

The logics of issue-emphasis of the two challenger issues European integration and immigration in election campaigns

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Abstract

The basic premise of the literature on issue emphasis and issue ownership is that political competition is primarily about parties deliberately choosing to emphasize issues that are favorable to them while keeping silent on unfavorable ones (Budge and Farlie 1983; Budge et al. 2001; Petrocik 1996, Riker 1986). What this literature often neglects, however, is the fact that parties are also expected to be responsive to public concerns and thereby pay close attention to the general political agenda – even though this means talking about issues for which they are at a disadvantage (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010; Sides 2006). Against this backdrop, the paper investigates how these two mechanisms play out in election campaigns for the issues immigration and European integration, both preferably emphasized by challenger parties, particularly from the populist right. What are determinants at the level of individual parties that explain their preference to talk about these issues (while keeping silent on others)? And how strongly does the general agenda constrain parties' strategies of selective emphasis? Relying on data from a large-scale quantitative media content analysis, this paper explores these questions by assessing the salience and issue-emphasis of these two issues in domestic election campaigns in six Western European countries and over two decades.

Introduction

In many Western European countries, both European integration and immigration have become highly contested and at times decisive political issues in domestic electoral competition. The politicization of immigration is by far not an entirely new phenomenon, yet the sustained and increased attention it has received across Western European countries since the early 1990s is exceptional. Similarly, although the politicization of Europe did not start until the early 1990s, it has significantly increased in the course of an unprecedented deepening and widening of the European Union. The treaty of Maastricht in 1992 and those following in Amsterdam, Nice, and Lisbon pushed European integration far beyond what used to be a simple economic community, and the supranational institutions of the EU were gradually strengthened. EU membership more than doubled from 12 in the early 1990s to 27 states in 2007, the latest newcomers being the former communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe and, most recently, Croatia in 2013. Along with these steps to an ever-closer and ever-wider union, Eurosceptic attitudes among citizens have continued to grow over the years (Eichenberg and Dalton 2007), and the issue has made its way into national election campaigns, affecting party competition and creating new opportunities for challengers, mostly from the right-wing populist end of the spectrum (Kriesi 2007).

Against this backdrop, the present article asks what are the *underlying factors* that are driving the politicization of these two issues? And, related to this question, what is the actual *extent of their politicization*? Unlike previous work which focused on the politicization of these issues separately, the article looks at them jointly and based on a common theoretical framework. Both are newly emerging issues with which in particular established political parties struggle how to cope and, by contrast, challenger parties, mostly but not exclusively from the populist right, are supposed to benefit from their politicization. The argument of this article, in a nutshell, is that there are common underlying forces that are driving the politicization of both of these issues in a similar way –for this reason I call them “twin issues”. Both are part and parcel of a new cleavage that pits winners and losers of increasing denationalization against each other. They both deal with questions related to collective identities and the (re-)creation as well as the transgression of boundaries, be they political, cultural or economic. However, at the same

time, there are also some significant differences to be expected in the way these two issues are being politicized, which are related primarily to their distinct characteristics. In particular, immigration is a rather tangible, 'easy' issue whereas European integration, by contrast, is a highly abstract and complex issue resulting in multiple and over time shifting linkages of Europe with more general political concerns/divides.

In order to answer the above questions, the article sets out to provide a systematic assessment of the *salience of European integration and immigration* in domestic election campaigns over more than two decades and across six Western European countries based on data from a quantitative analysis of mass media content. The countries included are the UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland. Benchmarked against other political issues, the question of the degree of the politicization of these two issues becomes much more tangible. Focusing on domestic election campaigns is a reasonable choice because although globalization increasingly constrains national politics, and European integration has led to a significant shift of political competences to the European level, domestic elections remain the most influential general political events for parties and voters alike.

The question of whether the politicization of European integration and immigration in election campaigns is either substantial or, by contrast, rather negligible, aims first and foremost to properly describe the actual extent of politicization. However, scholars also put forward differing views as to what underlying dynamics actually drive partisan contestation. In the case of European integration, skeptical voices argue that its primarily strategic considerations by parties at the fringes of the political spectrum or in opposition that motivate politicization (but ultimately with little or no success). A prominent strand of the other camp claims that the alleged extensive and growing politicization of European integration is spurred by its connection to highly salient, more basic political lines of conflict/cleavages (e.g., Hooghe and Marks 2009; Kriesi 2007). One can argue that these two bundles of factors are equally relevant for immigration. Hence, in a first step of the empirical analysis, the article tests these competing views about the key factors driving politicization by looking at the determinants of *European integration and immigration issue-emphasis*: the reasons why a party chooses to emphasize one of these two issues, or by contrast, remains silent about them.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. The next section develops the theoretical framework and derives possible scenarios regarding the extent of and the underlying factors that drive the politicization of Europe and immigration. Following a section on methods and data, the empirical section presents the results, first on the determinants of the individual parties' issue-emphasis, then on the overall salience during election campaigns. The paper concludes with a brief summary of the findings and discusses their further implications.

The role of Europe and immigration in domestic election campaigns

The key to winning an election for a party is to succeed in putting their preferred issues on top of the political agenda. Therefore, during election campaigns parties deliberately choose to emphasize those issues that are favorable to them and deemphasize unfavorable ones. This is the basic idea that underlies the literature on issue-emphasis and issue competition (e.g., Budge et al. 2001; Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996; Riker 1986). Partly developed as a critique of spatial theories of party competition, which claim that parties compete simply by changing their positions on issues, this literature objects by stating that issue positions are not flexible, but sticky. Politicians cannot easily change them as they have an ideological reputation to lose and they do not want to upset principled rank-and-file members. In contrast, issue emphasis is a much more flexible tool in this regard (see, e.g., Bale et al. 2010, 413–4). Hence, instead of changing their position on an issue because it is electorally disadvantageous, parties might instead shift the emphasis to an issue they “own” – i.e., for which they are perceived to be more competent or where they are closer to the median voter.

Moreover, while established and successful parties generally rely on their traditional issues to compete in elections, those on the losing side and new challengers try to come up with fresh, potentially disruptive issues in order to change the existing structure of competition to their advantage (Carmines 1991). Dealing with newly emerging issues is a delicate task for most parties. When orientations toward a new issue are difficult to fit neatly into a political actor’s ideological profile, when they threaten a party’s internal cohesion or scare potential voters away, the best strategy is to try to shift public attention away from this political issue. By contrast, if politicians think they will benefit from increased politicization because they hold a position that is attractive to voters and is at the same time consistent with their general programmatic profile, they will try to move the issue further up on the political agenda.

