies. More specifically, if the immigration and the left-right dimensions are found to be orthogonal dimensions, parties are similarly constrained, while if a stronger correlation is found, parties are differentially constrained. Secondly, an analysis is made concerning the extent to which immigration is a divisive issue for parties of the left and right. Again, this is hypothesised to impact the dynamics of indirect impact: high divisiveness urges parties to depoliticise the immigration issue. Special attention will be paid to the role of the ethnic minority vote as a constraint on left party position on immigration and integration.

Introduction

From the late 1980s onwards, mainstream parties have tried to isolate themselves from anti-immigration parties. The Flemish cordon sanitaire is the most institutionalised example of such a strategy of active disengagement, effectively cutting off VB from regular Flemish politics and isolating the immigration issue. In 1989, Flemish parties, led by the green party Agalev, formally agreed they would not enter into a coalition with VB at any level of government no matter the eventual party size. They also agreed to exclude VB from cooperation on legislative initiatives, to not solicit VB for support for resolutions, to never support resolutions proposed by VB, to not engage in joint press conferences or declarations, and never to enter into voting alliances with VB (Damen, 2001). These are far-reaching measures, which mainstream parties justified using normative arguments. Their main concern was the overt racism and ethno-centrism of VB, which was considered a threat to democracy, as well as to the healthy functioning of traditional party competition. Isolation of VB was considered the only way to guarantee that its
programme of ethnic discrimination would not, in part or in full, be realised (Stoffen & Gijssels, n.d.). Only seven weeks after the cordon came into effect, parties of the right defected. VU initiated the move, followed by PVV and CVP, while Agalev and SP remained united in endorsing the principle of complete isolation. Two years later, before the election of 1991, parties of the left again tried to persuade other parties to join the cordon, this time initiated by SP. This time, CVP was also on board, while VU and PVV did not wish to enter the cordon. It’s only from late 1993 onwards that VU and PVV joined the cordon, overtly expressing the view that they did not wish to engage with parties that do not respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although all mainstream parties eventually endorsed the cordon, and upheld the barriers to power the cordon posed, Flemish parties of the left have always been considerably more supportive of the cordon than parties of the right. On the right parties were ambivalent: VB was kept out of power, but the consequence was a severe weakening of the party bloc of the right (D. Jacobs & Swyngedouw, 2002). The cordon had detrimental effects for parties of the right, both on the mobility on the immigration dimension, as well as on the power dynamics between the Flemish left versus the Flemish right. The moderate right would not be able to profit in any way from gains by VB. Commentators on the right of the political spectrum were also more likely to reason that VB actually might benefit from their isolated position: the underdog position might win them votes, while their absence from government might obscure their incapacity to govern. Nevertheless, these considerations were not sufficient for parties to decide to dismantle the cordon.

In the Netherlands, there is no history of an official cordon sanitaire. The spectacular rise of Pim Fortuyn’s LPF led to a short-lived attempt at governing with the centre-right parties CDA and VVD without lengthy debate on the normative constraints of governing with an anti-immigration party. Nevertheless, the decision to govern with the LPF denotes a remarkable change of attitude on the side of the mainstream parties, breaking with a history of emphatically ignoring anti-immigrant competitors, most notably in the period 1989-1998 when Hans Janmaat’s CD occupied a number of seats in Parliament. The other parties’ attitude back then was one of open disdain: leaving Janmaat to proclaim his anti-immigrant message in a near-empty parliament. There was no official cordon sanitaire, but it is debatable whether this was a conscious strategy. Seen the negligible size of the party, mainstream parties had little to fear from CD. With Fortuyn, this strategy of ignoring the anti-immigration party could no longer be sustained. The newly formed LPF won an astonishing 26 of a total of 150 seats in Parliament, and mainstream parties of the right decided to profit from these developments to form a right-wing coalition. Despite the absence of a debate on implementing a cordon sanitaire, parties were highly uncomfortable with the issues Fortuyn discussed in the run-up to the election: immigration, integration and Islam, and did not have a ready answer to this flamboyant figure who thrived on confrontation and breaking taboos. The break with the traditional, consensual, moderate Dutch political culture came as a shock.

The unease of mainstream parties in dealing with an anti-immigration party was again apparent during the rise of the latest anti-immigration party, PVV, from 2006 onwards. PVV’s anti-Islam stance has raised
questions concerning whether the anti-immigration party should be treated as any other political party, or whether the party’s ideology justifies excluding the party from government coalitions. Although a formal cordon, such as the Flemish one was out of the question, parties of the left especially pressed other parties to distance themselves from PVV by urging them to proclaim they would not form coalitions with the PVV. This appeal has been unsuccessful. Although parties seemed hesitant to embrace Wilders and his party and the issue has led to heated debate within party factions, especially within CDA, the parties on the right, CDA and VVD went on to form a minority government supported by PVV.

In both Flanders and the Netherland the rise of anti-immigration parties has unmistakably caused dilemmas to arise for mainstream parties, weighing normative and electoral considerations for including or excluding the anti-immigration party. The decision to form a cordon and isolate the anti-immigration party, as happened in Flanders; or collaborate with the anti-immigration party as happened in the Netherlands, may be explained both by the spirit of the times (in the 1990s the anti-immigration party CP’86 was prosecuted and banned in the Netherlands for the same normative reasons for which the cordon was installed in Flanders), as well as the core ideology of the party. VB can be considered a ‘classic’ extreme-right party, with an ethno-centric worldview, which argues for solidarity strictly within the own ethnic group, while excluding non-Flemings. The LPF, as well as PVV can be considered anti-immigration and specifically anti-Islam parties, but their argumentation with regard to the inclusion of Muslims in society is ambiguous. The rather bizarre line of reasoning PVV uses considers Islam a ‘fascist ideology’, but differentiates between Islam and its followers. ‘Islam’ is considered a threat to the nation, without specific mention of the Muslim population. Although one can argue about the normative and practical implications of such an argument, both LPF and later PVV do not propose policies that specifically exclude Muslims, or any other minority in key areas such as welfare, housing or healthcare. They do tend to initiate isolated and often outrageous policy proposals specifically targeting Muslims, such as the PVV’s Muslim headscarf tax, which cause commotion and nothing much else, but these policies can’t be said to be a part of a comprehensive programme of ethnic nationalism and exclusion.

Despite the differences, there are definite commonalities in party responses to the anti-immigration party. For parties of the left, the dilemma between normative and electoral considerations appears to be relatively unproblematic. Left parties, including green parties, appear to favour the exclusion of the anti-immigration party, suggesting they have little to lose from a cordon sanitaire. For parties on the right the dilemma appears to be more acute, suggesting they may lose more votes and power as a result of engaging in a liberal cross-party consensus and isolating the anti-immigration party. Nevertheless, this loss must be counterbalanced by other factors, to explain the existence of the Flemish cordon sanitaire, and the confusion of Dutch parties of the right concerning how to approach anti-immigration parties. Normative considerations may be important, although electoral constraints should never be underestimated when assessing parties’ strategies. The divisiveness of the immigration issue for right parties’ constituencies may be such a constraint for parties of the right.
For parties of the left the ethnic minority vote is often mentioned as an electoral constraint, specifically in relation to the Labour Party in the UK, as well as, to a lesser extent, to parties of the left in the Netherlands and Flanders. Ethnic minority voters may constrain left parties in moving towards more restrictive policy positions if they play a pivotal role in securing an electoral majority. Depending on the party system, this will depend on local dynamics, or on the aggregate characteristics of the ethnic minority vote. In the UK, Labour prides itself on its legacy in the area of equal rights legislation and race relations, and couples these liberal policy positions with a hard-line stance on immigration control and asylum, especially since the elections of 2001 when the immigration issue became more salient in the national political debate. This strategy is often interpreted as an attempt to neutralise the oppositions within its constituency. The liberal positions on equal rights and anti-discrimination are allegedly aimed at attracting ethnic minority voters, while the restrictive rhetoric on immigration control is aimed at the general, more restrictive public. Whether this strategy effectively addresses the concerns of Labour’s constituency is debatable, seen the fact that Labour faces tremendous difficulties in competing with the Conservatives over immigration. As the previous chapter has shown, the Conservatives generally appear to benefit from competing on the immigration issue, with the electorate at large agreeing more with the Conservative Party stance on immigration, as well as trusting that the Conservatives would handle immigration best. Labour is traditionally seen as being ineffective in dealing with the immigration issue, a reputation that may be reinforced by their (declining) traditional appeal to capture the ethnic minority vote.

This chapter analyses the constraints on party movement on immigration in reaction to an anti-immigration party, or other triggers for political competition on the issue. As we have seen in the Flemish case, parties mostly use normative arguments to install a cordon sanitaire or dismiss an anti-immigration party. This chapter investigates a different angle: the electoral one. Do parties, apart from their normative complaints, have important electoral reasons for their hostile strategy towards the anti-immigration party? This question is analysed starting from a two-dimensional model of political competition with the left-right and the immigration dimensions comprising political space for parties to move in. By analysing public preferences at the mass electoral level which provide the incentives for party positioning and form the basis for the dynamics of political competition, the chapter addresses the electoral incentives and constraints of the politics of immigration. The main issues to be addressed include the correlation between dimensions of political competition, the absorption of the immigration dimension by the left-right dimension, the divisiveness of the immigration issue and the role of the ethnic minority vote for party positioning.

Most importantly, the chapter shows empirically that a correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension exists in all cases, in practically all immigration-related policy areas, which has an effect on the indirect impact of an anti-immigration party once it emerges. A liberal elite consensus is likely to be unstable once an anti-immigration party rises, and this finding would also suggest a differential pull on parties to reposition themselves in reaction to an anti-immigration party. As a result, immigration
cannot be considered a purely crosscutting issue. Moreover, in the Netherlands, and to a lesser degree in Flanders, left-right preferences are found to be the most important determinant of immigration preferences, trumping variables that are normally presented as being important determinants of immigration preferences, such as education, income and trust in politics, anchoring immigration to the left-right dimension, and reinforcing the dynamics of differential indirect impact.

At the same time the high level of divisiveness of the immigration issue, on the left as well as the right, offsets some of these effects. Although people on the left are on average less restrictive on immigration-related issues than those on the right, the variation of attitudes is very high. This finding suggests that is practically impossible for a mainstream party to reposition itself in such a way to successfully deflect the anti-immigrant threat. Even though a party can position itself optimally relative to its average voter, a large percentage of its electorate might still defect to the anti-immigration party. This distribution of voter opinion relative to the left-right dimension makes immigration a risky issue for vote-seeking purposes for parties mainly defined by their left-right status, including parties on the right, and presents one possible reason for parties to try and avoid political competition on immigration. Political competition on immigration has the potential of severely upsetting traditional left-right patterns of competition across the political spectrum. At party level traditional parties of the left, centre and right stand to lose from such electoral upheaval, while ‘new’ parties organising along the value cleavage stand to win.

In addition the chapter addresses a number of hypotheses regarding the impact of the ethnic minority vote: (1) that the ethnic minority vote can be considered a major electoral constraint on left party positioning on immigration, and (2) that this constraint is larger on matters regarding integration than on immigration control. This chapter shows that, although there is a significant difference of opinion between native and ethnic-minority voters on immigration-related matters, the ethnic minority vote poses a relatively small constraint on party positioning compared to the leftist and highly educated vote. The exception is the field of immigrant rights, which elicits more passionate responses from ethnic minorities. If ethnic minorities play an important role in left party positioning, this generally has to be considered an ideological rather than an electoral constraint, especially in multiparty systems.

**Structure of the chapter**

The first part of the chapter presents the theoretical concepts used, and briefly discusses the main arguments from the literature to date pertaining to them.

Firstly, the dimensionality of immigration politics relative to the left-right dimension is discussed. Interestingly, the literature views the immigration dimension in two opposite ways. On the one hand, immigration has been viewed as one of the issues belonging to the famous ‘new politics’ dimension, which divides the traditional electorate of the left and the right (Inglehart, 1977, 1984, 1990; Kitschelt &
McGann, 1997). On the other hand, authors tend to assume that immigration politics follows a left-right logic, with the party on the right being the anti-immigration party’s main competitor (Harmel & Svasand, 1997). This line of reasoning is consistent with the argument that poses that the left-right dimension is capable of absorbing many new dimensions of political conflict, despite their initial incongruence with left-right indicators.

Secondly, the indicators used to assess the dynamics of political competition on immigration are discussed: (1) the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension, (2) the absorption of the immigration dimension by the left-right dimension, and (3) the divisiveness of the immigration dimension relative to the left-right dimension, and for specific party constituencies.

Thirdly, the role of the ethnic minority vote is discussed. Money’s argument on the potentially pivotal role of the ethnic minority vote for immigration politics will be discussed in detail. In addition, the characteristics of ethnic minority voting in Flanders, the Netherlands and the UK will be discussed.

Finally, one of the crucial assumptions of the theoretical framework is discussed: the accessibility of the entirety of political space to all parties. Issue ownership and issue-based trust challenge this assumption. The implications of restricting this assumption will be discussed and empirically illustrated.

The second part of the chapter is empirical and, after a brief discussion of methods and data used, analyses to which extent party positions are electorally constrained, taking into account the preferences of the electorate at party system and party level. The empirical section is comprised of the following analyses per country case.

Firstly, is the immigration dimension a cross-cutting dimension that is likely to upset left-right oriented electoral markets? To assess this, the simple correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension will be calculated.

Secondly, based on graphic representations of voter demand on immigration in two-dimensional policy space comprised by the left-right and the immigration dimension: what are the characteristics of political competition in this two-dimensional space?

Thirdly, what is the effect of the ethnic minority vote on party movement? Is there empirical evidence that confirms the assumption that ethnic minority voters have different attitudes on immigration than native voters, and what effect does this have on political competition on immigration? Are parties of the left electorally constrained by the ethnic minority vote? Using a comparison of means test we will assess whether ethnic minority voters have divergent preferences from native voters, in a range of different immigration-related policy areas. Recalculating the correlation between the left-right and the immigration
axis, controlling for the ethnic minority vote will help assess whether these differences have any substantial impact on political competition.

Fourthly, to what extent has the left-right dimension absorbed the immigration dimension? A regression analysis is performed to assess whether left-right placement has become an important factor in informing immigration preferences, thereby stabilising the political market.

Fifthly, to what extent are voters of the left, centre and right divided on immigration? The divisiveness of immigration control is discussed at party system and party level, by analysing the degree of agreement on immigration within party constituencies using van der Eijk’s agreement indicator. The level of agreement within a political constituency, combined with the percentage of highly restrictive voters within that constituency provides a good indication of the incentives and constraints for party movement in reaction to an anti-immigration party.

The conclusion brings together the empirical evidence of the separate country cases, and attempts to come to some general conclusions.

**The Dimensionality of Political Space: The Left-Right and the Immigration Dimension**

At a fundamental level, the principal dimensions of political conflict determine political competition. Supporters and opponents mobilise around these crucial cleavages, with the cleavage itself determining positions on either side of the conflict. Naturally, not all conflicts can be played out at the same time - as Schattschneider (1960) puts it: “conflicts compete with each other”. This is especially so when conflict dimensions are orthogonal dimensions, signifying that opponents in one conflict become allies in the other. Realignment theory (Key, 1955) has pointed at the importance of issues that produce cross-cutting dimensions of competition for causing electoral landslides and the transformation of party alignments. With orthogonal dimensions of competition something has got to give: either the new or the old conflict ‘wins’ resulting in a realignment of voters if the victor is the new dimension.

The immigration issue is in potential one of such crosscutting issues with the capacity of severely upsetting partisan attachments. Inglehart (1977, 1984, 1990) identified the immigration issue as one of the issues important for political competition along the value dimension: a materialist-postmaterialist dimension of competition that cuts across the traditional socio-economic left-right dimension. Inglehart (1990) explained the rise of anti-immigration parties as an electoral reaction against rapid cultural changes which threatened to erode some of the most basic values of the more traditional and less secure parts of the electorate. Although immigration is only a very partial cause of this development of swift cultural
change, it is a tangible and related issue around which voters can mobilise to express their concerns about these changes. As such it becomes an important vehicle for political competition, dividing the electorate into the post-materialists, who welcome such changes, and the more conservative materialists, who feel threatened by cultural change. A similar conclusion is reached by Kitschelt and McGann (1997). The terminology used by both Inglehart and Kitschelt, on what these changes entail sends mixed messages. On the one hand, the alleged ‘crosscutting’ nature of this new dimension of competition suggests there is little or no connection between the left-right and the immigration dimension of competition, while in the same breath the left is associated with the postmaterialist end of the new-politics dimension, and the right with the materialist end.

Kitschelt’s earlier work (1997) argues that the supply side of the political market clearly demonstrates that the left-right dimension has rotated to absorb the new dimension. On the left, the rise of green parties show a linkage between postmaterialist values, and traditional egalitarianist leftism, while on the right, anti-immigration parties tend to combine authoritarianism with small-state right-wing appeals. Kitschelt goes as far as to argue that it is because of these rightist anti-state appeals, that anti-immigration parties can become as successful as they are (1997: viii). This simple rotation of the left-right dimension, in which economic and value concerns go hand in hand, is no longer considered adequate to explain the developments on the political market. In Kitschelt’s later work (2001) he notes that anti-immigration parties have mitigated their right-wing economic appeals, and are focusing more strongly on the value dimension. This conclusion is also reached by Kriesi et.al. (2008) and Bornschier (2010) who argue that issues of identity in a globalised world are the driving force behind the transformation of political space in Western Europe, more so than economic issues. Anti-immigration parties are not necessarily tied to a fixed position on the economic left-right dimension, but are primarily defined by their position on the value dimension. The evidence from emerging anti-immigration parties in the Netherlands and Flanders corroborates these observations. Political space has opened up in a new direction, in which cultural identity trumps economic interests.

This phenomenon is most clearly evident from the Flemish case, where VB adamantly negates the left-right dimension of competition. After years of campaigning solely on the value dimension using themes such as immigration, Flemish nationalism, and conservative values, VB added socio-economic themes to its programme in the 1990s. But instead of defining the issue along the lines of class and income, VB stressed the importance of ethnicity first and foremost. In the words of Filip Dewinter explaining his ideas on solidarity:

“...The left tries to talk people into an ideology which does not resonate: the class divide, the class struggle. It’s artificial, unnatural. While we, as nationalists, propagate an ideology, positions which come natural to people, which are a matter of common sense. Loathing is too strong a word, but resistance to what is foreign, resistance to what does not belong to us, is the most normal reflex in nature, which everyone has. This resistance is almost organic, it’s self-evident, it’s normal.” (quoted in: Spruyt, 1995, p. 133 (own translation))
As a consequence, VB’s policies to protect the weak, the sick and the elderly centre mostly on creating a purely Flemish system of solidarity and redistribution. The immigration dimension overrules the socio-economic dimension, even when it comes to classic left-right issues.

In the Netherlands, Pim Fortuyn upset traditional patterns of political competition by combining an anti-immigration appeal with a plea to protect national progressive values, on for example gay and emancipation issues. He argued that the influx of immigrants from traditional Islamic societies threatened progress made concerning the position of gays and women. Geert Wilders continued this line of reasoning, while moving his party from initial right-wing, anti-statist, small-government positions to positions that emphasised safeguarding the continuity of the welfare state in its present form, and criticising the ideas of parties in favour of welfare state reform. PVV targets the electorate with economic ideas that would traditionally be viewed as leftist. Wilders craftily combines liberal, conservative, rightist and leftist appeals confounding his political opponents.

It’s interesting to note that although the substance of these parties’ messages changes depending on specific national contexts, the structure of these messages are similar- the national cultural unit should be protected against attacks from the outside. At the same time, the differences between the content of what constitutes this cultural unity according to these parties, is rather ironically an impediment to collaboration. In the Netherlands, Fortuyn and Wilders have adamantly denied any resemblance of their parties to VB. Fortuyn denounced the ethno-centrism of VB and called Dewinter a fascist: “Dewinter is a fascist. I am a civilised man. You will never hear me say: ‘Our own people first’. And besides, wouldn’t you agree I am a far nicer person than Dewinter?” (Willems & Dijkstra, 2002 (own translation)). Wilders on his part has mentioned anti-Semitism as a reason not to collaborate with VB and other anti-immigration parties. On the Flemish side, the Dutch liberal value system, a cornerstone of Fortuyn’s and Wilders’ political ideology, is criticised. VB favours far more conservative cultural values stressing the importance of the nuclear family with a male breadwinner, and considers Dutch society lax in morals (Spruyt, 1995). Although VB toys with the idea of a united future for Flanders and the Netherlands, the Dutch will have to overcome their moral degeneration in order for such a future to come into existence. Despite these differences, VB, LPF and PVV all without fail demonstrate that anti-immigration parties mobilise along the value dimension, at the expense of the socio-economic left-right dimension.
Electoral constraints: the correlation of attitudes

The potential strategies political parties can deploy to achieve electoral success in a two-dimensional policy field in which an anti-immigration party mobilises along the immigration dimension depend to a large extent on the distribution of preferences within the electorate. A variety of preference distributions are depicted in figure 1, 2, and 3 linking the left-right and the immigration dimensions together in different ways to illustrate this point.

Figure 4.1.A. Perfectly Correlated Dimensions           Figure 4.1.B. Correlated Attitudes

Figure 1 shows a political space in which left-right and immigration preferences are perfectly correlated. The underlying distribution of preferences in a two-dimensional political space is shown in figure 1B, with voters either in the upper-left (left –liberal) and lower-right (right-restrictive) quadrants. Figure 1A shows the result for political competition: once immigration becomes a salient issue, the central dimension of political competition rotates in a clockwise direction to match both immigration and left-right preferences. As a result, the policy space is again reduced to one dimension, in which left-wing socio-economic match with libertarian immigration preferences and right-wing socio-economic preferences match with restrictive immigration preferences. This picture matches the supply-side accounts by Kitschelt and Inglehart, who observed the rise of new parties along this rotated axis.

Figure 4.2.A. Orthogonal Dimensions    4.2.B. Restrictive Attitudes            4.2.C. Mixed Attitudes

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute
DOI: 10.2870/4016
Figure 2 shows a two-dimensional political space in which the socio-economic left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are not correlated, in the sense that voters’ preferences on the left-right dimension do not inform immigration preferences. Attitudes can either be restrictive, as pictured in figure 2B, or mixed, as pictured in figure 2C. In the first scenario successful policy bundles consist of restrictive immigration attitudes, combined with left or right-wing socio-economic attitudes, while in the latter scenario political parties may be successful with combinations of socio-economic and immigration policies in all quadrants, but it will be far more difficult to capture a large share of the electorate. This picture illustrates the competing claims Kitschelt and Inglehart make: the crosscutting nature of the immigration dimension. It illustrates the phenomenon Ivarsflaten (2005) found empirically: that a considerable part of left voters may be equally restrictive on immigration-related matters as voters on the right.

Finally, figure 3 shows a two-dimensional political space in which the socio-economic left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are correlated, but in which voters of the left are far more divided on the issue than voters on the right. The main dimension of competition rotates in the same direction as it does in figure 1 once immigration becomes a salient issue, but to a lesser degree. Also, it is far more difficult for the party on the left to find a policy bundle that will satisfy its voters than for the party on the right. In an exaggerated way, this picture reflects the argument presented in the literature by scholars such as Sagger (1998), as well as by Jeannette Money (1999a) who argued that voters of the left are more divided on immigration (and especially on integration-related matters) compared to voters on the right. In this scenario, a split electorate is an important incentive for parties of the left to avoid political competition on the issue.
Dynamics of Political Competition: Correlation, Divisiveness, and Absorption by the Left-Right Dimension

A first indicator for assessing the dynamics of political competition on immigration is the simple correlation between the two dimensions of competition (compare figures 1A and 2A). The distribution of preferences directly affects the indirect impact of an anti-immigration party. Referring back to the theory chapter: if voter preferences on the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are not correlated, in other words, if the left-right and the immigration dimension are orthogonal dimensions, both parties on the left and right will have equally strong incentives to react to an anti-immigration party and co-opt its policies. At the same time, the absence of a correlation favours cartel formation on the immigration issue: if parties have similar optimal policy positions on immigration it is hardly a favourable issue to campaign on for any party. Assuming that mainstream parties can keep the anti-immigration party out of power, they can easily agree on the immigration issue behind the scenes, and keep it out of political competition. This allows them to refocus political competition on the left-right dimension, which is far more familiar territory, and a better counter-attack to the anti-immigration party than trying to compete on the anti-immigrant’s issue. Conversely, if voter preferences on the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension are strongly correlated, in other words, if the left-right and the immigration dimension are parallel dimensions, the rise of an anti-immigration party will have a very different effect. The pressures on parties of the right to co-opt anti-immigrant policies will be far stronger than the pressures on parties on the left. As a result, a liberal cross-party consensus will be unstable, and indirect impact will be largest on parties of the right. In the model presented here, the simple correlation is the most important indicator to predict patterns of political competition on immigration.

A second indicator that informs us on likely patterns of political competition on immigration is the absorption of the issue by the left-right dimension, or the correlation between these dimensions after controlling for a variety of other variables. The distinction between the correlation of dimensions and absorption of dimensions lies in the extent to which left-right preferences can explain immigration preferences. Whereas the correlation gives us information on the distribution of preferences, the degree of absorption tells us whether this distribution of preferences is actually anchored in the left-right dimension, or alternatively, can be explained by other variables. The higher the degree of absorption, the higher the stability of left-right party alignment on the immigration issue. The degree of absorption does not primarily inform us about political competition at any given election (it is the simple correlation that is most important in this regard), but is an indicator of the likely stability of the political market on immigration.

The degree to which the left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration issue determines the extent to which the left-right dimension functions as an anchor for the political market once an anti-immigration
party rises. If the left-right dimension is the most important factor informing immigration preferences the demand side of the political market can be considered relatively stable. Because the left-right dimension is traditionally found to be the most important dimension of competition in West European democracies, a strong linkage between this dimension and other dimensions of competition prevents new dimensions from upsetting traditional voter alignments. Voters are unlikely to defect en masse to the anti-immigration party, irrespective of their previous political alignment, unless the incumbent parties have policy positions wildly deviating from those held by their constituencies on the second dimension of competition. Even in the case of an initial liberal elite consensus on the second dimension of competition, parties can relatively easily readjust their positions to match their constituencies’ preferences using the left-right dimension as a yardstick, thereby deflecting an anti-immigrant threat. If the correlation is driven by other variables, which may affect party competition, this stability may be lost.

The control variables introduced when testing the absorptive capacity of the left-right dimension with regard to the immigration issue include ethnic minority status, sex, age, education, income and trust-related variables. If any of these variables prove to be more important than left-right status in informing immigration preferences, left-right patterns of political competition may become unstable after the rise of an anti-immigration party. These control variables were selected because they were mentioned in the literature either as a potential predictor of immigration preferences, or because they have been linked to voting for an anti-immigration party, which may indirectly suggest a correlation with immigration attitudes.

Ethnic minority background is one of the key control variables in this chapter, as it is hypothesised to significantly affect the correlation between these dimensions, following research by Money (1999a), as will be discussed in depth later on in the chapter. Education is another important determinant of immigration preferences to take into account. Two competing theories accompany the well-researched correlation between education and immigration preferences. The first argues that less-educated voters oppose immigration because of fear of losing their jobs as a result of fiercer competition in the labour market (Citrin, et al., 1997; Kessler, 2001; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001); while the second focuses on the effect of education on non-material attitudes: more highly educated voters are likely to have a more cosmopolitan worldview, and hold more tolerant attitudes towards racial and ethnic diversity (Citrin, et al., 1997; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007; Mayer & Perrineau, 1992; McLaren, 2001).

Further, the impact of trust-related variables on immigration preferences will be controlled for. The literature on anti-immigration parties emphasise that anti-immigrant voters are united by low levels of trust in the political system (Mayer & Perrineau, 1992; Norris, 2005). They are often disappointed in politics and feel ignored by those in power. These votes have been conceptualised as a ‘protest’-vote. Studies have shown that policy considerations play a more important role than the simple ‘protest vote’ would suggest (van der Brug, et al., 2000, 2005), and that these policy preferences are linked to
immigration. To control for this complex relationship between trust and immigration preferences, three trust-related have been included: (1) the ‘disillusioned voter’-variable, which measures the degree to which a voter feels listened to by the political elite, (2) the ‘institutional trust’-variable, which measures reflects trust in the political system by measuring trust in parliament, and (3) the ‘trust-in-politicians’- variable, which measures whether a voter trusts politicians in general.

Standard socio-economic and demographic controls are also included. These control variables include gender, age and income. Gender may matter for informing immigration preferences, as men appear to be less supportive of (low-skilled) immigrants than women (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007), and are more likely to vote for an anti-immigration party (Givens, 2004), while age generally has a restrictive effect on immigration preferences (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007). Income does not appear to directly affect immigration attitudes (McLaren, 2001; Quillian, 1995), but is included as a standard control variable.

Finally, the third indicator for the dynamics of political competition is the divisiveness of the immigration issue. The divisiveness of an issue relative to the left-right dimension informs us to which extent left-right arrangements are upset once the issue is raised in political competition. The higher the degree of divisiveness, the higher the degree of competition between dimensions, and the more difficulties the issues present for mainstream parties. Pictures 2B and 2C illustrate this point. In picture 2B the electorate at large has restrictive immigration preferences, while the preferences of the electorate in picture 2C are mixed. Once an anti-immigration party rises, mainstream parties in the divisive 2C scenario have a significant problem in establishing a successful policy bundle. If they co-opt anti-immigration preferences they lose their liberal voters, while if they don’t they risk losing a fair share of their electorate to the anti-immigration party. Parties in the restrictive 2B scenario are far less ruffled. As long as they propose restrictive immigration policies their voters will be more or less content. Although parties may lose some voters at the fringes, these losses won’t be of landslide proportions.

The divisiveness of the immigration issue is especially interesting seen that immigration scholars stress the divisiveness of the issue for parties of the left mostly as a result of catering to the ethnic minority vote, while there is little or no mention of divisiveness for parties of the right. Divisiveness is expected to be especially high for left parties in the policy areas relating to integration, such as immigrant rights. This scenario is depicted in figure 3B. If this scenario corresponds with empirical reality parties of the left will have great difficulties once immigration becomes a salient issue, while parties of the right can play it relatively safe. As a result parties of the right will not hesitate to leave a cross-party consensus. They only stand to gain from such a move.

Table 1 presents an overview of these arguments, which are at the heart of this chapter. It distinguishes between dynamics of political competition with regard to the stability of the cross-party consensus in the absence of an anti-immigrant threat, the degree of indirect impact when an anti-immigration party rises,
the immigration issue’s potential for upsetting traditional left-right patterns of political competition and dividing parties internally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Results for political competition on immigration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No anti-immigrant threat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correlation of dimensions</td>
<td>High: parallel dimensions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low: orthogonal dimensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absorption by left-right dimension</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divisiveness of immigration issue</td>
<td>High: high variance of preferences across political spectrum</td>
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<td>relative to left-right dimension</td>
<td>Mixed: high variance in left segment of political spectrum, low variance in right segment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low: low variance of preferences across political spectrum</td>
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<td>Divisiveness of immigration issue for</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>specific parties</td>
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Table 4.1. The Impact of Patterns of Voter Distribution on Political Competition on Immigration: Correlation of Dimensions, Absorption by Left-Right Dimension, and Divisiveness
The correlation of dimensions, absorption of dimension and divisiveness of the issue, as summarised in table 1, informs us to which extent an anti-immigration party may upset established patterns of political competition. Parties themselves are important actors in this process, determining the politics of dimensionality by shaping the political space they inhabit and influencing which conflict ‘wins’. The distinction made by Mair (1997) is illustrative in this regard: he speaks of parties that try to restrict or narrow the electoral market on the one hand, engaging in primarily defensive electoral strategies, and of parties that try to compete on the market, engaging in primarily expansive electoral strategies on the other. Parties have precisely this choice when deciding whether or not to compete on immigration, and their incentives are for a large part determined by the distribution of immigration preferences relative to the left-right dimension. If parties lock themselves in a liberal elite consensus on immigration, they effectively try to narrow the political market back to the left-right dimension; if they allow an allegedly crosscutting dimension to emerge as a line of conflict, a two-dimensional political space in which the odds may be less certain arises.

Empirical research into the relationship between these dimensions shows that a significant correlation exists between the left-right and immigration dimension, as well as a certain degree of absorption, though in terms of size they can be considered negligible. McLaren (2001) finds a significant but tiny correlation between self-positioning on the left-right dimension and immigration preferences (after controlling for age, education and income) concerning immigration from outside the EU using Eurobarometer data. For the Netherlands the regression coefficients amounted to -0.05 and -0.04 (1993 and 1997 data respectively), for Belgium the coefficients were -0.08 and -0.05, and for the UK the coefficients were -0.03 and -0.02. Whereas her analysis proved that right voters were statistically significantly more likely to have restrictive immigration preferences than respondents on the left of the political spectrum, the differences are minimal and can as such not be considered to amount to differential constraints on party positioning.

The Ethnic Minority Vote: Electoral or Ideological Constraint?

The ethnic minority vote occupies an interesting position in the literature on immigration politics. Whereas the anti-immigration vote pulls parties towards more restrictive immigration policies, it has been argued that the ethnic minority vote pulls parties, especially those of the left, towards more liberal ones. Money (1999a) has argued that the ethnic minority vote directly constrains parties of the left in playing the immigration card, especially when it comes to immigrant rights and integration; and in two-party systems. One of the cases she describes in which ethnic minority voters played a pivotal role in immigration-related politics were the 1998 federal elections in Australia. In the run-up to this election the liberal party flirted with anti-immigration positions as a reaction to the threat of Pauline Hanson’s anti-immigration and anti-aboriginal One Nation Party. The strategy backfired, and the liberal party made a U-turn just before the election implementing a large-scale anti-racism campaign and speaking out to attack the ‘evil of racism’.
Money argues that the large numbers of immigrants that had the right to vote and considered voting for the liberal party, but were planning to abstain or defect constituted the most important political force shifting the debate on xenophobia and racism. The tug-of-war between anti-immigration voters and the ethnic minorities was won by the latter group.

The Australian case Money describes is illustrative for two reasons: firstly, it emphasises that the exclusive policy bundles that parties put forward may not satisfy all voter constituencies: voter preferences may vary over different dimensions at the individual level, while parties’ aggregate positions cannot; and secondly that when constituencies are highly divided, a minority vote potentially constrains parties’ policy positions. Once an anti-immigration party emerges the contrasts between distinct constituencies of voters: those with anti-immigration preferences who might defect to an anti-immigration party, and those with pro-immigrant preferences who might also defect or abstain from voting in protest, becomes especially acute.

