Conflicting incentives? Party position change on immigration and EU integration in the European 'Refugee Crisis'

Ethan vanderWilden[1]
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Abstract

Do rapid changes to levels of immigration induce parties to shift their issue positions? I answer this question by examining issue-positional change on immigration and European integration for political parties in EU countries throughout the so-called European 'Refugee Crisis.' High levels of immigration at the national level, specifically by those considered racially and religiously outside of the European 'mainstream,' generally drove a restrictive shift in party positions on immigration but did little to change positions towards the EU. When further parsing the data, I find heterogenous effects by incumbency status and general ideological groupings. For shifts in positions on immigration, the overall effects are driven by parties in opposition at the onset of the 'crisis' as well as center right parties. Alternatively, heightened levels of immigration throughout the 'crisis' induce Eurosceptic shifts only for far right parties in the sample. I argue that these heterogenous effects can be explained through a series of conflicting or aligning incentives relating to governing responsibilities, ideological commitments, electoral strategies, and the existence of already polar positions. These findings suggest that to understand party politics, backlash, and reactions to crises, we must carefully parse the incentives that different parties encounter when forced to confront an issue.

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[1] Ph.D. Student, Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison. ethan.vanderwilden@wisc.edu

1. Introduction

How do political parties react to major events that drive change in their national contexts? More specifically, how do national-level shifts in migration patterns of racial and religious 'outsiders' affect party positions on immigration and European integration? In the following paper, I explore these questions throughout the so-called European 'Refugee Crisis.' First, I analyze how relative differences in country-level diversification and asylum applications throughout the 'crisis' induced changes in political party stances on immigration and European integration. On the one hand, we might expect that the greatest levels of migration and diversification should induce the greatest changes in party positions, given that parties in these countries face heightened pressure to confront related issues. On the other hand, it is unclear whether *actual* levels of migration affect partisan movement, or whether perceptions and politically manufactured crises might mitigate the effects of such real variation. Second, I explore whether parties act uniformly in their response to real and rapid changes in migration rates, differentiating parties by their incumbency status at the onset of the 'crisis' as well as their general ideological leanings.

Rapid changes in levels of migration present parties with a myriad of incentives and considerations. Previous work has offered some explanations of the ways in which parties are reactive to long-term developments in the makeup of an electorate (Adams et al. 2004; Adams, Haupt, and Stoll 2009; Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013) as well as the strategic dilemmas that parties confront when facing an increasingly heterogeneous society (Dancygier 2017). However, comparatively less work examines the effects of *rapid* changes in migration and national diversity on political parties. If we see a conservative backlash against diversification and migration as a function of real and rapid change, this might be cause for concern. Such a finding would suggest a trajectory towards increasing tensions in progressively heterogeneous societies while also bolstering adversarial relationships between established political parties and new migrants (who are now members of the polity).

Though a general analysis in my paper supports this normatively troubling finding, I argue that not all parties shift in conservative directions as a function of increasing diversification and pressure on a country's migration system. I describe a theory of conflicting and aligning incentives, in which parties confront incentives to shift positions in differing ways, depending on both a party's status in government or opposition at the onset of the 'crisis,' as well as its existing ideological prototype. I argue that parties in opposition at the onset of a 'crisis,' as well as center right parties,

confront incentives that align towards a conservative shift on immigration and European integration in reaction to heightened levels of migration. For other parties, motivation structures pull issue positions in multiple, conflicting directions.

To test these claims, I examine how relative demographic change throughout the 'Refugee Crisis' at the country level correlates with party position change on immigration, European integration, and the environment (used as a placebo). I draw on demographic data from Eurostat (2021a) and longitudinal ratings of party positions from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al. 2020; Polk et al. 2017). I analyze various subsets of parties to test the heterogeneous predictions noted in the previous paragraph. One drawback to this analysis, though, is the endogeneity of demographic change over a three-year period. Likely, when parties change their positions, migration and resettlement patterns are influenced in a simultaneous causal process. To strengthen my claims, I also examine how relative asylum applications to a country cause shifts in these issue positions for political parties, employing a shift-share instrument to leverage a plausibly exogenous measure correlated to immigration and diversification.

Findings support the heterogeneous effects claim. Parties in opposition at the onset of the 'crisis' and center right parties systematically shifted immigration policy in a conservative direction as a function of demographic change and asylum applications. However, the country-wide levels of demographic change and asylum applications did little to shift positions on European integration for these party subsets. Instead, only far right parties shifted towards more adversarial positions towards the EU in response to national diversification and migration.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section 2, I contextualize the case of study. Section 3 then reviews relevant literature on both the effects of immigration and ethnic diversity as well as the correlates of party position change, building off these studies to articulate a theory of party reaction and conflicting incentives. In section 4, I describe the data and methods that I employ to test hypotheses derived from this theory. In section 5, I present my results, discussing their implications in section 6 and concluding in section 7.