It is from this backdrop that the politicization of European integration and immigration must be seen. Both are newly emerging issues with which in particular established political parties struggle how to cope and, by contrast, challenger parties, mostly but not exclusively from the populist right, are supposed to benefit from their politicization. The argument of

this article, in a nutshell, is that there are common underlying forces that are driving the politicization of both of these issues: Both are part and parcel of a new cleavage that pits winners and losers of increasing political, cultural and economic denationalization against each other (Kriesi et al. 2006; 2008; 2012). However, at the same time, there are also some significant differences in the way these two ‘twin issues’ are being politicized, which are related to their distinct characteristics. In particular, while immigration is a rather tangible, ‘easy’ issue, European integration, by contrast, is highly abstract and complex resulting in multiple and over time shifting linkages of Europe with more general political concerns/divides.

Why is the politicization of European integration and immigration relevant? If Europe is being politicized in election campaigns in a sustained and significant way, this holds potentially serious implications both for the process of European integration itself as well as for domestic politics in general. As to the former, EU scholars have been passionately arguing whether increased politicization will make or break the integration process, and also whether it might ultimately lead to a more democratically legitimized EU (see, e.g., Bartolini 2005; Hix 2008; Risse 2010; Statham and Trezn 2013; Wilde and Zürn 2012). Scholars studying party politics, on the other hand, have been primarily concerned with the latter, the potential impact on domestic politics. The argument has been put forward that European integration as a forcefully emerging new issue might fundamentally reshape traditional patterns of political conflict and political competition (e.g., Kriesi 2007). However, as the true extent of the politicization of European integration in domestic election campaigns remains unclear, it is disputed whether such a fundamental transformation of domestic politics is a realistic concern. The same also holds for the issue of immigration, although the bulk of the literature I am relying on is dealing with European integration, but the argument can be easily extended to the issue of immigration as well. Hence, one goal of the present paper is to shed light on this question of the *extent of the politicization*, which has received considerable scholarly interest in the case of European integration, less so in the case of immigration.

In the case of European integration, scholars have been debating for quite some time whether the “sleeping giant”—a metaphor coined by van der Eijk and Franklin (2004) used to describe the widespread Euroscepticism among citizens and its alleged transformative potential—has finally awakened or is to remain asleep. Currently, the predominant view is that political entrepreneurs deliberately mobilizing on this issue have awakened the “sleeping giant” (de Vries 2007; Hooghe and Marks 2009; see also Kriesi 2007; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). Although mainstream parties tried to depoliticize European integration as they suffered from internal disagreement about this issue, Hooghe and Marks (2009, 21) argued that they ultimately failed to do so. According to them, the populist right parties, national conservatives, and the radical left “smelled blood” and did not pass up this opportunity. This diagnosis of a high level of politicization has been perpetuated in most more recent contributions (Risse 2010; Statham and Trenz 2013, 1; Wilde and Zürn 2012). However, a second strand of scholars is much more skeptical, arguing that the extent of Europe’s politicization is greatly exaggerated. In their view, the issue of European integration is, and will remain, a “giant fast asleep”—particularly because those who ultimately matter (namely, the mainstream parties) lack the incentive to politicize it (Green-Pedersen 2010; see also Mair 2001, 48). They expect European integration to remain a marginal issue in domestic politics, as opposed to other newly emerging issues, such as immigration. This leaves us with two competing expectations:

H1a: Both European integration and immigration have become highly politicized issues.

H1b: Unlike immigration, European integration has remained a weakly politicized issue.

At the same time, however, this descriptive question goes deeper. The conflicting expectations of the actual and future extent of the politicization of Europe are motivated by differing views about the *crucial underlying factors that are driving this phenomenon*. The politicization of an issue does not happen automatically or simply by chance; politicians are crucial to its success or failure. As Hooghe and Marks (2009, 18) argue, “[a]s European integration has grown in scope and depth, it has proved ripe for politicization. But there is nothing inevitable about this. Whether an issue enters mass politics depends not on its intrinsic importance, but on whether a political party picks it up.” Hence, before turning to

expectations as regards the extent of politicization during election campaigns, I discuss in some detail the two key bundles of factors that are expected to shape parties' strategies to politicize these two issues – ideological and instrumental motives. The main contention in this literature is whether the issue of European integration has become firmly embedded in preexisting, more general lines of ideological conflict or whether it has remained “orthogonal”—i.e., a single maverick issue defying any stable and coherent ideological linkages and on which politicians merely rely for instrumental reasons (see also Bartolini 2005, 321–2; Steenbergen and Marks 2004).

Among scholars who argue that the politicization of Europe by the parties follows an ideological pattern, there is some disagreement on *how exactly* European integration is related to more general lines of political conflict. One can reasonably conceive of the political space in most of Western Europe as essentially having a two-dimensional structure. Hence, politicians do not compete along a single left-right dimension, but along both an economic and a cultural axis (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004; Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Kriesi et al. 2008). The economic left-right axis sees adherents to market intervention and an encompassing welfare state opposed to proponents of market liberalization and lean government. The cultural axis has changed its meaning over time and—with the waning of the religious cleavage—currently stretches from traditional, authoritarian, and nationalist (TAN) values to green, alternative, and libertarian (GAL) views.¹ While some authors have claimed that the politicization of Europe is primarily driven by economic rationales—e.g., adherents of a regulated capitalism versus free marketers (Tsebelis and Garrett 2000)—it has been argued more recently that the issue is strongly attached to the cultural axis, more so than to the economic one (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004; Kriesi 2007). European integration, in this view, has chiefly become a political conflict between GAL supporters on the one hand, and TAN opponents on the other. The latter include not only fringe parties from the populist/extreme right, but also mainstream right parties (such as

¹ These labels used in the present paper have been introduced by Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2004). The cultural axis has also been labeled the new politics, postmaterialist (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987), or libertarian-authoritarian axis (Kitschelt 1994).

the British Conservatives and the German CDU/CSU). Hooghe, Marks et al. (2009, 17; 2002, 131–2) suggested that this opposition from the TAN-pole is motivated by more general concerns about national sovereignty and national community, which these parties are eager to protect. Kriesi and colleagues (2012; see also Kriesi 2007) argue similarly, but see both opposition to European integration and anti-immigration sentiments as part of a newly emerging globalization cleavage that pits winners of denationalization against losers. In their view, this conflict is not exclusively cultural, but also contains an economic dimension related to the opening up of previously protected domestic markets, ongoing economic liberalization, and deregulation. However, the findings by Kriesi and colleagues suggest that this new cleavage is successfully mobilized only by TAN-parties and therefore mainly expressed in cultural terms. Consequently, one would expect the politicization of both immigration and Europe to be primarily culturally driven, although particularly in the case of the more complex European integration issue, economic motives might play a limited role, too.