The parties most likely affected by such a dynamic in Flanders, the Netherlands and the UK are the parties of the left, seen that the ethnic minority vote, the vote of naturalised immigrants and their naturalised off-spring, has the reputation of belonging first and foremost to these parties. In the UK the Labour Party enjoys a long history of loyal support from ethnic minorities, across age, class, gender and ethnic cohorts, with Labour support figures hovering around 75% of voters with an Asian background, and 85% of voters with an Afro-Caribbean background in the period 1987 – 1997 (Messina, 1998). In the Netherlands the social-democratic party PvdA can be considered to attract most of the ethnic minority vote, judging from ethnic minority voting behaviour at the municipal level. A large majority of ethnic minority voters voted for the PvdA in 1986 (Buijs & Rath, 1986; Pennings, 1987), a pattern which has persisted in the following decade (Tillie, 1995). The scarce research on voting behaviour of naturalised ethnic minority voters at national level indicates a similar pattern. A study conducted at the 2006 election shows that 46% of these votes went to the PvdA and 23% to the socialist party SP (Foquz, 2006). Other parties: GroenLinks, D66 and CDA receive around 8% of the ethnic minority vote. For Flanders no such data exist: specific research into this topic has to date not been performed, and voters with an ethnic minority background are significantly underrepresented in the Belgian election studies, which makes it difficult to generalise from these data. There is no reason to assume, however, that voting patterns of ethnic minorities in Flanders should differ substantially from those in the Netherlands and the UK.

13 These figures include non-naturalised as well as naturalised ethnic minorities: foreigners residing in the Netherlands for over 5 years are entitled to vote at the municipal level.
14 Personal correspondence with Dirk Jacobs, KU Brussel. The only study which exists at present examines ethnic minority voting behaviour in Brussels at the 2006 local elections (Teney, Jacobs, Rea, & Delwit, 2010) It shows that Moroccan voters especially tend to vote for parties of the left, and more specifically SP, exclusively, while other ethnic minority voters have a more diverse pattern of voting behaviour which also includes parties of the centre and moderate right.
The assertion that ethnic minority voters successfully constrain left party policy positions on immigration is subject to a number of conditions: firstly, that the attitudinal profiles concerning immigration and integration differ considerably when comparing ethnic minority and non-ethnic minority voters; secondly that ethnic minority voters base their vote on policy in a comparable way to non-ethnic minority voters and will punish a party that goes against their preferences; and thirdly that the ethnic minority vote can occupy the role of a pivotal player in electoral politics.

The first condition for ethnic minority voters to constrain left party positions on immigration concerns the degree to which they have divergent preferences on immigration from native voters. It is often silently assumed that such divergent preferences exist (Saggar 1998, Messina 1998). Money (1999a) presents a detailed empirical argument on the issue. Instead of treating immigration and race-related issues as a single issue she distinguishes between ethnic minority preferences on immigration and integration policies. Whereas restrictive integration policies concern ethnic minority voters directly by constraining their rights or imposing duties; restrictive immigration policies do not. As a result, she argues, ethnic minority voters may very well have equally restrictive preferences compared to native voters, with regard to immigration, while they will have more liberal preferences with regard to integration and immigrant rights. Supporting this distinction, Sides and Citrin (2007) show that incorporation into the host society is an important factor affecting ethnic minority attitudes towards immigration. Newcomers feel most positive towards immigrants, while longer residence is associated with more restrictive attitudes. The empirical part of the chapter will add to the empirical evidence concerning the immigration and integration preferences of ethnic minority voters relative to majority group voters on a variety of immigration-related issues, testing whether the ethnic minority vote can be considered a homogenous group of voters on the immigration dimension, or that preferences converge with native voters.

The second condition asks that the ethnic minority vote is a mobile vote, with ethnic minority voters voting with their feet when their party goes against their interests. For the Netherlands, this condition appears to be met. Tillie (1995) concluded that ethnic minority voters do not differ from native voters concerning the basis on which they select their preferred party: the ethnic minority vote is based on an evaluation of party ideologies and policy similar to that of native voters. In the UK, such mobility is lacking, with an overwhelming ethnic minority voter loyalty to the Labour Party (Saggar, 1998).

Traditional voter loyalties might explain the ethnic minority vote rather than policy preferences. As Messina put it (1998): “the Labour Party is the most logical and effective vehicle for representing the political interests of ethnic minorities”, with “the non-white vote a specific ethnic vote”. He goes on to argue that social class does not predict partisan preferences of ethnic minority voters to nearly the same extent as among native voters. In another article Messina (1987) argues that ethnic minority preferences have been ignored by Labour because it was deemed a ‘safe vote’, while addressing ethnic minority preferences might have alienated native voters. He stresses the marginalised role of ‘excluded groups’ in...
two-party dynamics. If one party (the Conservative Party) openly chooses to not endorse the agenda of ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities have only two options: vote for Labour or exit the political process. Labour may count on ethnic minority voters to continue supporting the party, despite party movements going against the minorities’ interests. As such, the ‘non’ or ‘late’ emancipation of the British ethnic minority vote might be explained by the fact that in a two-party system voters have little place else to go, if they want to support a party that has access to political office. The Liberal Democrats may have started to fill this void. Polls in the run-up to the 2005 General Elections showed support among ethnic minority voters for Labour plummeting from 75% to 38%, with the Liberal Democrats the party primarily gaining from these losses. The main reason was very likely Labour’s stance on the Iraq war, and the ‘war on terrorism’, which alienated mainly Muslim voters, although the Liberal Democrats insist it was a more general trend, initiated by the ‘anti-immigrant hype’ started by the Conservatives in 2001 (and later intensified in 2005) (Goff, 2004). Labour, of course, dismissed this claim arguing that the Labour Party remained the ‘natural party’ for people believing in racial equality by virtue of its record on race equality legislation. The increasing volatility of ethnic minority’s party preferences, also in the UK, shows that the ethnic minority vote might not be as automatically assigned to Labour as it was in the past, and will urge Labour to be more responsive to its ethnic minority constituency.

The third element necessary for the ethnic minority vote to constrain left party movement is a pivotal position in the electoral battle. The punishing power of the ethnic minority vote hinges on the degree to which it poses a successful threat to established voter alignments. In the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK a rough 10% of votes are estimated to belong to voters with an ethnic minority background. Turnout among ethnic minority voters is often low, further diminishing their potential impact. Although it is clear from these figures that the ethnic minority vote cannot dominate elections, depending on the party system and vote distribution they may still have an independent impact on party movement on issues they care about. The Dutch and Flemish multi-party systems increase the mobility of ethnic minority voters, thereby increasing their potential impact, with many options for disenchanted ethnic minority voters to defect within the same left or right bloc. Because of proportional representation their impact never exceeds their relative number, and depends on the position of ethnic minority preferences relative to those of native voters in certain segments of the political market. In the Netherlands, around 10 of the 150 seats in parliament are estimated to be determined by the ethnic minority vote, depending on voter turnout (Verduijn, 2010). It’s a small share of the total vote, but a potentially powerful one in a fragmented party system if the ethnic minority vote were to be mobilised as a single block. In the UK, the two-party system, in which one vote can determine the difference between being in office or out, encourages a fierce battle for votes. The trade-off between anti-immigrant voters and ethnic minority voters defecting or staying home may be acute, depending on the configuration of preferences. At the same time, limited choice might bind voters to parties more strongly in two-party systems. Although the ethnic minority vote has ‘nowhere to go’ in the UK, the party system is very sensitive to the local distribution of preferences, which may work in favour of minority interests, and allow ethnic minorities to
hold a pivotal position in winning or losing a seat, despite their relatively small size. The 2001 census showed that in 25 constituencies, over 40% of voters were registered as being from an ethnic minority (Anwar, 2009). In these constituencies, the battle between more liberal and more restrictive factions within one party’s constituency may result in a serious tug of war. With inter-bloc competition presenting the main danger for parties in two-party systems, intra-bloc competition poses a threat for left parties in multi-party systems.

A Critique: Issue Ownership and Party Reputation

Before moving on to the empirical part of the chapter, it is useful to discuss one of the major critiques of the rational choice approach. Selective emphasis and issue ownership theory would predict severe constraints on party movement, unrelated to the distribution of voter preferences.

Probably the most important assumption when using a spatial model of political competition is that political parties directly confront each other’s policy positions, competing along the same dimensions and addressing the same issues. The political market is a ‘level playing field’ in which all parties compete as equals. A major critique of this conceptualisation of political competition can be found in the work of Budge and Farlie (1983) and later by Petrocik (see: Blomqvist & Green Pedersen, 2004; Petrocik, 1996), which emphasises the selective emphasis on issues by parties. Parties effectively ‘own’ some issues on which they are expected to perform better than any other party based on their reputation concerning this issue, and influenced by the performance of the incumbent government. The dynamics of agenda setting have a large impact on electoral competition as a result. If a party manages to manipulate the political agenda in its favour, that is, if it manages to focus attention on those policy issues that it is likely to handle best, an electoral victory will be relatively easily to obtain. If, on the other hand, the most important problems to be tackled do not belong to a party’s traditional competences, but to that of the opponent, the party is doomed to fight a losing battle. In essence there is no ‘neutral ground’ in theories of competition that focus on the selective emphasis of issues. Political parties have natural attributes, or identities, which cannot be credibly altered to suit each and every political battle. In more formal terms: political space is not equally accessible to all parties. This is a radical departure from the rational choice approach, which treats parties as empty vessels. In effect, according to issue ownership theory issue-based trust rather than ‘neutral’ information on policy content determines electoral outcomes.

Issue ownership theory adds an extra constraint to immigration politics: not only do attitudes, dimensionality and party positioning matter; party reputation becomes a crucial factor in determining political success. Translated to the two-dimensional model presented here, the most important implication would be that, despite the distribution of attitudes on the demand side of the political spectrum, on the supply side certain quadrants of political space remain inaccessible for specific political parties, which

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causes a curious disjunction between the distribution of voter preferences and possibilities for party supply. Long-term ideological constraints narrow possibilities for party supply, effectively reducing political space.

This situation is illustrated in figure 4. Two quadrants of political space, the lower left quadrant (left-wing socio-economic preferences and restrictive immigration preferences) and the upper right quadrant (right-wing socio-economic preferences and restrictive immigration preferences) fall outside the political space that can be effectively accessed by political parties as a result of reputational effects. On the demand side, however, we see that the inaccessible lower quadrant is filled with left-wing anti-immigration voters, who now have to choose between following socio-economic preferences and their immigration preferences. The empirical evidence for this trade-off effect for left voters is still relatively scarce, though Blomqvist and Green-Pedersen (2004) convincingly argue that immigration appears to be an issue where voters are willing to cross traditional ‘bloc’ lines to cast their vote in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, while the aforementioned study by Ivarsflaten (2005) argues this case concerning voters supporting anti-immigration parties in France and Denmark. These findings suggest that the rise of anti-immigration parties may lead to a decline of the vote for the bloc of left parties.

![Figure 4.4: Issue ownership, Political Space and Political Competition](image)

Left parties may try to defend themselves by campaigning on those issues on which voter preferences generally fall in the liberal quadrants. Following the same logic that restricts left party access to the restrictive quadrants of two-dimensional political space, left parties will try to move competition to the liberal quadrants that are only limitedly accessible for parties of the right with their restrictive reputations. Changing issues may change political dynamics profoundly if party reputation is taken into account. An example of such a strategy is the focus on anti-discrimination and equal opportunities legislation by Labour in the UK, which has been their major focus of immigration-related political competition, in conjunction with more restrictive rhetoric in the field of asylum and immigration control. If voters across the political spectrum support liberal anti-discrimination measures, this issue may counterbalance the more ‘difficult’ restrictive issues for parties of the left. The empirical part of the chapter will show whether
different topics inhabit different parts of the political spectrum, presenting distinct opportunities for parties with differential party reputations.

**Method and Data**

The data used for the analyses in this chapter come from the European Social Survey (ESS) 2002-2003, which had a specially added batch of questions on immigration. The study covers the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK, making cross-national comparison possible.

1. **Orthogonal vs. parallel dimensions: simple correlation**

The first aim of the empirical section is to assess the distribution of immigration attitudes relative to the left-right dimension, with a variety of immigration variables. To start with, the simple correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension is calculated using nine immigration-related variables. The immigration variables were selected to resemble the categories in chapter 5 on party movement and include attitudes towards: immigration control, labour immigration, asylum, family reunification, anti-discrimination, multiculturalism, immigrant rights, integration and the deportation of criminal immigrants\(^{15}\). The simple correlations will inform us as to whether the left-right and immigration dimensions can be considered orthogonal or parallel dimensions. As discussed, the presence or absence of a correlation between these two dimensions has an important influence on political dynamics, and determines the extent to which traditional party allegiances are upset by the activation of the immigration dimension.

2. **Illustration of correlation in two-dimensional political space**

To further illustrate and examine this phenomenon, the distribution of voter preferences will be depicted in a two-dimensional graph, which shows the mean value on the various immigration variables for each category (0-10) on the left-right axis. The result is a graph that can be compared to the two-dimensional spaces of political competition as pictured earlier in the chapter. These graphs, made for all cases and including all 9 immigration related issues, will show the relationship between the left-right and the (various) immigration issues. These pictures will give valuable insight into the preferences of voters along the whole left-right spectrum. Although dimensions of political competition are generally conceptualised as linear dimensions, it is likely that extreme left and extreme right voters will have diverging, more restrictive, immigration attitudes, possibly reshaping the immigration dimension in the shape of a horseshoe, with both extreme left and extreme right respondents having more restrictive immigration

\(^{15}\) For an overview: see Annex 2. Attitudes towards illegal immigration are not included in this chapter, as this category was not covered by the ESS data-set. The issue of deportation of criminal immigrants was added, seen that it might be an important variable for anti-immigration party support, judging from anti-immigrant rhetoric on the issue.
preferences. This could have an important impact on political competition, with mainstream parties competing for the favour of more liberal voters, and fringe parties on both the left and right competing for more restrictive voters.

3. The ethnic minority vote and its effect on political competition: comparison of means test
If a statistically significant correlation is found between these two dimensions, most probably with left voters less restrictive than voters of the right, the next question pertains to which structural variables might explain the correlation. One of the hypotheses to be tested concerns the effect of the ethnic minority vote on immigration attitudes. A comparison of means-test will point out whether immigrant attitudes on the set of immigration-relation variables differ from general opinion. After establishing whether there is indeed a difference between ethnic minorities and natives’ outlook on the diverse immigration issues, the question whether this difference significantly affects the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension will be explored. A recalculation of the simple correlation controlled for ethnic minority status will show the potential of ethnic minorities to affect party competition on immigration and constrain left party movement.

4. The absorption of the immigration dimension by the left-right dimension: regression analysis
Other structural variables such as age, education, gender, income, and trust in politics may also determine the relationship between these two dimensions, since it has been argued that these variables have a significant impact on immigration attitudes (McLaren, 2001; Norris, 2005; Sides & Citrin, 2007). A regression analysis will show the extent to which these variables affect the correlation between the two dimensions of competition. The results of the regression analysis will give us insight into the degree to which the immigration dimension has been absorbed by the left-right dimension.

5. Divisiveness of the immigration issue
The degree of divisiveness or agreement within political constituencies is explored using the van der Eijk agreement indicator (0-1), which is specifically designed to measure consensus when using ordered rating scales (van der Eijk, 2001). 0 stands for complete divisiveness, 1 stands for complete agreement. This indicator is calculated for political constituencies both at party system level and at party level on the issues of immigration control and integration. In addition to the figures on divisiveness, the percentage of restrictive voters is analysed, which shows incentives for co-optation strategies. Combined, these indicators illustrate the balance between incentives and constraints in the political market on immigration: parties with high levels of very restrictive voters are urged strongly to respond to an anti-immigration party, while they may be simultaneously inhibited from responding because of voter divisiveness on the issue.
Empirical results - The Netherlands

Correlation between left-right and immigration dimension

Table 2 presents the correlation between self-positioning on the left-right dimension, and attitudes towards a variety of immigration-related variables, indicating to which extent immigration preferences are informed by left-right positioning. No control variables have been used, as the simple correlation is a better aggregate measure to analyse expected dynamics pertaining to party positioning on immigration and indirect impact. A positive correlation between the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension is found for all variables, in all cases, disclosing an unambiguous relationship between the left-right and immigration preferences. In the Dutch case the strongest correlation is found on the issue of integration (0.230), closely followed by the issues of asylum (0.209), immigration control (0.208) and the deportation of criminal aliens (0.205). The weakest correlation is found in the area of anti-discrimination (0.115). For political dynamics, these correlations suggest it is unlikely that a liberal elite consensus endures once an anti-immigration party rises, as right parties are more likely to defect from a cross-party consensus than parties of the left. They also suggest that left parties will have ‘naturally’ more liberal positions than parties of the right.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>NL (2038)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration control</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour immigration</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation of criminal aliens</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Correlations Left-Right Dimension - Immigration Dimension, the Netherlands

Figure 5 presents more details with regard to the distribution of correlations in two-dimensional political space. The figure shows the mean value on the various immigration variables for each category (0-10) on the left-right axis. This graph can be compared to the two-dimensional spaces of political competition as pictured earlier in the chapter. The steeper the angle between the immigration-lines and the left-right

16 When analysing the correlation excluding the extreme ends of the political spectrum (left-right dimension 2-8) the results found are slightly weaker, except for the issue of anti-discrimination. This does not significantly impact the argument.
dimension in the graph, the stronger the correlation between these dimensions of political competition. More parallel lines in the graph depict a weaker or absent correlation between left-right and immigration preferences.

**Political competition on immigration in two-dimensional policy space**

The first characteristic to note is the slope of the immigration lines. As expected from the correlation coefficients found, the immigration lines slope gently downwards from the upper-left quadrant to the lower-right. Left voters have visibly more liberal immigration preferences than right voters. The relationship is, however, not a strictly linear one. The most liberal immigration values generally belong to voters who place themselves between 1 and 3 on a 0-10 left-right scale, depending on the issue at hand. Voters who position themselves at 9 or 10 on a 0-10 left-right scale have the most restrictive immigration preferences. On the extreme left of the political spectrum, at point 0, voters tend to have more restrictive views relative to their close neighbours on the left, which results in an overall horse-shoe shape for most immigration lines, albeit a rather flat and tilted one. The preferences of extreme-left voters are still far more liberal than the immigration preferences of voters in the centre and on the right of the political spectrum. An interesting phenomenon is the ‘dip’ in the middle of the political spectrum. Voters who
consider themselves to be nor left nor right, and position themselves right at the middle of the left-right scale, tend to have more restrictive immigration preferences than very moderate left or right voters at 4 or 6 points of the left-right axis. As we will see later on in the chapter, a considerable percentage of the electorate resides at this middle point of the left-right scale.

When comparing the different immigration-related variables, we can identify three distinct categories: the issues on which both left and right voters hold liberal preferences, the issues on which left voters hold liberal preferences and right voters hold restrictive preferences, and the issues on which voters across political spectrum hold mainly restrictive preferences. Anti-discrimination and immigrant rights belong fully to the first category, with multiculturalism following suit: only the voters at the extreme right have restrictive preferences concerning multiculturalism. Immigration control, labour immigration and integration are in the mixed category, in which left voters have liberal preferences and voters on the right have restrictive preferences. Finally, asylum, the deportation of criminal aliens and family reunification are in the restrictive category. Apart from very left voters who have liberal preferences on family reunification, voters across the political spectrum have restrictive preferences on these issues on average.

These distinctions are important, as they show that voters have an awareness of the differences between these policy areas, as well as distinct preferences relating to different policy issues. One size doesn’t fit all, despite the sometimes clichéd image of immigration politics. The results also show that parties of the left should not necessarily position themselves with liberal preferences on all issues, while parties of the right will not necessarily win with all-restrictive positions.

The distribution of voter preferences relative to the left-right dimension as described by the correlations and figure 5 has far-reaching consequences for political competition once an anti-immigration party rises. In the Dutch case, a liberal cross-party consensus will fall apart, with parties spreading across political space to best attract voters. Parties of the moderate left will be most successful with relatively liberal position, compared to parties of the right that feel a far stronger pull towards the more restrictive end of the political spectrum. More specifically, parties of the centre and moderate–right will likely adopt relatively restrictive stances, while there is room for a party with highly restrictive positions at the very right of the political spectrum. Indirect impact may also differ substantially from topic to topic. Voters demand restrictive positions on issues such as asylum, criminal aliens and family reunification across the board, which means that upholding a liberal consensus on these issues is out of the question. Conversely, voters appreciate liberal stances on anti-discrimination and immigrant rights, and to a certain extent on multiculturalism. If parties position themselves too restrictively on these topics this may lose them votes. The most important political opposition appears in the mixed category as described above, where left parties are advised to choose substantially more liberal positions compared to parties of the right. The other categories do not offer a real opposition between voters of the left and those of the right. Although

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left voters hold more liberal preferences compared to voters of the right, on average these differences may not be sufficient to constitute a real divide.

Comparison of means test

Table 3 presents the result of a comparison of means test, which analyses whether ethnic minorities indeed have divergent immigration preferences compared to native voters.\footnote{The indicator chosen is: father not born in country, mostly for reasons of comparability. Self-selected ethnic minorities had a too low N in Flanders for statistic analysis. The means of self-selected ethnic minorities are comparable to those of self-selected ethnic minorities.} Ethnic minority voters indeed appear to have statistically significant divergent preferences from native voters on all variables. As such, the ethnic minority vote can be considered a distinctly more liberal constituency of voters in the field of immigration politics. The pattern Money predicts, in which this gap is largest for integration variables and weaker for integration variables is also visible. Multiculturalism ($t=5.70$) and immigrant rights ($t=4.81$) are the two policy areas that show the largest gap with native voters, while the gap is smallest concerning immigration control ($t=1.81$) and the deportation of criminal aliens ($t=2.0$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Netherlands (by father not born in country)</th>
<th>Ethnic Minorities (191)</th>
<th>Natives (2080)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration control</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>5.15</td>
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<td>Labour immigration</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>1.96</td>
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<td>Asylum</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>2.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3. Do Ethnic Minority Voters Have Divergent Immigration and Integration-related Preferences Compared to Native Voters? the Netherlands.

To analyse whether these differences influence the correlation between the left-right and the immigration axis in two-dimensional political competition, a second analysis of simple correlations is performed controlling for the ethnic minority vote. The simple correlations found, laid out in table 4 are weaker than the original correlations but only very marginally so. The policy area in which the ethnic minority vote is

\footnotetext{Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism European University Institute DOI: 10.2870/4016
most likely to influence parties of the left is immigrant rights, as the difference between the correlations is highest in this policy area. Other areas in which the ethnic minority vote may constrain parties of the left include anti-discrimination, multiculturalism and integration.

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<th>p</th>
<th>NL (2038)</th>
<th>p</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration control</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour immigration</td>
<td>0.180</td>
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<td>0.183</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
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<td>Asylum</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>0.175</td>
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<td>0.174</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
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<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>0.108</td>
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<td>0.115</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
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<td>0.203</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>0.137</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4. Correlations Left-Right Dimension - Immigration Dimension Excluding Ethnic Minority Voters Compared to the Full Sample, the Netherlands.

These results also show that the liberal bias of voters on the left cannot be attributed solely to the presence and attitudes of ethnic minority voters. The resulting correlations excluding ethnic minorities from the sample are very comparable to the original findings. Although ethnic minorities have more liberal preferences than native voters on immigration politics, the results presented here suggest that the ethnic minority vote cannot fully account for the divergent pressures parties of the left and right are under in the face of a challenge by an anti-immigration party. Rather, it appears that left voters in general have more liberal immigration preferences than right voters, irrespective of their ethnic background, and that this effect is far greater than the constraints posed by the ethnic minority vote.

Regression analysis: absorption by the left-right dimension

To assess whether the left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration dimension, while controlling for other variables that might affect this relationship, a regression analysis has been performed using sex, age, education, income, and three different trust-related variables as control variables. The results can be found in table 5 (see: Annex 3). The results of the regression analysis unambiguously show the importance of the left-right dimension as an independent factor informing immigration preferences. The results show that left-right preferences indeed inform immigration preferences. The more left-wing a voter considers himself to be, the more liberal his views on immigration, irrespective of other characteristics. The correlation between these dimensions is statistically significant for all policy variables. The policy field of integration records the highest normalised beta coefficient (0.213**), closely followed by asylum (0.201**) and the deportation of criminal aliens (0.197**). The weakest, but still statistically significant, correlation is
found in the field of anti-discrimination (0.101**). Rather impressively, left-right preferences appear to be the most important factor determining immigration preferences for all policy variables, from which we can conclude that the left-right dimension has, to a certain degree, successfully absorbed the immigration dimension, stabilising the political market. Left-right preferences appear to have a far greater informative power than any of the control variables in predicting immigration preferences.

In the Netherlands the second most important factor in informing immigration preferences tends to be education, with higher levels of education corresponding with more liberal views on immigration. Trust-related variables also matter, but they matter considerably less. Within the cluster of trust-related variables the most important one in explaining immigration preferences is the ‘disillusioned voter’-variable, which measures to which extent voters feel ‘heard’ by their political elite. The greater the felt disconnect between voter and political elite, the more restrictive the voter’s immigration preferences tend to be. The ‘institutional-trust’ variable, which measures trust in parliament, also matters in a number of cases, but only marginally. The final trust-related variable, which measures trust in politicians in general matters in a majority of policy areas, but is of limited importance compared to other control variables.

An interesting result from the regression analysis is the role of ethnicity in informing immigration preferences. Echoing the conclusions from the comparison of means test, the results show that ethnicity matters, but only very limitedly. Ethnicity is in all cases secondary to left-right preferences, and in most cases also subordinate to education and trust-related variables in informing immigration preferences. Notable exception is the field of immigrant rights, in which ethnicity is the second most important explanatory variable. In the field of immigration control and the deportation of criminal aliens the correlation between ethnic minority status and immigration preferences disappears after controlling for the other variables. Finally, sex and age are statistically significant in some cases, but these effects tend to be of marginal importance. Income is the least significant variable in predicting immigration preferences. With regard to these last three variables, there is no apparent logic to the direction of the relationship; some variables are positively correlated with income whereas others are negatively correlated. This contradicts the general tendency shown by the data, which is a consistently positive or negative correlation between the range of independent and control variables and immigration-related preferences.

**Divisiveness**

Figure 6 analyses the divisiveness of the immigration issue in Dutch politics at party system level and at party level, using the left-right dimension, and party voted for as a reference point respectively. The left-right dimension has been divided into three parts: ‘Left’ (N=667) for respondents who positioned themselves below 5 on the 0-10 left-right scale, ‘Centre’ (N=590) for respondents who positioned themselves at point 5 of the scale and ‘Right’ (N=1028) for respondents who positioned themselves above 5. The figure shows the van der Eijk agreement indicator (0-1), which calculates the degree of divisiveness.
or agreement within that part of the left-right scale on the issues of immigration control and integration. 0 stands for complete divisiveness, 1 stands for complete agreement. Parties are sorted from most divided to least divided on the integration issue, as that issue was most important for the political debate in the Netherlands at the time. In addition to the figures on divisiveness, the percentage of very restrictive voters is analysed in figure 7. Parties are sorted from most restrictive to least restrictive on the integration issue. Combined, these indicators illustrate the balance between incentives and constraints in the political market on immigration: parties with high levels of very restrictive voters are urged strongly to respond to an anti-immigration party, while they may be simultaneously inhibited from responding because of voter divisiveness on the issue.

Figure 4.6. Degree of Agreement on the Immigration Issue, the Netherlands

Figure 4.7. Percentage of Very Restrictive Voters, the Netherlands

18 Voters are considered ‘very restrictive’ if they positioned themselves in the most restrictive category (out of 5) on the variable of immigration control / integration.
In the Dutch case, the first remarkable conclusion from the findings in figure 6 and 7 is that the right of the political spectrum is the most divided on immigration and integration, followed by the centre and finally the left, which is the most united part of the political spectrum. This goes against the general assertion that the left is hopelessly divided on immigration. In fact, these figures show that the Dutch right has a more pressing dilemma than the Dutch left in reacting to an anti-immigration party. While divisiveness within the share of right voters is relatively high (0.30 on immigration control; 0.31 on integration), a larger share of right voters has highly restrictive immigration preferences (12.3% on immigration control; 14.3% on integration). On the left, agreement scores are considerably higher (0.51 on immigration control; 0.41 on integration), while only a relatively small share of the electorate has highly restrictive preferences (4.9% on immigration control; and 5.5% on integration). The political centre hovers in the middle on both divisiveness (0.39 and 0.33) and restrictiveness (8.8% and 9.0% respectively).

The results at party level show that left-libertarian parties GroenLinks and D66 have the least divided constituencies. They occupy a position in political space that can safely rely on the immigration dimension. These parties have relatively little to lose when an anti-immigration party emerges and may even benefit because they are able to attract liberal voters defecting from other parties. Parties of the left, centre and right that have traditionally organised along the socio-economic dimension are more troubled by the immigration issue: CDA, PvdA and VVD belong to the top four most divided parties on both integration and immigration. They also have relatively high percentages of very restrictive voters who may defect to the anti-immigration party: respectively 7.4%; 9.4% and 9.3% of their voters have very restrictive immigration preferences and 7.8%; 8.5% and 11.6% have very restrictive integration preferences. As a result these parties will be most negatively affected when one-dimensional left-right political space opens up to two dimensions due to the activation of the immigration dimension by an anti-immigration party. The similarities between PvdA and VVD are especially remarkable: although VVD has a higher percentage of restrictive voters, the divisiveness characteristics of these parties are almost identical.

Finally, the results show that LPF’s constituency does not occupy an unambiguous position on the immigration dimension in two-dimensional political space. Although LPF attracted a high percentage of voters with very restrictive immigration and integration preferences- it is the most restrictive constituency - the level of divisiveness is still relatively high, occupying the middle position between the highly divided traditional left-right parties, and the relatively united left-libertarian parties. Judging from these figures, the vote for LPF is unlikely to have been solely driven by anti-immigration sentiments; the level of divisiveness on the immigration issue appears to be too high for that. Fortuyn also appealed to voters with a general anti-establishment frame, promising voters real change on pressing issues, while blaming the political establishment for ignoring these problems, which may have attracted voters. Also, the 2002 election, which is analysed here, was the election closely following Fortuyn’s assassination, which led to something of an impulsive sympathy vote for the murdered politician. Some of these voters may not have voted for Fortuyn had this tragedy not occurred.
Conclusion the Netherlands

The empirical analysis has shown the following general characteristics for Dutch immigration politics. Firstly, the left-right and the immigration dimension are moderately strongly correlated, with left voters holding significantly more liberal preferences than voters on the right. This correlation is found in all policy areas under discussion, although preferences differ considerably depending on which issue is discussed, with some policy areas falling wholly in the liberal quadrants of the political spectrum, and others in restrictive quadrants.

Secondly, the left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration dimension to a large degree. Statistically significant correlations remain after controlling for a range of control variables, indicating that left-right preferences have a strong independent impact on immigration preferences independent of other factors. In fact, left-right placement emerges as the strongest predictor of immigration preferences in Dutch immigration politics.

Thirdly, the divisiveness of the immigration issue is considerably high. Interestingly, the right of the political spectrum is more divided than the left at the aggregate level. At party level, one can observe the consolidation of the value cleavage in Dutch politics: left-libertarian parties are solidly united on the immigration issue, while parties organising along the socio-economic dimension are more polarised, whether they are parties of the left or right.

Fourthly, the ethnic minority vote is an electoral force of marginal importance in Dutch immigration politics. The main exception is the field of immigrant rights, in which ethnic minority voter preferences have a relatively strong impact on the correlation between the left-right and immigration dimension. In all policy fields left-right placement remains more important than ethnicity as an explanatory factor for immigration preferences.

Judging from these findings, the Dutch political landscape does not allow for forming a stable liberal elite consensus. The correlations and absorption found are strong enough to elicit significantly different policy positions from parties, indicating that the pull of indirect impact will be felt far more urgently by parties on the right compared to parties on the left, when an anti-immigration party rises. Parties on the left will favour a liberal consensus, as this is where their natural policy equilibrium lies, while parties of the right will defect once the anti-immigrant threatens to become too large. That being said, the politicisation of immigration has risks for parties across the political spectrum. Parties of the left run into difficulties with the immigration issue when they try to attract voters from the centre of the political spectrum who have far more restrictive political preferences, while parties of the mainstream left, centre and right all have significant trouble with internal oppositions within their constituencies. To avoid these troubles, parties across the political spectrum may choose to actively depoliticise the immigration issue.
Left-liberal parties GroenLinks and D66 form the exception to this dynamic. These parties have more united constituencies on immigration with liberal policy preferences. They may benefit from openly attacking the anti-immigration party, with relatively few voters to lose, and many to gain from the liberal wings of other parties that have to deal with stronger internal divisiveness. And indeed, the strongest attacks in parliament against Fortuyn and Wilders have come from the leaders of these parties, concerning for example Wilders’ proposals for abolishing dual citizenship and introducing a tax for women wearing the Muslim headscarf. This opposition underscores the fundamental repositioning of parties in multi-dimensional political space: the immigration dimension has become a backbone of political competition in its own right.

**Empirical Results Flanders**

**Correlation between left-right and immigration dimension**

Table 6 presents the correlation between self-positioning on the left-right dimension, and attitudes towards a variety of immigration-related variables, indicating to which extent immigration preferences are informed by left-right positioning. This is an analysis at the aggregate level of political competition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Flanders (944)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration control</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour immigration</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>&lt;0,05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>0.157</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>0.128</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminals leave</td>
<td>0.123</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6. Correlations Left-Right Dimension - Immigration Dimension, Flanders

A positive relationship between the left-right dimension and immigration preferences is found for all variables. In the Flemish political market the strongest correlation is found on the issue of integration (0,212), closely followed by the issues of immigration control (0,186), multiculturalism (0,157) and anti-

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19 When analysing the correlation excluding the extreme ends of the political spectrum (left-right dimension 2-8) I find very small differences resulting in both weaker and stronger correlations. There is no significant change in the overall picture.
discrimination (0,141). The weakest correlation is found in the area of labour immigration (0,053), which not statistically significant at the 0.95 level.