2. Studying country and party reactions to the 'Refugee Crisis'

The so-called European 'Refugee Crisis' presents a relevant opportunity to examine how parties react to these rapid changes in diversification, migration, and asylum rates. In 2015 and 2016, asylum applications were up over 400% to the EU countries as compared to years prior. Figure 1

plots total and first-time asylum applications to EU countries between 2011 and 2019 (Eurostat 2021c).

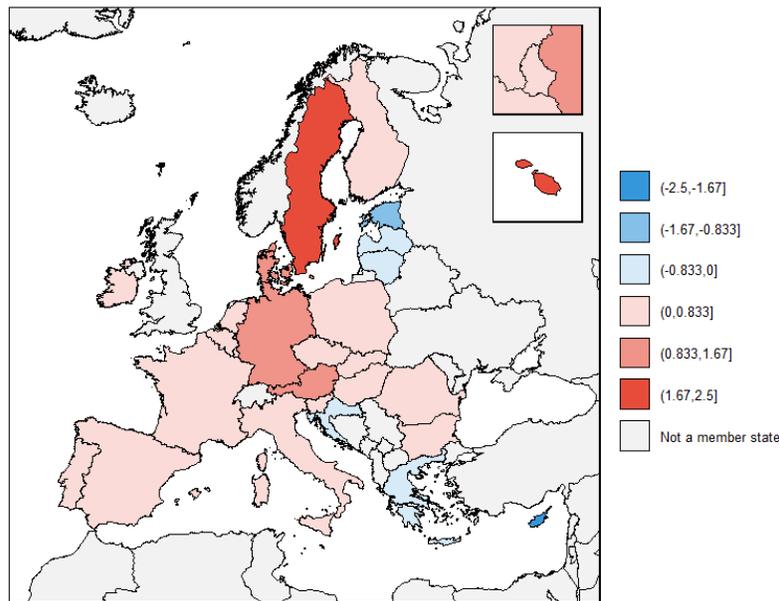Figure 1: Asylum Applications to EU Countries
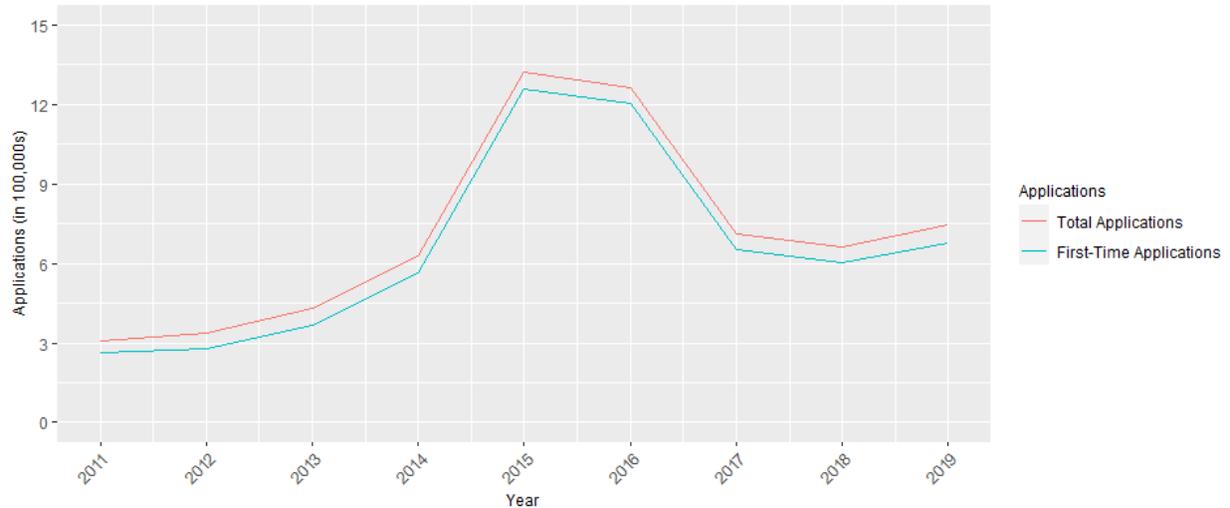
Source: Eurostat 2021

News media and parties certainly took notice of these trends, with some meeting the developments with open arms and a humanitarian outlook, while others advocated for more restriction, conservatism, and closed borders. Overall, expert ratings of political party positions on immigration reflect a general conservative shift among most parties in recent years, though certainly not among all parties (Bakker et al. 2020).