H2: The politicization of Europe and immigration by the parties is shaped by their ideological characteristics (location on the economic left-right axis and the cultural TAN-GAL axis).

H2.1: More specifically, the closer a party to the culturally conservative TAN pole, the stronger they are expected to emphasize the two issues.

The alternative view about the nature of the underlying conflict claims that the two new issues are orthogonal to existing domestic lines of conflict. In other words, their politicization would be largely independent of the traditional programmatic profiles of the parties. At the very beginning of the life career of an issue, such orthogonality is the norm. It takes some time for politicians to incorporate a new issue into their ideological packages. The crucial question, however, is whether the established political actors succeed in embedding the emerging issue within reasonable time or whether it remains unconnected to traditional political issues, either to become marginalized or, by contrast, to establish a fundamentally new basic line of conflict, as argued in the case of European integration by Hix and Lord (1997, 49–50; see also Benoit and Laver 2006, chapter 5). As a consequence, one would expect opposition parties to mobilize the two new issues primarily for

instrumental reasons in order to challenge the governing coalition and, likewise, fringe parties take a Eurosceptic and anti-immigration stance simply to signal to voters that they are different from the mainstream parties (for Europe, this is argued by Mair 2001; Sitter 2002; Taggart 1998).

H3: The politicization of Europe and immigration by the parties follows an ‘institutional’ logic:

H3.1: Parties in opposition are more likely to emphasize the two issues than parties in government.

H3.2: Extreme parties at the fringes of the political spectrum are more likely to emphasize the two issues than parties that are ideologically moderate.

Finally, any analysis of issue-emphasis remains seriously incomplete and risks being flawed if it fails to consider the systemic salience of the issue under investigation, as the strong and statistically significant effect of this variable, as found for European integration by Steenbergen and Scott (2004) as well as Netjes and Binnema (2007) suggest. Why does systemic salience matter? As Steenbergen and Scott (2004, 187–8) note, “[p]arties cannot decide on issue salience willy-nilly. Lest they find themselves marginalized from the mainstream national political debate, they will have to consider the importance that other parties attach to the issue of European integration.” This insight is shared by scholars from the agenda-setting field who criticize traditional issue-emphasis approaches for not being able to explain the considerable issue overlap between individual parties, as regularly found in empirical studies. After all, if parties only emphasized their own issues, we would expect them to talk past each other most of the time. From an agenda-setting perspective, however, “party interaction is thus completely expected because individual parties have a strategic interest in shaping the common party-system agenda, even when that involves paying attention to disadvantageous issues” (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010, 261). Similarly, Sides (2006) argues that politicians are “riding the wave” of prominent issues because they want to appear responsive to public concerns, even when this means emphasizing issues that are unfavorable to them. Hence, we should expect that the overall salience of European integration and immigration, respectively, should have a critical impact on how strongly parties emphasize these issues.

H4: The higher European integration and immigration, respectively, are on the political agenda during an election campaign, the stronger these issues are being emphasized by the individual parties.

Four scenarios of how European integration and immigration are being politicized

Drawing together these insights from the literature, there are competing views on the politicization of Europe in domestic politics that diverge not only in their expectations about the true extent of the politicization (high versus low), but also about the nature of the underlying conflict structure and, related to this, the crucial drivers of politicization (more general ideological conflict versus single issue/instrumental). Accordingly, we can distinguish four possible scenarios as shown in Figure 1 and broadly classify scholarly views based on the specific combination of claims regarding both aspects. This article tests them not only for European integration but also for immigration as both issues are part and parcel of a newly emerging globalization cleavage and therefore we should expect them to be shaped by the same underlying dynamics.

If ideological characteristics of the parties are expected to primarily determine whether they politicize Europe and immigration, both scenarios I and III are potential outcomes. As discussed above, culturally conservative parties close to the TAN pole are probably the most strongly mobilizing on these issues, but alternative/additional ideological patterns of politicization are compatible with this view as well. However, in the case of European integration at least, most scholars take a high level of politicization for granted, assuming that the successful integration of Europe into larger and salient patterns of political conflict should boost politicization. Therefore, the scenario that is best in line with this literature is scenario I.

By contrast, if one believes that issue-emphasis is mostly instrumental and unrelated to ideological characteristics of the parties, there are no clear expectations as regards the true extent of politicization. Europe and immigration as single issues might be so powerful that they are able to spur massive politicization even single-handedly (scenario II). Or, alternatively, their instrumental use by opposition and fringe parties might be the very reason that their politicization remains limited. This is argued by Green-Pedersen (2012)

for European integration, who claims that this issue will therefore remain a “giant fast asleep” (scenario IV). Hence, for European integration (and, by way of extension, for immigration) there are good arguments in the literature for scenarios I, II, and IV, while scenario III finds little backing. In the empirical section of this paper, we will see which of these scenarios comes closest to reality, and whether there are significant differences between the two ‘twin issues’. Of course, hybrid forms are a possibility—ideological and instrumental motives might both drive politicization of the two issues yet to varying extents.

Methods and Data

In today's "audience democracies" (Manin 1995), politics take place primarily in the mass media. Citizens' perception of political issues, actors, and political conflict in general are largely shaped by their representation in the media as this is the first place they turn to for information about politics. Consequently, the strategies of parties and candidates have adapted to this and try to get their statements in the news to shape the public debate to their advantage. Against this backdrop, the present article relies on a systematic quantitative analysis of party statements in newspaper articles during election campaigns, based on which the salience of European integration, immigration and other political issues both for whole elections and for individual parties (issue-emphasis) has been calculated.

Of course, in order to succeed in their goal of shaping the public debate, politicians have to consider not only their political competitors, but also the fact that the media has increasingly become an autonomous actor that follows its own logic, such as news values to which they need to adapt (Esser 2013). However, unlike during routine periods, the media's agenda-setting role is rather limited during electoral campaigns—a conclusion drawn by Walgrave and Van Aelst (2006, 96–8) based on an extensive review of the literature, and they see three main reasons for that. First, during election campaigns, the parties and their candidates multiply their communication efforts and flood the media with their press releases, manifestos, statements, and (pseudo) events to shape the public agenda in their favor. Although most journalists are fully aware of this strategy and react with cynicism and a horserace style of political reporting, politicians still largely succeed in getting their messages across. Not least because, second, the media devote considerably more attention to politics during election campaigns than usual, which lowers their barriers to access to politicians of all sorts and provides them with opportunities to speak up. And third, the journalistic norm of fair and balanced reporting is particularly well respected by the media during election campaigns, not least because parties and candidates are quick with allegations about unfair treatment by the media.