Figure 8 presents a detailed picture with regard to these correlations in two-dimensional political space. The figure shows the mean value on the various immigration variables for each category (0-10) on the left-right axis. The steeper the angle between the immigration-lines and the left-right dimension in the graph, the stronger the correlation between these dimensions of political competition. More parallel lines in the graph depict a weaker or absent correlation between left-right and immigration preferences.

![Political competition on immigration in two-dimensional policy space](image)

*Figure 4.8. Political Competition on Immigration in Two-Dimensional Policy Space, Flanders*

Very generally speaking, the slope of the immigration lines runs from the upper left-liberal corner towards the lower right-restrictive corner in direction, which matches the expectations suggested by the simple correlations. The very left of the political spectrum (at score 0) is the dramatic exception to the rule, with extreme left voters holding considerably more restrictive views than their more moderate left-wing counterparts. Because of this steep incline at the very left of the political scale, the overall shape of Flemish the immigration spectrum is that of a horseshoe. The most liberal voters can be found at point 1
and in some cases also point 3 of the left-right scale; while the most restrictive voters reside unambiguously at the very extreme right of the spectrum at score 10. A notable exception arises in the policy area of asylum: voters in the middle of the political spectrum (at score 5) have the most restrictive preferences, which are notably more restrictive than the asylum attitudes of voters on the left, while voters further to the right and extreme right have marginally more liberal asylum preferences. Similar to the Dutch case, the picture shows a ‘dip’ in the middle of the political spectrum (at score 5), with voters considering themselves left nor right holding more restrictive preferences in most policy areas, than very moderately left or right-leaning voters. This interesting phenomenon can quite likely be attributed to the clustering of a large share of the voting population at the middle of the political spectrum. Another segment of the political spectrum which does not adhere to the linear model is the extreme right at score 9 of the left-right scale. These voters are considerably more liberal on a variety of topics compared to their neighbours at point 8 and 10. This may be an outlier, and the result of a relatively small sample size. When it comes to labour immigration they are even the most liberal of voters across the left-right scale. On the other topics they are still considerably restrictive, consistent with the right-restrictive logic.

The policy areas show the same categorisation as in the Dutch case. Three policy areas fall in the liberal category, with voters across the left-right spectrum (with the exception of extreme right voters at point 10) holding liberal preferences on anti-discrimination, multiculturalism and immigrant rights. Three policy areas fall in the mixed category, with voters holding liberal or restrictive preferences depending on their positioning on the left-right dimension on immigration control, integration and labour immigration. The policy lines in this category meander around the x-axis on the left side of the political spectrum showing that left voters are not decidedly liberal in these policy areas. Apart from the extreme right, there are no clearly demarcated constituencies on these issues. Finally, three policy areas fall in the restrictive category regardless of voter positioning on the left-right continuum: family reunification, asylum and the deportation of criminal aliens.

The distribution of voter preferences relative to the left-right dimension as described by the correlations and distribution of immigration attitudes across the left-right spectrum will urge parties to defect from a liberal elite consensus once an anti-immigration party rises. Although these pressures tend to be stronger for parties of the right than for parties of the left, the generally restrictive bias of voters will have a considerable impact on party positions. In some policy areas a liberal agenda is out of the question for any party. As also indicated by the correlation coefficients, the specific issues of integration and immigration control show the largest differences between left and right, which suggests that parties of the left should pursue a substantially different immigration strategy on these issues, and indirect impact is likely to affect parties differentially. In the other policy areas these differences are more marginal, as indicated by the

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20 The sample size is half that of the Netherlands and the UK, because Walloon voters are taken out of the sample. Also, fewer voters reside on the extreme ends of the political spectrum.
smaller correlation coefficients and the relatively flat policy lines in the pictures. In these policy areas the
differences between parties of the left and right are expected to be far less pronounced. In the latter case,
pressures are felt relatively evenly across the political spectrum, providing incentives for upholding cross-
party agreements. An interesting example is the policy area of asylum. Although general public opinion
would pull parties towards highly restrictive positions, mainstream parties have no tangible electoral
incentives to defect from a cross-party consensus, due to the small correlation between the dimensions of
political competition. Unless an anti-immigration party threatens to attract a large share of the vote on the
issue, parties may successfully uphold a liberal cross-party consensus.

Comparison of means test

Table 7 presents the result of a comparison of means test, which helps assess the extent to which the
ethnic minority vote contributes to the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension.
The t-test shows whether there is a specific ethnic minority vote, with different, more liberal preferences,
than those of native voters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ethnic Minorities (86)</th>
<th>Natives (1088)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration control</td>
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<td>5.40</td>
<td>1.96</td>
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<td>Asylum</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>6.77</td>
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<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
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<td>Multiculturalism</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Integration</td>
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<td>2.90</td>
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<td>Immigrant Rights</td>
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<td>2.45</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7. Do Ethnic Minority Voters Have Divergent Immigration and Integration-related Preferences
Compared to Native Voters? Flanders.

The results laid out in table 7 confirm the thesis that ethnic minority voters have statistically significant
divergent preferences from native voters. This distinction is present in all policy areas, apart from anti-
discrimination (t=0.06); and it is weak in the fields of family reunification (t=1.86) and multiculturalism
(t=1.75). The largest gap between ethnic minority and native voters appears in the policy field of
immigration control (t=3.97), followed by immigrant rights (t=3.80) and integration (t=3.20). The
immigration/integration dichotomy as formulated by Money (1999a, 1999b) is disconfirmed for the
Flemish case: Flemish ethnic minorities care about integration and immigrant rights, but they are

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands,
Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute
DOI: 10.2870/4016
especially more liberal than native Flemish voters when it comes to immigration control. In the field of anti-discrimination, which is one of the policy areas in which voters of all political leanings with the exception of the extreme right hold liberal policy preferences, the difference between native and ethnic minority voters is slight, and not statistically significant.

To analyse whether these differences influence the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension in two-dimensional political competition, a second analysis of simple correlations is performed controlling for the ethnic minority vote. The results are laid out in table 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Flanders (870)</th>
<th>Flanders (944)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration control</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labour immigration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,05</td>
<td>&lt;0,05</td>
</tr>
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<td>Asylum</td>
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<td>0.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.141</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>0.153</td>
<td>0.157</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>0.224</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>0.151</td>
<td>0.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
<td>&lt;0,01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8. Correlations Left-Right Dimension - Immigration Dimension Excluding Ethnic Minority Voters Compared to Full Sample, Flanders

Interestingly, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension becomes stronger, rather than weaker in the majority of policy areas after controlling for the ethnic minority vote, most notably with regard to the deportation of criminal aliens, labour immigration and integration. In three policy areas the correlation becomes weaker, but still remains considerably strong. These results do not support the thesis that the liberal bias of voters on the left can be attributed solely, or at all, to the presence and attitudes of ethnic minority voters. Ethnic minorities hold more liberal preferences than native voters on immigration politics, but the results presented here contradict the thesis that the ethnic minority vote can account for the divergent pressures parties of the left and right are under in the face of a challenge by an anti-immigration party. Apparently a fair share of the ethnic minority vote self-identifies as right-wing rather than left-wing. In the majority of cases ethnic minority background dilutes the correlation between left-right preferences and immigration preferences in Flanders, rather than strengthening it.
Regression analysis

To assess whether the Flemish left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration dimension, while controlling for other variables that might affect this relationship, a regression analysis has been performed using sex, age, education, income, and three different trust-related variables as control variables. The results can be found in table 9 (see: Annex 3). The results show that the left-right dimension has to some degree absorbed the immigration dimension. Apart from preferences on the issue of labour immigration, which are not informed by left-right preferences, a significant effect of left-right preferences on immigration preferences is found in all policy fields. The highest reported normalised beta coefficients are found in the fields of immigration control (0.173**), integration (0.173**) and family reunification (0.154**). The more left-wing the voter, the more liberal her immigration preferences tend to be.

Nevertheless, the absorption of the immigration issue by the left-right dimension cannot be said to be complete. The Flemish figures do not show a general supremacy of the left-right dimension over other variables in informing immigration preferences, with levels of education appearing most often as the most important explanatory factor. Education is followed closely by left-right preferences and at some distance by the ‘institutional trust’ variable. Voters have more restrictive preferences firstly when they have fewer years of education; secondly, when they consider themselves to be more right-wing, and in some cases thirdly when they have a lower trust in political institutions. In this configuration parties cannot rely simply on their voters’ left-right orientations to inform them on a successful immigration strategy. The highly-educated tend to have significantly different opinions compared to the lower-educated, trumping left-right orientations.

In the fields of immigration control, labour immigration and multiculturalism, trust seems to have a significant impact on policy preferences. The ‘institutional trust’ variable tends to display the strongest correlations, followed at some distance by the ‘disillusioned voter’ variable, and at a further distance by the ‘trust in politicians’ variable. The pattern displayed is rather weak, with a number of policy areas showing no correlation with trust-related variables, and quite a few with only weak correlations.

With the exception of the policy field of immigrant rights, ethnic minority status is a rather weak predictor of immigration preferences. Other policy areas in which ethnic minority status makes a statistically significant difference include immigration control and labour immigration, as well as the deportation of criminal aliens, asylum and integration. In these policy fields the explanatory power of other factors including education, left-right preferences and trust-related variables exceed that of ethnic minority status. In the policy fields of family reunification, anti-discrimination, and surprisingly, multiculturalism ethnic background does not inform policy preferences significantly.

Income, age and sex are the least significant variables in explaining immigration preferences. Income is the weakest predictor overall, as it displays not one statistically significant correlation with immigration
preferences. Age appears to matter in a number of policy areas, but the direction in which it matters is not unambiguous. Older voters tend to be more liberal in the policy areas of asylum and family reunification, but they tend to be more restrictive concerning immigration control, integration and multiculturalism. Sex displays a similar ambiguous pattern, while correlations tend to be quite weak.

**Divisiveness**

In Flanders, VB had already established itself as a major force in politics at the time of data collection. Flemish parties had had to deal with an ever-growing anti-immigration party since the late 1980s, despite the cordon sanitaire that had been installed. The Flemish figures on divisiveness and restrictiveness illustrate which political forces lay beneath the cordon sanitaire of two decades. Figure 9 analyses the divisiveness of the immigration issue in Flemish politics at both party system level and at party level, using respectively the left-right axis, and party voted for as a reference point. The Flemish political landscape has been reduced to the ‘Left’ (N=317), the ‘Centre’ (N=385) and the ‘Right’ (N=475) at party system level, and well as divided into party constituencies (party voted for in last election) at party level. The percentage of restrictive voters is analysed in figure 10, which indicates the incentive for parties to respond to an anti-immigration party. Together the divisiveness and restrictiveness of political constituencies form the incentives and constraints for reacting to the anti-immigration party.

![Figure 4.9. Degree of Agreement on the Immigration Issue, Flanders](image-url)
The results show that in Flanders, the left, centre and right of the political spectrum are more or less equally divided on the issue of immigration. This goes against the general assertion that the left of the political spectrum has more trouble integrating the immigration issue than the right. On integration, however, this assertion is confirmed: the left is far more divided on integration than the centre and right of the political spectrum. Integration appears to be a weak spot for Flemish parties on the left. Nevertheless, the parts of the political spectrum most affected by the anti-immigration party are likely to be the centre and right, not primarily because they are divided on immigration and integration, but because of the substantial share of voters with highly restrictive immigration preferences. While divisiveness scores hover around 0.4 for the right and centre on both immigration and integration; their percentages of highly restrictive voters amount to respectively 13.8% and 16.0% on immigration and a massive 18.4% and 20.6% on integration. That’s a considerable share of voters that might choose to vote for VB.

Moving to party level, the high agreement scores on immigration and integration for the parties organising around the value dimension, the green party Agalev and VB, are the first result to catch attention. These results show that this second dimension of competition is a mature one in Flanders, and attracts voters to parties at either end. These parties assume a distinct position in two-dimensional political space relative to the more traditional parties. Agalev can be characterised as having a distinctly liberal constituency, with relatively low percentages of anti-immigration voters (4.8% on immigration and 6% on integration) and relatively high agreement scores (0.56 and 0.48 respectively); while VB, not surprisingly, has a strong anti-immigrant constituency: 41.3% of their voters have very restrictive immigration and integration preferences, while agreement scores on immigration are high (0.58 and 0.61 respectively). Whereas the Dutch case only showed a consolidated immigration dimension at the liberal end of the cleavage, the Flemish dimension is consolidated at both ends. VB attracts a coherent share of voters, united on the immigration dimension. These findings shine a new light on the motives of Agalev to initiate the cordon
sanitaire. Earlier in the chapter we hypothesised that the cordon was installed primarily to depoliticise the immigration dimension, and protect parties from the anti-immigration party. These figures show that the party needing the least of such protection is Agalev. The question really comes down to how a cordon sanitaire impacts political competition. Agalev had little to lose no matter how this would turn out: if the cordon would lead to depoliticisation and would manage to isolate and deflate VB, this would be a moral victory, which would reflect well on the party. If the cordon would not succeed in depoliticising immigration and combating VB, and would lead instead to a power struggle on the immigration dimension, this would not be a particularly troublesome prospect. Agalev could stand to win votes from the liberal wings of the more divided traditional parties, while very few voters would abandon the party over the issue.

For the other parties, the immigration issue appears to be more troublesome. For CVP the most important challenge would be not to lose its highly restrictive voters to VB, which it has a fair share of (13.3% and 19%; on immigration and integration respectively). Divisiveness seems to be less pressing compared to other parties (0.44 and 0.41), which means that if the cordon would fail to depoliticise immigration, and VB would continue attracting new voters, CVP would likely be drawn into direct political competition with VB despite the cordon. For SP and VLD divisiveness figures are much higher (agreement scores of 0.34 and 0.31 for SP and 0.32 and 0.33 for VLD) which suggests there is a lot at stake for these parties, depending on whether the immigration dimension is activated or not. They will strongly prefer political competition along the socio-economic dimension compared to the immigration dimension. VU voters have a mixed profile. On immigration they have the most liberal profile (2.2% very restrictive voters), and are highly united (agreement score of 0.59), but on integration their preferences differ. 11.1% of VU voters had highly restrictive integration preferences and the agreement score of 0.31 puts them squarely in the troubled party category on the integration issue.

A startling characteristic of the Flemish political market on immigration is the high percentage of restrictive voters in general, also among the larger mainstream parties. Despite the already significant defections to VB seen its size in 1999, parties had not lost enough restrictive voters to become immune to attacks by VB. More than 10% of remaining voters voting for mainstream parties had highly restrictive preferences. This phenomenon begs the question of whether installing a cordon sanitaire may have aggravated the situation, instead of depoliticising and toning down the immigration issue, which was the initial objective.

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute
DOI: 10.2870/4016
Conclusion Flanders

The dynamics of Flemish immigration politics can be summarised in the following general conclusions. Firstly, the left-right and the immigration dimension are moderately strongly correlated: left voters on average have more liberal immigration preferences than voters on the right of the political spectrum. These differences vary by policy area; and with some policy areas eliciting more restrictive or liberal attitudes in general from voters compared to others. As a result of this consistent correlation, the immigration issue cannot be considered a crosscutting issue relative to the left-right dimension.

Secondly, the left-right dimension has partially absorbed the immigration dimension. The regression analysis shows that left-right placement is an important predictor of immigration preferences, but is not the single most powerful explanatory variable in Flemish immigration politics. Consistent with earlier research on immigration preferences, education is another powerful contender in determining immigration attitudes. The left-right and the education cleavages tend to be of relatively equal importance in Flemish immigration politics.

Thirdly, Flemish voters of the left, centre and right are more or less equally divided on immigration while the left is most divided on integration. At party level, the traditional mainstream parties are most divided, while the Agalev and VB form a strong opposition along the immigration dimension with the most united constituencies.

Fourthly, the ethnic minority vote cannot be considered a constraining force in Flemish immigration politics. Although voters with an ethnic minority background tend to have more liberal immigration preferences than native voters, these differences tend to weaken, rather than strengthen the relationship between left-right and immigration preferences in most policy areas.

This configuration of voter preferences shapes the dynamics of immigration politics. To start with, if we consider the Flemish electoral market to be an independent entity in the Belgian party system, a liberal elite consensus is unlikely to remain stable with the rise of an anti-immigration party. Due to the correlation of the left-right and the immigration dimension, parties on the right will have stronger incentives to adopt a restrictive immigration stance compared to parties on the left, which puts considerable pressure on liberal cross-party agreements. This dynamic is reinforced by the high percentage of restrictive voters that reside within right party constituencies.

This result is a surprise seen the continued emphasis on the cordon. For left parties such a strategy is a rational one, and indeed we have seen Flemish left parties insisting on installing a cordon sanitaire to institutionally protect the cross-party consensus, more so than parties of the right. Apart from diluting the strength of the right party block, this strategy has three potential advantages for parties of the left: (1) it
weakens the position of the parties of the centre and right by restricting their movement on the immigration dimension, while on average satisfying their own left-leaning liberal voters and party elite; (2) it diminishes the risk of immigration becoming an important dimension of political competition, minimising oppositions within the party constituency; and (3) it allows parties to ignore defections to the anti-immigration party. Although normative arguments may play a role, electoral dynamics conveniently support left party indignation. Why right parties would continue to support the cordon is less obvious, although the second and third line of reasoning mentioned may also apply to parties of the centre and right. The high variance of voter opinion on the issue is likely an important electoral reason for parties on the right to agree on an official cordon sanitaire.

In the Belgian context the role of the Walloon party system provides another important electoral reason for parties across the political spectrum to install a cordon. This may be the key to understanding the configuration in which parties of the left and right agree to uphold the cordon. Walloon parties provide access to power and cannot be excluded like an anti-immigration party. The absence of a strong anti-immigration party on the Walloon side may cause a liberal bias on both sides of the language divide. If Flanders were to have a wholly independent party system, it is unlikely the cordon would survive, seen the pressures on parties of the right due to the configuration of voter preferences as analysed in this chapter. If strategies to protect themselves against anti-immigrant losses and try to re-establish the left-right dimension as the most important dimension of political competition failed, as they probably would taking into account the size of VB, it is unlikely they would let the cordon restrict right party movement on immigration. Parties of the right could only lose from remaining in such an explicitly liberal policy consensus. The configuration of voter preferences points towards co-optation as the most rational response to the rise of an anti-immigration party.

The question of whether the cordon has contributed to the defusing of the immigration issue in Flanders is highly debatable according to these results. To start with, the opposition between VB and Agalev shows that the immigration dimension has become an institutionalised part of Flemish politics. The immigration dimension unites the constituencies of these parties, while it divides the constituencies of parties traditionally organising along the left-right dimension. Initiating the cordon may have caused Agalev to consolidate rather than negate this dimension of political competition. Although excluding VB from power may have kept politicisation of the issue relatively low on the supply side of the political market, the high percentage of Flemish voters with very restrictive immigration preferences indicates that this strategy has not succeeded in mitigating voter preferences on immigration. The cordon affects power constellations, but has not been able to curb voter demand for restrictive immigration policies, nor has it prevented the immigration dimension from becoming an institutionalised dimension of political competition.
Empirical Results United Kingdom

**Correlation between left-right and immigration dimension**

Table 10 presents the correlation between self-positioning on the left-right dimension, and attitudes towards a variety of immigration-related variables, indicating to which extent immigration preferences are informed by left-right positioning at the aggregate level in the UK.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>UK (1719)</th>
<th>( p )</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Immigration control</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour immigration</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>0.116</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.10. Correlations Left-Right Dimension - Immigration Dimension, UK*  

A positive relationship between the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension is found for all variables. In strength, the British correlations differ substantially from the Dutch and Flemish results: the strongest correlation in the British case, found in the policy area of multiculturalism (0.147) is comparable in strength to weaker correlations in the Dutch cases. Comparable policy areas include asylum (0.143) and immigration control (0.143), followed by integration (0.135) and the deportation of criminal aliens (0.131) with slightly weaker correlations. The weakest correlation is found in the field of anti-discrimination (0.067).

Figure 11 presents more details with regard to these correlations. The figure shows the mean value on the various immigration variables for each category (0-10) of the left-right dimension. British immigration lines in two-dimensional space have a gentle downward slope, corresponding with the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension. The extreme left is the exception to this pattern, with voters at the 0 and 1 point with restrictive preferences on average. The most liberal voters tend to be concentrated at point 2, which is the highest point of most immigration lines. From the centre-left,

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21 When calculating correlations for the left-right dimension 2-8 I find slight differences compared to the results for the entire left-right dimension, both stronger and weaker. There is no significant change in overall picture.
towards the right preferences become more restrictive. The most restrictive voters are concentrated at the extreme right of the political spectrum.

**Political competition on immigration in two-dimensional policy space**

The ‘dip’ which showed up at the middle of the political spectrum in the Flemish and Dutch cases is also visible in the British case. Voters at point 5 of the political spectrum, which accounts for a large share of the total voter population, have far more restrictive preferences than their neighbours on the moderate left, and slightly more restrictive preferences than their neighbours on the moderate right. This pattern of immigration preferences is to the disadvantage of the party on the left, especially in the British two-party system. Any party wanting to win a majority of the vote will need the voters in the centre of the political spectrum. As the picture shows, these voters show more similarity to the voters on the right of the political spectrum than those on the left. As a result, the main party on the left has to juggle a larger variety of preferences: with voters on the extreme left of the political spectrum holding on average restrictive preferences, voters of the moderate left with liberal preferences, and voters of the centre with restrictive preferences. The main party of the right will likely be able to attract a large share of the vote with moderately restrictive stances, without these troubles.
The British policy areas show a markedly different pattern compared to the Dutch and Flemish patterns. To start with, there are only two policy areas that fall squarely in the liberal quadrants: anti-discrimination and immigrant rights. Multiculturalism is valued less strongly in Britain, and joins a cluster of other policy areas that fall in the ‘mixed’ category, which combines liberal and restrictive preferences. This cluster, which is very tight, includes asylum, immigration control, labour immigration, integration and family reunification. Whereas Flemish and Dutch voters clearly distinguish between these policy areas, British voters assess them very similarly. Perhaps the most interesting case in point is the presence of asylum in the cluster of policy areas. The British voter shows very similar attitudes towards asylum compared to other policy areas, whereas Dutch and Flemish voters hold more restrictive attitudes on the asylum issue. The only issue that falls entirely in the restrictive quadrants is the issue of deportation of criminal aliens.

With the distribution of voter preferences on immigration relative to the left-right dimension described by the correlation and the policy lines in figure 11, a liberal elite consensus will probably not be stable once immigration becomes an important issue for political competition. Nevertheless, the correlations tend to be weaker than in the Dutch and Flemish case indicating that parties of the left and the right are relatively more equally constrained in the UK. Two policy areas allow for liberal positions across the political spectrum: anti-discrimination and immigrant rights, which offers parties a liberal alternative to focus their attention on. On other issues political competition will urge parties of the left to adopt neutral policy positions balancing the preferences of more restrictive extreme left and centre-voters with more liberal moderate left voters; and parties of the right to adopt moderately to strongly restrictive immigration positions.

**Comparison of means test**

Table 11 presents the result of a comparison of means test, which shows whether there is a specific ethnic minority vote with different, more liberal preferences, than those of native voters. If so, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension may be related to the presence of ethnic minority voters. The results indeed show ethnic minority voters to have statistically significant more liberal preferences than native voters on all issues except on the deportation of criminal aliens. This difference is most pronounced in the field of labour immigration ($t=7.73$), followed by multiculturalism ($t=7.03$) and immigration control ($t=5.15$). Although ethnic minority voters are also more liberal when it comes to anti-discrimination ($t=2.82$), integration ($t=4.86$) and immigrant rights ($t=4.15$), the issues that would arguably be most important for ethnic minority constituencies, the differences with native voters are less pronounced. With regard to anti-discrimination legislation, the native voter population can be said to be fairly liberal, and the resulting gap with ethnic minority voters is modest.
UK (by father not born in country)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Ethnic Minorities (249)</th>
<th>Natives (1737)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>7.35</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11. Do Ethnic Minority Voters Have Divergent Immigration and Integration-related Preferences Compared to Native Voters? UK.

To analyse whether the gap between the ethnic minority vote and native voters significantly influences the correlation between the left-right and the immigration axis in two-dimensional political competition, a second analysis of simple correlations is performed controlling for the ethnic minority vote. The results are laid out in table 12.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>p</th>
<th>UK (1719)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour immigration</td>
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<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification</td>
<td>0.098</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.116</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-discrimination</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant rights</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deport criminal aliens</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12. Correlations Left-Right Dimension - Immigration Dimension excluding Ethnic Minority Voters Compared to Full Sample, UK

Judging from the results, the ethnic minority vote may pose minor electoral constraints in a number of policy areas, most notably in the field of family reunification, as well as multiculturalism. The ethnic minority vote is not sufficient to explain the correlation between the left-right and the immigration
dimension, nor does it affect the correlation in a major way. In two policy areas, integration and the deportation of criminal aliens, the ethnic minority vote weakens the correlation between these dimensions. Judging from the simple correlations the role of ethnic minority status in influencing political competition on immigration will be relatively small.

**Regression analysis**

To assess whether the British left-right dimension has absorbed the immigration dimension, while controlling for other variables that might affect this relationship, a regression analysis has been performed using sex, age, education, income, and three different trust-related variables as control variables. The results can be found in table 13 (see: Annex 3). A statistically significant correlation is found between the left-right and the immigration dimension in all policy areas, after controlling for a range of relevant control variables. This finding suggests that the left-right dimension has to some extent absorbed the immigration dimension. The absorption is strongest with regard to multiculturalism (0,125**), asylum (0,121**) and immigration control (0,120**); and weakest in the field of anti-discrimination (0,051*).

Despite the consistent correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension, with left-wing voters holding more liberal preferences as compared to right-wing voters, left-right preferences have only very limited powers of explaining immigration preferences in the UK. Education has by far the strongest explanatory power in the British results, followed only at a distance by left-right preferences and the ‘institutional trust’ variable. Other factors, in this case education, trump the left-right dimension as an organising force.

Of the trust-related variables, the ‘institutional trust’ variable, which measures trust in parliament, appears as the strongest predictor of immigration preferences, followed by the ‘disillusioned voter’ variable. It’s especially in the fields of immigration control, labour immigration and multiculturalism that trust appears to matter. The ‘trust in politicians’ variable appears to matter only very marginally, with a weak significant relationship found in a couple of policy areas.

Ethnic minority background is an interesting case. Similar to the Dutch and Flemish results, some of the differences between ethnic minority voters and native voters as found in the comparison of means test disappear after controlling for other variables. In fact, in the UK, ethnic minority status matters independently in only two policy areas. The first policy area in which this is the case is labour immigration, although education and institutional trust matter more; the second policy area is multiculturalism, with education, the ‘institutional trust’ variable, the ‘disillusioned voter’ variable and left-right preferences appearing with a higher explanatory value. Rather surprisingly, there is no significant correlation between ethnic minority status and preferences in the field of immigrant rights, or any of the other fields which showed weak but statistically significant correlations in Flanders and the Netherlands. Overall, ethnic minority status is a very weak predictor of immigration preferences in the UK.
Finally, sex, age and income show no strong pattern of explanation. The exception is anti-discrimination, where age appears as the strongest predictor of preferences, with younger people more strongly in favour of such measures compared to older people. Apart from this policy area there is no unambiguous direction of correlation between age and immigration preferences. Sex too, is only of relatively minor importance in the cases in which a significant correlation is found, and the direction of correlation is not consistent across policy areas. Income matters more in the UK compared to the Netherlands and Flanders, but only very marginally overall, with richer voters having more liberal immigration preferences compared to poorer voters with regard to immigration control, anti-discrimination, multiculturalism and integration. Poorer voters appear to have statistically more liberal preferences on asylum. In sum, sex, age, and income are weak predictors of immigration preferences.

**Divisiveness**

The argument that the left is politically divided on immigration more so than the right is often mentioned by scholars specifically studying British politics, with the opposition between Labour and the Conservatives in mind (Saggar, 1998, p. 66). As we have seen in a previous section, ethnic minority voters on their own are not numerous enough to constitute a divide that has critical consequences for electoral politics (with the exception of a few specific constituencies), although they do tend to have more liberal preferences than majority voters. This begs the question whether such a critical divide exists at all, or whether this alleged divide is simply a matter of a struggle over immigration ideology within the party elite, rather than a battle of numbers within the party constituency. Figure 12 says it all: it shows that the British left (N=464), right (N=732) and centre (N=800) are more or less equally divided on immigration and integration at party system level (agreement scores are 0,32 and 0,31; 0,37 and 0,27; and 0,34 and 0,32; for the left, centre and right respectively), but that, at party level, Labour voters are far more divided than Conservative voters on immigration and integration. Labour has agreement scores of 0,26 and 0,23; while the Conservatives score 0,34 and 0,38. The LibDems are the least divided with agreement scores of 0,41 and 0,37. In terms of percentages of restrictive voters, Labour and LibDem constituencies have very similar profiles, with just below 10% of very restrictive voters, as figure 13 shows. Conservative voters tend to have more restrictive preferences: 13,8% of Conservative voters have very restrictive immigration preferences, while 13% of voters have very restrictive integration preferences. At party system level, the correlation between left-right and immigration preferences is clearly visible: the more right-wing the voter, the higher the percentage of restrictive preferences.
Labour has the highest level of divisiveness of all parties in this chapter, which indicates that immigration and integration are topics the party is well advised to avoid, as they highlight strong disagreement on the topic within the party’s constituency. Given this weakness, it makes sense for the Conservatives to compete on immigration, and exploit its direct rival’s dividedness. In response to an anti-immigrant threat, such as a local threat from UKIP of the BNP, these figures also suggest that the Conservatives will move first: they have a higher percentage of voters which may defect to these parties, while their agreement scores suggest this will not cause them a disadvantage in their simultaneous competition over votes with Labour. Labour may have to follow suit depending on the share of voters that may defect to the anti-immigration party, but will do so more hesitantly. The divisiveness of immigration for Labour is not a myth or an affair of the party elite; it is rooted in the party constituency’s preferences.
Conclusion United Kingdom

The dynamics of immigration politics in the UK have their basis in the following demand-side characteristics. Firstly, a consistent statistically significant correlation is found between the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension. This correlation is found in all policy areas, although the strength of the correlation varies. Generally speaking, the correlations are weaker compared to the correlations found in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Secondly, the left-right dimension has not absorbed the immigration dimension, as education is a far stronger predictor of immigration preferences compared to left-right preferences. In fact, in some cases even trust-related variables are more strongly correlated with immigration preferences than left-right preferences, from which one can conclude that the left-right dimension is not the dominant organising force in British immigration politics. This phenomenon can be explained with the centripetal two-party system in mind, which organises mainly around the centre of the left-right dimension. Both voters and parties gravitate towards the centre of the political spectrum diminishing the explanatory power of the left-right dimension.

Thirdly, the British vote is highly divided on immigration: the left, centre and the right of the political spectrum are all more or less equally divided, with strong internal oppositions within voter constituencies. At party level, the party most troubled by divisiveness is Labour, which has extremely low agreement scores. The Conservatives and LibDems fare relatively better.

Fourthly, the ethnic minority vote is only a very marginal constraint on left party movement. Although voters with an ethnic minority background are a distinct constituency with more liberal immigration preferences, they have a considerable effect on the aggregate correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension only in the policy fields of multiculturalism and family reunification. After controlling for other variables the impact of the ethnic minority vote all but disappears.

Immigration politics in the UK has two political dynamics contending with each other. On the one hand, a liberal elite consensus is likely to be relatively stable seen the high divisiveness of the issue across the political spectrum at party system level and the relatively weak correlation between left-right and immigration preferences. On the other hand, at party level, the Conservative Party is most likely to benefit from competing on immigration. Once immigration becomes a salient issue, Labour will feel the electoral disruption far more strongly, which may be a reason for the Conservatives to compete quite fiercely on the issue. The trade-off for British political parties is between trying not to upset a delicate political balance by introducing an electorally volatile issue, and deliberately trying to upset the political balance, with maximum damage to the party on the other side of the political spectrum. Labour is without a doubt
in the weakest position once this power play commences. The party’s constituency is highly divided on immigration, with liberal and restrictive factions strongly opposing each other.

On the whole, the immigration dimension has not yet become a consolidated dimension of political competition in the UK. The UK lacks a party structure which mobilises voters on the immigration dimension on a grand scale: the LibDem constituency is only marginally more united on immigration than the Conservative constituency, which shows that the immigration dimension has not been consolidated on the liberal end of the spectrum. On the restrictive end, BNP and UKIP are very likely to have constituencies highly united on immigration, but these parties don’t attract shares of the vote significant enough to dominate politics at the national level. This leaves the larger parties, the Conservatives and Labour to dominate politics, and does not leave room for smaller parties to transform political space using the issue of immigration to do so. More than an issue that is capable of upsetting the basic structure of the party system in which two parties compete for power, immigration has to be viewed as an issue that can be strategically used to tip the power balance towards one of those parties, the Conservative Party, if the immigration card is played.

**Conclusion**

The founders of the cordon sanitaire in Flanders stress that the cordon should be interpreted first and foremost as a matter of ethics and principle, rather than as a vote-seeking strategy (Geysels, de Lange, & Fennema, 2008). Geysels, former party leader of Agalev who can be considered the father of the cordon, argued that a cordon sanitaire as it was initially conceptualised makes the distinction between parties that can be considered ‘opponents’ in a liberal democracy, and parties that are ‘enemies’ of liberal democracy and which, for that reason should be shunned. He warned against what he calls the ‘normalisation’ of the extreme-right: against treating VB as a ‘normal’ party, switching over from being an ‘enemy’, to being an ‘opponent’ or even an ‘ally’. The results of this chapter show that Geysels’ appeal for ethical politics makes high demands on some parties’ willingness to forsake votes and access to power for the sake of morality, while these demands are much less pronounced for other parties (most notably his own!). Although constituencies of the left, right and centre are more or less equally divided on immigration at party system level, at party level these underlying preferences are aggregated in such a way that dramatically transforms political space, with left-liberal and anti-immigration parties specifically mobilising voters on the immigration dimension. Green parties, and other left-liberal parties have become the natural opponents of anti-immigration parties, with constituencies that are relatively highly united on the immigration dimension. The losers of this transformation in competition with an anti-immigration party are the traditional parties of the left, centre and right which have highly divided constituencies. Parties of the moderate right, especially, have a dilemma on their hands, with high levels of divisiveness combined with high levels of very restrictive voters.
The Flemish and Dutch cases point towards a political set-up in which groups of parties are similarly constrained in reacting to an anti-immigration party. Left-libertarian parties stand to benefit from competition with an anti-immigrant competitor seen that the immigration issue reinforces their position in two-dimensional space opposite the anti-immigration party. In Flanders this means that Agalev will be VB’s most obvious opponent, while in the Netherlands this position is occupied by D66, GroenLinks and SP. Although they may lose some votes from voters with more restrictive preferences, these vote shares will likely be more than compensated for by defections from the more divided parties on the moderate left and right. These parties have very little to lose electorally from the politicisation of the immigration issue.