The large increase in asylum applications came mostly from refugees from the Middle East and Africa. Most of these newcomers to Europe were and are racially and religiously outside of the white and Christian mainstream. Asylum applications not only reflect pressure on European systems and institutions, but also can be connected to significant changes in the demographic makeup of many countries. For example, the proportion of Swedish residents born outside of the EU rose by nearly two percentage points—translating to hundreds of thousands of people— between 2014 and 2017. In that time period, the overall proportion of European residents born outside of the EU rose by 0.6 percentage points (Eurostat 2021). However, considerable variation exists between countries in the levels of diversification in this period (see Figure 2). Accordingly, analyzing party change throughout the 'crisis' offers an opportunity to explore the differential effects of an asymmetric shock.

Figure 2: Mapping change in the proportion of non-EU born residents from 2014-2017 among EU countries

■ (dark blue)	(-2.5,-1.67]
■ (medium blue)	(-1.67,-0.833]
■ (light blue)	(-0.833,0]
■ (light pink)	(0,0.833]
■ (medium red)	(0.833,1.67]
■ (dark red)	(1.67,2.5]
■ (gray)	Not a member state

*Source: Author's creation using data from Eurostat (2021) and eumaps R package (Fjelstul 2021)*

3. Immigration, diversity, and party position change

How does immigration, paired with racial and religious diversification, affect national political outcomes? Previous work has examined the effects of diversity in Europe on related attitudes, but mostly at the individual, rather than party, level. For example, Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky (2006) find that anti-foreigner sentiment in Europe is higher in places with larger proportions of foreign-born residents. It is unclear, though, whether actual demographic heterogeneity, or simply the perception of diversity, might influence xenophobic attitudes. For example, Gorodzeisky and Semyonov (2020) find that the perception of the presence of immigrants is more important to predicting hostile attitudes than actual population numbers. However, Hjerm (2007) finds that neither real nor perceived immigrant population size affect attitudes towards immigrants in Europe. Put simply, we lack a consensus on the effect of real versus imagined change on xenophobic attitudes—even at the individual level. Studies like Swank and Betz (2003) and Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers (2002) have demonstrated a correlation between high levels of immigration (and, specifically, asylum applications) and support for anti-Immigrant and Radical Right parties. However, this literature on the effects of *real* changes to demography tell us little about how political parties react to such country-level shifts. Under this

backdrop of studies, I re-evaluate (a) whether real changes in national diversity brought about by immigration affect political outcomes and (b) how parties differ in their reactions.

High levels of real change in national diversity brought about by immigration logically force parties to confront the issue of immigration (primarily) and European integration (as a possible spillover issue, given the nature of migration and refugee policymaking in Europe), increasing the likelihood of positional shift. I therefore expect parties in sites of high diversification and immigration to be more likely to consider shifting their related issue positions than parties with lower levels of diversification and immigration. However, when forced to confront such issues, parties are incentivized to shift positions in different directions. I separate these incentives into four main logics highlighted in the literature: governing constraints, past commitments, electoral considerations, and ceiling effects. In sites of high relative migration and diversification, parties are induced to confront various incentives that may either align in certain directions or conflict, leading to either positional shift or stagnation. Figure 3 visualizes this theoretical process.

Figure 3: Theoretical Model for Heterogenous reactions to rapid demographic change
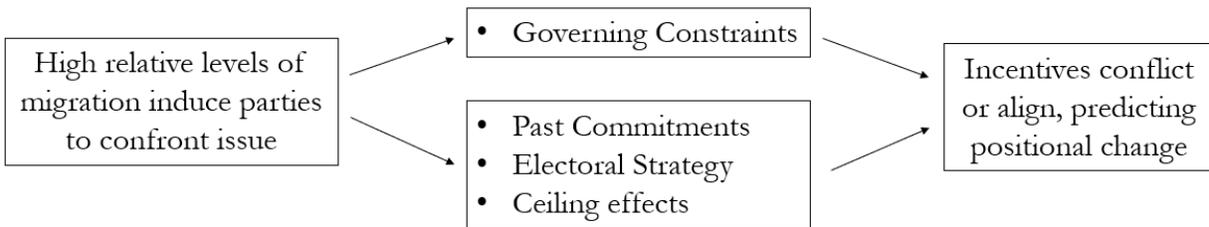
3.1 Incentives to change policy positions