The dataset used in the analysis has been assembled in the framework of an earlier, larger project² and covers six Western European countries—France, Germany, the UK, Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland—and a time period of more than two decades. Table 1 reports the newspapers as well as the number of elections and statements that have been coded for each of the countries under study. An election campaign has been defined as the two months before Election Day. In the selected newspaper articles during this time period, every statement about any political issue from a political party has been coded, be it from an official party speaker or any party-affiliated individual, such as a member of the executive branch. For each statement, the name of the individual and their organizational and party affiliation, the political issue, as well as the position adopted (negative, positive, ambivalent) have been coded. Statements are then categorized into twelve categories: Europe, immigration, welfare, economic liberalization, budgetary rigor, cultural liberalism, culture, army, security, ecology, infrastructure, and institutional reform.³ More detailed discussions of the coding approach, the sampling, and the advantages and limitations of this data for political analysis, including comparisons with other data sources, can be found in Kriesi et al. (2012, chapter 2), Helbling and Tresch (2011), and Hoeglinger (2013).

² Kriesi, Hanspeter, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Marc Helbling, Simon Bornschier, Timotheos Frey, Dominic Höglinger, Swen Hutter and Bruno Wueest. 2012. National political change in a globalizing world. Supply side data on national election campaigns. University of Zurich and Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich.

³ For a short description of each of these issues, see Kriesi et al. (2012, 54). The very few miscellaneous topical statements (< 2%) that could not be assigned to any of the twelve issues have been excluded from the analysis.

Operationalization

The *salience of a political issue in an election campaign*, the first main variable of interest, has been operationalized as the (percentage) share of statements dealing with this particular issue out of all topical statements made by the parties during the two months before the election. The second main variable is the *issue-emphasis by an individual party*, which is simply the share of statements about the issue in question in relation to all issue statements made by this particular party.

The independent variables in the regression analysis in the second part of the empirical section have been operationalized as follows: For *ideology*, I use the location of the particular party on the economic axis and the cultural axis of the political space. The cultural TAN-GAL axis spans from the TAN-pole to the GAL-pole, the economic left-right axis from the economic leftist pole to the economic rightist pole. A party's score on these two axes is the *salience-weighted index of its position toward cultural and economic issues, respectively*, as stated during the election campaign. The issues used for the calculation of the economic left-right axis are welfare (-), economic liberalization (+), and budgetary rigor (+). The issues of the cultural TAN-GAL axis are cultural liberalism (+), culture (+), immigration (-), army (-), security (-), and ecology (+).⁴ Both axis scores range from -1.0 to +1.0. Hence, to give a fictitious example, a right-populist party with only culturally conservative (TAN) issue positions would receive the value -1.0 for the cultural axis, while a green party with only culturally liberal (GAL) issue positions would score +1.0. In reality, of course, most parties have values in between these two extremes.

Ideological extremism is operationalized as the squared Euclidian distance of a party from the center location in the political space. In other words, this is the sum of a party's squared scores on the economic and the cultural axis. Possible values range from 0 (least extreme) to 2 (most extreme). The *opposition party* variable is the duration a party was in opposition during the ten years before the election and ranges from 0 (never in opposition) to 1.0 (always in opposition).

Finally, the regression analysis of the parties' issue-emphasis controls for *systemic salience*, the salience of European integration or immigration, respectively, in the

⁴ The signs in brackets indicate how the issues are related to the axis.

particular election campaign for the whole party system (all party statements). Note that the systemic salience has been calculated for each party separately by excluding the party's own statements in order to avoid endogeneity (see Steenbergen and Scott 2004 for this approach).

Findings

The empirical analysis proceeds in two steps. First, the factors that are hypothesized to drive individual parties' issue-emphasis of the two challenger issues are tested—factors that, as shown above, are put forward by different theoretical strands (each, in turn, with differing expectations about the actual extent of politicization, particularly of European integration). This is done for both issues separately in order to be able to compare the effects on European integration and immigration. In a second step, the overall level of salience of Europe and immigration in domestic election campaigns is assessed, which is the result of these individual partisan strategies, amongst other factors.

To speak or not to speak of Europe and immigration—issue-emphasis in election campaigns

What explains whether an individual party speaks about Europe and immigration or, by contrast, remains rather silent about these two issues? Table 2 presents the results of the combined regression analysis of the parties' European integration and immigration issue-emphasis. While European integration is the reference issue category, all variables are interacted with an immigration-issue dummy (2nd column of the table). Moreover, the model includes dummies and interactions for the two decades under study, as there might be different explanatory patterns in the early phase of politicization in the 1990s and in the 2000s.⁵ To facilitate interpretation and comparison, Figure 2 provides the marginal effects

⁵ As potential country effects are part of the systemic salience, there is no need to include country dummies.

Moreover, adjusted standard errors correct for clustering.

of the hypothesized determinants ideology, extremism, and opposition-party status (in our case simply the OLS slope coefficients, with confidence intervals for both issues).

What becomes evident from these results is first and foremost that ideology has a strong and systematic effect. In particular the position of a party on the cultural TAN-GAL axis is significant for both issues and in both decades (although only marginally for Europe in the 1990s). In other words, the closer a party is to the culturally conservative TAN-pole, the stronger it emphasizes both European integration and immigration. Yet more specifically, in both decades this effect is considerably stronger on immigration. Hence, the culturally conservative parties prefer the politicization of immigration over European integration, which they apparently deem less attractive. The pattern for the economic left-right axis, by contrast, is considerably weaker and rather ambiguous. Only in the 2000s is its effect significant, yet it goes in opposite directions for the two issues: The closer a party is to the economic left pole, the more it emphasizes Europe, and the more a party is to the economic right, the more it emphasizes immigration.

Taken together, these findings on the effect of the two axes suggest that for the issue of European integration, a party's location in the political space that combines a culturally conservative and an economic leftist stance is the most conducive for a strong politicization. However, this combination is actually rather rare to find in Western European party systems. Generally, the cultural TAN-GAL axis and the economic left-right axis are strongly *negatively* correlated –in other words, the bulk of the parties is either culturally liberal and leaning to the economic left or, by contrast, culturally conservative and economically to the right. The latter pattern, which corresponds to Kitschelt's "winning formula" (2007; 1995) for right-wing populist success is exactly the combination that fits nicely with the pattern we observed for the immigration issue. By contrast, the ideal combination for European integration is not only an ideological package rare to find among Western European parties, yet, as a further consequence, parties politicizing Europe risk ending up with strange bedfellows. Eurosceptic populist right parties, for example, might find themselves all of a sudden in the same camp as the radical left, an uneasy constellation which is highly unlikely in the case of immigration.