Moderate right-wing parties enter competition with the anti-immigration party with more pressing electoral concerns: as a result of the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension, and relatively high shares of the restrictive vote, parties of the right are the most at risk of losing votes to the anti-immigration party if they fail to react. In Flanders these parties include CVP and VLD, in the Netherlands VVD. These parties have a relatively large share of the vote to lose to the anti-immigration party. They also have highly divided constituencies. Once an anti-immigration party grows stronger the party of the right will have to choose between two evils: risk losing votes to the anti-immigration party if they fail to appeal to voters with more restrictive immigration preferences; or risk alienating voters in their constituency with more liberal preferences if they chase after anti-immigration votes with too much enthusiasm. In this tug of war between the divisiveness of the issue and the correlation of dimensions, a lot depends on the assessment of these risks, and the assessment of whether open competition or attempts at depoliticisation will work best. As we have seen in Flanders, parties have tried but failed to actively nullify this conflict by placing the anti-immigration party outside the realm of power. Although VB was kept out of power, its potential impact measured by the share of the vote, as well as the percentage of voters with restrictive immigration preferences grew to tremendous proportions. In the Netherlands, the decision to collaborate with LPF and later PVV ensured access to political power for parties of the right, but did not succeed in crushing the anti-immigration party at the polls either. On the contrary, although LPF crashed once it was without a leader, PVV is managing to consolidate a stable position in the Dutch party system. It can count on a considerable share of the vote, and currently has a pivotal position for right party access to power.

Finally, parties of the traditional centre and left have to deal with conflicting incentives. In Flanders this group includes SP and VU, in the Netherlands PvdA and CDA. Although their voters are on average less restrictive, and they stand to lose fewer voters directly to the anti-immigration party, the divisiveness of their constituencies is troubling for political competition on immigration, as they may lose votes both at the liberal and at the restrictive end of the spectrum once the issue becomes salient. This set-up may cause friction within the party elite over which course to take, highlighting the opposition between vote-seekers and ideologists, such as we have seen within the PvdA after the rise of Fortuyn, and within CDA after

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism European University Institute DOI: 10.2870/4016
collaborating with PVV. Whereas it is sometimes suggested that this struggle originates from a desire to satisfy ethnic minority voters, this chapter shows that the ethnic minority vote does not create a substantial divide within the left party constituency specifically. On the contrary, voters are divided across the whole political spectrum, and although left voters are more liberal than voters on the right, this can be attributed mostly to their left-leaning political orientation or to levels of education, rather than to ethnic minority status. As a result, the electoral constraint of the ethnic minority vote on left party repositioning in reaction to an anti-immigrant threat is only marginal. If anything, attitudes towards ethnic minorities are an ideological constraint, which cannot fully explain internal oppositions over party strategy. Rather, these oppositions are rooted in the party constituency’s policy preferences at large. Depoliticisation and isolation of the anti-immigration party in the form of a cross-party liberal consensus may be left and centre parties’ best bet, as it may to some degree defuse the immigration issue; while at the same time diminishing the power base of parties of the right who may want to collaborate with the anti-immigration party.

The comparison of the Netherlands and Flanders shows that the electoral conditions for setting up a cordon sanitaire are more favourable in Flanders, but only marginally so. In the Netherlands, the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension is slightly stronger and the absorption of the immigration dimension by the left-right dimension is more consolidated, both factors that suggest a lower chance of a cross-party consensus to be sustainable over time. In the absence of political competition, this political set-up explains why parties would mobilise to form a liberal cross-party consensus on immigration, especially seen the high divisiveness of immigration for parties across the entire political spectrum, with the exception of the anti-immigrant right and the liberal left. Mainstream parties will be hesitant to embrace an issue which has the potential to emphasise a rift within the party’s constituency, and capable of upsetting traditional left-right politics. But once an anti-immigration party rises, the chance of the consensus breaking up is high, as we have seen in the Dutch case where CDA and VVD chose to collaborate with anti-immigration parties.

Seen the consistent correlation of the left-right and immigration dimension which is also found in Flanders, as well as the partial absorption of the immigration dimension by the left-right dimension it is something of a miracle that the cordon sanitaire still stands. One would expect patterns of competition that use co-optation instead of isolation, especially on the right of the political spectrum. As we will see in chapter 5, such patterns are indeed present, though more hidden than in the Dutch case. PVV/VLD tries to escape from the cordon on a policy level, by proposing highly restrictive (but hardly credible) immigration policies in its party manifestos and CVP competes with slightly restrictive positions in 1991. Moreover, all parties leave the cordon on a policy level when N-VA, which competes with restrictive immigration positions, becomes the largest party in 2010. Officially though, a collective strategy of isolation is still in place, which is counter-intuitive seen the Flemish distribution of voter preferences on immigration.
In the UK, political forces shaping immigration politics are less pronounced compared to those in Flanders and the Netherlands: patterns in constituency profiles point in the same direction, but less convincingly so. The political landscape is more amorphous, with weaker correlations between the left-right and immigration dimension, lower levels of absorption of the immigration dimension by the left-right dimension, and higher divisiveness of political constituencies. The LibDems are more of a catch-all party than their continental left-liberal counterparts. Although they have a relatively united constituency for British standards their constituency does not have the distinct, united liberal profile GroenLinks, Agalev and D66 portray. The immigration dimension does not appear to have transformed political space in a significant way. Even so, some parties are worse of than others. Special mention should be made of the Labour Party, which is the party that struggles most once immigration becomes a salient issue, due to its dramatically low agreement scores. The Conservatives have exploited this weakness, even in the absence of a tangible anti-immigrant threat. Although the two-party system would allow the two major parties to uphold any elite consensus they wish to uphold seen the low correlations of dimensions and other pattern of preferences found which support depoliticisation of the immigration issue, the competitive dynamics ensure that no opportunity for weakening the other party is left unused.

The seeming paradox at the heart of this chapter is the perception of the immigration issue as a crosscutting issue relative to the left-right dimension, while simultaneously being absorbed by that same left-right dimension. The results found in this chapter can explain this paradox. On the one hand, the correlation between the left-right dimension and the immigration dimension at party level is strong enough to elicit differential party positions on immigration, and left-right preferences are found to be a strong predictor of immigration preferences. On the other, political constituencies across the political spectrum remain strongly divided on the immigration issue at party level. Traditional parties of the left, right and centre especially, struggle to find the right balance to satisfy their complex voter constituencies. The seemingly elusive quest for finding sustainable party strategies on immigration continues.
CHAPTER 5
Reactions to the Rise of an Anti-Immigration Party:
Political Competition on Immigration in the Netherlands,
Flanders and the United Kingdom: Content Analysis of
Party Manifestos 1987 – 2010

Abstract
The main hypothesis put forward in this thesis poses that a liberal cross-party consensus on the immigration issue provides anti-immigration parties with the opportunity to rise and grow strong. If mainstream parties prefer to keep political competition on immigration limited, anti-immigration parties can exploit this niche, and attract voters for whom immigration and integration are salient issues. This chapter uses a content analysis of party manifestos to assess empirically whether such a niche has existed and how it has changed in reaction to an anti-immigration party, by documenting the existing patterns of competition before, during and after the rise of an anti-immigration party. The chapter shows that parties ultimately cannot escape the demand for restrictive immigration positions when facing a growing anti-immigration party. Ultimately parties take up restrictive positions closer to those of the anti-immigration party. Patterns of competition reflect conflicting incentives: parties tend to take up more restrictive positions in reaction to an anti-immigration party, but prefer to take up more liberal positions in the absence of a credible anti-immigrant threat. These patterns follow the logic of the party system, with its institutional complexities. In the multi-party systems of the Netherlands and Flanders parties tend to wait until an anti-immigration party grows strong before using immigration as a political issue, while in the UK mainstream parties take the lead in immigration politics. The chapter also finds that a left-right logic is pervasive in party positioning on immigration: no matter whether parties compete with more liberal or more restrictive positions, they stay true to their relative party positioning in a left-right sense. The predictions of the demand-side chapters with regard to party movement are on the whole confirmed.

Introduction
Flanders, the Netherlands and the UK share a history of anti-immigration parties accusing mainstream parties of being a soft touch on immigration. They have also been accused of forming a liberal conspiracy to ensure immigrant rights, while denying those of the population at large. According to anti-immigration parties, immigration is deliberately kept out of political competition. As the 1997 British National Party (BNP) Manifesto states:

“We do not think it is an exaggeration to say that in this election there is a conspiracy, in which the leaders of all the main parties are culprits, to treat the problems of race and immigration in Britain almost as if they don’t exist and were not in any way an election issue.”
VB echoed these sentiments in its 2007 election campaign. Its campaign poster featured three monkeys, representing the Christian democrats, liberals and socialists, covering their eyes, ears and mouth, accompanied by the slogan ‘see all, hear all, say nothing: Vlaams Belang, the only real alternative’. In the accompanying party programme VB accused mainstream parties of ‘being blind and deaf to voters’ real concerns: immigration, crime and the Walloon theft of Flemish wealth’. In the Netherlands, Pim Fortuyn, the late leader of the Dutch anti-immigration party LPF, also fulminated against the silence of mainstream parties. According to him, the ‘left church’ wilfully ignored any signs of failure of multiculturalism, to avoid having to compromise their idealistic views. Breaking this alleged liberal conspiracy is one of the primary self-proclaimed goals of anti-immigration parties. In the words of Filip Dewinter:

“Ultimately, our duty as a ‘whip party’ is to make other parties co-opt our policy positions in order to ensure the realisation of the political programme of the Vlaams Blok” (Party Paper Vlaams Blok, October 1991 quoted in: Spruyt, 2006 (own translation)).

The aim of this chapter is to assess empirically whether anti-immigration parties fulfil this role and have managed to influence mainstream party positions. A content analysis of party manifestos of Flemish, Dutch and British parties covering the entire political spectrum in the 1987-2010 period was performed, in order to answer this question. The aims of this content analysis are three-fold. The first aim relates to the alleged liberal cross-party consensus on immigration, which allows for the emergence of an anti-immigration party. Does indeed such a consensus exist? As we have seen in chapter 3 a liberal consensus does not exist in the eyes of voters, but voters do perceive all parties to have more liberal positions than they would prefer. This chapter answers the same question from a different angle: is there a liberal immigration consensus based on party’s policy positions?

The second aim pertains to identifying patterns of political competition before, during and after elections in which an anti-immigration party emerged. Chapter 4 has predicted certain patterns of political competition based on parties’ left-right orientations and constituency preferences. Most importantly, it found conflicting incentives for traditional mainstream parties due to a correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension, which would logically lead to an unstable liberal elite consensus and co-optation mainly by parties of the right; and high divisiveness which would lead to a stable liberal elite consensus and depoliticisation. This chapter analyses whether political competition on immigration indeed reflect these conflicting patterns.

Finally, the chapter looks at cross-national patterns of party competition. Do we see different patterns of competition emerging in the ‘consensus’ democracies, Flanders and the Netherlands, which are characterised by low barriers to entry and low levels of political competition for the pivotal voter, from the pattern of competition emerging in the UK, with high barriers to entry and high levels of political competition?
competition? The answers to the above questions will provide important clues as to how political competition on immigration works: they show how parties across the political spectrum position themselves on immigration, and how these political dynamics change when an anti-immigration party emerges.

**Immigration Politics: The Liberal Elite Consensus**

The ‘liberal elite consensus’ on immigration refers to political dynamics in which mainstream parties agree on relatively liberal immigration and integration policies, even though the public at large does not support these policies. This thesis argues that parties, especially those in multi-party systems, have important electoral incentives to not compete on immigration, which, as a cartel, allows them to put forward more liberal policies than the public would prefer. There are several additional non-electoral reasons why parties would prefer clustering together with liberal policies, which would allow for an anti-immigrant gap to emerge.

The first of these are business interests. Gary Freeman (1995) argues that a ‘liberal elite consensus’ emerges because immigration is a policy area with concentrated benefits and diffuse costs, in which pro-migration groups will win the battle for policy influence from the unorganised public. These pressures, combined with a general anti-populist norm which dictates that political parties should not exploit immigration-related fears to win votes, create policies that are generally expansionist and inclusive. For the European case, Freeman describes a process in which a self-involved political elite welcomed labour immigration in the 1960s, ignoring the objections of the European public that failed to mobilise on the issue. Policy was made without public participation and little parliamentary supervision, mostly in administrative contexts (Hammar, 1985). When elites decided to ‘end’ labour immigration and implement restrictive policies from the mid 1970s onwards, this too was decided without consulting the public, without much parliamentary discussion, and without conflict between the major political parties. Later, immigration moved to the stage of high politics, in which controversial issues concerning multiculturalism and asylum elicited public attention. A cross-party liberal elite consensus became a restrictive elite consensus.

The second are the moral and legal constraints embedded in liberal democracies. Joppke (1998), in a second elaboration of the ‘liberal elite consensus’ thesis, notices that despite the turn towards more restrictive rhetoric on for example asylum, an expansive immigration and integration reality exists concerning immigrants already in the country. The passive acceptance of immigration in the form of family reunification can, according to Joppke, be attributed to the self-limited sovereignty of liberal states. Firstly, the legal process is a source of expansiveness towards immigrants, and well removed from anti-
immigrant pressures; and secondly, states are morally constrained to dispose of immigrants they once actively solicited, or to deny them rights.

The third are elite preferences. Guiraudon (1997, 1998) shows that West-European political elites created expansive citizenship policies, while deliberately operating behind ‘gilded doors’. Despite negative public opinion, immigrant rights in Western Europe were expanded in the last two decades of the 20th century, which can only be explained if political elites had relatively liberal preferences, had discretionary powers to convert these preferences into policy, and could operate out of public view to escape public sanctions. The cross-party consensus that, according to Freeman, moved across towards restrictionism had a counter-move: the move towards a tacit consensus on certain issues that were taken off the political agenda by all parties and agreed upon outside the public arena.

The immigration debate is, as such, a debate in which restrictive discursive positions and stated policy goals may conflict with actual policy measures and outcomes, whether due to the pressure of business lobbies seeking to attract cheap labour, the realities of the legal system, moral constraints, or elite preferences. In addition, the effect of restrictive migration policies may be more limited than parties may want to acknowledge publicly. Whether policies are indeed effective in restricting immigration remains debatable, but it is reasonable to assume that the effect of migration policies is limited compared to other economic and political determinants of migration (Czaika & de Haas, 2011). For all these reasons, political parties may prefer relatively liberal and depoliticised policies. Once the immigration issue becomes salient for political competition, and especially once an anti-immigration party rises, such positions are likely to become unsustainable in face of public opposition. In some policy areas, such as immigration control and asylum this would lead parties to shift towards restrictionism as Freeman describes, characterised by turning to effective as well as to symbolic policy measures which in the words of Massey et al. (1998) create ‘an appearance of control’. In other policy areas, such as immigrant rights, the move is more likely towards further depoliticisation, conform with Joppke’s and Guiraudon’s findings. Party manifestos hold important information to judge these strategic shifts, and analyse the existence and break-up of a liberal cross-party consensus.

**Method**

The method used to establish party positions on immigration over time consists of scoring party manifestos on an immigration scale, which encompasses 40 immigration-related items. The main purpose was to come to a scale fit for using in a longitudinal cross-national approach, covering a large number of immigration-related issues as not to obscure underlying dynamics. The result is a scale which quite literally represents the positions of parties on immigration as put forward in their manifestos, as the number of
items is large enough to encompass all major immigration-related issues featuring in elections over the past 25 years.

Other methods to measure parties’ positions were less suitable for the specific goal of measuring detailed immigration positions over time and space in a two-dimensional model of political competition. To start with, the method chosen needed to be compatible with a two-dimensional model of political competition. This requirement ruled out the method of content analysis developed by the Manifesto Research Group (MRG), probably the widest used method in the field. The MRG method focuses primarily on the saliency of issues, fitting with a valence based model of political competition, and involves allocating each sentence of a manifesto to an issue category in the MRG coding scheme, thereby determining the issue profile of parties at any particular election. The relative emphasis placed on an issue by parties determines its profile, irrespective of the substance of the position. Although the coding scheme used by the MRG indeed includes immigration as one of their categories, the data generated do not fit the research aimed at here. Firstly, the MRG method says nothing about the substance of party positioning and focuses entirely on salience. This alone would leave main questions pertaining to political strategies of co-optation unanswered. Secondly, the immigration category in the MRG coding scheme lumps together all immigration and integration related issues, whereas the literature discussed previously suggests that parties might compete differently depending on the policy area involved.

An alternative to the MRG method better suited to determine the substance of policy positions, and compatible with our theoretical model, is the method developed by the Party Change Project (PCP), which has taken up immigration as one of its 19 variables to score party positions. It develops a scoring category in which parties across the world have been scaled on immigration on a -5 to +5 dimension, giving a general picture of parties’ immigration policy positions. The method does not allow for issue separation, however, since it assumes a linear correlation between immigration and integration variables; as well as between economic and cultural appreciation of immigration. As a result, the method cannot report on more detailed and differentiated developments in immigration politics.

A third alternative, that of Pellikaan et al. (Pellikaan, 2002; Pellikaan, de Lange, & van der Meer, 2003; Pellikaan, et al., 2004), the confrontational approach, allows for measuring both policy content and for separating issue dimensions. Pellikaan et al. developed a method aimed specifically at capturing political competition in a multi-dimensional space. For the Dutch elections of 2002 they created such a model of political competition with two dimensions: the economic, or left-right dimension; and the immigration, or cultural dimension, arguing that both dimensions have to be taken into account to generate an accurate picture of the elections, and shifts in the political landscape as a result of the entry of the LPF. To determine party positions Pellikaan et al. identified 10 correlated items on either dimension, which they each scored with a ‘+’ if the party was in favour of a particular policy, a ‘-’ if a party was against a particular policy or a ‘0’ (position unclear or item not present). All 10 scores added up then created a
position on each of the two dimensions, ranging from -10 to 10, indicative of the overall attitude of the party on this issue dimension. They purposely created 'strong scales' in which the correlation between party scores on items was relatively high. By doing so, they need relatively few items to create a cohesive scale.

Although the confrontational method seems to be most suited to analyse party positions in political space, Pellikaan et al.’s method needs to be substantially adapted to suit our analysis for two reasons: longitudinal analysis is problematic as the immigration scales used in the confrontational approach measure only relative, not absolute positions; and the ‘strong scales’ obscure underlying patterns of competition and depoliticisation, which we are interested in. Firstly, the confrontational approach is designed to capture the characteristics of one single political battle, at a specific moment and place (Louwerse & Pellikaan, 2011). In their own research, bridging two consecutive elections, Pellikaan et. al. have chosen to create a new scale built up from different items at each election. This becomes problematic when interested in dynamics over a longer period of time, and across space, as these scales are not comparable in an absolute sense. A change in party positioning in the confrontational approach can only be interpreted as a change of positioning relative to other parties. It is party ordering, the method captures, and changing positions over time cannot be interpreted as a change towards more restrictive or liberal positions relative to parties’ own previous position. Secondly, the confrontational method selects only those issues on which parties actively confront each other, purposely creating a ‘strong’ scale with items that correlate in order to best capture the relative positioning of parties (Louwerse and Pellikaan 2011). With the same purpose of creating a strong scale, issues on which a general consensus consists are omitted. This would be a sub-optimal choice for measuring political dynamics on the specific issue of immigration, as it is an issue famously characterised by depoliticisation, as the discussion of immigration politics and the arguments of Freeman (1995), Joppke (1998) and Guiraudon (1997, 1998) show. Seen that we are especially interested in the absence of political competition and the dynamics of consensus, we do not want to delete these consensual issues from our data-set. Our objective calls for measurement with a more extensive set of variables, providing rich data, rather than measurement limited to ten variables selected for their creating a strong and coherent scale. Thirdly, the confrontational method relies heavily on the judgement of the researcher in selecting the variables, which may produce a bias in the results. By including a far larger number of items, covering most if not all immigration-related issues mentioned in election manifestos at a particular election, and by using very strict coding criteria, selection bias is prevented.

To extend the method to meet the objective of longitudinal analysis, and make it applicable to three diverse countries, I chose to perform the content analysis in an inductive fashion. First I identified the
whole universe of immigration-related items across countries and across time 1987-2006, by isolating those paragraphs of party manifestos of British, Dutch, and Flemish parties that dealt with ‘immigration’, ‘integration’, ‘migrants’ and ‘ethnic minorities’. I then selected those statements that dealt with a particular policy goal. For example, a sentence stating that ‘immigration has been good for [country]’ did not qualify as an item, seen that the policy goal is unclear (should we restrict or expand immigration based on this statement?); while ‘immigration should be restricted’, did.

Secondly, I aggregated those statements into variables, based on their sustained relevance for political competition. I only included those items that were mentioned by more than two parties in more than one country, which resulted in 40 items. The general aim while creating variables was to come to a list of items that would be relevant irrespective of country and specific election. For the most part, this did not generate problems. Despite differing national contexts, immigration turned out to be debated using similar terms and categories. Nevertheless, 5 variables were dropped from the British scale due to zero variance, mostly in the field of multiculturalism and integration, which was far less debated in the UK compared to the Netherlands and Flanders. These differences between Flanders and the Netherlands; and the UK remain relatively small and have little impact on the final scale. The items included in the variable list are sufficiently broad to analyse party programmes in any West European country, despite countries’ particular immigration situations, and irrespective of particular items which may not come up in either particular countries or at particular elections.

The end-result of this process of analysing items was a list of 40 variables that could be grouped in 10 categories: immigration control, labour immigration, illegal immigration, asylum, family reunification, anti-discrimination and equal opportunities, multiculturalism, voting rights, citizenship, and the European / international dimension. Please refer to Annex 4 for the complete variable list. These variables were then incorporated in a framework in which -1, 0, 0 and 1 scores were attributed to parties on each item. A score of -1 was attributed to an item if a party favoured more liberal immigration or integration policies in a particular party manifesto; while a score of 1 was attributed if the party favoured more restrictive

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22 The scale was developed in 2006, which is why later election manifestos were not incorporated. Although incorporating later elections may have had an effect on the scale by adding one or two variables, the impact on the overall results is expected to be negligible seen the already very detailed nature of the scale.

23 Please refer to the codebook available from the author for a complete overview of all party statements on immigration from all manifestos, which formed the basis of my analysis. These statements are grouped in ten categories referring to specific policy areas, and an ‘other’ category for policy areas that are immigration-linked, but do not have immigration as their primary subject or immigrants as their target group.

24 For the UK v2.2, v7.4, v7.5, v7.6, and v9.2 were removed from the scale due to zero variance. Whereas these issues play an important role in the Flemish and Dutch debates on multiculturalism and the integration of former labour migrants, they are absent in the British debate that centres mostly on immigration control.
policies. A 0 score was obtained if either the item was mentioned but the position was unclear or ambiguous (0), or if the item was not mentioned (0). The items were phrased in the way they were mostly used in the manifestos. For example ‘Improve border control, pro +1 against -1’ versus ‘Positive discrimination in labour market, pro -1 against +1’. The scoring of items is relatively simple, and does not take into account differences in intensity of the positions between parties on the same issue in the same direction. This simple way of scoring is justified by the fact that the scale incorporates a large number of variables, which through adding up produces differentiation among parties similar to the differentiation if one would take intensity of positions into account. The scores reflect absolute, rather than relative party positions, in the sense that they do not take the positions of the other parties into account. Each party is scored separately and independently on each item per election.

The result is a scale of political competition, which provides insights into patterns of political competition within countries over time, and is comparable cross-nationally. It is an absolute scale in the sense that all variables are included in the results of all elections - there is no standardisation of the scale - which facilitates longitudinal analysis. One can immediately see from the scores generated whether parties have kept the same positions or changed their positions by comparing the scores from one year to the next. This is important information, as it shows how and whether parties change strategies on immigration when faced with an anti-immigrant threat. It is, however, a relative scale in the sense that it measures parties’ positions relative to the current policy status quo. To interpret the substantive meaning of rhetorical positions, changing scores should be interpreted within their political and policy context. For this reason this chapter combines the analysis of changing patterns of competition with a broader discussion. For analysing changes in political strategy in its own right this is not a necessary condition.
Analysis: The Netherlands

Dutch immigration politics has experienced a profound transformation over the course of the past two decades. In the 1980s and 1990s the Dutch political process surrounding immigration was characterised by consensual decision-making by the political elite. Although parties held different opinions on immigration-related issues, there was a great deal of faith in parties' abilities to bridge these differences and come to satisfactory united solutions (Traenhardt, 2000). Sustaining the image of being an open, tolerant country, was an important unifying motive for parties. This image was shattered by the spectacular rise of the anti-immigration parties of Fortuyn and Wilders. The consensual ways of dealing with immigration were challenged and replaced by a far more politicised mode of immigration politics. Figure 1 is a stylised version of the empirical findings of this chapter and shows how this transformation took place. At the top of the picture, it shows the parties of left, centre and right clustered together with relatively liberal policy positions before an anti-immigration party becomes a real challenge. Then, with the rise of Fortuyn in 2002, parties collectively take up restrictive immigration positions. When Fortuyn's party collapses, after 2003, parties collectively retreat into a liberal elite consensus. Finally, with the strong rise of Wilders in 2010 political parties split up, with CDA and VVD co-opting restrictive immigration positions, and PvdA left behind, which seems to become the structural basis for the new model of Dutch immigration politics.

**Figure 5.1. Stylised Pattern of Political Competition on Immigration, the Netherlands**

In the 1980s the depoliticised, consensual mode of immigration politics centred on multiculturalism was in full force. This is not to say that there were no political oppositions between political parties on immigration, but rather that these differences were overcome without significant politicisation. The
granting of voting rights at local level to immigrants in 1985 is an example of consensual policymaking from this era, in which parties across the political spectrum agreed that foreigners living in the Netherlands should have the right to vote. The proposal was a reaction to terrorist activities by Moluccans, to which the political elite responded by improving access to the democratic system for foreigners, in the hope it would appease tensions and improve the integration of ethnic minorities. The left-right divide was apparent, with PvdA and D66 arguing for even more inclusive measures, including granting voting rights to foreigners at all levels, while CDA and VVD maintained that was a bridge too far, but did result in politicisation of the issue. This pragmatic approach was characterised by the leading role of the political elite relative to public opinion. The granting of local voting rights was not an issue the public at large approved of, although their attitudes changed in favour of the measure once voting rights had been granted and had been accepted as the new status quo (Traenhardt, 2000).

The first cracks in the consensual, depoliticised model of immigration politics arrived in the early 1990s, when VVD parliamentary party leader Bolkestein published a controversial article on immigrant integration, which announced a ‘clash of civilisations’ due to the lack of civil integration by immigrants (Bolkestein, 1991). The multicultural model, Bolkestein argued, was at the heart of this development, as it emphasised group identities, which would inhibit immigrant integration. Bolkestein mentions Islam specifically, and his argument is later co-opted in a more extreme version by Fortuyn and Wilders (Fennema, 2010). Bolkestein pitted European civilisation with values such as the separation of church and state, freedom of speech and non-discrimination against ‘the world of Islam’, where these values had not been integrated into society’s core value system. The article caused an uproar. Although the political climate was changing in favour of more restrictive and less multicultural policies, the political debate up to that point had been polite and civilised. Immigration, with its positive and negative effects had been studied extensively in technocratic policy circles, for example by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) which published detailed reports on immigration and integration, but had never really entered the realm of high politics. Immigration and integration were not deemed suitable for fierce political debate for fear of racism and other detrimental side effects of polarisation. It wasn’t until 2002 that political correctness finally lost the battle, with the rise of Pim Fortuyn. His statements were the most inflammatory the Netherlands had seen, with the exception of CD’s extreme right rhetoric. After Fortuyn, Wilders took up his position in political space. Even mainstream parties started discussing immigration as a cultural rather than a socio-economic phenomenon, bowing to a relentless public, thereby completing the transformation of Dutch immigration politics.

25 For example: WRR (1979, 1989)
Figure 2 represents the Dutch immigration debate over time, covering the transformation of immigration politics from elite-dominated to anti-immigrant-dominated in the course of two decades, based on an analysis of party manifestos. Seven elections have been taken into account: 1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, 2006 and 2010. The bubbles represent the parties, positioned along the x-axis of which a score to the left represents more liberal, and a position to the right more restrictive policies. The size of the bubbles refers to the share of the vote that party received at that particular election.

The 1989 election

The first election under consideration is that of 1989, which falls well within the consensual, multicultural era. For 1989, figure 2 shows an immigration profile of parties clustered, though roughly ordered along left-right lines. Polarisation is low, and none of the parties, except CD, has a restrictive profile. The overall mood portrayed in the mainstream party manifestos is mild. The common restrictive elements are the introduction of (voluntary) remigration policies for guest workers (PvdA and VVD), and the emphasis on establishing centres for refugees in the regions of origin to take pressure off the Dutch asylum system.

26 To keep the chart readable the smaller Christian parties RPF, GPV, SGP and CU have been omitted from the chart as has the animal party PvdD. An analysis of their manifestos is available from the author.
(CDA, VVD, D66), but this does not stop parties from taking up outspokenly generous preferences in the policy areas of asylum (GroenLinks, PvdA, D66 and CDA) and family reunification (GroenLinks, PvdA and CDA). Overall the immigration climate is fairly liberal, acknowledging people’s right to migrate and be treated humanely.

The real liberal consensus, however, is in the field of integration policy. The underlying data show that parties are especially united in their motivation to develop anti-discrimination legislation (GroenLinks, PvdA, CDA, VVD), which would lead to the initiation and eventual adoption of the ‘Wet Gelijkbehandeling’ in 1994, a law elaborating on the first article of the Dutch constitution: the principle of non-discrimination. Two decades later Fortuyn would attack that principle and call for its abolishment. The data show a certain degree of left-right divergence, with parties on the liberal left calling for more outspokenly multicultural policies, parties on the right such as VVD, emphasising the Dutch language as an integration requirement and centre party CDA emphasising both. Nevertheless, this does not amount to an actual rift between parties: parties differ on details, while agreeing on the main course of integration policies. Equal opportunity policies and anti-discrimination legislation are the core focus of parties across the political spectrum. The underlying data show that VVD is a forerunner in immigration politics as it emphasises the link between immigration and integration: immigration should be limited to allow for better integration of migrants already living in the country. This argument would be picked up and further elaborated by Fortuyn some twenty years later. The only party, apart from the anti-immigration party CD, that can be considered an outlier, is GroenLinks with its pronounced multicultural, pro-migration and pro-immigrant policies, which are openly and conclusively liberal.

In 1989, the gap between mainstream and anti-immigrant policies is wide and unbridgeable. While mainstream parties emphasise the importance of removing obstacles for immigrants to fully participate in society, CD launches a campaign that is aimed primarily at excluding them. Immigrants should return to their country of origin if unemployed or divorced from their partner who brought them to the country, they should be excluded from the Dutch social insurance and healthcare systems, work under more flexible labour laws with less pay and protection, and be discriminated against in the workplace if a Dutchman could do the job. Remigration agreements with the countries of origin should be reached without taking into consideration its political system or situation. CD is also explicitly racist: marriages across cultures are considered undesirable, as is the practice of adopting children from third world countries. CD also warns for contagious diseases imported by asylum seekers, and considers refugee status a right in only the gravest cases of political asylum. Extreme as the programme is, it does contain elements that will at a later date resurface in the mainstream immigration debate, most importantly regarding the multicultural society. CD is adamantly opposed to the idea of a multicultural society, which should be reversed to reach a purely Dutch state. The party also attacks cultural relativism, arguing in favour of imposing the Dutch culture, language and customs. Adapt or return is its central message. Although
parties discussing these issues in later years drop the racism and some of the extremism, this theme would play a dominant role from Fortuyn onwards.

The 1994 election

The 1994 election shows parties reacting to rising immigrant numbers, with an open discussion on immigration. Is the Netherlands an immigration country? Yes, says GroenLinks; maybe, says D66; no, say PvdA, CDA and VVD. One of the issues to become contested in this period is the issue of asylum. The number of asylum requests would reach an all-time high of 53,000 in 1994, a number which had increased seven-fold since the previous election (CBS 2010, 10-9-2010). Although parties continue to argue that the right to asylum should not be compromised, they worry about the abuse of the system by 'economic refugees' and the impact of an inflow of asylum seekers on the local job market. More related to the exposure of asylum-seeking on a large scale as a permanent and ethically problematic phenomenon, CDA calls for an amnesty on humanitarian grounds for those who cannot be considered to be refugees, but cannot return either. Several other parties, including VVD, call for attention for asylum at the international level to tackle the causes of displacement, thereby trying to prevent international problems from becoming national ones.

In the same election, the consensus on family reunification, which according to the PvdA and CDA needed to be expanded in 1989, shifts to a restrictive consensus. Whereas parties stressed a more open and circular system in 1989, in which voluntary remigration of guest workers was emphasised, as well as their right to bring family members, the immigration reality of 1994 undermined this vision. First-generation immigrants were not returning to their home-countries and their children tended to marry people from their region of origin. Family formation and reunification became the most important purpose of migration into the Netherlands, making up over 50% of total non-EU immigration in 1995 (CBS 2010, 18-3-2010). The continued inflow of immigrants as a result of family reunification, especially from Morocco and Turkey, also triggered changes in the integration debate. Whereas the 1989 positions focused on the positive sides of social integration, by 1994 parties on the right come to the conclusion that this process is not self-evident, and requires a tangible incentive. In this light, both CDA and VVD propose a system of sanctions for those who do not comply with the language requirement. Anti-discrimination and equal opportunities are no longer mentioned in party manifestos. These measures also follow the rare event of open politicisation of the immigration issue by VVD party leader Bolkestein, as mentioned previously. Bolkestein attacked some of the shortcomings of multicultural policies, and argued specifically that adopting Western values should be a key component of immigrant integration. In this context he especially criticised the 'pillarised' model of multiculturalism, in which immigrant groups were expected to organise along cultural lines, very similar to how the Dutch themselves had organised their society. Although these pillars, which formed the basis for separate education, press and even healthcare per subculture, were rapidly eroding, they still provided a blueprint and mind-set for structuring society.
CDA was the party most in favour of this model of multiculturalism, which has later been criticised for sending mixed signals to immigrants. On the one hand immigrants were encouraged to remain isolated from Dutch society through institutional separation; on the other, immigrants were criticised for not having integrated into society (Entzinger, 2003).