First, the electoral context surrounding a party will likely influence its 'room to maneuver' on a policy. We might expect a difference in reactivity on the basis on incumbency status. This can arise both from *governing responsibility, as well as policy constraints*. To begin, both Senninger (2017) and Traber, Giger, and Häusermann (2018) argue that parties in opposition are more likely engage in general, ideological debates as opposed to their governing counterparts, who are positioned to focus on technical aspects of policymaking. Thus, when assessing ideological position change, we might expect more movement from opposition parties who are likely to respond with ideological, rather than technical, assessments. Furthermore, both Klüver and Spoon (2014) and Traber, Giger, and Häusermann (2018) find that parties in opposition are more likely than governing parties to adjust to issue-positional demand changes in the electorate. Finally, we

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might expect ideological movement by parties out of office as a means of trial and error (Heersink 2018)—out of office, parties are more willing to change in the hopes of altering the status quo. Taken together, incumbents generally appear more constrained to be consistent in their positions while opposition parties have more leverage and opportunity to shift.

Second, immigration and demographic change can force a party to confront its *past commitments*. This could include both its commitments to groups as well as its ideological commitments. One strand of literature on political parties points to organizational structure as a constraint on positional change (Karol 2009; Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013). That is, if a party is deeply tied to an institutional group, like a union, it may be constrained in its ability rapidly shift issue positions.

A rapid shift in demography also logically forces a party to confront its ideological commitments. While it may normally only be the parties 'owning' an issue that prefer to talk about it (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003), actual changes to national context make some issues unavoidable. Then, we might ask, how do parties confront these unavoidable issues? As Schimmelfennig (2001) argues, past norm-based policy arguments present a legitimacy dilemma for parties when confronted with real policy decisions. Parties are incentivized to re-up on their commitments to avoid a crisis of legitimacy (Seawright 2012). Put simply, when the salience of an issue rises, we might expect a party to reaffirm or strengthen its positional commitments. Similarly, Lupu (2014) finds that when parties dilute their brands—a somewhat analogous process to backtracking on commitments—the probability of electoral sanctioning rises. Thus, sudden demographic changes present a critical moment for many parties. Given the raised salience of immigration, and resultingly, the European Union, a party must reaffirm its ideological commitments or risk credibility and legitimacy.

Third, *electoral strategy* could influence how a party re-evaluates its positions. I assume that rapid demographic change will produce some overall backlash in the electorate, especially given that contact across groups, in the context of this study, is relatively unsustained. Thus, parties may have an incentive to cater to the demands of their native residents and promote more conservative policy. As Adams et al. (2004) suggests, parties are likely to shift their positions to fit present public opinion. However, Dancygier's (2017) model of 'inclusion dilemmas' casts doubt on the uniform tracking of 'native' public opinion, examining when and why European parties choose to incorporate Muslims into both their target electorate as well as their political elite.

Dancygier (2017) argues that considerations of local demographic composition shape party strategies—that is, if newcomers constitute a relevant electorate to capture, parties will pursue policy and strategies to that seek to gain their favor. However, given the reactionary and short-term outlook of this study, I would expect this incorporation strategy to be relatively limited.

Additionally, interparty competition will influence electoral strategies and party positions. For example, Meguid (2008) argues that mainstream parties will intentionally alter the salience of an issue or strategically move issue positions as a means of competition with new, niche parties. De Vries and Hobolt (2020) similarly argue that mainstream parties sometimes co-opt the dominant issues of extreme challengers to mitigate their success. On the issue of immigration, however, there is disagreement as to whether radical right parties systematically 'pull' more centrist parties to adopt their positions (Dancygier and Margalit 2020; van Spanje 2010). Taken together, parties must weigh the electoral incentives presented by demographic change. Parties are induced to ask whether they should follow public opinion, seek to incorporate new voters, and/or adopt positions of other parties who have built success with extreme positions on immigration.

Fourth, parties may be constrained in their movement on some issues given *ceiling effects*. Parties at the polar ends of the spectrum on immigration and European integration have little room to move. This idea, especially on the far right, can be connected to the relationship between a party and 'crisis.' Put simply, if a party promotes an image of a 'country in crisis' before *real* changes to demographic makeup and migration rates occur, we should expect little issue-positional movement at the onset of real change. As Moffitt (2015) argues, populist radical right parties often 'perform crisis.' Normally central to these parties is an extreme anti-immigrant, anti-multiculturalism, and anti-EU position (Mudde 2019; Lorimer 2020). Accordingly, such parties, without the necessity of real demographic change, already emphasize these issues to an extreme. In a state of perpetual crisis, threat and real change should only affect those not already at the extremes (Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

3.2 Hypotheses on conflicting incentives

These four general logics (governing constraints, past commitments, electoral considerations, and existing polar positions) offer a useful starting point for theorizing on how parties may have reacted in the so-called European 'Refugee Crisis.' Because these logics are not uniformly applicable to every party, this paper seeks to add to existing literature on heterogenous partisan reactions to

common events (Adams et al. 2004; Adams and Somer-Topcu 2009; Klüver and Spoon 2014; Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013; Williams and Spoon 2015).