Unlike for ideology, where specific orientations are able to explain an individual party's issue-emphasis, the findings lend only limited support for the relevance of purely instrumental motives. A party in opposition, it has been hypothesized, will put pressure on the government by emphasizing these two challenger issues, while the same party tones down its hostile rhetoric if in government—regardless of its ideological orientation. Similarly, extreme parties at both ends of the political spectrum might politicize Europe and immigration to challenge the mainstream parties. However, the opposition status of a party has no statistically significant effect on issue emphasis or, in the case of Europe in the 1990s, even a marginally *negative* one. To corroborate this finding, I tested alternative operationalizations of the opposition variable, such as a trichotomous version (instead of an interval one) and a dummy (being in opposition on the day of the election)—none of them performed any better. However, there is a significant effect of ideological extremism, yet only in the case of immigration. Hence, radical parties from all sides are more likely to emphasize this issue. By contrast, parties do not politicize European integration systematically merely out of instrumental considerations when they are in opposition or ideologically extreme.

Finally, there is a strong and significant effect of an issue's importance of on the general political agenda (systemic salience). This holds for both issues, although the coefficient for systemic salience is slightly weaker in the case of immigration yet the difference is not statistically significant. Hence, as hypothesized and in line with the agenda setting approach, parties are strongly constrained in their individual issue-emphasis strategies during election campaigns by the overall party system agenda.

In sum, the results show that ideology critically determines whether parties emphasize immigration and European integration during election campaigns. Those parties that have the proper ideological package—being culturally conservative or, to a considerably lesser extent, having the issue-specific suitable economic stance—tend to emphasize these two challenger issues more than their competitors. Moreover, we found that the common underlying pattern for the two issues, the strong impact of the cultural axis, to be considerably larger in the case of immigration, which suggests that parties at the conservative TAN pole of the cultural axis tend to emphasize immigration much more strongly compared to other parties than they do European integration. Furthermore, while

opposition status had no effect in the hypothesized direction, extremism is a relevant factor in the case of immigration. Finally, parties' issue-emphasis strategies seemed to be severely constrained by the salience of the issue in question in the party system as a whole, as the major effect of systemic salience suggests.

The overall salience of the two challenger issues in election campaigns - Europe in the shadow of immigration

Having assessed the underlying dynamics that drive the parties' issue-emphasis of these two challenger issues, this section turns to the actual extent of the salience of immigration and European integration in election campaigns. Hence, we switch from the party-level and their individual politicization strategies to the system-level. Figure 3 shows the salience of European integration and immigration in election campaigns across all six Western European countries under study—both over time and compared to other political issues. Both were rather negligible issues in the 1970s with on average only around 2% of all public statements in election campaigns, yet they both considerably increased their salience in the 1990s with average levels between 6% and 9%. From 2000 onwards, however, there are contrasting developments. The salience of Europe slightly decreased from its peak of 7.4% in the second half of the 1990s although it remained at a substantial level. Immigration, by contrast, exhibited a continuing upward trend in the 2000s, reaching its highest salience of 9.0% in the most recent period under study (as opposed to only 4.6% for Europe in the same period).

Benchmarked against other political issues, the salience of immigration and Europe can be put into broader perspective. To start with, the salience of these two challenger issues is still considerably lower than those of traditional key issues, as the comparison with the welfare issue suggests. Between 15% and 20% of all statements in election campaigns deal on average with welfare, which made it the most salient issue on the political agenda throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Moreover, if we look at the ranking in terms of salience among the twelve political issues covering the partisan campaign discourse, the modest importance of European integration on the general political agenda becomes apparent. Indeed, Europe starts from a lowly 10th place in the 1970s and then climbs to the rank of 6.5 in the second half of the 1990s. But then again, Europe comes in only at the rear of the

field of relevant political issues in the 2000s (rank 9 and 8.25 in these two time periods, respectively). Hence, it is fair to say that overall, European integration has been moderately politicized at best. By contrast, immigration clearly has become an issue to be reckoned with—with a median rank of 6.5 and 5 in the 2000s it clearly fares better than European integration in this more recent period.

While Figure 3 shows general patterns and puts the salience of Europe and immigration into its broader context of the political agenda, Figure 4 reports the salience of the two issues separately for each country under study and for each election. Two key points stand out when looking at the six graphs. First, although we might expect that the salience of the two issues is systematically related (either positively because both are driven by similar factors, or negatively, because they might act as functional equivalents for each other), they are not ($r=0.1$, $N=32$). Second, in all six countries there is considerable variation in the salience of Europe and immigration from one election campaign to the next. For example, the three elections in which European integration actually became a dominating issue in the campaign took place in Switzerland or the UK (with shares of 20% and Europe being the number one issue on the political agenda in at least one of the two media outlets under study). In Switzerland, European integration became a major campaign issue in the first half of the 1990s, when the Swiss People's Party (SVP) won the referendum against joining the European Economic Area single-handedly and incorporated opposition to European integration as a defining issue of its programmatic profile. In the UK, the salience of Europe increased dramatically in the late 1990s/early 2000s. The all-time high was reached at the 2001 elections, when the Conservatives made the question of whether to adopt the euro one of their main campaign issues—yet with only modest electoral success (Evans 2002; but see Baker 2002, 324). In the subsequent elections of 2005, the salience of Europe dropped back to a very modest level—this time, the Conservatives focused instead on the issue of immigration (Fisher 2006, 1282) while keeping fairly quiet on Europe. Overall, this suggests that there is a lot of contingency at work—idiosyncratic events, campaign dynamics, and not least factors influencing the salience of other political issues (which, in turn, has an impact on the salience of the two challenger issues).

Discussion and conclusion

The present paper set out to test differing expectations about both the extent of the politicization of two newly emerging issues, Europe and immigration, and related to this, the crucial drivers of this phenomenon by looking at the overall salience of these issues and individual parties' issue-emphasis in domestic election campaigns. How do our findings compare to the four potential scenarios laid out above (Figure 1)? As regards the underlying conflict structure, the findings suggest that both immigration and European integration issue-emphasis are indeed driven to a significant extent by ideological conflict. Parties close to the culturally conservative TAN pole, such as the right-populists, but also the conservative right, are more prone to emphasize Europe, and there is a similar but considerably weaker pattern for parties close to the economic leftist pole as well. This is in line with theoretical arguments put forward by scholars such as Kriesi and colleagues as well as Hooghe, Marks, and colleagues, who stress the ideological component, and in particular the cultural dimension, of contestation over Europe. This argument also holds for immigration, where the impact of the cultural axis was even stronger than in the case of European integration. Moreover, the economic axis had an impact on immigration issue-emphasis, too, although in the opposite direction than in the case of Europe: the more to the economic right a party, the more it is likely to emphasize immigration.