Generally speaking, the 1994 election has a considerably more restrictive immigration profile than the previous election, with the more problematic aspects of asylum and integration rising, and the smaller parties addressing illegal immigration. An explicit consensus of the three largest parties exists on immigration control, on the right to claim asylum while being on guard to prevent abuse of the system, on command of the Dutch language as an integration requirement, and finally on the system of burden-sharing of asylum at European level. This election also features one of the few examples of open conflict between parties over immigration: CDA, together with GroenLinks, declare their preference for a more open system of labour immigration (although CDA emphasises that these seasonal workers should only have limited access to the Dutch social security system), while PvdA and VVD, together with SP are explicitly against promoting economic migration. The role of the anti-immigration party CD in eliciting the more restrictive positions in the immigration debate of 1994 is most likely only marginal. Although the party grew from having one seat in Parliament in 1989 to three seats in 1994, there was no real interaction between mainstream parties and the anti-immigration party. At the national level parties tried to isolate and freeze out this competitor (Lucardie, 1998). Janmaat complained fiercely that he was being excluded, and tried to exploit this position by emphasising the gap between the political elite and ‘the people’. He proclaimed that people ‘massively approved of’ his policies, which were not being implemented because of this strategy of isolation. CD’s party programme hadn’t changed significantly, focusing predominantly on the burden of immigrants for Dutch society in outspokenly racist terms, and framing immigration as a threat.

The 1998 election
In the 1998 election campaign both PvdA and CDA choose less restrictive immigration and integration strategies, while VVD makes a slight change in the same direction. The main change is a diminished emphasis on immigration control, replaced by an ever-increasing emphasis on asylum. Positive discrimination in the labour market gets renewed attention, as do multiculturalism and integration which are approached more optimistically than in the previous election. This election shows a significant gap between PvdA and CDA on the one hand and VVD on the other, which sticks to its cautious and restrictive stances, especially on immigration and asylum. Interesting in PvdA’s profile is its renewed humanitarian approach to asylum, focusing on asylum seekers’ rights, for example the right to work while the asylum case is being decided on. At the same time PvdA proposes a deportation policy for non-refugees, though amnesties are available for those who cannot return. CDA focuses on anti-discrimination and equal opportunities, and similar to the PvdA adopts a mixed stance on asylum. The party proposes
amnesties for certain groups of asylum seekers, but also restrictive measures such as quota. Two points of conflict arise: family reunification, in which PvdA and CDA support more open policies, while the VVD tries to close this channel of immigration; and the legal rights of asylum seekers which the VVD wants to restrict, the CDA and PvdA are silent on, and smaller left-liberal parties such as GroenLinks and D66 want to expand. Broadly supported policies still include the right to asylum, embracing multiculturalism and asylum burden sharing at EU level.

The emphasis on asylum in the political debate in the mid 1990s, driven by the spectacular rise in asylum applications, would lead to a new law restricting the eligibility of refugees, and speeding up the asylum procedure which was severely struggling to keep up with the large numbers of asylum seekers. The Aliens Act of 2000, which was initiated and implemented by a government coalition of PvdA, D66 and VVD explicitly aimed at restricting the number of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands, and reducing the number of refugees accepted. It aimed at rejecting economic immigrants within 48 hours of arrival of the country, and introduced temporary rather than permanent permits for those who were accepted (Ersanilli, 2007). To the extent a policy measure can be credited for changes in a complex phenomenon such as asylum migration, the Act appeared to be successful in deterring asylum seekers: applications dropped significantly after its implementation, from over 40,000 in 2000 to under 20,000 in 2002 (and under 10,000 in 2004). Although parties' rhetoric varied, balancing humanitarian concerns and the necessity of limits to the number of refugees accepted, policy reality was becoming highly restrictive and the sense of necessity for implementing such a restrictive law was broadly shared.

Another example of change towards more restrictive immigration laws was the ‘Koppelingswet’ or Linking Law which was initiated in 1996 and implemented in the year of the 1998 election, specifically aimed at discouraging the inflow of illegal immigrants. The law linked access to social security, housing and healthcare to residency status, thereby effectively excluding illegal immigrants from the welfare state. Education for minors and access to healthcare in emergency situations remained accessible. The law has been called disproportional, pointing at the far-reaching consequences for only a small group of people, representing only a marginal fraction of the budget of social service providers. Critics warned for the potentially disastrous effects of excluding people from these provisions, although the effects have been relatively limited due to the non-compliance of street-level bureaucrats and other professionals such as healthcare workers (Engbersen, 1999). The introduction of the law led to considerable debate among parties on the details of implementation with parties of the left more lenient than those on the right, but the overall consensus was unanimous: the status quo in which illegal migrants could obtain a social security number, thereby easing access to work and welfare was no longer acceptable. Illegal immigration and residence had to be discouraged, and the Linking Law was a means to that end. The only parties fundamentally opposed to the law were GroenLinks and SP.
A final example of a change towards more restrictive policy, which would become crucial in later debates once Fortuyn and Wilders entered politics was the shift from the multicultural ‘pillarised’ model of integration focused on communities, to a model of civic integration that focused on the integration of the immigrant as an individual. This shift can be contributed to a change in the power balance. CDA, the party fiercely in favour of a communities-based multicultural integration policy was not included in the 1994 ‘purple’ government coalition formed by PvdA, VVD and D66 that chose to focus primarily on socio-economic integration. The change should also be interpreted against the background of an increasingly large share of immigrants on unemployment or other benefits (Joppke, 2007). Immigrant unemployment was four times higher compared to native unemployment, and non-western immigrants made up half of the total number of people on welfare in the course of the 1990s. To counter this trend, the government passed a law, Wet Integratie Nieuwkomers, specifically aimed at socio-economic integration, which came into force in 1998. New immigrants were obliged to follow an integration course, which consisted of Dutch language lessons, lessons on civic values, and job market orientation. These measures were relatively uncontroversial. Although parties had different opinions on details and implementation, overall there was a broad consensus that ‘something had to be done’. All parties including PvdA, VVD and CDA continued to emphasise the importance of cultural identity, but increasingly added that societal integration hinged on job market participation. The two outliers in the discussion and polar opposites were GroenLinks, which emphasised the rights-based nature of immigration and which put human rights at the centre of its approach, and CD, which focused solely on reversing immigration flows, and excluding immigrants from Dutch society.

The 2002 and 2003 elections

The 2002 election was a truly remarkable one, and is considered one of the most volatile elections in Western Europe since the 1950s (Mair, 2008). Pim Fortuyn’s party managed to secure 17% of the vote, and became the second largest party after CDA, while the incumbent parties PvdA, VVD and D66 were severely punished. For immigration politics this election signified a revolution. It was the first time that Dutch political parties reacted to allegations made by an anti-immigration party, rather than taking a more technocratic stance and reacting to policy developments. The debate leading up to the election had been heated and highly unsettling for the mainstream parties. Fortuyn mocked the pragmatic consensual elite mode of decision-making mainstream parties were used to, and launched a highly inflammatory attack. His two main points were a zero immigration policy and an attack on what he called ‘the purple mess’: the track record of the incumbent government. He defended the immigration stop he proposed by arguing that it would be the only way to allow immigrants already present in the country to integrate fully, thereby deviating from traditional anti-immigrant ideology, which emphasises segregation and repatriation. He specifically argued that what he called the ‘fundamental norms and values of modernity’ should be instilled in the immigrant population: firstly the principle of individual responsibility and anti-authoritarianism, secondly the separation of Church and State, thirdly equality of gender and sexual orientation, fourthly
children’s right and fifthly universal human rights (Fortuyn, 2002). A wide-scale emancipation campaign would have to be launched to ensure successful immigrant integration, and abolish some of the ‘backward’ practices of the immigrant population. At the same time, Fortuyn proposed to dismantle the Schengen agreement, and to withdraw from the Geneva Convention to be better able to control the Dutch borders and refugee flows. From now on, the Netherlands should only accept refugees from neighbouring countries Belgium, West Germany, France, the UK and Denmark. But Fortuyn was no textbook extreme-right politician. He also argued in favour of regularisation of illegal immigrants to further their integration in society, a policy that would be much debated in later years and would eventually lead to a large-scale regularisation of asylum seekers who had been in the country for over 5 years. The tying together of immigration and integration has arguably been Fortuyn’s most important legacy, and became a central focus of government policy in later years.

In the election battle of 2002 all of the larger mainstream parties react to Fortuyn’s candidacy by collectively moving towards restrictive immigration positions, as becomes abundantly clear from figure 2. Immigration control, asylum and more restrictive integration policies are the driving force behind these changes, while explicit warnings against the danger of the Islam for western societies complement these positions. The new, more restrictive, cross-party consensus that emerges has two key elements: it warns against the abuse of the asylum system, and it advocates language as the key integration requirement. Other policies which are agreed upon include: immigration control (PvdA and VVD), asylum policy in the region of origin (PvdA and CDA), the detention and deportation of illegal immigrants, the restriction of asylum seekers’ rights, stricter requirements for family reunification and asylum burden-sharing at EU level (CDA and VVD). Even though VVD takes harsher stances than CDA, they are clearly closer to each other in terms of profile than PvdA, which is silent on many of the issues CDA and VVD agree on. International policies on immigration are CDA’s most important pro-immigration stances, while PvdA tries to mobilise pro-immigrant support on voting rights and dual nationality. A remarkable feature of the Dutch reaction to Fortuyn is the relative lack of polarisation on the immigration issue. Mainstream parties move towards more restrictive stances collectively, keeping their relative positions intact. On immigration, VVD and CDA positions are very similar to those of LPF, although LPF is significantly tougher on integration. But even PvdA moves towards uncharacteristically restrictive immigration positions, while their integration position remains liberal. The only real opposition on immigration-related themes comes from GroenLinks, which maintains its outspokenly liberal view, and surprisingly from SP, which has transformed from an anti-immigration to an immigration-friendly party in response to Fortuyn. On integration-related matters PvdA, GroenLinks and SP share a very moderate liberal view, which nevertheless grudgingly accepts changes towards assimilation instead of multiculturalism. They focus on diversity, but also emphasise the ‘limits to diversity’ (PvdA).

The 2003 election sees a consolidation of the shifts of 2002, with some minor changes. The right to asylum re-enters the cross-party consensus, amnesties for certain groups of asylum seekers are re-
introduced, and warnings against Islam are replaced by explicit stances on compliance with ‘western norms’ such as the separation of church and state and the equality of men and women. Except for the more liberal views on asylum these changes mainstream parties make are in line with Fortuyn’s policy programme. This election interesting shifts occur, not in the large parties, but in the smaller ones which ‘catch up’ with the movement of their larger counterparts. Both D66 and the SP join PvdA on the restrictive side of the immigration dimension, while even GroenLinks makes a considerable leap towards more restrictive policies. The 2003 election campaign shows a united restrictive cross-party consensus. On the whole parties have abandoned their more liberal policies in favour of restrictive ones in reaction to the party of the late Pim Fortuyn.

The 2006 election

The election of 2006 shows the rise of a new anti-immigration party, PVV of Geert Wilders, to replace LPF, which disappears from the political scene after the assassination of its leader. Figure 2 shows mainstream parties returning to more liberal immigration and integration policies in the election campaign of 2006. Parties clearly did not consider the threat by Geert Wilders sufficiently serious (yet) to continue to compete with previously developed restrictive immigration policies. This move illustrates one of the central arguments of this thesis: that parties will cluster together with relatively liberal or neutral immigration positions if they can do so without significant electoral losses. If at all possible, parties appear to prefer more liberal positions than those they take up in response to an anti-immigration party. New positions, in cross-party consensus, include the access to healthcare for illegal migrants, emphasis on the right to asylum, a general amnesty for asylum seekers ‘stuck’ in the system for over 5 years, access to the labour market for asylum seekers also before their status has been finalised, renewed attention for anti-discrimination legislation and the fight against racism and prejudice, and a return to multiculturalism in the sense that sanctions for not passing integration tests should be abolished, as well as a call for more religious tolerance, as opposed to the submission of Islam to atheism or Christianity. The two issues generating a restrictive consensus are asylum policy in the region of origin, which was still favoured by a majority of parties, and the language integration requirement, which had become an uncontested requirement for immigrant integration.

The impact of the rise of an anti-immigration party on implemented immigration policies had not abated, however. Following the 2006 elections many of the policies as developed in reaction to the rise of Fortuyn were finally introduced. To be able to deter underprivileged immigrants, applicants for family reunification would be obliged to take a civic integration and language test abroad, before being granted a residence permit. The standards of these tests were relatively low, and were specifically designed to prevent only partially literate or otherwise disadvantaged immigrants from reaching the Netherlands. Another toughening up of integration policies concerned the introduction of a civic integration test both for new immigrants, and immigrants already living in the country, inspired by Fortuyn’s body of thought and

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introduced in 2007. Eligibility for residency for new immigrants would become dependent on the test scores, while immigrants with a permanent residence permit would face fines if they failed the test. These developments mark the complete reversal of government policy in the 1980s. Then, politicians argued that granting immigrants rights, such as voting rights and dual citizenship, would lead to better immigrant integration, while twenty-odd years later politicians argued that only after proven successful integration, as demonstrated by the results of the civic integration test, immigrants would be granted the right to residence and nationality. Whereas immigrant rights used to be seen as the means to an end, they were by 2006 considered the reward for ‘successful integration’.

The 2010 election

The anti-immigrant threat returned in full force 2010, when Geert Wilders’ party PVV managed to secure 15.4% of the vote, which was enough to become the third largest party of the country after VVD and PvdA. As figure 2 shows, parties of the right reacted to this threat by returning to restrictive positions, similar to those in 2002/2003 in reaction to Fortuyn, while GroenLinks, D66, PvdA and SP remained on the liberal side of the immigration dimension. This time, unlike in 2002/2003 parties of the (new) left stay put. VVD, the largest party, would go on to form a minority government with CDA, supported by PVV. Figure 2 shows that these parties are positioned closest to each other on the immigration dimension. On socio-economic matters the decision to collaborate made far less sense: PVV went on to block several economic reforms which resulted in the government going forward with approximately only half of their proposed cuts and reforms formulated in their party manifesto (B. Jacobs, 2010). Similar to the 2002/2003 elections, the significant threat of an anti-immigration party caused parties of the right to join forces with the anti-immigration party.

This election shows clearly how liberal positions, agreed on by parties across the political spectrum in 2006, are left behind by parties of the centre and right: CDA and VVD. VVD’s 2010 profile especially, shares many positions with PVV including a focus on restricting immigration, fighting illegal immigration, and toughening up the asylum and integration procedures. Although VVD’s positions in other years, in the absence of a significant anti-immigrant threat, show that the party might prefer relatively liberal positions, these preferences are quickly overridden once an anti-immigration party threatens to attract a too large share of its voters. The newly elected government launched a restrictive immigration programme, which in many cases was an intensification of previously initiated policy. PVV even boasted that immigration from non-western countries would be reduced by 50%. The election of 2010 also marked the shift from a restrictive immigration agenda at the national level, to a vocal anti-immigration stance at EU level. With legal boundaries for immigration reduction at national level reached, the Dutch government would go on to lobby at EU level for more restrictive legislation concerning family migration, and limits to the freedom of movement for members of EU accession countries.
Conclusion The Netherlands

The rise and fall of Fortuyn signified a turning point in Dutch politics, as Fortuyn singlehandedly changed how parties positioned themselves on immigration, especially in their communication with voters. Long before Fortuyn relatively restrictive immigration and integration policies had already been put into place, including measures to restrict the number of refugees accepted and deter asylum-seekers, measures to restrict family reunification, and a switch from an emphasis on institutional multiculturalism to a strategy of civic integration. It is no exaggeration to say that the most important restrictive policy changes were initiated in the 1990s, many of which the product of the ‘purple coalition’ which Fortuyn loved to hate. What had not changed, however, was the technocratic and consensus-oriented political process. Despite the fact that the Netherlands had started to severely toughen up its immigration and integration policies, these changes didn’t convince the public. Fortuyn voiced these feelings of scepticism towards the political class, while the political elite had difficulties believing the public would judge them so harshly.

Figure 2 perhaps shows why parties were not believed: party political messages remained very moderate until the rise of Fortuyn. Restrictive policy reality was masked by a relatively balanced official position, while the treasured consensual model seemed to have failed to communicate the changes towards restrictionism that had taken place. It is very much this cross-party consensus, the core of the Dutch political model that voters denounced, egged on by Fortuyn. This effect was strongest in the area of integration, Fortuyn’s most important focus. Since Fortuyn, VVD especially has vowed to remove itself from this consensus and follow an explicit hard-line course in an attempt to win back its voters. PvdA and CDA remain ambiguous. GroenLinks and to a lesser extent D66 and SP are the only parties that actively oppose the increasingly restrictive immigration and integration climate in the Netherlands.

The empirical results reflect the expectations generated in previous demand-side chapters, as regards to patterns of political competition on immigration. In chapter 3 and 4 we deduced that the political market on immigration would follow a left-right logic; that mainstream parties PvdA, CDA and VVD might choose to depoliticise immigration to avoid the danger of exposing a rift in their constituencies; and that GroenLinks, D66 and SP would likely be the parties which openly opposed the anti-immigration party. These predictions based on demand-side analyses are mirrored by supply-side dynamics as this chapter has shown. To start with: immigration politics follows left-right cues. Figure 2 shows a consistent left-right line-up, in which GroenLinks and D66 position themselves on the liberal side of the scale, PvdA and CDA oscillate between liberal and moderately restrictive positions, and VVD oscillates between moderately and more fiercely restrictive positions. SP is an interesting case: the party starts out with a highly restrictive viewpoint in earlier elections and switches to a liberal one in 2002 in reaction to Fortuyn. Secondly, PvdA, CDA and VVD preferred to depoliticise the immigration issue in the 1980s and 1990s, but this became increasingly impossible due to the continued presence of a large anti-immigration party. The reaction to Fortuyn in 2002 is nothing less than revolutionary, ‘pulling’ practically all parties towards
restrictive positions in 2002 and 2003. Once the Fortuyn hype died down, however, parties resumed more liberal positions, as party positions in the 2006 election show. Since Fortuyn all three large mainstream parties have had trouble positioning themselves on the immigration issue due to rifts within the party over the issue. VVD endured a serious leadership crisis at the 2006 election, when the more populist and restrictive Verdonk received more votes than the official party leader, the more liberal Rutte. After this incident, VVD, led by Rutte, steered firmly towards more restrictive positions. CDA faced its immigration crisis during the coalition negotiations with VVD of 2010, as many of its members and party elders opposed collaborating with PVV. Although the party survived intact, and went on to govern, it came very close to internal collapse as a result of this divide. PvdA, finally, was the prime political target for both Fortuyn and Wilders, and branded by these politicians as the party in charge of the failure of multiculturalism. This accusation was far from accurate, seen the joint cross-party decision-making on immigration and integration matters in previous decades. Nevertheless, the party now had to deal with this public image, which created problems because the party was internally divided on the issue.

Finally, vocal opposition to the anti-immigration party indeed comes from GroenLinks and D66, and depending on the issue from SP. These parties firmly position themselves on the liberal side of the immigration spectrum consolidating the immigration dimension.

**Analysis: Flanders**

The story of Flemish immigration politics is one of unflagging resistance against VB. From its first victories onwards, VB crafted the self-image of a ‘whip party’, which forced mainstream parties to co-opt its anti-immigrant policies as a function of its vote share. As this chapter will show, no such thing happened. After a brief episode of turmoil around 1991 mainstream parties fiercely resisted cooperating with VB, and equally fiercely resisted its ideological appeal. They succeeded, in the sense that VB seems to have had very little effect on immigration and integration policy, despite its consistent and sizable presence in parliament. Belgian nationality legislation remains very liberal in comparative terms and the Flemish tradition of multiculturalism stands firm, although it has lately been incorporating more assimilationist policies. Although immigration legislation has changed from a guest-workers policy to a policy of restricted migration, these changes echo changes in other West European countries, and are certainly not more restrictive. During these years when VB was the only anti-immigration party, the social democrats, the Christian democrats and the greens strictly adhered to the cordon sanitaire. These parties doggedly competed with liberal or neutral immigration positions, or avoided the issue altogether in the run-up to elections. (PVV/VLD is the exception to this pattern as will be discussed). With the success of N-VA in 2010 this pattern of competition became a thing of the past. With the exception of the greens, all parties chose to compete with restrictive immigration positions. Where VB failed to mobilise parties on the immigration dimension, N-VA succeeded.
A stylised version of the results of this chapter is presented in figure 3, which shows how Flemish immigration politics developed from 1987-2010. At the top of the figure we see the political set-up when VB enters Flemish politics in 1987. Parties are clustered together with liberal/neutral immigration policies, when VB enters with a highly restrictive immigration programme. When VB enjoys its first real electoral victory in 1991 parties all choose different strategies to address this threat. SP chooses opposition, CVP chooses a strategy of very mild co-optation, and PVV chooses a strategy of strong co-optation. When VB continues to grow in the mid-1990s, parties establish a cordon sanitaire, which effectively binds them to the liberal side of the immigration dimension. PVV/VLD was the only party continuing its strategy of co-optation, with restrictiveness depending on the election at hand, although it persists with more liberal positions in policymaking. The most prominent feature of the Flemish immigration debate during these years was silence. Depoliticisation was greatly facilitated by the cordon sanitaire, which effectively excluded VB from political competition making it easy to ignore this important competitor, despite its size. Most importantly, parties felt justified in their silence on immigration as it was considered a topic better dealt with behind closed doors, than in the public debate. This pattern is relatively stable for close to 20 years, until N-VA forces a breakthrough in 2010, as pictured at the bottom of figure 3. At this election all major parties enter the restrictive part of the immigration spectrum. Parties never succumbed to the pressure of VB, but had little choice once a less extremist party with restrictive immigration positions threatened and went on to become the largest Flemish party.

Developments in Belgian and Flemish immigration and integration policies cannot be understood without a basic understanding of the institutional set-up in which competences are shared, as Walloon
counterforces play a large role in both political competition and policymaking. Immigration policy is decided on at the federal level, and falls within the jurisdiction of the Minister of the Interior, while related policies such as housing and labour market participation fall within the jurisdiction of other ministries. The implementation of immigration-related policies is in many cases devolved to the regional level of government, the regions Flanders, the Walloon provinces and Brussels. These competences include the issuing of work permits, housing, education and civic integration. At the regional level, there is a Flemish minister responsible for civic integration: the only minister at any level of government specifically responsible for ethnic minority policy (Loobuyck & Jacobs, 2006). The division of responsibilities in a multi-level state combined with political competition divided along the language divide at federal level causes a very diffuse migration debate. On integration especially, where Flanders follows the ‘multicultural’ approach shared by Netherland and the UK, while the Walloon provinces follow the ‘assimilationist’ approach shared by France, there is no overarching debate on matters relating to civic integration. In some cases policies at national level are disharmonious with policy aims decided on at regional level. An example of such disharmony is Belgian nationality legislation: at the regional level Flanders has introduced compulsory language tests for migrants in 2004 with the objective of better labour market integration, while at the federal level, influenced by the Walloon model which does not target ethnic minorities specifically, migrants are not obliged to speak the Flemish (or French) language to obtain Belgian nationality. The language divide further complicates these multi-level characteristics in the political system, which separates Flemish- and French-speaking parties at federal level; while the cordon sanitaire further divides the Flemish parties, and constitutes a barrier to competition and dialogue. It’s no wonder that Belgian politics often finds itself in a deadlock position. For immigration politics this institutional set-up has meant that policies have been changed incrementally and pragmatically, at different levels of government, while an overarching unanimous philosophy has been lacking.

At the federal level, the first initiative aimed at improving the position of immigrants in society, and also potentially weakening the basis for VB support, was the creation of the Royal Commissariat for Migrant Policy in 1989 which was responsible for the development of a federal policy on immigrant integration (D. Jacobs, 2004). It would be accused by VB of being a ‘mouthpiece of the pro-immigration lobby’. At the regional level the Flemish government launched complementary policies combining multiculturalism with the aim of socio-economic integration. CVP and SP were the two main parties involved in designing these Flemish policies. These parties can be considered the architects of Flemish integration policy that leaned heavily on the Dutch model of institutionalised multiculturalism based on communities. Immigrant communities were actively supported in speaking the language of their country of origin, celebrating their culture, and self-organising, although the financial means invested were insignificant compared to the Dutch industry of multiculturalism (D. Jacobs, 2009). Both parties mostly tried to refrain from political competition on immigration, while behind the scenes they were the prominent forces in developing immigration and integration policy. While SP and CVP tried to silence the immigration debate, the greens became VB’s most vocal opponents. The party initiated the cordon sanitaire, and after a brief bout of
depoliticisation in 1991, never hesitated to attack and denounce VB. Their strategy pulled the social democrats, SP, into competition on immigration on occasion in a battle over liberal votes. VLD, finally, resisted the multicultural approach, and can be considered the mainstream party with the most restrictive policy positions. Other than SP and CVP it tended towards restrictive measures when competing on immigration. After CVP was forced into opposition in 1999, VLD and SP.a (formerly SP) introduced a gradual shift from multiculturalism towards civic integration in the early 2000s. Although the policy change was unmistakable, it was also incremental and limited in scope, as will be discussed. Many aspects of multiculturalism would continue to characterise the Flemish approach towards immigrant integration (D. Jacobs, 2004) and parties continued to resist restrictive rhetoric and policies. In this light, the developments in 2010 are nothing short of revolutionary. With the rise of N-VA, parties move towards restrictive positions, and thereby effectively leave the cordon. Although it is too soon to assess the effect of this move for Belgian immigration policy, the effect on political competition is pronounced. Where the liberal consensus held strong notwithstanding an ever-growing VB for over 20 years, it fell apart in competition with N-VA.

**Flemish elections 1987-2010**

![Figure 5.4. Immigration Politics, Flanders 1987-2010](image_url)

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism

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The 1987 election

Figure 4 shows the Flemish immigration spectrum for the period 1987-2010. The election of 1987 is shown at the very top of the figure. This was the first election in which VB was a serious contestant, preceding the 1988 local election in Antwerp where VB would become the third largest party with 17% of the vote. As figure 4 shows, parties did not anticipate this win, and mostly chose to ignore the dimension of competition that would win VB most of its votes. Political parties saw no reason to compete on immigration, with the exception of Agalev on one end of the immigration spectrum, and VB on the other. As figure 4 shows, the immigration spectrum is politicised at the extremes and completely depoliticised at the centre at the 1987 election. Agalev’s position is a truly pro-immigration one, focusing on immigration as a permanent and beneficial phenomenon, of which the end product, a multi-cultural society, should be celebrated. Refugees should be welcomed, former labour migrants should be able to permanently settle, family reunification should be facilitated, multiculturalism embraced and migrants’ rights, including voting rights should be enhanced. VB’s position could not differ more. Even at this early stage it strongly opposed immigration, whether in the form of labour migrants, refugees or entry through family reunification. Its solutions involved segregation and repatriation. Active deportation policies should be set in place and Flanders should opt out of the Geneva Convention to permanently close the door to asylum seekers. Integration was not yet an important topic for VB, although the position it takes is restrictive nevertheless. Among the larger mainstream parties political activity on immigration was negligible, although immigration is mentioned to some extent in their party programmes. SP subtly leans towards Agalev’s position focusing on improving the rights of asylum seekers, fighting racism and expanding access to citizenship. Together with CVP these parties argue in favour of a programme furthering immigrant integration, which is CVP’s only immigration position. PVV mentions a generous reception of refugees in its party programme, while VU is silent altogether on the issue of immigration.

The 1991 election

The 1991 election would be remembered as ‘Black Sunday’, as it was the first election at federal level in which VB forces a breakthrough. It manages to secure 6.6% of the total vote, and 12 seats in parliament. At this time, parties are uncertain as to how to react to this new competitor, and have not yet consolidated their competitive strategies. The establishment of the cordon is on its way, but has not yet brought forth a comprehensive reaction to the anti-immigrant threat. The first remarkable feature of the immigration spectrum in this election is Agalev’s deathly silence. The party, which is known as VB’s primary opponent falls silent on most if not all immigration variables, although it stands by a handful of its liberal integration positions, including appreciation of the multicultural society, equal opportunities and voting rights for immigrants. This orchestrated silence by the party initiating the cordon could be interpreted as an attempt to freeze out VB by annihilating the immigration dimension and excluding it from political competition. Other parties react with strategies of opposition (SP) and co-optation (PVV, CVP and VU). It’s the only
election in which parties seem to react impulsively to VB, without yet resorting to the official strategy of depoliticisation under the cordon.

A broad cross-party consensus exists on two issues: that the asylum right should not be compromised, while the abuse of the system is a point of concern; and that learning the language should be a minimum integration requirement for migrants. On other issues parties of the right unite in a restrictive consensus, moving closer towards VB. There is a right-wing consensus on restricting immigration (CVP, VU, PVV, VB), on deportation of non-refugees (CVP, VU, PVV, VB) on restricting migrant voting rights (CVP, VU, PVV) and on fighting illegal residence (CVP, PVV, VB). The party most consistently choosing a strategy of co-optation is PVV, which decided to counter VB's aggressive anti-immigration stance with restrictive positions, even comparably restrictive on integration. PVV changed its tone considerably since the previous election: while it had been mostly silent on immigration in the election of 1987, it had developed a comprehensive restrictive programme by 1991 which emphasised strategies of immigration control, repatriation and deportation, as well as emphasised the importance of civic integration. Very similar to the role the Dutch liberals played in breaking taboos around immigration and expanding the bounds of the immigration debate, PVV introduced the concept of ‘western norms and values’ to the integration debate, arguing that Muslims especially should emancipate. In the same programme, however, PVV continued to endorse the multicultural society with an emphasis on the own cultural identity, as it had been preached by the Flemish mainstream for years.

SP chooses a radically different strategy, focusing on immigrant integration by means of positive discrimination in the labour market, anti-discrimination legislation, fighting racism, and endorsing multiculturalism. SP’s positions are based on a diametrically opposite mind-set and problem definition compared to VB, emphasising the institutional barriers for immigrant integration, and the dangers of racism and discrimination. Where VB blames the immigrant for any and all problems Flanders faces, SP focuses entirely on taking away barriers to immigrant integration when addressing migration-related issues. We thus see three different strategies in reaction to VB in the election of 1991: depoliticisation by Agalev, co-optation by PVV and to a lesser extent CVP and VU, and active opposition by SP.

VB was in a league of its own with its militantly aggressive immigration and integration strategy. Even more so than at the previous elections, VB focused on immigration as its key issue, besides Flemish separatism. In the year after the election it releases its infamous ‘70-points’-plan with the subtitle: ‘Immigration: the solutions. 70 proposals to solve the immigration problem’, in which the party responds to the criticism from mainstream parties that VB uses immigration to attract votes without providing realistic policy solutions. Specifically, the previously mentioned Royal Commissioner for Migrant Policy had criticised VB’s repatriation proposals as being unrealistic. Filip Dewinter argued the ‘70-points’-plan proved the opposite. VB’s report had four main messages: Flemish immigration policy should be better and more centrally organised to improve its current chaotic institutional structure and should educate the
Flemish public on the dangers of immigration; a complete immigration stop for non-European immigrants should be put into place; the government should enforce regulations to strip immigrants from many of their rights in a wide range of areas including the labour market, social security, housing, freedom of religion, citizenship and voting rights; and the government should prevent immigrant integration and focus solely on segregation and repatriation. The only area in which the government should invest in immigrants were its return policies. These policies would provide funding for developing an infrastructure in the countries of origin to further VB’s repatriation objectives. Mainstream parties reacted in shock and horror to the report pointing at the clash between the report’s objectives and fundamental human rights. VB remained unimpressed, although it would produce a slightly modified version of the ‘70-points’-plan in 1996, which it claimed to be in harmony with the European Convention on Human Rights.

The 1995 election

By 1995, mainstream parties had officially endorsed a cordon sanitaire to collectively manage their competitive strategies towards VB. Although the first attempts at setting up a cordon were already underway at the time of the previous election of 1991, parties at that time had not managed to unite forces. The 1995 election can be considered the first election in which parties have consolidated their strategic course, which would serve as a blueprint for competition with VB in the coming decades. The most essential element of the Flemish political market on immigration is the depoliticised core of the political spectrum made up of SP and CVP, the most powerful players in immigration policymaking. The issue of immigration is practically absent from their party programmes, even though Belgium struggled considerably with immigration issues at the time, especially concerning asylum. While immigration laws were tightened at federal level several times during the 1990s in reaction to the increase in asylum seekers and to keep up with the introduction of more restrictive asylum rules in neighbouring countries (Martiniello, 2003), parties did not communicate these restrictive measures to the public as a feature of their party ideology. CVP remains completely silent on the issue of asylum in 1995, despite the asylum crisis Western Europe was experiencing, while SP mentions only that sexual violence should be an independent ground for refugee status. The greens launch a liberal attack, proposing more liberal immigration and asylum policies, thereby opposing the silent mainstream, which is introducing increasingly restrictive immigration legislation. This strategy is a remarkable shift away from its depoliticisation agenda in the 1991 election, and seems counter-intuitive seen the depoliticisation discourse embedded in the cordon sanitaire the party initiated. Agalev is the party that would go on to increasingly criticise VB, actively taking up a position on the liberal side of the immigration dimension.

The other party choosing to politicise immigration in reaction to VB is VLD (formerly PVV), which competes with very restrictive stances on immigration and integration. The party introduces tough positions on illegal immigration, asylum, and family reunification, while pleading for a restriction of voting rights for foreigners and a restriction of access to citizenship. The main difference between VB and VLD,
apart from the intensity of its aversion to immigration and immigrants, is VLD’s stance on integration. Whereas VB promotes separation, segregation and return, VLD argues in favour of far-reaching integration. Immigrants will have to ‘deserve to stay’, but they can ‘earn’ this right. With this position, VLD distances itself from SP and CVP that hold the opinion that generous access to rights and provisions, for example access to citizenship, is the key to successful immigrant integration. VLD argues that the promise of gaining access to these rights should be used as an incentive for immigrant integration. VLD also dropped any praise for the multicultural society from its programme, thereby dissenting from the general consensus that multiculturalism should be considered a central pillar of Flemish society.