Furthermore, a party's opposition status failed to show any impact, and fringe parties at both ends of the ideological spectrum do not systematically put more emphasis on Europe—evidence for either of these two would have lent support to the argument that the politicization of Europe is not ideologically driven but rather a deliberate strategy by these parties to challenge mainstream and governing parties. In the case of immigration, however, there is some effect of extremism. Still, taken together, in terms of the underlying conflict structure this speaks for either scenario I or III in Figure 1 reflecting best what we actually observe for both issues.

What about the second dimension that distinguished our scenarios, the magnitude of politicization? Clearly, the extent of how strongly European integration is being politicized in domestic election campaigns is limited. Although European integration has gained more prominence in domestic election campaigns since the 1970s, when it was largely

nonexistent, its salience has generally remained at a rather modest level throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. This also holds with some reservations for the traditionally Eurosceptic countries Switzerland and the UK, except for a few distinct elections in which Europe was indeed a dominating issue. Hence, for European integration our findings rule out scenario I, which suggests that the ideological underpinning fosters an ever-increasing politicization and, finally, an awakening of the “sleeping giant.” This has not happened yet and is likely not going to happen in the near future either. Hence, this leaves us with scenario III, a somehow unexpected combination that does not fit any of the discussed theoretical strands well: *a rather low politicization of European integration, yet structured along preexisting lines of political conflict*. This is a combination the literature has not really foreseen, as those scholars arguing that the heavy politicization of Europe is unlikely and the sleeping giant is to “remain fast asleep” (Green-Pedersen 2012) justify this claim with reference to parties’ strategic considerations while those who rightly view ideology as a critical driving factor generally tend to overstate the actual level of politicization that is resulting thereof. In the case of immigration, however, the assessment of the level of politicization is more ambiguous. In the 1990s, the salience of immigration is at a similar level than for European integration, yet in the 2000s it increases even further. Hence, scenario I, a high level of politicization of immigration, which is firmly embedded in traditional lines of conflict, remains a possibility.

How are we to make sense of these findings? First of all, they suggest that the fact that a newly emerging issue is becoming embedded into preexisting lines of conflict does not necessarily lead to a strong(er) politicization. In the case of European integration, the multiple and intricate linkage of this issue with the political space may actually hamper politicization (Hoeglinger 2013): Elite opposition to European integration is substantively motivated by a diverse and sometimes contradictory array of reasons, notably economic and cultural ones, that are linked to longstanding, more fundamental political divides. For example, the culturally conservative French Front National endorsed a “no” vote in the referendum against the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 mainly out of a fear of losing national independence, while the radical left opposed the Constitution because of its alleged neoliberal bias. The Bolkestein Directive, which aimed at liberalizing the EU

service sector, became a powerful symbol of these alleged neoliberal tendencies in the French referendum campaign, and as a result, even mainstream parties such as the Parti Socialiste and the Conservative UMP opposed it, although they were supportive of the Constitution in general. Hence, parties have to deal with ambivalent attitudes as well as unclear, crosscutting lines of conflict in the case of European integration. Moreover, the meaning of this issue is difficult to control for any individual actor in light of the highly diverse and contested framing (Helbling, Hoeglinger, and Wueest 2010), and the risk of strange bedfellows looms. Politicians face a thorny and often unresolvable dilemma as some of their ideological core concerns speak in favor of a certain aspect of European integration, while others lead them to adopt a Eurosceptic stance. Hence, the issue of European integration is thereby potentially undermining what parties generally strive for—a simple and coherent programmatic package based on a few basic core concerns. This makes its politicization unattractive for the parties. By contrast, in the case of immigration the conflict structure is much simpler and clearly defined, and therefore the issue is easier to handle in political competition. This also means that the potentially powerful globalization cleavage will be manifest primarily in a sustained politicization of immigration, and only secondarily of European integration. Not Europe, but immigration is the issue of (first) choice for these parties to mobilize their constituency, particularly for the right-wing populists.

More generally, this difference found between European integration and immigration is in line with the “hard” versus “easy” dichotomy (Carmines and Stimson 1980), which argues that issue voting is more widespread in the case of the latter (and, hence, politicizing such an “easy” issue electorally more rewarding). However, things have been getting more complicated recently, as the radical right in particular increasingly focuses on intra-EU migration by emphasizing the alleged negative consequences of the free movement of persons. This interplay between the two issues and their possible merging merits further attention in future research.

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Tables and Figures

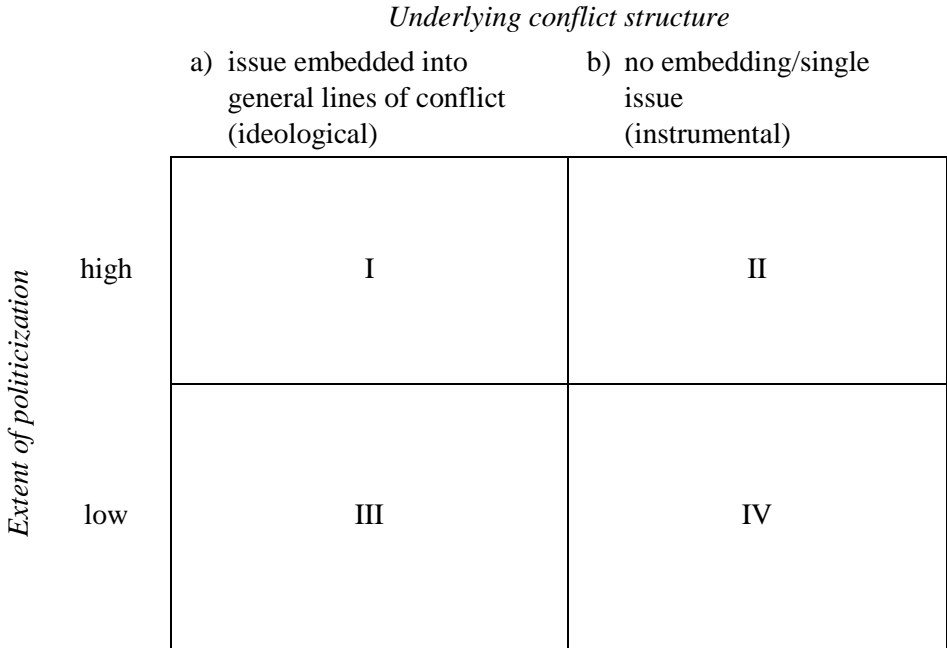


Figure 1: Four possible scenarios of the politicization of Europe and immigration

Table 1. Countries, newspapers, and number of coded nuclear sentences

<i>Country</i>	<i>Newspapers</i>		<i>Election campaigns</i>
	Quality	Tabloid	N sentences (N elections)
Austria	<i>Die Presse</i>	<i>Kronenzeitung</i>	6,183 (5)
UK	<i>The Times</i>	<i>The Sun</i>	4,420 (5)
France	<i>Le Monde</i>	<i>Le Parisien</i>	8,170 (5)
Germany	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	<i>Bild</i>	6,586 (5)
Netherlands	<i>NRC Handelsblad</i>	<i>Algemeen Dagblad</i>	5,270 (6)
Switzerland	<i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</i>	<i>Blick</i>	9,797 (6)

Notes: Elections coded: Austria 1975, 1994, 1999, 2002, and 2006; UK 1974 (Feb.), 1992, 1997, 2001, and 2005; France 1978, 1988, 1995, 2002, 2007; Germany 1976, 1994, 1998, 2002, and 2005; Netherlands 1973, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2003, and 2006; Switzerland 1975, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, and 2007.

Table 2: Explaining European integration and immigration issue emphasis in domestic election campaigns (OLS regression)

			<i>(continued)</i>	
	<i>Coeff.</i>		<i>Coeff.</i>	
	<i>(S.E.)</i>		<i>(S.E.)</i>	
<i>Europe (ref. issue)</i>			<i>Immigration</i>	
Systemic salience	0.475	**	0.012	
	(0.108)		(0.017)	
Economic left-right axis	-0.024	*	I*Systemic Salience	-0.096
	(0.009)			(0.138)
Cultural TAN-GAL axis	-0.044	**	I*Economic left-right axis	0.068
	(0.010)			(0.025)
Extremism	-0.001		I*Cultural TAN-GAL axis	-0.051
	(0.014)			(0.030)
Opposition party	-0.019	+	I*Extremism	0.064
	(0.009)			(0.032)
			I*Opposition party	0.012
				(0.026)
<i>Decade (ref. 2000s)</i>			<i>Decade</i>	
<i>1990s</i>	0.021		I*1990s	-0.038
	(0.016)			(0.026)
1990s*Economic left-right axis	0.027		I*1990s*Economic left-right axis	-0.060
	(0.024)			(0.046)
1990s*Cultural TAN-GAL axis	0.013		I*1990s*Cultural TAN-GAL axis	-0.069
	(0.020)			(0.041)
1990s*Extremism	0.002		I*1990s*Extremism	0.032
	(0.030)			(0.053)
1990s*Opposition party	-0.014		I*1990s*Opposition party	0.050
	(0.023)			(0.042)
<i>(continued)</i>			Constant	0.035
				(0.007)
			N	232
			N parties	32
			R2	0.43

Notes: Systemic salience is the salience of the issue in the whole party system and for the particular election (without the impact of the party for which the value is calculated, in order to avoid endogeneity). Both scores for the cultural as well as the economic axis range from -1.0 to +1.0. Extremism ranges from 0 (least extreme) to 2 (most extreme). Opposition party is the time a party was in opposition during the ten years before the election and ranges from 0 (never in opposition) to 1.0 (always in opposition). Cluster-adjusted robust standard errors (for party). Significance levels: ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1.

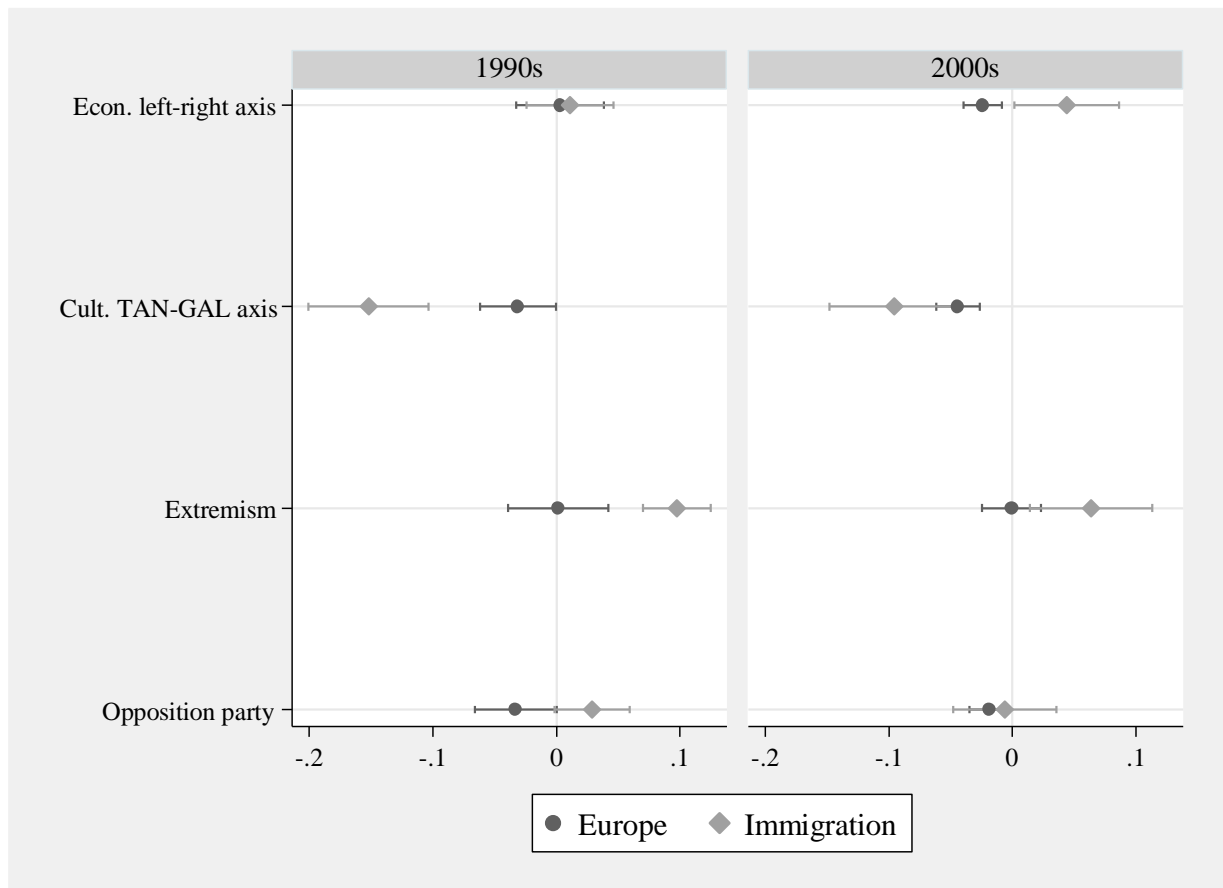


Figure 2: Effect of the economic and the cultural axis, extremism and opposition status on a party's European integration and immigration issue emphasis (OLS slope coefficients with 90% robust confidence intervals).