VLD’s party manifesto, as becomes clear from figure 4, shows that although VLD claimed it opposed political competition on immigration within the framework of the cordon sanitaire, it effectively competed aggressively with VB. Although it stays within certain boundaries that VB violates, VLD has a highly restrictive profile on immigration, and cannot be said to be part of a liberal elite consensus, or of a pact to defuse the immigration dimension in the political debate. It is not unthinkable that VLD tried to use the cordon as a shield to prevent voters to defect from the party, while positioning itself as close as it could to VB’s position without losing its respectability.

Essentially, the 1995 election shows that the cordon is interpreted rather differently by competing parties, and by no means automatically implies parties do not compete on immigration. It’s quite striking that the two parties in power that are actively involved in shaping immigration and integration policy, SP and CVP, are mostly silent on the issue, while parties without access to actual policymaking power appear to compete fiercely on immigration. As a result there is a remarkable disjunction between political competition for votes and political power translated to policy.

The 1999 election

The 1999 federal election followed the period in which the Flemish government, at regional level, consolidated its integration policy by means of the 1998 Minorities Decree. The decree lays down the complex institutional blueprint of the Flemish integration strategy, which is designed to administer a mostly ‘inclusive’ integration policy aimed at ‘ethno-cultural minorities’. The concept of ‘ethno-cultural communities’ used in the decree is borrowed from the Netherlands (the sections of the decree specifically dealing with this concept are copied literally from Dutch documents (D. Jacobs, 2004)), and is central to the Christian democratic notion of multiculturalism which combines integration in society with self-organisation by communities. By adopting this approach, Flemish parties subscribed to a version of multiculturalism that was already considered out-dated in the Netherlands. Party strategies are generally comparable to party strategies in 1995. SP and CVP cluster together in a depoliticised consensus: SP chooses not to mention immigration or immigration whatsoever in its party programme, while positioning itself as close as it could to the asylum issue, still very much an important policy problem at the time, with a mixture of liberal and restrictive measures, while its silence on integration matters is significant.
VLD drops its harshest stances concerning the detention and deportation of illegal immigrants and non-refugees it adopted in 1995, thereby effectively joining SP and CVP in the centre of the political spectrum on immigration, even though its rhetoric is more restrictive in tone than that of the other parties. The party’s restrictive position in figure 4 is a result of its highly restrictive integration rhetoric, which is at odds with the regional integration policy as outlined in the Minorities Decree. The party also deviates from the integration consensus by emphasising that rights should be ‘earned’ by immigrants. Once VLD entered government with the greens and social democrats in 1999, however, it quickly dropped its restrictive rhetoric in favour of compromises with its governing partners. One example was the planned regularisation of illegal migrants and asylum seekers stuck in the overloaded asylum system. Although VLD fiercely opposed such a regularisation in its 1999 election campaign, the regularisation was enforced by the end of 2000 under the new government led by VLD. The party also compromised heavily on its ‘earn the right to rights’ appeal, when the government introduced the ‘Snel-Belgnet’- a law introducing a ‘fast-track’ to Belgian nationality for immigrants in 2000, initiated by the Walloon PS. In stark contrast to VLD’s rhetoric, the law did not require foreigners to have a command of any of the community languages, nor did it include any of the other integration requirements, such as labour market participation and a basic knowledge of the principles of liberal democracy, which VLD mentioned in its programme as a requirement for access to citizenship. These discrepancies have to be understood in the context of a federal government in which Flemish and Walloon parties, with different approaches towards immigrant integration, share power, and in which VLD is dependent on social-democratic and green support. At the regional level, policy strategies were being evaluated with the conclusion that very little progress had been made (Verhoeven, Anthierens, Neudt, & Martens, 2003), and a new strategic plan was developed under a green minister of integration in 2003, which did not show any significant change in policy aims and direction. These outcomes at federal and regional level significantly weaken the credibility of VLD’s co-optation strategy on immigration in competition with VB. VLD appears to join VB with restrictive rhetoric in the run-up to elections, but it drops these positions in collaboration with parties with more liberal immigration positions once in government. The party uses co-optation techniques in political competition, while remaining solidly within the liberal elite consensus in the realm of policymaking.

1999 is the election that shows the most polarised political spectrum, due to VB’s and the greens’ highly politicised immigration positions. It is no exaggeration to say that opposition to VB was one of the greens’ main political strategies. The party presented a wide range of liberal immigration positions, objecting to current restrictive legislation as well as VB’s ideas of Flemish society. Multiculturalism, in the traditional sense, remained the party’s ideal of immigrant integration. VB on its part, managed to come up with an even more restrictive party programme compared to 1995, actively opposing policy proposals such as the planned regularisation of irregular immigrants, and the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation. Its main message did not move an inch towards the mainstream, and remained centred on the notions of segregation and deportation, and positive discrimination for the Flemish. Finally, a party that changed its
The competitive strategy in 1999 was VU. The party had competed with moderately restrictive immigration positions previously, but switched to a more liberal strategy in 1999, which included a ‘yes’ to the regularisation of illegal migrants and asylum seekers, the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, and the expansion of access to voting rights. In so far as the party had co-opted restrictive immigration rhetoric, for example its proposed ‘complete immigration stop’ of 1995, it drops these positions completely.

The 2003 election

The 2003 election again shows a typically Flemish immigration spectrum, with highly politicised extremes and a depoliticised core. One of the main shifts compared to the 1999 election is in the area of integration, where parties, with the exception of the greens and SP.a (formerly SP) are slowly moving away from multiculturalism in favour of assimilation. The greens had been decimated at the elections at both federal (2003) and regional (2004) elections, and moved into opposition, which removed an important veto player from government. As a result VLD, which formed a grand coalition with SP.a and CD&V (formerly CVP) at regional level, could finally implement its proposed policies in the field of civic integration, which the greens had strongly opposed. The most important of these measures was the introduction of an obligatory civic integration course for immigrants which was implemented in 2004, including Dutch language lessons, and lessons on ‘Flemish society’. This turn towards what is generally understood as a more restrictive integration strategy remained confined to the specific topic of integration courses. In other policy areas policy initiatives remained liberal in nature. In 2005 state subsidies were extended to include the support of mosques as well as synagogues and churches, and consultations with immigrant organisations were intensified. The latter policy measure led to conflict between VLD and SP.a, illustrating their ideological differences. The former insisted on an integration policy aimed at individual immigrants, while the latter parties insisted that integration policy should comprise both the individual and the community level. The conflict caused a clash in parliament over subsidies for youth organisations. VLD argued that youth organisations should not be subsidised if they were frequented by one ethnic minority group only, as this would encourage segregation rather than integration, while SP.a argued that youth organisations stimulated societal participation regardless of the ethnic minority status of its members; that ethnic minorities were entitled to their own organisations; and that these organisations would lead to immigrant emancipation. In this dispute, CD&V and the greens supported SP.a, while VLD stood alone. This debate, which was a highly politicised one for Flemish standards, shows that the mainstream consensus on integration had hardly shifted in twenty years. Community-based multiculturalism remained the leading concept in most parties’ ideology on integration.

In the meantime, VB had become the largest party at regional level, attracting 24% of the Flemish vote. It softened its position on immigration and integration slightly compared to the 1999 election manifesto, most notably concerning its opposition to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies and its...
warnings against Islam. Nevertheless, its rhetoric was changing, and the party was trying to become more palatable to mainstream voters. One of its efforts in this regard was its increased focus on ‘scientific’ evidence to increase its credibility and acceptability. The party published articles on the cost of migration\textsuperscript{27}, mixing official statistics with party propaganda, though admittedly far subtler than in previous years. Having conquered the more extreme segments of the Flemish vote, the party now appeared to aim at swaying voters of more moderate conviction. There was no immediate reaction from mainstream parties. Immigration had become an issue with two separate political arenas: one in which mainstream parties debated amongst themselves and affected policy; and one in which VB attracted votes with highly restrictive positions.

The 2007 election

The political strategies on immigration in the 2007 elections are highly comparable to those in 2003. The greens, social democrats and Christian democrats position themselves on the liberal side of the immigration dimension, while VLD competes with a moderately restrictive stance. The election would be won by the alliance of CD&V and N-VA, both parties competing on the Flemish nationalist issue, though the latter far more fiercely so. Figure 4 shows that N-VA, despite joining forces with CD&V, has significantly more restrictive immigration preferences than its Christian democratic partner. Another restrictive newcomer is LDD.\textsuperscript{28} The party, which competed with an appeal to voters ‘common sense’, presented a restrictive but ‘realistic’ immigration programme. Unlike VB, which continued with its familiar demand to halt immigration completely and persisted in its ethnic nationalism, LDD focused on ‘controlled immigration’. Its appeal to common sense included a toughening up of legislation aimed at preventing and punishing criminal behaviour in migrants, such as scam marriages. The party also argued in favour of the right to freedom of speech over anti-discrimination, and competed with liberal opinions on gay marriage and adoption. As such, there are parallels with the parties of Fortuyn and Wilders in the Netherlands, and a sharp contrast with the conservative VB. The party received 6.5% of the vote, which made it one of the election’s main winners, and hinted it might go on to put pressure on the cordon sanitaire in years to come. The rise of LDD did nothing, however to stop the growth of the party renamed as Vlaams Belang (formerly Vlaams Blok). Under its new name, and with a marginally milder programme, the party managed to secure 12% of the total vote, a 0.6% win compared to the previous election. In doing so it became the 2nd largest Flemish-speaking party, after CD&V/N-VA. Its size did nothing to convince other parties to abolish the cordon: the coalition talks with Walloon parties ensured that VB remained far outside the realm of power. In the media too, the party remained ostracised. Despite its size

\textsuperscript{27} For example: (Somers, 2005)

\textsuperscript{28} LDD’s position on the immigration dimension in 2007 and 2010 are missing because LDD has no available full-length manifests. The only documents available are a ‘ten-points-plan’ for 2010 and a manifesto for the Flemish regional elections of 2009, which are not comparable with the full-length manifests analysed for the other parties (personal communication with Piet Deslé (LDD)).

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the party had not been welcome in the main televised election debates. Strategies of competition of the larger parties towards VB remained stable, despite the rise of LDD.

**The 2010 election**

The election of 2010 caused a political landslide in more ways than one. Its central theme had been Flemish nationalism, an issue that had caused a political stalemate since the previous elections of 2007, with three parties with a nationalist profile competing for Flemish votes: LDD, N-VA, which left its cartel with CD&V behind, and VB. N-VA won this competition with dramatic figures. The party became the largest Flemish party with 17% of the total vote, leaving the second and third parties CD&V and SP.a far behind, with 11% and 9% respectively. In doing so, the other Flemish nationalist parties suffered great losses: LDD all but disappeared attracting a mere 2% of the total vote, while VB lost ground for the first time since 1987. Its winning streak, which straddled more than 2 decades, had come to an end. The election of 2010 meant the demise of VB, but also of the substantive cordon surrounding the immigration issue, as figure 4 shows. While the threat of extremist VB had been firmly responded to with an insistence on non-collaboration and non-co-optation, the threat of the far milder N-VA caused an unprecedented shift in political strategy on immigration. For the first time ever, mainstream political parties collectively moved over to the restrictive side of the immigration dimension. For the social democrats it was the first time in history they presented a restrictive immigration position. When comparing the SP.a’s 2010 programme to that of 2007, the changes are dramatic. The party stays silent on those issues it previously had a liberal stance on, such as the protection of illegal immigrants and anti-discrimination, and shifts to restrictive positions on asylum and family reunification. The changes in CD&V’s programme focus mostly on a far more restrictive asylum regime. For the first time in history, parties with a Flemish nationalist profile (and accompanying restrictive immigration profile) had a serious chance of winning a majority of Flemish votes (Maddens, 2010). With such a majority, mainstream parties would lose their pivotal position with regard to access to power and keeping the cordon in place. As such, the moves towards co-optation in this election can be interpreted as the surrender by SP.a, CD&V and open VLD to high demand for restrictive positions on the immigration dimension, which in the Flemish case colludes with the Flemish nationalist dimension. Another likely factor in this shift was an ideological one. Although N-VA proposed restrictive immigration policies, its immigration profile had little to do with the ethno-centric extremist nationalism of VB. As a result, the normative reasons to maintain the substantive cordon lost in strength. There was no longer an ‘enemy of democracy’ to fight as had been argued when VB was the main challenger on immigration. At this point in time, it is not yet clear what the implications of these changes will be. As long as the Flemish nationalist movement threatens to outnumber other Flemish parties it is unlikely that parties will retreat back to the liberal side of the immigration dimension.
Conclusion Flanders

The cordon sanitaire is at the centre of any debate on Flemish immigration politics. In this chapter, we have seen that the cordon was stable for decades, but is now being challenged successfully by N-VA, with parties collectively moving towards the restrictive side of the immigration dimension. Not VB, but a far more moderate party is transforming Flemish immigration politics. From 1987 to 2007, political competition on immigration in Flanders was characterised by an immigration dimension with highly politicised extremes, and a depoliticised core. Belgium’s many institutional complexities, which add numerous veto points to the political process, played a large role in this stability and allowed for the establishment of a cordon sanitaire which added a further barrier between mainstream parties and the anti-immigration party in political competition. As a result, the impact of VB on mainstream party positions remained very limited during these years. Although VB claimed to have a disciplining role in the Flemish political system, this self-styled identity did not materialise in political competition with other parties. At the federal level Walloon parties served as a brake on co-optation, while at the regional level parties dug their heels in and made a concerted effort to resist the pull from the extreme-right of the political spectrum. If anything, the rise of VB froze mainstream parties into silence, exacerbating the anti-immigrant gap. Immigration had become such a sensitive topic, adding controversy and complication to the already frustrated Belgian political landscape, that parties decided to take the issue off the political agenda whenever possible.

Concerning immigration legislation, VB had very little influence due to the balancing of Flemish and Walloon interests. On the Walloon side, anti-immigration parties remained very weak, providing no matching incentive for French-speaking parties to co-opt restrictive policy positions. In addition, the cordon sanitaire effectively shielded mainstream Flemish parties from anti-immigrant pressures and allowed them to ignore VB. As a result, Belgium has been a country mostly following immigration developments at European level, as well as reacting to immigration legislation in neighbouring countries. Policy such as asylum legislation was mostly inspired by international policy developments in the field, rather than by political pressure from the anti-immigration party (Martiniello, 2003). In other policy fields, such as access to citizenship, Flemish parties gave in to Walloon pressure, following their ‘French’ tradition of immigrant inclusion. The Snel-Belgwet of 2000, an initiative of the Walloon PS, but endorsed by a government led by the Flemish VLD is the most striking example.

At the regional level, the cordon, behind which VB kept growing, had the effect of upsetting the balance of power between more liberal and restrictive parties in favour of the liberal ones. The greens, for example, became more powerful because of the cordon, and obtained a pivotal position in politics in 1999, which it used to put a check on VLD ambitions for more restrictive integration policies. SP and CVP on their part actively depoliticised the immigration and integration issues, while behind the scenes they were important actors in shaping Flemish integration policy. SP went to the extreme with this...
strategy, for example not mentioning immigration or integration at all in its 1999 manifesto, even though the immigration dimension was at its most polarised at that election. Figure 4 shows that when these parties choose to compete on immigration, it is mostly on the liberal side of the political spectrum, competing for left-liberal voters.

The cordon adds an important (self-imposed) constraint to party movement, on top of the electoral constraints as analysed in chapter 4. As we have seen in chapter 4, the Flemish pattern of voter preferences on immigration does not point towards a cordon as the most logical response to an anti-immigration party. Although parties have incentives to depoliticise due to the divisiveness of the issue, parties of the right, especially, also have incentives to co-opt more restrictive policies. The initial knee-jerk reaction of parties to the rise of VB in the election of 1991 indeed included co-optation by the right as well as opposition and depoliticisation by the left. VLD is the only party that continued to ignore the cordon at the level of party positioning and competed with co-optation strategies, which can be considered a rational (though not necessarily effective) move seen its high percentage of restrictive voters.

On the whole, party reactions are consistent with the expectations generated in the demand side chapters, although the cordon adds an important additional constraint. Firstly, the Flemish immigration spectrum reflects the correlation between the left-right and the immigration dimension as found in chapter 4 and is ordered from left to right, starting with the greens, followed at distance by SP and CVP in the middle of the spectrum, followed by VLD on the right. Secondly, the extremes of the immigration dimension are made up of the parties least divided on immigration: the greens have a highly vocal liberal profile, while VB has an extremely restrictive position. These parties thrive on competing on the issue. Thirdly, the most divided party, SP, reacts with a depoliticisation strategy to avoid competing on this divisive issue. CVP is the only party going against electoral incentives. From the results of chapter 4, CVP, more so than VLD, is expected to resort to co-optation strategies as it has the highest percentage of restrictive voters after VB and relatively high agreement scores. Instead, CVP chose to govern, but not compete on immigration.

As made possible by the cordon, elite ideology is extremely important in the Flemish case, and is from 1995 onwards not overridden by competitive incentives until the election of 2010. None of the parties enter into serious competition with VB as the liberal policy outcomes show. The cordon, made possible by the complexities of the Flemish political system, effectively shields parties from the anti-immigration party, and prevented VB from having substantial restrictive effects on immigration positions. These dynamics change in 2010, when mainstream parties can no longer ignore voter opinion on immigration due to the rise of N-VA. The collective movement towards more restrictive competitive positions on immigration at this election demonstrates that Flemish parties too are disciplined by the forces of the political market, despite the extremely low levels of competitiveness of the Flemish political system.
Analysis: United Kingdom

British immigration politics has been characterised by a relatively early resort to restrictive immigration legislation, coupled with progressive race relations legislation and a liberal multicultural model of immigrant integration. Despite the absence of a sizable anti-immigration party due to the two-party system, both the Conservatives and Labour took up restrictive immigration positions early on compared to other European countries that were actively soliciting immigration during the guest workers era in the 1960s and 1970s. Although Labour, in opposition, condemned the Conservatives for its ‘populist and racist’ stance on immigration control in the early 1960s, it quickly took up similar stances and implemented restrictive legislation once in government (Hansen, 2000, 2007). While the Conservatives focused mostly on the issue of immigration control, for Labour the backbone of its immigration politics has been the emphasis on race relations legislation, focused on anti-discrimination.

The politics of immigration UK

The pattern of political competition, which becomes apparent from the analysis in this chapter is one in which Labour and the Conservatives alternate between competing with relatively similar stances, and elections in which Labour prefers a far more liberal position. For Labour, the trade-off between votes and ideology translates into a more erratic pattern of political competition than for the Conservatives. Over time, the political debate on immigration becomes more competitive and more restrictive. Figure 5 summarises these findings. At the top of the figure, which represents the late 1980s, Labour and the Conservatives compete with very moderately liberal and restrictive positions respectively, clustered around the centre of the immigration dimension. The Conservatives continue with similar stances until the
election of 2001, when the party starts taking up more restrictive positions. This move coincides with the rise of anti-European, anti-immigration UKIP. Labour stays on the liberal side of the immigration dimension with moderately to highly liberal positions until the election of 2005. From this election onwards both parties once again cluster together, but with more restrictive positions, the Conservatives slightly more restrictive than Labour. The LibDems compete with a consistently liberal profile.

Anti-immigration parties have played a relatively minor role in political competition at the national level, especially until the election of 2001 when UKIP emerged. Before then, the openly racist BNP played a role at several local elections, but remained marginal at the national level as a result of the combination of its extreme ideology and the party system, which allowed the larger parties to easily ignore this competitor. UKIP is a more moderate contender, and may have played a role in intensifying the immigration debate in the elections of 2001 and 2005, as will be discussed. Besides these anti-immigration parties, which have played a relatively minor role, the anti-immigrant press, most notably the tabloids, have been an important actor in British immigration politics. During the asylum crisis especially, slanted journalism fed into already hostile public opinion on immigration, causing sizable pressure on mainstream parties (Renton, 2003). The high competitiveness of the British party system causes pressures from public opinion, whether mediated by an anti-immigration party or the media to be translated swiftly into party movement. At the same time, the large parties dominate political competition and retain the right of initiative in the immigration debate, unlike in multi-party systems where anti-immigration parties can dominate the immigration dimension.

The immigration debate in the UK centres very much on the concept of immigration control, which as a phenomenon has become increasingly difficult to control over time. In the 1970s a highly restrictive immigration policy was announced, endorsed by a both major parties, which has been called the world’s only successful zero-immigration policy (Layton-Henry, 1992). Labour and the Conservatives together upheld this restrictive consensus in the following decades, with relative success and without considerable political competition on the issue, until asylum applications surged in the 1990s and 2000s reaching a peak in 2002 with close to 85,000 asylum applications (Home Office 2011), which meant that the UK had become Europe’s most popular destination for asylum seekers. Since then, a range of highly restrictive measures have been implemented, including much criticised measures that significantly reduced social benefits for asylum seekers, as well as measures similar to those in other countries such as the fast-tracking of applications and the declaring of airports to be international zones so as to speed up the asylum procedure and facilitate deportation. Asylum was without a doubt the most fiercely contested immigration related issue in the UK in the past thirty years. The points system, introduced in 2002, also fits the British debate on immigration control, which couples a positive narrative on solicited economic immigration with a hard-line stance on ‘unwanted’ immigration. The control rhetoric has increasingly come under pressure in later years, especially since the large influx of immigrants from EU countries in the late 2000s, which at
around 250,000 per year far surpassed the government estimates (Hansen, 2007). Nevertheless, governments of either colour still very much rely on the ideology of ‘Fortress Britain’.

The concept of multiculturalism has been central to British integration politics, although it has a different meaning compared to the term as used in the Netherlands and Flanders. British multiculturalism is more inclusive in the sense that it emphasises the absence of boundaries between ethnic minority and majority culture: it is ‘Britishness’ which binds all these British people from different communities together. It does not rely on a communities perspective, as it does in the Netherlands and Flanders, in which diversity is institutionalised and ethnic minority organisations are subsidised by the state. Race relations legislation, a Labour forte, which is centred mostly on anti-discrimination legislation, plays a large role in the British multicultural model. In this model, ethnic minority status and community background should not be an impediment to societal participation. In contrast, Dutch and Flemish multiculturalism emphasise ethnic minority communities as the vehicle for societal participation. Both major parties have endorsed this British concept of multiculturalism, although when under pressure, for example after the race riots in 2001 and 2005 between white, black and Asian youths, the Conservatives are more likely to emphasise the inclusive aspect of multiculturalism, alluding to ‘British values’ within the collective unity; while Labour traditionally emphasises the aspect of respect for diversity.

The developments in immigration and integration politics in the UK in the past two decades are characterised by the decline of the concepts of immigration control and multiculturalism in their capacity to satisfactorily address tensions related to immigration and integration developments. This has not yet, however, led to the emergence of an alternative paradigm, especially concerning immigration and immigration control. Parties continue to rhetorically assert their control over British borders, despite the fact it gave up much of that control to the supra-national level. On integration matters, the Conservative stance, which emphasises the attachment to Britain is currently the dominant one, and has led to an increased appeal to immigrants to demonstrate their allegiance to the UK. This is certainly a shift away from traditional laissez-faire multiculturalism towards a more assimilationist stance. ‘Britishness’ is no longer ascribed, but has to be earned. Due to the majoritarian party system, the Conservatives and Labour still very much control the boundaries and content of acceptable debate, although UKIP has become increasingly important in articulating the voice of those wishing to undo European integration and by doing so regaining control of British borders and immigration legislation, as well as those preferring an assimilationist model of immigrant integration.
United Kingdom Elections 1987-2010

The 1987 election

Figure 6 presents the results of the content analysis of UK party manifestos in the years 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2010. The election of 1987 is shown at the very top of the figure. 1987 was a year of historically low immigration figures for the UK. At approximately 45,000, immigration was lower than ever since 1962. Parties competed with moderate positions. On immigration control, the consensus was a very moderately restrictive one. Both Labour and the Conservatives used the term ‘firm but fair’, with Labour adding an emphasis on anti-discriminatory immigration control. Even the LibDems joined the restrictive consensus on immigration emphasising that emigration should be higher than immigration. Overall, the Conservatives competed with the most restrictive immigration profile. Although the number of asylum seekers in the late 1980s was negligible, in the thousands, compared to the tens of thousands the figure would rise to in the late 1990s and 2000s, the Conservatives had already started to emphasise the problem of ‘bogus’ refugees and illegal immigrants seeking to settle in the UK. On integration matters, the debate was more liberal. Labour, in keeping with its reputation on race relations, emphasised the promotion of racial equality, and promoted positive discrimination as a means to overcome barriers to emancipation for ethnic minorities. The Conservatives adamantly opposed positive discrimination, although it agreed with Labour that ethnic minorities should be better represented in leadership positions.
The Conservative solution consisted of urging immigrants to better integrate through ‘active participation in British culture’. This distinction between parties, especially in these early stages, is remarkable, as it illustrates the rift in party ideology between parties of the left and right which would become important across Western Europe, from the 1990s onwards. In the mind of the Conservatives, holding ethnic minorities accountable for their own integration was perfectly compatible with the concept of multiculturalism, which they praised as ‘tried and tested with positive results’.

An anti-immigrant threat was absent during the 1987 election. BNP had been founded in 1982, but only competed with two candidates in the 1987 election, gathering just over 500 votes in total. Its chairman, John Tyndall, had been convicted and sentenced to a prison sentence for inciting racial hatred the year before, and the party appeared to have disintegrated as a result. There is no BNP manifesto available for analysis in this election, but at the time the party could be considered a militant racist nationalist movement, with sympathy for revisionist ideas (Renton, 2003). Its main activities in the 1980s concerned involvement in race-related riots, such as the 1989 Dewsbury riots following a BNP ‘rights for whites’ demonstration. The party was very far removed from mainstream politics and policy.

The 1992 election

The Conservatives change their immigration strategy in the 1992 election, dropping immigration from their programme and focusing solely on race relations. This change may reflect changes in British society, shaken up by the Rushdie affair several years earlier, which, very unusual for the UK, put issues of religion on the political agenda. In reaction to the fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khomeini sentencing Rushdie to death, British Muslims took to the streets protesting. The Conservatives reacted with a message of restraint, which is echoed in their 1992 manifesto in which they state that ‘racial harmony demands restraints on all sides’, as well as a ‘tolerant understanding of the legitimate views of others’. They go on to state that ‘openness is required on the part of the British majority’ and ‘participation in wider community life’ on the part of ethnic minorities. Hate crime occupies a central role in the manifesto, and the party stresses the importance of individual freedom, including a person’s background, religious and personal beliefs. Labour competes with a programme with familiar items, most importantly anti-discrimination legislation and the fight against hate crime. More so than the Conservatives, Labour targets ethnic minorities, which stand to benefit from the measures they propose. That being said, Labour adopted some of the Conservative’s restrictive rhetoric of the previous election combining an appeal to guarantee sanctuary for ‘genuine’ refugees, while being tough on ‘bogus’ asylum applications. The 1992 election sets the tone for the LibDems’ immigration strategy in the decades to come. It decides to settle on a liberal course on both immigration and integration, and together with the Green Party forms the bloc of parties that do not pander to negative public opinion on immigration. Their policy proposals are similar and centred around anti-discrimination, improving the rights of asylum seekers, and emphasising the positive value of a diverse multicultural society. BNP emerges as the LibDem’s ideological opponent during this
election in which it participated with 13 candidates, though without significant success. In 1993 the party secured its first council seat at local level, which was its only small victory. During these years BNP was associated with far-right activism and hooliganism, based on a ‘rights for whites’ platform. Its party manifesto of 1992 reflects this ideological basis. It calls for the repatriation of non-whites, a complete immigration stop for non-whites, the abolishment of the multicultural society and a return to Christian values. Moreover, it argues for the abolishment of any legislation that protects ethnic minorities or favours their position, including anti-discrimination and positive discrimination legislation. Its focus on race places BNP far outside the mainstream debate. Rather than cashing in on anti-Muslim sentiments that were on the rise since the Rushdie affair, the party stayed true to its militant racist discourse, which was deliberated in isolation from the political mainstream.

Despite the Conservative’s silence on asylum in its 1992 party manifesto, asylum would become the most salient issue in immigration politics once the party entered office. The party introduced the 1993 Asylum Act, which was the first British piece of legislation specifically aimed at asylum and was designed to speed up the asylum procedure. Although the Act provided rejected asylum seekers with the right to appeal in the UK, the speed of the appeals process, which demanded that large categories of asylum seekers appeal against a negative decision within 48 hours, implied a restriction of the rules rather than an expansion. The Act also included an extension to the Carriers’ Liability Act, which shifted responsibility to airline companies for ensuring that transit passengers did not disembark in the UK and claim asylum. The introduction of the Act had an immediate impact on acceptance rates. Whereas 86% of asylum seekers were granted some form of asylum in the six months prior to the implementation on the Asylum Act, only 27% were granted asylum in the six months following its implementation (Cohen, 1994; Stevens, 1998). Labour’s reaction to the Act showed both assent and opposition. The two parties agreed that ‘genuine’ refugees should be granted asylum, while ‘bogus’ asylum claims should be rejected, and had no qualms reinforcing this distinction in the political debate. Labour’s main objection to the Act was that too many ‘genuine’ refugees would be affected, which would in turn affect ethnic minority communities and race relations (Bloch, 2000). For this reason, Labour opposed the increased use of pre-entry controls, pointing out that ‘genuine’ refugees were most likely to travel without or with false documentation.

In 1996, relatively shortly after the introduction of the 1993 legislation, and shortly before the 1997 election, the Conservative government introduced a new Asylum and Immigration Bill, which introduced a host of highly restrictive measures. The measures most criticised by Labour were the White List of safe countries, which would help the administration differentiate between ‘bogus’ and ‘genuine’ refugees, and changes to the benefits system for asylum seekers, which they would now receive in vouchers instead of cash. Labour, similar to its criticism of the 1993 Act, argued that these measures were inhumane and bad for race relations. The party also criticised employment regulations introduced, designed to discourage hiring illegal workers. Labour feared these measures would lead to racism among employers, who might discriminate against non-white workers, as they may be seen as more of a risk. Despite these criticisms,
Labour’s opposition was considered more moderate in tone than in previous years, reflecting Tony Blair’s new party leadership (Bloch, 2000). Although Labour continued to attack the Conservative’s immigration policies, Blair tried his very best to not be seen as a ‘soft touch’.

The 1997 election

Judging from the party manifestos, Labour and the Conservatives mostly agree on immigration and integration in 1997 and discuss the issue with a moderate but restrictive tone. Both parties emphasise the asylum issue, as well as the issues of hate crime and race relations. Asylum applications had steadily increased to reach over 40,000 in 1997, to which parties reacted with concern regarding unfounded claims. Labour, which would go on to win the elections, argues in favour of specific reforms of the asylum system, to ensure ‘swift and fair’ decisions. In its manifesto it proposes to abolish the primary purpose rule, a rule dating from 1983, which required immigrants married to British citizens to prove that their marriage was genuine, and not primarily driven by the desire to enter the UK. The Conservatives address asylum in very general terms, emphasising that the ‘firm but fair’ controls put into place by the Conservative government were the underpinning of good race relations.

Once in office, Labour indeed went through with its proposal of doing away with the primary purpose rule. Although immigrants would still be screened for marriages of convenience, they no longer, as a matter of routine, had to prove the intention of the relationship. Labour also abolished the White List for safe countries, which it was fiercely opposed to, and granted asylum seekers who had been waiting for over five years for their case to be heard, amnesty. Nevertheless, Labour would not allow much of a gap to emerge between their position and that of the Conservatives. Many of the measures it criticised as inhumane when in opposition were now endorsed and extended, including pre-entry controls which were extended to include trucking and rail companies, and the voucher system for asylum seeker’s benefits which was kept in place, while the benefits were lowered to 70% to 90% of the breadline. Overall, Labour continued the Conservative strategy of increasingly restricting the right to access to the UK and reducing social citizenship rights for asylum seekers, despite a number of measures reversing restrictive Conservative policies.

In the policy area of integration, the Labour government commissioned a report on multiculturalism and race relations in 1997. The recommendations of the Parekh report, especially those on national identity and institutionalised racism, were met with fierce opposition by the Conservative Party and sparked an intense debate on the meaning of Britishness and its implications for multiculturalism. On these issues the report argued that the national narrative of British history should be partially rewritten to better reflect the realities and perspectives of ethnic minorities; and that anti-racist measures should be widely implemented to remove barriers to societal participation. William Hague, the leader of the Conservatives at the time, reacted to the report by stating that the report was an ‘assault on British culture and history’, reflecting the
‘tyranny of political correctness’, which would lead to the collapse and paralysis of institutions due to an excessive emphasis on race (Weedon, 2004). The arguments on both sides of the political spectrum illustrate the difference of opinion between the parties on the concept of multiculturalism. The report stressed the balance between cohesion, equality and difference. In the eyes of the Tories, Labour put too much emphasis on the (lack of) equality and promoting diversity, thereby discounting the average Briton; while Labour accused the Conservatives of putting too much emphasis on cohesion, effectively dismissing the battle for equal rights. The reactions in the press, and especially the conservative tabloids, show that Labour was already losing the battle in its quest for being seen as the party with the best and fairest integration policies, with headlines suggesting that Labour equated being proud of Britain with being racist (Weedon, 2004)29. The bad reception of the report in the press became a nightmare for Labour, which now would be criticised from both sides: the mass public which believed Labour was deprecating the nation, and its liberal voters and backbenchers which criticised Labour for becoming defensive and not taking strong action to effectively address the issue of race relations30. A similar development was occurring with regard to asylum, where Labour was losing ground with liberal and restrictive voters alike, either for being too tough, or for not being tough enough.

The party positioning itself to benefit from the share of liberal voters who would become disillusioned with Labour’s restrictive course were the Lib Dems, which shared all of Labour’s liberal positions, but none of its restrictive ones. Together with the Green Party, which dropped immigration completely from their 1997 manifesto, they form the progressive block of parties opposing the restrictive consensus. On the other extreme of the political spectrum BNP far surpassed Labour and the Conservatives in their anti-immigration rhetoric by claiming that Britain should not accept asylum seekers or refugees at all, that non-white refugees should not be granted asylum and that non-whites should be deported from the country. Their manifesto introduced restrictive policies covering a wider variety of policy areas compared to those discussed in 1992, resulting in a more restrictive score in figure 6, although its core message of segregation and deportation remained the same. Although the national vote share of the BNP remained negligible, the party was growing, running for election with 54 candidates and gathering five times as many votes as in the previous election. It is highly doubtful that BNP played a large role in the restrictive positions of Labour and the Conservatives: its positions were too extreme, and its vote share too marginal.

The 2001 election

The 2001 election was called a ‘quiet landslide’, as Labour won convincingly, losing only six seats to the Conservatives despite serving a full term in office. It’s important to note that Labour, under Blair, had

29 Tabloid headlines included: ‘Straw wants to rewrite our history’, ‘British is a racist word says report’ (Johnston, 2000); and ‘Curse of the Britain Bashers’(Kavanagh, 2000).

30 See for example the discussion of Labour’s race relations legacy in the late 90’s by the Jewish Council for Racial Equality (Lerman, 2009).
explicitly chosen to compete mainly on economic issues, introducing the then popular Third Way, which stepped away from traditional left-wing solutions. The approach was still new and held promise in economically prosperous times. At this time, immigration may have been one of the few issues on which the Conservatives had an advantage over Labour, despite its weak leadership and identity. The election took place only a week after the 2001 race riots in Oldham, where the English Defence League, which had strong ties with BNP, had organised a march through town, which erupted in violence. Nick Griffin, BNP’s new party leader, benefited from the riots, winning 16.4% of the Oldham vote, which was the party’s best ever election result at a general election. It was also the election in which UKIP secured 1.5% of the vote, although it did not manage to secure a single seat in parliament.

In 2001 Labour’s immigration profile stresses the positive contribution of immigrants to society, and argues that immigration rules should reflect skill shortages in an expanding economy. The party calls for a new system for labour immigration. It also prides itself on its achievements in the field of family reunification, which has been facilitated by abolishing the primary purpose rule. Even in the field of asylum, the party mitigates its restrictive appeal. Although the manifesto emphasises that asylum should not be used as an ‘alternative route of migration’ and introduces a steep objective of removing more than 30,000 rejected asylum seekers in the years 2003-2004, it also pays attention to the merits of the tradition of granting asylum, and the progress that has been made in reducing the backlog in the asylum system and in dispersing asylum seekers over the country. Needless to say, the Conservatives are not convinced. Their party manifesto accuses Labour of allowing the ‘virtual collapse of the asylum system’ which ‘hampers our ability to be a safe haven’; and of creating ‘chaos which encourages unfounded asylum claims’. It goes on to state that ‘Britain has gained a reputation as a soft touch for bogus asylum seekers’. It also addresses the rise in costs in the asylum system, and the ‘great strain’ on local communities. Its own solution consists of detaining asylum seekers until their case has been decided on and investing in a Removals Agency to ensure deportation of those whose claims had been rejected. Labour had in fact introduced ‘reception centres’ with the purpose of detaining asylum seekers, but these did not imprison asylum seekers, with the effect that some asylum seekers disappeared while their cases were still pending, a weakness the Conservatives did not hesitate to exploit. UKIP too, addresses this issue, by stating that the ‘current system which affords the opportunity to disappear makes a mockery of the law and helps to make Britain a popular destination.’ When comparing UKIP and the Conservative manifesto, it becomes immediately apparent that in terms of tone, the Conservatives are the anti-immigration party, not UKIP. The Conservatives use highly emotive language and bases its own policies on self-proclaimed ‘common sense’, while UKIP uses a variety of arguments, none of them new, but all of them more reasonable-sounding compared to those of the Conservatives. In terms of asylum policy there is not much difference: both parties support hard-line asylum policies, in favour of detention of asylum seekers and against taking up refugees from third countries. The most notable difference lies in the international dimension. UKIP argues that immigration policy should be ‘the sole responsibility of the British government and Parliament’. It criticises the Geneva Convention for being ‘seriously out-dated’ and although UKIP says it
supports the principles of the Convention, it also argues that the Convention should be regarded as a ‘series of guidelines’, rather than as a ‘binding legal code’, effectively arguing for the supremacy of national interests over international law.

The debate on integration in the 2001 election is civilised. None of the parties, including UKIP have restrictive integration preferences except for BNP. Parties emphasise the inclusive nature of British society, and speak favourably of multiculturalism. Labour and UKIP mention shared British values, but do not appear to suggest that ethnic minorities need to ‘adapt’ in order to share these. Nevertheless, a new focus on citizenship is unmistakable. Following turbulent race and religion-related events in 2001, including the 2001 riots and the 9/11 attack, the government chose to tighten access to citizenship, which included the introduction of a citizenship ceremony (Hansen 2007). The Labour government also introduced citizenship education in schools. These measures show that immigrant integration was increasingly becoming an important issue. A related issue, that of religious hatred, was heavily debated in parliament in reaction to the 2001 events. Racial hatred was already covered by previous legislation, and would be extended to include religious hatred in the 2005 race and religious hatred bill. The necessity of this bill was much debated, and its content much reduced over the years before it was passed, in response to criticism of artists and intellectuals who feared an impingement on the freedom of speech. Although the distinction between the concepts of ‘racial’ and ‘religious’ hatred is ambiguous, the extension of the law closed some of the BNP’s opportunities for incitement to hatred. Since 9/11 it had often exploited this distinction, turning its attention from ‘blacks’ which it could be indicted for to ‘Muslims’ which it could insult without consequence (Goodall, 2007).

The 2001 election shows how the two main parties dominate the political agenda, marginalising smaller parties. Although the Conservatives responded to the rise of UKIP and the supremacy of Labour with fierce anti-asylum stances comparable to those of anti-immigration parties, their anti-immigration appeals remain very much limited to the area of asylum, and allowed room for concepts as diversity and equality in other policy areas. As a result, anti-immigrant rhetoric remained isolated. It must be noted, though, that UKIP does not really qualify as an anti-immigration party. It is, for example, not against labour immigration, saying Britain could accept skilled migrants from non-EU countries. Rather, it is an anti-European party, and firmly in favour of a return to the traditions of imperial Britain, giving preference to immigrants from Commonwealth countries over EU nationals. BNP underwent something of a transformation under Nick Griffin, who was elected in 1999. Griffin was intent on remodelling BNP to make it more palatable to the mainstream, mitigating some of its offensive discourse, such as its anti-Semitism. Despite these changes there is no mistaking the BNP for a mainstream party. The gap between its rhetoric and that of mainstream British politics, including UKIP, remains very large.

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute
DOI: 10.2870/4016
The 2005 election

Labour won the 2005 election, but with a far smaller margin than in 2001, losing 33 seats to the Conservatives. While Labour continued to emphasise the economy, the Conservatives made immigration one of its key issues, using the slogan ‘It’s not racist to impose limits on immigration’, with the subtitle ‘Are you thinking what we’re thinking?’ in their election campaign. Figure 6 shows that Labour succumbed to Conservative pressures on immigration in this election, as it joins the Conservatives on the restrictive side of the immigration dimension. The issues on which Labour toughens its stance include border control, asylum, illegal immigration and family reunification. Asylum remains one of the most important issues. Although asylum numbers were dropping significantly since its peak in 2002, and would reach the lowest levels since 1993 in 2006, public and political perception had not yet caught up. Whereas Labour had distanced itself from some of the more repressive Conservative proposals in previous years, it now joined the Conservatives’ chorus, proposing the detention and electronic tagging of rejected asylum seekers, and the prosecution of those who deliberately destroyed their documents in order to cheat the system. In former years, Labour had explicitly been against some of these measures. Recall that in 1992 Labour argued that ‘genuine’ refugees were unlikely to travel with valid documentation, and that refusing these applicants without papers would likely affect the exact group of people they were trying to protect. Whereas Labour, in the previous election, proposed to grant asylum seekers waiting for decisions on their case the right to work, it now argued in favour of detention and the restriction of rights to appeal. The Conservatives, more than Labour, focus on the issue of border control, which is ironic but understandable in the light of the hundreds of thousands of Eastern Europeans travelling to Britain to work after the May 2004 enlargement of the European Union. The Conservatives also continue to focus on asylum seekers, arguing they would ‘take back power from Brussels to ensure national control of asylum policy.’ They are in favour of the points-based system for skilled immigration, as is Labour, and intend to set an ‘overall annual limit on the numbers coming to Britain’. The competition between the Conservatives and UKIP becomes immediately apparent, as the Conservatives for the first time emphasise national sovereignty and echo UKIP’s proposal of withdrawing from the Geneva Convention to re-establish control over the number of asylum seekers to accept.

The 2005 elections precede the 2005 bombings, in which four suicide bombers who turned out to be British Muslims attacked London, raising the issue of second-generation integration and radicalisation. In the absence of this trigger and in good British tradition, parties hardly debate integration policy, although Labour for the first time mentions the need to learn the English language in its manifesto. UKIP is the exception, breaking the British consensus on inclusive multiculturalism by ‘encouraging full assimilation’. UKIP proposes ‘Britishness tests’, covering the English language and British culture. More so than in 2001, UKIP emphasises the issue of immigration, calling for a zero net immigration policy and relying on the issue as a defining characteristic of the party alongside with anti-EU stances. The anti-EU stance, more than the issue of immigration, differentiates UKIP from the Conservatives. UKIP promises, for
example, to reintroduce limits to immigration for EU nationals, as they want nothing to do with being part of a ‘federal’ European Union. Instead they persist with their focus on British imperial history, arguing that immigrants from Commonwealth countries should have precedence over EU citizens, as they have closer links with Britain. UKIP can be considered a relatively mild anti-immigration party based on its manifesto. It for example supports the point-based system of immigration, which is also mentioned by Labour and the Conservatives, and its zero-immigration policy and Britishness tests are relatively tame in comparative perspective. The other anti-immigration party, BNP, remains at the fringe of the political spectrum, arguing that ‘Britain’s very existence is threatened by immigration’ and that ‘immigration means choosing to become a poorer, more violent, more dependent and worse-educated society’. Its policies are similar to those of previous years: immigrants should be repatriated either voluntarily or with ‘assistance’, positive discrimination should be abolished, laws against racial discrimination should be repealed and racial integration should be prevented. Its 2005 manifesto clearly illustrates why the party remains very marginal: it does not make any effort to shed its racist identity, arguing that ethnic minorities have ‘racially determined anti-democratic tendencies’ that they have ‘health and behavioural problems’ and pointing out the danger of ‘biologically determined racial warfare’ and the ‘danger of war between British pensioners and young ethnic minorities’.

The 2005 election shows that at national level, the British market for anti-immigration parties is very limited. UKIP had managed to secure 16% of the vote in the European election of 2004, but could not sustain that result at the national level, gaining only 2.2% of the vote at the 2005 general election. BNP manages to secure a mere 0.7% of the vote. Figure 6 also illustrates that the larger parties choose to compete on immigration before an anti-immigration party such as UKIP gets the chance to grow strong: the Conservatives’ and Labour’s manifestos present comparably restrictive immigration positions. The LibDems and the Green Party are the only parties that choose not to compete with restrictive stances, and occupy positions on the liberal side of the immigration dimension.

The 2010 election

In 2008 the Labour government had introduced a points-based immigration system, which was designed to ‘control immigration’ and halt unskilled non-EU migration. Along with language tests for spouses arriving in Britain, these measures have been interpreted as measures to restore public faith in the UK’s immigration system and Labour’s ability to handle immigration. Two years later, in the run-up to the 2010 election, the points-based immigration system seemed to have indeed cut immigration for the purpose of work, as was Labour’s intention, but saw a dramatic increase in student numbers, a topic which then went on to dominate the immigration debate of the 2010 elections. As figure 6 shows, Labour and the Conservatives competed with highly similar and restrictive immigration positions. The Conservatives attacked Labour on the fact they did not set an annual limit on immigration permits, while Labour stood by its implemented policies. From the scores on the immigration dimension it is difficult to tell the two
parties apart, with the exception of the far more prominent role of further immigration controls called for by the Conservatives. In comparison with 2005, the main shift was from a focus on asylum in 2005 to immigration control in 2010, with both parties participating in this shift. The other two camps on the immigration spectrum consisted of the LibDems and the Green Party, clustering together on the liberal side of the political spectrum; and UKIP and BNP clustering together on the highly restrictive end. The LibDems and the Green Party presented a very liberal immigration position. Although the LibDems joined the Conservatives and Labour in their well-known appeal for stricter immigration controls, it proposed a more liberal solution for how to deal with illegal immigration and asylum. The LibDems for example proposed a highly controlled amnesty for illegal immigrants in the country for over ten years. The Green Party proposed a similar amnesty and stood out by explicitly stating that parties could do very little to control immigration. On the other end of the political spectrum BNP and UKIP competed for votes. UKIP argued that none of what the other parties had to say on immigration mattered much as long as UK remained part of the EU. Compared to the 2005 election it took up a far more extreme immigration position, and focused on the integration of immigrants. UKIP labelled the ideological foundation of its integration policy ‘civic nationalism’, centred on ‘Britishness’, which it defines in terms of ‘democracy, fair play, freedom and politeness’ (Barsley et al., 2010). BNP, finally, presented a programme very similar to its previous programmes, focusing on the ‘extinction of the British people, culture, heritage and identity’. It also accused Labour of ‘orchestrating mass immigration to forcibly change Britain’s demographics and to gerrymander elections’. Of the latter two parties UKIP was certainly the one to fuel the immigration debate, especially in the light of the flight EU immigration to the UK took after 2004. By connecting the issues of EU membership and immigration control it forced Labour and the Conservatives into the defensive.

The overall strategies of political competition on immigration, as shown in figure 6 are consistent with expectations for competitive dynamics in a majoritarian party system. Firstly, the two largest parties compete for votes on the moderately restrictive part of the immigration dimension, where most voters are situated. Secondly, the far smaller LibDems and the Green Party compete on the liberal end, attracting liberal voters from their own and other constituencies, such as the highly divided Labour constituency. Thirdly, UKIP and BNP try to attract voters with more restrictive preferences on the highly restrictive end of the immigration dimension. The percentage of voters voting for UKIP increased by 0.9% to 3.1%, while the BNP vote increased by 1.2% to 1.9%. Although the vote share for these parties show a continuing rising trend, despite the fact that UKIP had urged voters to vote Conservative in certain districts, their total vote does not amount to much.
Conclusion United Kingdom

The UK is often mentioned as a country in which anti-immigration parties have failed to rise, and the party system is credited for this characteristic of political competition (Ignazi, 2003). The empirical evidence presented here underlines this argument. Fierce competition between the two main parties, the Conservatives and Labour, and to a lesser extent the Liberal Democrats, dominates political competition at the general elections to such an extent that anti-immigration parties fail to attract a large share of the vote. At the same time, large parties are under far greater pressure from public opinion due to the higher competitive incentives in the party system, which urge parties to react more promptly to matters voters care about, such as immigration.

The British debate on immigration between the two largest parties is a curious mix of highly restrictive rhetoric on immigration control, from the late 1990s onwards especially on asylum; and very moderate debate on integration, which centres mostly on issues of race relations and anti-discrimination. The parties also link the two: the Conservatives argue the point that strict immigration control ensures good race relations; while Labour often points out that Conservative immigration measures are too repressive to contribute to stable race relations. In either case, there is a strong belief that being tough on border control, and inclusive with regard to race relations is the key to successful immigration politics, which can be considered the general British consensus until the early 2000s when the focus shifts from ‘multiculturalism’ to ‘citizenship’, the latter institutionalised by means of a citizenship ceremony for new Britons. Integration is not much debated in the run-up to elections until 2005, the year that UKIP shifts its attention, which was mainly focused on Europe to immigration and multiculturalism. UKIP’s key concept of ‘Britishness’ is no longer defined as an automatically assigned characteristic, but a set of values one should dedicate oneself to, and can be considered the first real move towards assimilation in the British debate, and a new direction the Conservatives and to a lesser extent Labour would also follow. Nevertheless, the debate remains relatively inclusive: immigrants who feel allegiance to Britain, and come to work, remain welcome.

The striking exception to this relatively civilised debate is the issue of asylum, which is debated with such ferocity that the distinction between mainstream and anti-immigration party fades. The Conservatives, egged on by the tabloids, happily exploit the issue with highly restrictive positions, especially in opposition, after losing power in 1997. The debate intensifies in 2002, at the height of the asylum crisis and at the time UKIP starts to present a threat to the Conservatives, and peaks in 2005, when Labour joins the other two parties at the restrictive side of the immigration dimension as it fears to lose the election. If one were to look at the asylum debate only, one could argue that there was simply no room for an anti-immigration party to rise, as the major parties had already occupied this position in political space. The LibDems are the only larger party staying true to their liberal immigration ideology, also in the field of
asylum. As a result they become the party to which liberal Labour and Conservative voters, disappointed with the asylum discussion, might defect.

The two demand side characteristics of British immigration politics that are reflected most clearly in party positioning are the higher percentage of very restrictive Conservative voters relative to Labour and LibDem voters, and the high divisiveness of Labour constituencies on immigration. These two characteristics make immigration an ideal issue for the Conservatives to campaign on, which especially once in opposition, they do. The role of anti-immigration parties in luring the Conservatives towards these positions is minimal until 2001. Until then, BNP was the only real anti-immigration party competing in the general election, which disqualified itself as a serious competitor by its racist ideology as well as its weak organisational capacity. The party caused turmoil at the local level by being actively involved in race related violence, which led to the implementation of legislation protecting ethnic minorities, rather than the co-optation of its rhetoric by the mainstream. In short, BNP was too far out to affect mainstream political competition at the national level as a competitor capable of pulling the larger parties over to restrictive positions. UKIP, on the other hand, did influence mainstream rhetoric, and especially Conservative rhetoric on the issue of national sovereignty. The Conservatives proposed to opt out of the Geneva Convention in 2005 and explicitly expressed the intention to ‘take power back from Brussels’, a move which would satisfy the more nationalist Conservative wing most at risk of defecting to UKIP. Interestingly, UKIP positions itself are very close to the Conservative position until 2010, with the addition of its central concept of ‘Britishness’. In the UK, the relatively successful anti-immigration party UKIP is a moderate one, which points at the centripetal forces of British political competition.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the supply-side dynamics of immigration politics in reaction to an anti-immigration party. The chapter has two main findings: firstly, that a liberal cross-party consensus is ultimately unstable. Although parties may try to resist competing on immigration, in the end they cannot escape voter demand for restrictive immigration policies, no matter the party system or the barriers to indirect impact imposed by party elites. Mainstream parties clustered together with depoliticised positions in all party systems in the late 1980s, but have now taken up far more restrictive positions. Secondly, party movement on the immigration issue in reaction to an anti-immigration party affects the whole party system and follows a left-right logic. No matter where parties position themselves in absolute terms, in relative terms they keep their left-right ordering intact. Longitudinal analysis shows parties moving across the political spectrum depending on competitive opportunities and threats in that particular election while using left-right cues. Liberal democratic parties deviate from this pattern, which has a profound effect on political competition as will be discussed.
Despite these common findings, there are remarkable differences between our cases. The most important difference is between our multi-party systems Flanders and the Netherlands; and our majoritarian party system, the UK. In Flanders and the Netherlands political competition on immigration process involved the rise of a strong anti-immigration party, which ultimately forced mainstream parties into competition on immigration. In the UK, mainstream parties never lost the initiative to an anti-immigration party. Instead, the Conservative Party, later joined by Labour, took up highly restrictive positions on immigration on its own account. These differences between party systems are quite easily explained, and follow the expected dynamics as discussed in the theory chapter. In a nutshell, multi-party systems as found in Flanders and the Netherlands have lower levels of competition for the median voter, which leads to higher opportunities for parties to cluster together on the immigration issue, an anti-immigrant gap to come into existence, and an anti-immigration party to emerge. Once the anti-immigration party emerges it has a good chance of establishing itself as a medium-sized or even larger party due to the advantages multi-party system offer. In majoritarian systems, as found in the UK, the dynamics are the opposite, with high competition for the median voter, resulting in a smaller anti-immigrant gap, fewer opportunities for anti-immigration parties to rise, and fewer opportunities for these parties to grow strong. In majoritarian political systems, anti-immigration parties remain small, because strategic voting is more likely, as votes are effectively lost if not cast for the winning candidate. In party systems with a more open structure, votes count for representation, regardless of the election result. These differences are reflected in the percentage of votes for anti-immigration parties. In the Netherlands, these percentages are highest: Pim Fortuyn’s LPF attracted 17% of the vote in 2002, while Geert Wilders’ PVV gained 15,4% in the 2010 general election. In Flanders, 19% of the Flemish vote (11,9% of the total vote) went to VB in 2007, the party’s biggest victory at a federal election. In contrast, in the UK, UKIP is the anti-immigration party that has attracted the highest percentage of votes, 3,1%, in 2010, but none of these votes translated into seats in parliament. BNP attracted 1,9% of the vote in the 2010 election, which was its best election result. The incentives to vote for a candidate likely to win the district seat in effect results in a centripetal force towards the two, or increasingly three, main parties at the disadvantage of fringe parties. These dynamics keep the British party system relatively safe from anti-immigration party influences. As a result, the rise of an anti-immigration party poses a far greater threat to the political status quo in Flanders and the Netherlands than in the UK.

The degree to which parties retained control over the immigration dimension, and the strategies they used to do so differ considerably. In the UK, mainstream parties, and especially the Conservative Party, kept close to complete control of the immigration issue, although some overlap with UKIP’s ideology can be observed. The party took up policy positions that can be considered extremely restrictive, but managed to isolate restrictive discourse mainly to the area of immigration control, and specifically asylum. In other policy areas, most notably the integration-related ones, the British debate remained civilised and relatively liberal. In Flanders, mainstream parties attempted to keep control over the immigration dimension by trying to institutionalise depoliticisation by installing a cordon sanitaire. As this chapter has shown, this
strategy kept indirect impact very limited until the election of 2010. Until this election, the Flemish cordon functioned as a shield between VB and mainstream political parties, excluding it from political debate and political power, and diminishing incentives for competing with restrictive policy positions. It is arguable whether the cordon would have been able to survive in a different political context than the Flemish one. The complex institutional set-up in which Flemish and Walloon interests are balanced, provided so many veto points that a cordon could be easily upheld. These veto points, especially on the Walloon side, which had no sizable anti-immigration party, a very different approach to immigration and integration, and a strong aversion to VB, have served to block anti-immigration appeals, also from mainstream parties, with the overall majority favouring liberal policy solutions. Since the 2010 election the cordon no longer functions as an effective barrier to prevent parties from taking up restrictive policy positions. The Flemish political elite has lost control over the immigration dimension and parties have taken up restrictive positions. This finding reflects the competitive incentives of the Flemish political market that the cordon has tried to negate. If the region Flanders were an independent nation such a move could have been expected long ago: to join forces with VB would have been a far more rational strategy for political parties such as CVP/CD&V and PVV/VLD. In the absence of Walloon counterweight, VB would likely be too large a contender to easily ignore, and could have served as a sizable stepping stone to power, in a similar way to the situation in the Netherlands, where VVD and CDA have chosen to cooperate with PVV. Finally, in the Netherlands, there was very little resistance to a strategy of co-optation. Parties reacted immediately to the rise of an anti-immigration party by taking up restrictive immigration positions. In the process, they became followers, following the anti-immigration party’s cues on the immigration issue, instead of setting the agenda. This effect was not limited to specific issues, but involved a general move towards restrictionism in many immigration-related policy areas. When the anti-immigrant threat declines, as happened in 2006, parties acutely respond by abandoning these restrictive positions and taking up more liberal positions. This movement over time clearly reflects the conflicting pressures parties are under, as analysed in chapter 4. When the anti-immigrant threat is negligible the pull towards depoliticisation wins; while in the face of a credible anti-immigrant threat parties are pulled towards more restrictive positions in a left-right fashion.

One of the most consistent findings of this chapter concerns the correlation between the traditional left-right placement of parties relative to each other and their immigration positions. Even during the most tumultuous elections, this ordering is stable. Take for example party movement between the Dutch 1998 and the 2002 elections, as pictured in figure 2. Although parties all make a big leap towards more restrictive policies, they do so keeping the distance between parties more or less stable. Political parties have moved in absolute terms, not in relative terms (that is, with the exception of the distance to the anti-immigration party). In Flanders parties also tend to use the left-right yardstick to determine their position. The specific pattern of competition is a different one however, with the greens increasingly moving away from the centre in a liberal direction, CVP/CD&V and SP/SP.a hovering around the centre, and

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PVV/VLD moving towards VB. In the UK, too, Labour and the Conservatives take up expected positions relative to each other. Although Labour competes with variable absolute positions relative to the Conservatives, competing with a more liberal profile at one election, and a more restrictive one at the next, in relative terms Labour never overtakes the Conservatives on immigration. A snapshot of any of these elections individually, as portrayed in figures 2, 4 and 6 would suggest that left-right politics could explain immigration politics, similar to findings by other scholars (van der Brug & van Spanje, 2009). This chapter has added to the debate on the relationship between the left-right and the immigration dimension by showing that despite the consistent line-up of parties, their absolute positioning changes dramatically over time in response to an anti-immigration party.

The chapter also shows that one-dimensional left-right politics cannot fully explain patterns of competition on the immigration dimension. The liberal democratic parties D66 and the LibDems are the notable exceptions to the pattern of left-right ordering. Although they have a moderately right-wing position on the socio-economic left-right dimension, these parties take up liberal immigration positions. This finding is consistent with our findings in chapter 4 on party constituencies: liberal democratic voters tend to have relatively liberal immigration preferences and are united on the issue of immigration. Together with green parties, liberal democratic parties position themselves on the liberal side of the immigration dimension. This pattern of party positioning points towards a political market in which the immigration dimension is an independent dimension of competition, where green and liberal democratic parties consolidate the liberal end of the dimension, and anti-immigration parties consolidate the restrictive end. Although mainstream parties position themselves according to their left-right identity, as would also follow from the correlation between the left-right dimension on the demand side of the political market as we have seen in chapter 4, this does not necessarily imply these parties do so at low cost. Mainstream parties stand to lose voters from both the liberal and restrictive parts of their constituencies to liberal democratic and green parties, and anti-immigration parties respectively. This chapter confirms that liberal democratic parties take up positions to sweep up this liberal vote, contrary to expectations from a simple left-right perspective. The positioning of liberal democratic parties is, as such, very important for the dimensionality of political space and the squeeze mainstream parties find themselves in.

With these patterns in mind, it comes as no surprise that indirect impact affects party families differently. Firstly, green and liberal democratic parties are the anti-immigration party’s most obvious opponents, and the least susceptible to co-optation. In the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK, these parties have consistently proposed liberal immigration policies, and have openly opposed restrictive measures, with the greens generally occupying the more extreme and the liberal democrats the more moderate position. In some cases, especially in Flanders and in the Netherlands after Fortuyn, these parties- Agalev in Flanders and GroenLinks and D66 in the Netherlands- have actively attacked the anti-immigration party. The parties most tempted to co-opt anti-immigrant rhetoric in the face of a rising anti-immigration party have
been liberal/conservative parties on the right of the political spectrum. The most striking example of indirect impact can be seen in the rhetoric of the Dutch VVD in 2002 and 2003. The Flemish VLD also took up highly restrictive positions in the 1990s, despite the cordon. Social democratic and Christian democratic parties position themselves between these extremes, and have changeable strategies. In Flanders, conflicting incentives led mostly to depoliticisation, sometimes radically so. SP/SP.a and CVP/CD&V chose not to compete on immigration whatsoever in certain elections. In the Netherlands social democratic and Christian democratic parties kept changing course, in an attempt to best balance liberal and restrictive constituencies. Indirect impact, as measured in party manifestos, varied considerably per election.

An interesting angle for further research would concern the relationship between anti-immigrant ideology and co-optation of anti-immigration positions by other parties. This chapter points towards the intuitive conclusion that the more extreme the anti-immigration party’s ideology, the less likely the party’s ideas will be co-opted by mainstream parties. Mainstream parties are extremely careful to avoid racial, ethnic or religious stereotyping. At the same time, the chapter has shown that the ideology of the anti-immigration party does not impact the more general pull towards the restrictive side of the immigration dimension. VB, BNP and CD have their roots in a racist ideology, which includes a racial definition of societal hierarchy, sympathy for collaboration in WWII and anti-Semitism. Of these parties, VB is the party which has most forcefully attempted to modernise the party with a more favourable spin, but has not changed its core ideology of ethnic supremacy, expressed in its slogan ‘Our own people first’. The ethnic definition of supremacy and entitlement is the main feature of the more traditional anti-immigration parties, and makes opposition for mainstream parties easier, potentially limiting indirect impact. Newer anti-immigration parties such as LPF, PVV and UKIP have been more difficult to define and denounce as racist, because their central argument does not hinge on ethnicity. UKIP is primarily an anti-EU party, and not so much focused on ethnic or cultural supremacy, but on national sovereignty. Although the party sought to toughen asylum legislation by opting out of the Geneva Convention, the rationale behind the move was that the British government, not the international community, should determine who gets to enter the UK. This line of thinking appears to be widely accepted in the UK, especially in conservative circles, which is probably also why UKIP managed to influence the Conservatives to the extent that they did. LPF’s main argument is a cultural one, arguing that ‘Western’ culture is supreme to non-Western, and especially ‘Islamic’ culture. If immigrants choose to side with Western ways, they are perceived as ‘one of us’, or so the argument goes. PVV follows the same logic, but more ambiguously so. The party is primarily an anti-Islam party, which Wilders argues is not the same as an anti-Muslim party. Nevertheless, many of PVV’s proposals in parliament, especially before Wilders agreed to support the minority government, specifically targeted Muslims. The obscure nature of Wilders’ politics, in which he refuses to clarify where he draws the line between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and the religion and the believer, has worked in his favour, as it allows him to easily discount claims of racism, while in the same breath opposing the ‘Islamification’ of the Netherlands.

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In terms of indirect impact, it is clear that PVV has not been able to persuade other political parties to share its views on Islam, either in rhetoric or in policy, which supports the idea that indirect impact has ideological limits. The highly pragmatic minority government led by VVD, which desperately needed PVV support, simply stated that they had agreed to disagree on the nature of Islam: PVV regarded Islam to be a ‘dangerous ideology’, while coalition partners VVD and CDA agreed it was a ‘religion’, and left it at that. Rather, PVV influence has ensured the more general emphasis on highly restrictive immigration and integration policies, which mainstream parties reframed in socio-economic terms. The government’s attempts at reducing immigration for the purpose of ‘family formation’, a concept that was later considered unlawful by the European Court of Justice, is a good example. The perceived problem concerned the continued immigration of Turkish and especially Moroccan wives to the Netherlands. The government introduced stricter immigration legislation to curb these marriages, arguing they were restricting immigration of ‘low-opportunity’ groups, pointing at the more problematic aspects of integration of low-skilled, often illiterate immigrants. With this argument, which is consistent with current Dutch government policy of differentiating by skill-level, not ethnicity, the government safely distanced itself from Wilders’ rhetoric. So although these measures mostly affect Muslim immigration, and can be read by Wilders and his followers as an anti-Muslim measure, the government did not resort to anti-Muslim rhetoric, and stayed safely within the bounds of its ‘opportunity’ discourse.

Despite the reframing of issues, which may influence how anti-immigration parties specifically affect immigration policy, this chapter has shown that parties ultimately cannot escape the pull towards relatively restrictive immigration policies, in line with public opinion. The Flemish case shows that an unresponsive political system, in which an abundance of checks and balances provide temporary counterweight to party movement on immigration, can for a (long) while form an effective shield against indirect impact from an anti-immigration party. But even in Flanders, parties eventually had to give in to political pressure. Needless to say, the price in terms of the effectiveness of democratic institutions is the great drawback in the Flemish scenario. A two-party system also mitigates indirect impact. It helps keep an anti-immigration party at bay, and supports the larger parties in controlling the political agenda, which they can use to their advantage. It does not prevent anti-immigration politics, however, quite to the contrary. The asylum discussion in the UK has been harsh, with positions taken up only marginally more liberal than those of anti-immigration parties. The main conclusion from this chapter is that, sooner or later, the immigration issue will be used for political competition in a responsive democracy where a large share of the electorate has a negative opinion of immigration, and that liberal elite opinion will be overruled if political pressure endures. As a result, parties will take up restrictive positions until governments become a restrictive force. The question remains whether the public at large perceives this shift, thereby closing the anti-immigrant gap, which is the only way in which a stable political equilibrium can be reached.
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

When anti-immigration parties rise, mainstream parties are left searching for solutions to curb the growth of this new competitor. One of these potential solutions is the co-optation of restrictive policy positions on the immigration issue, the issue that is at the heart of anti-immigration parties’ ideology. This thesis has tried to find answers to questions pertaining to the dynamics of this process of co-optation. Using a two-dimensional model of competition as its starting point, and incorporating both the demand and the supply-side of the political market, it has begged the question how parties compete on immigration, and why they compete the way they do. The main argument put forward has been that parties follow electoral incentives when positioning themselves on immigration, despite the normative debates the issue is often shrouded in. The main empirical findings support this argument. Although normative constraints play an important role in immigration politics, they lose from electoral incentives once the latter become pressing.

The most revolutionary instance of indirect impact is found in the Dutch case, where parties collectively and dramatically moved towards restrictive immigration positions in 2002 in reaction to the rise of Pim Fortuyn’s party LPF. This move cannot be attributed to any ‘objective’ immigration crisis, that is, immigration figures were not significantly higher in those years compared to previous years, nor was asylum an acute issue. On the contrary, parties of all colours had proposed and implemented relatively restrictive immigration policies in the years leading up to Fortuyn’s victory. In addition, the Dutch economy had enjoyed several years of growth in the late ’90s and early 2000s, leading party leaders to expect a ‘thank you’ from the Dutch voter. The opposite happened: with the rise of Fortuyn, the collective vote-share of the mainstream parties that had been in government, PvdA, D66 and VVD, dropped from 63% to 36%. In the run-up to the election, these parties realised they would have to defend against Fortuyn, and parties changed their immigration positions massively, effectively all taking up restrictive immigration positions. Fortuyn had successfully managed to tap into latent discontent with the political elite and its perceived too liberal immigration and integration policies.