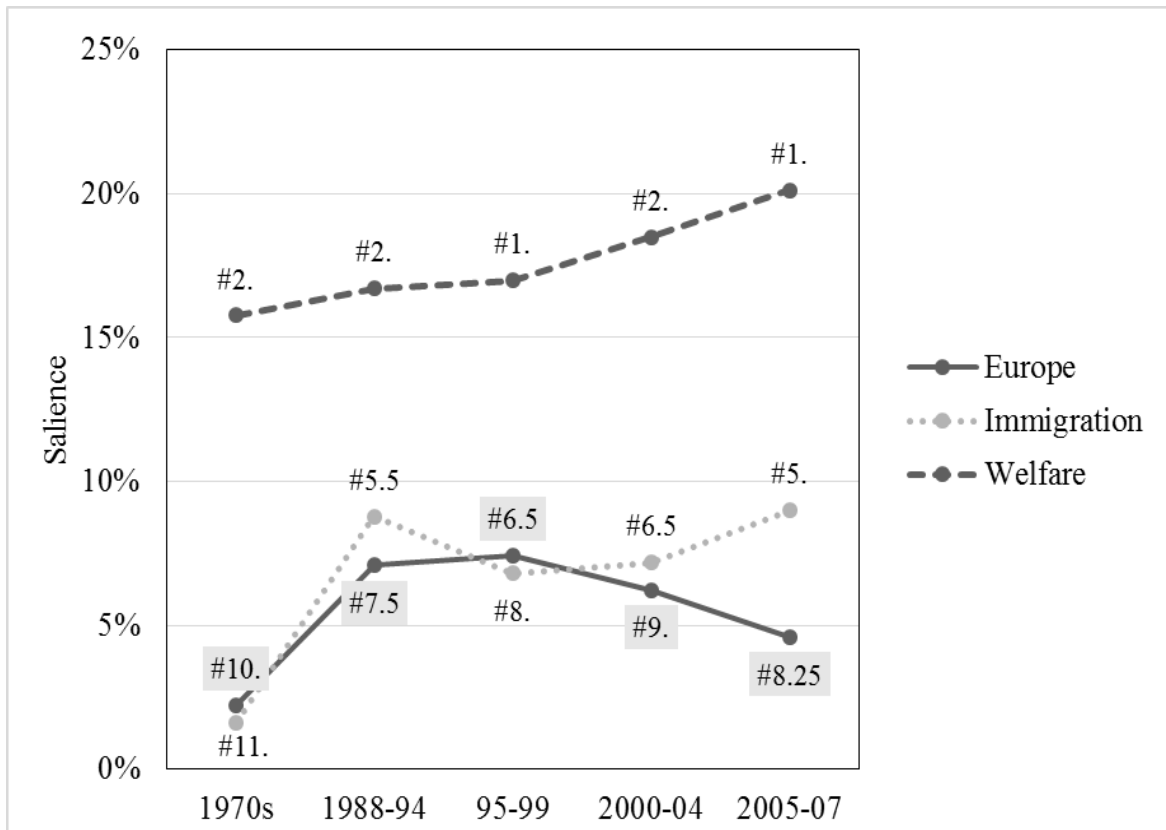


Figure 3: The salience of European integration and immigration in domestic election campaigns—percentage share of statements and ranking on the political agenda.

Notes: The values given in the graph are the (median) rankings on the political agenda for the specific issue and time period in terms of salience. The twelve issues that constitute the political agenda are welfare, economic liberalization, budgetary rigor, cultural liberalism, culture, immigration, army, security, ecology, Europe, infrastructure and institutional reform.

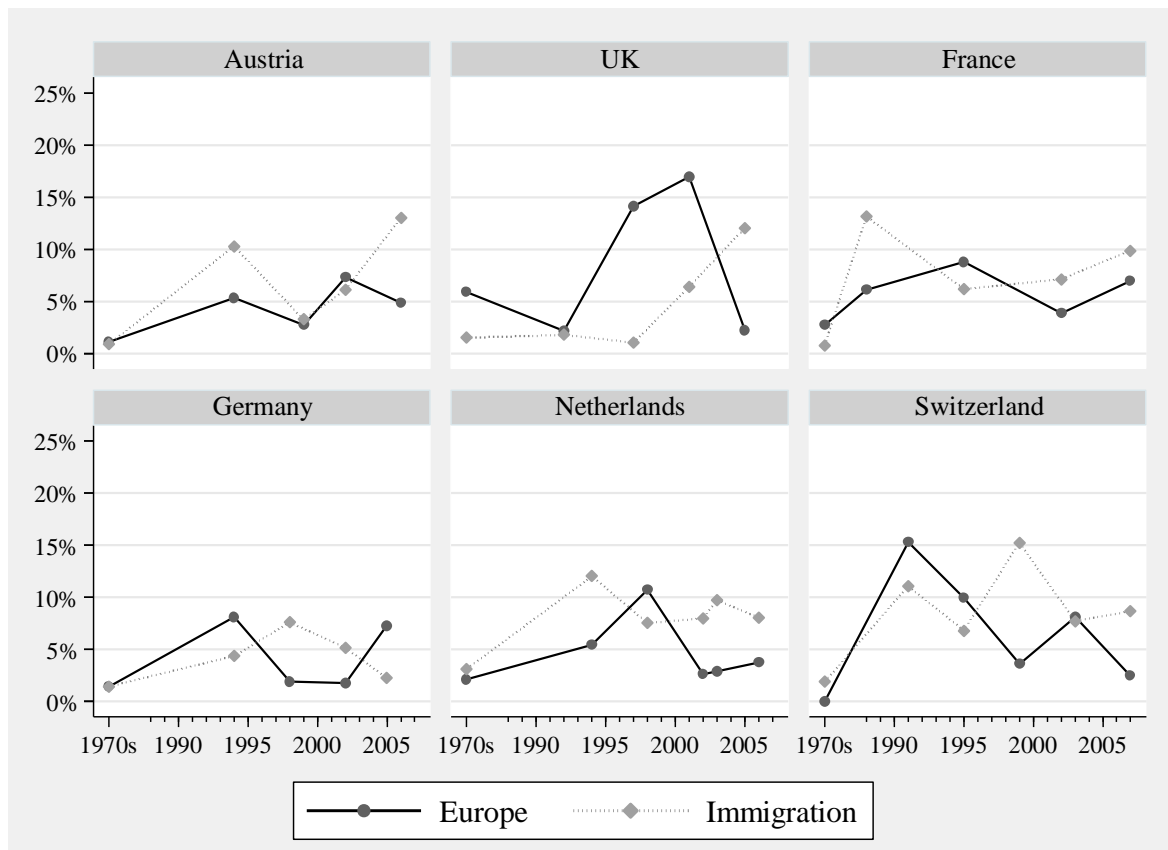


Figure 4: The salience of European integration and immigration over time by country.