The Dutch reaction to the rise and demise of Fortuyn’s party clearly illustrates the tensions characterising the political market on immigration: on the one hand the pull towards more restrictive positions in a left-right ordering as a result of the correlation of left-right and immigration preferences in combination with an anti-immigrant gap; and on the other hand the resistance to this pull as a function of the divisiveness of the immigration issue for mainstream parties’ constituencies. A snapshot of the political market at any given moment obscures these tensions, and suggests that political competition is a relatively straightforward left-right affair. No matter whether parties positioned themselves with more liberal or
more restrictive positions, parties always honoured their positions relative to each other. This finding is consistent for immigration positioning not only in the Dutch case, but in all cases. The left-right blueprint of politics is pervasive at the aggregate level, not only in stated party positioning (chapter 5), but also in perceived party positioning (chapter 3), self-positioning by party adherents (chapter 3), and revealed preferences of left voters and right voters (chapter 4). On average, the left-right yard-stick is an adequate one.

But left-right politics alone cannot explain the longitudinal dynamics in reaction to an anti-immigration party. As the Dutch case illustrates, parties are only very reluctantly pulled towards restrictive positions, and use any opportunity that arises to return to more neutral positions. In the 2006 election, the election following LPF’s collapse, parties collectively moved back towards positions highly similar to those of 1998. If the 2002 and 2003 elections were to be kept out of the picture, no one would have guessed Fortuyn had caused such an electoral earthquake, judging from parties’ immigration positions in their manifestos: they are practically identical to their policies of the 90s. With the credible threat of PVV in 2010, VVD and CDA again leaped towards positions approximating those of 2002 and 2003. There appear to be two modes of positioning in Dutch immigration politics: the first for elections without and anti-immigrant threat, with relatively liberal positions; and the second when facing an anti-immigration party, with highly restrictive positions. This pattern of competition can only be explained when taking into account conflicting incentives which find their basis in the correlation of left-right and immigration preferences at party system level; and the divisiveness of the immigration issue at party level. In the absence of an anti-immigrant threat these incentives lead to the dominance of depoliticisation, as parties traditionally organising on the left-right dimension have little to win by competing on the divisive issue of immigration; while they lead to co-optation once an anti-immigration party presents a credible threat.

The Flemish case, quite surprisingly seen the cordon sanitaire, ultimately shows the same principal pattern of competition, with the main difference being that parties only resort to co-optation if it is the only and final option to retain power. Because the Flemish party system is balanced out by the Walloon party system, parties that want to govern are in general better advised to align themselves with their liberal Walloon counterparts, than with anti-immigration parties. As a result parties resisted co-optation, even though VB continued to grow. The strategy of co-optation was only used once a competitor threatened to become the largest Flemish party, as happened in 2010. All mainstream parties, including SP.a and CD&V, which religiously kept to the cordon in previous years, took up restrictive immigration positions in this election. Although Flemish resistance to co-optation was fierce, even in Flanders co-optation trumped isolation when it remained the last path to power. In Flanders, the divisiveness of the immigration issue, together with the combined party system, which puts an extra break on co-optation, can be considered the electoral basis for the cordon sanitaire. The other characteristics of immigration politics, including its left-right logic and the structure of voter preferences, are fairly similar to those in the Netherlands.
The British case, finally, shows a different pattern of competition, as it is questionable whether competing with restrictive immigration positions can be interpreted as a reaction to an anti-immigration party. Although there is a correlation between the rise in vote-shares of anti-immigration parties BNP and UKIP, the rise in saliency of the immigration issue and the restrictiveness of parties’ immigration positions, voter opinion as analysed in chapter 3 showed that anti-immigration parties are not considered a real option to take seriously or vote for by most British voters, including those who are worried about the immigration issue. The Conservatives rule supreme on immigration, and using the issue in an election campaign should more likely be interpreted as an offensive, than as a defensive move. The Conservatives know they can very easily beat Labour on this issue, as Labour’s constituency is far more divided on the issue than the Conservatives’. At the national level it is the Conservatives’ call, and the party moves between neutral or very mildly restrictive positions, and restrictive ones. Labour has a changeable strategy, and alternates between very liberal and restrictive positions depending on the election, though it always competes with at least slightly more liberal positions than the Conservatives, reflecting a left-right logic, which is evident both on the supply and the demand side of the British political market, though far less pronounced than in the Netherlands and Flanders. In the elections of 2005 and 2010 we have witnessed Labour ‘catching up’ with the Conservatives, almost colluding on the immigration issue, reflecting smaller differences between the party of the left and right compared to Netherlands and Flanders.

The Conservatives’ leading role in immigration politics, with its strategy of using immigration fiercely when it believes it thinks it needs to, can be explained by the lack of opportunity for entry and growth of new parties in the British electoral system. Partly as a result of the electoral opportunity structure, partly an electoral self-fulfilling prophecy, these parties are doomed to remain fringe parties. The electoral system by far favours the larger parties, which translates not only into fewer votes for anti-immigration parties, but also into lower trust in such parties to present a credible alternative. As a result, both UKIP and BNP lack the ‘whip’ that characterises anti-immigration parties in our continental cases. The government-opposition dynamic in the British electoral system may further undermine the credibility of an anti-immigration party’s appeal, as not only the anti-immigration party, but also the mainstream party in opposition can claim the outsider role, a dynamic which is hardly present in a system of coalition government. The dynamic in our continental cases is the opposite with low barriers to entry, and equal treatment of smaller and larger parties. This system invites renewal of the party system, as the rise of anti-immigration parties and their success has shown.

A comparison between the three mainstream right-wing parties, VVD, PVV/VLD and the Conservatives, and their reputation on the immigration issue illustrates the difference between electoral systems and their effect on party strategy and reputation. PVV/VLD in Flanders chose a dual strategy of staying within the cordon officially by not co-operating with VB, but at the same time competing with highly restrictive immigration appeals until the late ‘90s when the party entered government. This strategy was not perceived as a credible one by voters. 50% of the general public and party adherents alike judge the party
as being ‘too lenient’ on the issue of immigrant rights, as we have seen in chapter 3. As a result the party’s anti-immigrant gap was only slightly smaller than those of SP/SP.a and CVP/CD&V, the parties that decided not to compete on immigration altogether. Moreover, the average voter positioned himself to the restrictive side of PVV/VLD on the immigration dimension. Knowing these figures, it comes as no surprise that PVV/VLD’s efforts to stop VB in its tracks did not amount to much. VVD’s position in the Netherlands was very different, which explains some of the shocked reactions when LPF entered the political system with such force. In 1998, before the rise of Fortuyn, 63% of the public thought VVD was too restrictive on asylum. 53% of the public thought it was too restrictive on the issue of integration. The anti-immigrant gap did not exist for VVD- it was considered either slightly too restrictive (on asylum) or about right (on integration) by its party adherents. Also, the average voter positioned himself further to the liberal side of the immigration dimension compared to VVD. Seeing these figures, VVD was probably confident it had the restrictive end of the immigration dimension covered. The rise of LPF showed however that it had not. There was more room for an anti-immigration party to enter than anyone had foreseen. It appears there is little VVD could have done to prevent such a rise as it already had an ‘optimal’ position in the mind of voters to prevent the rise of an anti-immigration party. So no matter whether the mainstream party of the right proposes immigration policies that are perceived as lenient (PVV/VLD) or restrictive (VVD), and no matter whether there is a perceived anti-immigrant gap (PVV/VLD) or not (VVD), anti-immigration parties may rise quite forcefully in a multi-party system.

It might be argued that VVD’s and the Conservatives’ perceived position on immigration are relatively similar. Both parties are seen as restrictive on immigration and party adherents tend to agree with their immigration policies. Although we have no hard data to confirm this, it is also not unlikely that Dutch voters trust VVD more than other parties when it comes to immigration. Moreover, it appears that in the UK, the Conservatives may have an absolute lead over immigration compared to Labour, but close to 50% of the British electorate do not believe either party puts forward policies to address the issue of immigration adequately (Ipsos MORI 2006). In theory, these voters could be swayed by an anti-immigration party. The main difference between the Conservatives and VVD, and it makes a big difference indeed, is the party system in which it operates. While both parties enjoy similar ratings from the electorate on the immigration issue, in the centripetal two-party system votes flow to the mainstream party and the anti-immigration party remains marginal, while in the centrifugal multi-party system, the anti-immigration party has a chance to emerge as a strong force at the fringe of the political spectrum, upsetting traditional political alignments.

The differences between the party systems, in which two-party systems favour the large incumbent parties, while the multi-party system allows more room for smaller parties and renewal, become highlighted once an anti-immigration party rises, as it has more opportunities in, as well as a larger effect on the multi-party system. The findings of chapter 3, 4, and 5 combined show that mainstream parties in multi-party systems have good reason to worry when an anti-immigration party rises. To start with,
mainstream parties, especially those traditionally organising along the left-right dimension, have electorates that are highly divided on the issue of immigration, as we have seen in chapter 4. Although at party system level the left-right dimension appears to have absorbed the immigration dimension to a certain degree, at party level traditional mainstream parties are at a strategic disadvantage. Whereas parties organised along the value cleavage, such as the greens and the liberal democrats, enjoy levels of agreement comparable to those of the anti-immigration party, parties traditionally organising along the left-right dimension tend to be far more divided. Once an anti-immigration party rises, this likely translates into a further fragmentation of the political market, as mainstream political parties stand to lose voters from both the restrictive and liberal parts of their constituency. This process is illustrated in figure 1 and 2, which depict the two-dimensional political market before and after the rise of an anti-immigration party. Before the rise of an anti-immigration party, the left-right dimension can be considered the principal dimension of competition. Some small parties position themselves at the liberal and restrictive end of the value dimension, which dilutes this focus to some degree. Once an anti-immigration party rises strongly, and starts accumulating votes at the restrictive end of the value dimension, mainstream parties lose grip on their preferred dimension of competition. The latent possibilities for a truly two-dimensional political market rooted in voter preferences, become manifest. In a truly two-dimensional political market, there is no stable solution for ‘optimal’ party positioning. Divided parties become fragmented, and stand to lose votes no matter where they position themselves. Traditional mainstream parties stand to lose most from such a development, whereas parties organising along the value dimension stand to gain.

![Figure 6.1. Political Competition in a Multi-Party System Before the Rise of an Anti-Immigration Party](image1)

![Figure 6.2. Political Competition in a Multi-Party System After the Rise of an Anti-Immigration Party](image2)
The increase of the fragmentation of the political system due to the increasing importance of the value dimension is evident in both the Netherlands and Flanders. In the Netherlands, elections since 1989 can be divided into those that are won mainly by the three large parties CDA, VVD and PvdA; and those that are won by four parties, which include CDA, VVD and PvdA plus another party. In the latter case, which includes the elections of 1994, with D66 being the fourth party; those of 2002 with LPF; 2006 with SP; and 2010 with PVV, vote shares per party are much lower. These ‘fourth’ parties organise along the value dimension splitting traditional electorates in two as we have seen in chapter 4. Electoral volatility reached unprecedented heights with the rise of Fortuyn (Mair, 2008). The previously largest parties VVD and PvdA managed to attract a mere 15% of the vote each at this election. In the election before the rise of Fortuyn, that of 1998, these figures had been an approximate 30% and 25%.

In Flanders we see a similar pattern. The Belgian party system is one of the most fragmented in Western Europe, with vote shares of the total Belgian vote below 20% per party from 1987 onwards. In 1999, when VB joined the group of middle-sized parties, vote shares plummeted to below 15% per party, with six Flemish parties attracting between 5% and 15% of the total Belgian vote. The general pattern is comparable to that of the Netherlands in which new parties attract increasingly large shares of the vote: large parties shrink to become medium-sized parties, while small parties grow to become medium-sized parties. In Flanders, the three parties at the heart of this trend are VB and N-VA on the winning side; and CVP/CD&V on the losing side. CVP/CD&V was in a league of its own as the largest Flemish party in the ‘80s and has since been in decline, joining the group of middle-sized parties in 1999. Parties grudgingly had to accept large flocks of voters shifting towards VB from the early 90’s onwards, and now see their voters move towards N-VA. The latest election shows that ‘new’ parties may be the large parties of the future, with N-VA securing 17.4% of the vote in 2010. It remains to be seen whether N-VA will manage to hold onto these sizable vote-shares or will go on to join other parties in the 5-15% range.

The Dutch and Flemish figures illustrate that fragmentation of the party system is a likely result of new dimensions of competition becoming anchored into the party system and being activated by the rise of an anti-immigration party. Mainstream parties are divided on the immigration issue and have increasing difficulty hanging on to their traditional electorate. But the story of why the rise of an anti-immigration party is detrimental to mainstream parties does not end with divisiveness. The combined results of chapter 3 and chapter 5 also show that the rise of an anti-immigration party in and of itself changes the way voters perceive the immigration issue and evaluate the performance of their parties. Such a finding is incompatible with a rational choice framework in which voters are assumed to be rational actors with exogenous preferences. Although we concluded in chapter 3 that voters do not takes cues from their own party elites when it comes to immigration, combined with the results of chapter 5 it becomes clear that voters may not take clues from their own parties, but they may very well take clues from the anti-immigration party. The effect on political competition is profound as it changes the entire perceived
political landscape, and even parties without a perceived immigrant gap need to dramatically adjust their immigration positions to keep up with this new perception.

A poignant example can be found in voter perception of VVD in the Netherlands. As we have just discussed, VVD had a relatively optimal perceived position on immigration before the rise of Fortuyn. After the rise of Fortuyn, this position becomes contested. Although the party tries to catch up with Fortuyn with a majestic leap towards extremely restrictive immigration positions as captured in figure 5.2, voters perceive the party to have moved towards more liberal positions on asylum, and only slightly more restrictive positions on integration, as figures 3.3 and 3.8 show. VVD’s anti-immigrant gap remains non-existent, with party adherents agreeing with the party’s immigration position, but the percentage of the public that thinks VVD’s policies are too restrictive drops from around 60% to 50% on asylum and from 50% to 40% integration, despite a severe toughening up of the party’s stated policy positions. Although we concluded from chapter 3 that voter preferences could be treated as exogenous, combined with the findings of chapter 5, one has to conclude that the anti-immigration party strongly influences voter perception. Dutch political parties have experienced the rise of Fortuyn as nothing short of a revolution, changing Dutch politics practically overnight. These findings show us why. Once the anti-immigration party emerged, mainstream parties were forced into a defensive position, losing the initiative to an anti-immigration party, which managed to transform the politics and perception of the immigration issue, despite the efforts of mainstream parties to appear tough on immigration.

On the left and centre of the political spectrum, parties have even greater trouble with voter perception of their performance on immigration. Parties of the left and centre have a relatively large and stable anti-immigrant gap as we have seen in chapter 3. No matter the party system, parties of the left and centre most notably PvdA, CDA, D66, and GroenLinks in the Netherlands; SP/SP.a, CVP/CD&V and Agalev/Groen! in Flanders; and Labour in the UK are perceived as having too liberal immigration positions by voters as well as party adherents. As chapter 3 and 4 have shown, it makes sense from an electoral perspective for parties of the left and centre to position themselves with more liberal positions compared to parties of the right, but it appears to be difficult to find a position voters of the left and centre on average are satisfied with. At certain elections, for example the 1994 and 2002 elections in the Netherlands, and the 2005 and 2010 elections in the UK, parties of the left and centre competed with more restrictive positions, but this did not lead to a decrease of the anti-immigrant gap. Although voters did perceive a very slight move towards restrictionism (see for example fig 3.3 and 3.8) parties’ reputation on an issue can apparently not be manipulated easily from one election to the next by means of adjusting stated policy positions. CDA is an interesting example. It competes with the most restrictive immigration position of any of the mainstream parties in 1994. This does very little, however, to influence voter perception and it does not succeed in closing CDA’s anti-immigrant gap, which at the time is as large as that of PvdA. Voter perception of CDA changes quite dramatically when it decides to compete with restrictive policy positions and cooperate with LPF in a coalition government in 2002. As figure 3.3 and
3.8 show, parties perceive CDA to have moved towards restrictive positions, while they do not perceive a similar move by PvdA, which makes a comparable move across the political spectrum. Whereas CDA’s anti-immigrant gap shrinks over the years, though it never disappears, PvdA’s anti-immigrant gap shrinks only marginally and remains the largest of all parties. But even CDA, which joins forces with an anti-immigration party, competes with restrictive positions, and is perceived by voters to have moved towards restrictionism does not succeed in closing the anti-immigrant gap. This begs the question whether parties of the left and centre can ever close the anti-immigrant gap. The psychological association between the concept of ‘the left’ and that of ‘soft on immigration’ appears to be of formidable strength. Conversely, it means that the political right ‘owns’ the immigration issue, and can be more successful on this issue than the left.

In a nutshell, mainstream parties in multi-party systems appear to have little power to take charge of the immigration issue, and by doing so stabilise the political market. On the left and centre, parties are not trusted on immigration, relatively independently of their policy positions on the issue which renders them powerless once the immigration dimension becomes a salient dimension of political competition (this is also true for Labour); while on the right parties are forced into the role of followers. Even when parties of the right get their policy positioning ‘right’, the rise of an anti-immigration party shifts perceptions of policy positioning to a sometimes perplexing degree. Anti-immigration parties take the lead; mainstream parties try to ‘catch up’.

Many people have asked me for an ‘appendix for parties’, which would outline parties’ best course of action once faced with an anti-immigration party to contend with. My analysis shows first and foremost, that such a course of action is not easy to find. Mainstream parties have divided constituencies, which is a structural feature of the political market and not easily overcome; voters of the left and centre structurally feel their party is misaligned on immigration, but do not readily accept, trust and internalise changes in party positioning; and perceived positioning on the immigration dimension is influenced quite heavily by the rise of an anti-immigration party. It appears that only a party of the right in a two-party system with quite fiercely anti-immigrant positions ‘wins’ the battle for control over the electoral market on the immigration dimension from an anti-immigration party. Judging from these findings, changing the electoral system to a two-party system may be the only fool proof way to successfully and structurally beat an anti-immigration party, stabilise the political market, and reverse to some degree the increasing fragmentation found in multi-party systems. Mainstream parties could then benefit from a system in which two or three large parties compete and alternate between government and opposition. There are a number of problems with this solution. Firstly, by now, the anti-immigration party may very well become one of those two large parties in a two-party system in the Netherlands and Flanders. Such a change in party system would have had to be implemented before the rise of an anti-immigration party to be successful (and legitimate), but of course, before the rise of an anti-immigration party there are few incentives to do so! Secondly, the reason a two-party system works in preventing the rise of an anti-
immigration party and stacks the odds of competing with such a competitor in the favour of older, larger, mainstream parties, is the exact same reason it will be difficult to implement in countries that traditionally have multi-party systems. A majoritarian party system disproportionately favours some parties over others, not only as a function of how votes are aggregated, but also psychologically, in that voters will refrain from voting for smaller parties seen that these parties hardly stand a chance of winning seats. The Netherlands and Flanders are both cases where minority representation is highly valued. Seen that one cannot select specific parties to discriminate against, but has to either discriminate against all smaller and newer parties or none, it is unlikely the change towards a two-party system would be warmly welcomed.

It will likely depend on the degree to which anti-immigration parties conform, cooperate and mitigate their agenda once in a position of political power, and how disruptive the party’s presence is to a country’s stability whether the negatives of the rise of a large anti-immigration party (instability and fragmentation of the party system, normative concerns) will outweigh the positives (representation) to such a degree that changes to the electoral system will have to be made. In the long run, the degree to which an anti-immigration party undermines cooperative government may prove to be an important indicator of the sustainability of a multi-party system in a country with a strong anti-immigration party. Political competition has undoubtedly become fiercer as the result of the anti-immigration party no longer adhering to old rules of accommodation. It remains to be seen whether this also undermines cooperative government. The Dutch case suggests that an anti-immigration party can quite smoothly cooperate with other political parties behind the scenes (rather too smoothly some would argue), while continuing its aggressive strategy of political competition in the public sphere. It is ‘business as usual’ as far as elite cooperation goes. But if anti-immigration parties, or any of the other parties for that matter, no longer commit to a mode of governing in which compromise is a central feature, multi-party systems come under severe centrifugal pressure. A centripetal force is necessary for successful government whether provided by elite cooperation, as found traditionally in multi-party systems, or the party system itself, as provided by majoritarian electoral rules, to prevent disintegration and political stalemate. The Flemish case suggests that a tipping point, when parties may start to reconsider their electoral system, is not easily reached. Years of crisis and stalemate have not led to openings for a radical redesign of the Belgian and Flemish electoral system.

In the absence of such a fundamental change, there are several lessons parties can take to heart based on the results of this thesis: Firstly, the electoral market wins. Although parties can attempt to ignore the anti-immigration party, ultimately parties are forced to reconnect with their electorate on the immigration dimension. In Flanders parties resisted to do so, and succeeded for close to two decades. But even in Flanders, political will was trumped by electoral concerns, and parties moved towards more restrictive positions in 2010 to try to prevent N-VA, LDD or VB from becoming the largest Flemish party. The price parties pay for such a strategy of isolation is a larger anti-immigrant gap, which translates into weakening ties between mainstream parties and their traditional electorates, and an increase in
opportunities for new parties to sway these voters. That being said, the anti-immigrant gap is not only a feature of parties with a strategy of isolation, as we have seen in chapter 3, and the extent to which a larger gap leads to more instability is open to interpretation. Responding to voter opinion does not mean that parties all have to take up highly restrictive policy positions. On the contrary, parties on the left, and especially those of the new left are well advised to stick only very moderately restrictive policies (in a proportional representation voting system). The average left voter has little sympathy for highly restrictive stances. On the right, parties would naturally have more restrictive positions to satisfy their voters. In a two-party system these differences between the main party of the right and that of the left are likely to be less pronounced, based on voter preferences.

Secondly, short-term changes of party strategy on immigration are not internalised and believed by voters. As we have seen in chapter 5, parties of the left and centre tend to move back and forth across the immigration dimension alternating liberal and restrictive policies. Moving towards more restrictive positions for the time-span of one election does very little to close the anti-immigrant gap, as we have seen in chapter 3. It seems futile therefore to try to appease voters in the short run by changing stated policy positions. Knowing this, the focus on opinion polls and the like on specific issues, which have become so important for political strategizing, seems undeserved. Although opinion polls may serve to understand voter demand in the moment, it is unlikely they provide quick fixes to satisfy this demand. Long-term reputation is likely to be a far stronger factor, and is built on years of political conduct, rather than weeks. Rather ironically, anti-immigration parties themselves are not subject to these pressures of responsibility to the same degree. Voters more readily seem to accept exaggerated, inconsistent or infeasible claims from anti-immigration parties, perhaps because they are seen primarily as outsider parties and challengers of the mainstream.

Thirdly, the anti-immigration party appears to dominate politics on the immigration dimension shifting perceptions of the general public after its rise. This phenomenon is as of yet little understood, yet it is at the heart of political transformation in political systems across Western Europe. If parties want to recapture their voters, they will have to reconnect with them and somehow regain their trust. The hypothesis in this thesis proposed parties would try to do so by moving party positions on immigration closer to those of the anti-immigration party. This indeed happens, but it does not seem to result in a closing of the anti-immigrant gap, as spatial theory assumes. These findings show that taking up restrictive immigration positions alone does not counter an anti-immigrant threat effectively. Often, when immigration discussions become too heated and controversial, commentators argue that parties should refocus attention on the socio-economic dimension of competition to deflect an anti-immigrant threat. Parties could then reconnect with their voters on issues that traditionally bind parties and voters. Again, it is questionable whether such a strategy works in the current political market. As much of the recent literature shows (Kriesi 2008; Bornschier 2010), West European political markets now structurally sport two important dimensions of competition: the socio-economic left-right dimension, and the value

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dimension which includes issues such as immigration. These have become part of the DNA, so to speak, of modern political competition. To deny the value dimension might have been possible in times in which this configuration of dimensions was not yet as consolidated as it is now, when anti-immigration parties were weak, and when parties of the centre of the political spectrum still dominated political competition. But now, when in many party systems anti-immigration parties have become powerful actors in the political market, ignoring this dimension of competition appears to be a strategy of denial, rather than one of engagement with a new political reality. Parties in multi-party systems are no longer large and powerful enough to influence the dimensionality of politics on their own. If co-optation doesn’t work, and denial and isolation no longer work, parties will have to come up with new ways to engage their electorate. Formulating a coherent appeal on the value dimension, which includes but is not limited to the issue of immigration, may be such a solution. Although this will be difficult for mainstream parties due to the divisiveness of the value dimension for these parties, denial only leads to a loss of voters on both the liberal and restrictive ends of this dimension. This may be the most pressing issue facing parties across Western Europe at this time: to develop a new vocabulary and discourse addressing value issues.

The results of chapter 3 and 5 combined show that the key to formulating such an appeal is not likely to be found within a spatial approach – perceived party positioning in political space is shown to depend to only a limited degree on objective party positioning, and mainstream parties have had little success in reclaiming their electorate by taking up more restrictive immigration positions. Political psychology may provide more promising answers. Researchers in this tradition have emphasised that taking up optimal positions on policy issues, as the spatial approach would have it, is not the key to electoral success (Weinberger & Westen, 2008; Westen, 2007; Westen, Blagov, Harenski, Kilts, & Hamann, 2006). Rather, they argue that voters are persuaded to vote for a party because of the values and the emotions they convey. In this view it is far more important to appeal to voters’ emotions than to their intellect and rational self-interest. It is a controversial way of viewing politics, as it suggests that emotions trump facts, an assumption which sits uncomfortably with assumptions of rationality. In the darkest scenario, this reading of political competition endorses ‘fact-free’ politics in which anything goes that resonates with the electorate. In a more positive interpretation, accepting the power of emotion may give access to understanding how political competition actually works, using voters’ emotional rather than rational mind as a starting point. The rise of parties utilising the immigration dimension, which ultimately deals with issues of identity (Sides & Citrin, 2007), is best understood through the same lens: that of values and emotion. Developing a broad value identity stands a higher chance of successful opposition in face of an anti-immigration party, than turning a blind eye to divisive issues no matter how attractive this option may sometimes seem. Whether immigration is the specific issue on which this appeal should be centred is not imperative. The focus is likely to be away from specific issues, and towards a more general philosophy which formulates what parties stand for and who they represent, not so much in terms of material self-interest, but in terms of values, mind-set and identity.
Bibliography


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Annex 1

Chapter 3: Data, Question Texts and Results

Netherlands

Data used

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NKO'02-'03, Dutch Parliamentary Election Study '02-'03, Prof. Dr. G.A. Irwin, J.J.M. van Holsteyn, J.M. den Ridder, Amsterdam, Steinmetz Archives (P1628)
NKO’06, Dutch Parliamentary Election Study ’06. K. Aarts, H. van der Kolk, M. Rosema, H. Schmeets, Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS), Statistics Netherlands (CBS), Dutch Electoral Research Foundation (SKON)

Question text

Asylum

Asylum seekers –position of [party] / [respondent]
Allowing ASYLUM SEEKERS to enter the Netherlands has frequently been in the news during the last few years. Some people think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers than the government currently does. Other people think that the Netherlands should send asylum seekers who are already staying here back to their country of origin. Of course, there are also people whose opinion lies somewhere in between.
At the beginning of this line are the people (and parties) who think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers to enter (at number 1); at the end of the line are the people (and parties) who think that the Netherlands should send back as many asylum seekers as possible (at number 7). I will ask you first to place some political parties on the line. If you have no idea at all which position a party has, then please feel free to say so. Where would you place [party] on this line? And where would you place yourself on this line?
### Results

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### Question text

**Integration**

Ethnic minorities –position of [party] / [respondent]

There is disagreement in the Netherlands about foreigners and ETHNIC MINORITIES. Some people and parties think that these people should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all customs of their own culture. Others think that these people, if they stay in the Netherlands, should completely adjust themselves to Dutch culture. Of course, there are also people whose opinion is somewhere in between. At the beginning of this line are the people (and parties) who think that foreigners and ethnic minorities should be able to live in the Netherlands while preserving all customs of their own culture (at number 1); at the end of the line are the people (and parties) who think that these people should fully adjust themselves to Dutch culture (at number 7). Where would you place [party] on this line? And where would you place yourself on this line?

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### Results

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European University Institute

DOI: 10.2870/4016
Flanders

Data used
NBES 1991: The data used were made available by ISPO-PIOP Center for Electoral Research. The Flemish data were originally collected by J. Biliet, M. Swyngedouw, A. Carton and R. Beerten (ISPO)
NBES 1995: The data used were made available by the ISPO and PIOP – Interuniversity Centres for Political Opinion Research, sponsored by the Federal Services for Technical, Cultural and Scientific Affairs. The Flemish data were originally collected by J. Billiet, M. Swyngedouw, E. Meersseman and A. Depickere (ISPO).

Question text
Immigrant Rights
‘Concerning immigrants, by which we mean Turks and Moroccans, a range of opinions exists. Some people think they should have ‘the same rights’ as Belgians, others think they should have ‘less rights’. Where would you place yourself on the scale? Where would you place [party]?’ 0= ‘same rights’, 10 = ‘less rights’

Results

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### United Kingdom

**Data used**

2005 BES rolling campaign panel survey (RCPS), pre-campaign wave (N=7793). These data were gathered in a Britain-wide internet survey carried out by YouGov under the supervision of Research Director J. Twyman.

**Question text**

**Asylum**

How well do you think the Labour government has handled/ a Conservative government would handle the number of asylum-seekers coming to Britain? 1= very well, 5= very badly

**Opinion Polls**

- Ipsos MORI Political Survey August 2006, published August 20, 2006, (N=975)
- YouGov/Mail on Sunday Survey 2005, conducted February 3-5, 2005 (N=2039)

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Annex 2

Chapter 4: Data and Question Texts

Data used


Question text

Left-right scale
In politics people sometimes talk of ‘left’ and ‘right’. Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means left and 10 means right?

Immigration control
If a country wants to reduce tension it should stop immigration.

Labour immigration
Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]’s economy that people come to live here from other countries?

Asylum
Government should be generous judging applications for refugee status.

Family reunification
Refugees whose applications are granted should be entitled to bring in their close family members.

Anti-discrimination
Would you say a law against ethnic discrimination in the workplace is generally good or bad for a country?

Multiculturalism
Would you say that [country]’s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?

Integration
It is better for a country if everyone shares the same customs and traditions.

Immigrant rights
Immigrants should be granted the same rights as everybody else.
Deport criminal aliens
If people who have come to live here commit a serious crime they should be made to leave the country.

All items were rescaled to fit a 0-10 scale with a 0 score representing an extremely restrictive attitude towards immigration-related variables, and a score of 10 indicating an extremely liberal attitude. (The reversal of these scales, which in previous chapters had 0 as an immigration friendly score, and 10 as an anti-immigration score, was only for optical purposes to create a two-dimensional political space, with the left-liberal quadrant in the upper left corner).

Trust-related control variables

Question text: ‘Disillusioned voter variable’
Politicians in general care what people like respondent think.

Question text: ‘Institutional trust variable’
How much do you personally trust [country’s] parliament?

Question text: ‘Trust in politicians variable’
How much do you personally trust politicians?
## Annex 3

### Chapter 4: Results Regression Analysis

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<tr>
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Reports correlation coefficients and normalized beta coefficients

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Table 4.5. Predictors of Attitudes towards Immigration, the Netherlands
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Reports correlation coefficients and normalized beta coefficients
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Table 4.9. Predictors of Attitudes towards Immigration, Flanders

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Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute

DOI: 10.2870/4016


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<th>United Kingdom</th>
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<td>-0.021</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
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<td>-0.088</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>-0.084*</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
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<td>-0.079*</td>
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<td>observations</td>
<td>3,518**</td>
<td>3,951**</td>
<td>3,088**</td>
<td>3,092**</td>
<td>1,447**</td>
<td>3,591**</td>
<td>2,883**</td>
<td>1,697**</td>
<td>3,431**</td>
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<td>R-squared</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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Reports correlation coefficients and normalized beta coefficients
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

Table 4.13. Predictors of Attitudes towards Immigration, UK

Davis, Amber (2012), The Impact of Anti-Immigration Parties on Mainstream Parties’ Immigration Positions in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010: Divided electorates, left-right politics and the pull towards restrictionism
European University Institute
DOI: 10.2870/4016
Annex 4

Chapter 5: Data and Variable List

Data used
Many of the party manifestos analysed in this chapter were made available in electronic form through a joint effort between the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung (ZA), Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB), the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU) and the Party Manifestoes Project.


Variable List Chapter 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable List for analysing party manifestos</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Immigration control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v1.1. Restrict immigration</td>
<td>pro (+ 1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v1.2 Immigration quota</td>
<td>pro (+ 1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v1.3 Improve border control</td>
<td>pro (+ 1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v1.4 Remigration policy</td>
<td>pro (+ 1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Labour immigration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v2.1 Facilitate labour immigration</td>
<td>pro (-1) against (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v2.2 Restrict access to social security for labour migrants</td>
<td>pro (+1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Illegal immigration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v3.1 Amnesty for illegal migrants</td>
<td>pro (-1) against (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v3.2 Illegal residence is criminal offence » detention, deportation</td>
<td>pro (+1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v3.3 Grant access to social services for illegal migrants</td>
<td>pro (-1) against (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v3.4 Penalties for employers of illegal migrants</td>
<td>pro (+1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Asylum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v4.1 Safe haven for political refugees</td>
<td>pro (-1) against (+1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v4.2 Guard against non-refugees or criminal refugees</td>
<td>pro (+1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v4.3 Restrictive quota for refugees</td>
<td>pro (+1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v4.4 Against taking up asylum seekers from 3rd safe countries</td>
<td>pro (+1) against (-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Detention of asylum seekers and non-refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Deportation of non-refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Amnesty for non-refugees for humanitarian reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Asylum policy in region of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Access to work for asylum seekers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Improve rights of asylum seekers (social, legal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Adapt / opt out of Geneva Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Stricter requirements for family reunification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Positive discrimination in labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Improve anti-discrimination legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Fight prejudice / racism / hate crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Tackle ethnic segregation of schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Embrace cultural diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Education in language of country of origin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Integration minimum (learn language of host country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Sanctions for non-compliance integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Against cultural relativism (religion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Integration maximum (comply with Western norms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Expand migrant voting rights (local, regional or national)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Restrict access to naturalisation/ nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Accept dual nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>EU co-ordination of asylum policy: burden-sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>EU co-ordination of labour migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>International co-ordination of human rights or anti-discrimination legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Tackle causes of displacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>Readmission agreements with host countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A codebook with a complete overview of all statements on immigration of parties in the Netherlands, Flanders and the UK 1987-2010 from their party manifestos is available from the author. The codebook is in English, also for statements in the Dutch and Flemish manifestos.