I investigate party position change on immigration and European integration. Political entrepreneurs in Europe have long tied issues of migration to the European Union. Given the freedom of movement within Europe, immigration is a political issue that must be shared across national borders, and many of the rules, policies, and institutions set up to manage the movement and settlement of people emanate from Brussels. Accordingly, examining positional change on integration offers a view into a relevant, yet more distant (as compared to immigration) issue. I expect that high levels of immigration and demographic change push parties to confront these logics, which in turn incentivize and explain party position shifts. For some parties, the various incentives align, inducing issue-positional change as a result of high demographic change. In other cases, these incentives conflict, inducing relatively little positional change based on demographic change. Like waves in the physical world, the direction and magnitude of party reactions are the outcome of constructively and destructively interfering incentives.

In the theoretical model presented in Figure 2, I separate the mechanisms along two pathways. Each pathway leads to different division points along which I expect heterogeneous effects by party group. However, before addressing possible heterogeneous effects, it is useful to outline a broad hypothesis. If I am to treat parties as monolithic, assuming that parties are indistinguishable regardless of incumbency or prototype status, I can gain a sense for the overall patterns of issue-positional movement throughout the 'crisis.' In general, I expect that parties may tend to move in a conservative and restrictive direction on immigration and European integration when confronted with high levels of demographic change. Accordingly:

> *H1: An increase in the proportion of country residents born outside of the EU between 2014 and 2017 causes a conservative shift in party positions on [a]immigration and [b]European integration for political parties.*

However, my theory is does not aim to treat parties as monolithic. First, I expect differences in positional shifts by incumbency status. The mechanism of 'governing constraints' operates differently on parties in government and parties in opposition at the onset of the 'crisis.' Opposition parties should be freer (than parties in government) to shift policy, be willing to change course, and follow public opinion. Therefore, I expect that:

H2: An increase in the proportion of country residents born outside of the EU between 2014 and 2017 causes a shift in party positions on [a]immigration and [b]European integration for parties in opposition in 2015, but not for parties in government at the time.

Second, I expect differences in policy reactions by ideological 'prototypes.' The three mechanisms along the bottom pathway in Figure 2 should induce different positional shifts for different parties. For the purposes of this paper, I group parties into four broad categories based on expert assessments of their general placement on the Left-Right ideological scale.

Moving from left to right, I expect that high levels of demographic change would not have a large impact on far left parties' issue positions. While they are likely to recommit and strengthen their ideological commitments to openness and are likely to try to appeal to both new voters and existing left-leaning voters, these parties have little room to move to further to the Left. Thus, I would expect little movement in any direction

For center left parties, I also do not expect systematic reactionary patterns as a function of levels of diversification. Such parties have likely committed to relatively open immigration policies, and with heightened issue salience, we might expect a reaffirmation of such commitments. However, their movement may be constrained by their institutional structures. Considering that Social Democratic parties often organizationally bounded to group (labor) demands and interests, the process of positional shifting may be less reactionary (Schumacher, de Vries, and Vis 2013). Strategically, while these parties may be interested in attracting recently resettled potential voters, reactions from existing constituencies are unlikely to be uniform.

Center right parties, I propose, are the most likely to shift towards more conservative issue positions on the basis on rapid demographic change. While other parties face a set of *conflicting incentives*, center right parties are subject to *aligning incentive*s. They are likely to have ideologically committed to relatively restrictive policy, and with heightened issue salience, would logically strengthen such commitments. Electorally, their target electorate may shift to the right, incentivizing the party to follow. Additionally, shifting issue positions in a more conservative direction might be a strategic move to ward off potential realignment favoring radical right parties.

Finally, parties on the far right likely have aligning incentives similar to those presented in the center right case. However, they are likely to face a ceiling effect. Parties on the far right have little space to grow more restrictive on immigration or integration. Furthermore, many of these

parties claim a crisis of migration far before any real shocks. Thus, actual changes in immigration and national diversification are unlikely to produce a systematic shift in policy positions.

To summarize, Table 1 outlines the direction that parties in each ideological group are incentivized to move under conditions of forced issue-confrontation (that is, in sites of high levels of diversification and immigration), leading to a third hypothesis.

Table 1: Incentives parties meet in sites of high diversification and pressure on migration systems

Party	Past Commitments	Electoral Strategy	Ceiling Effects	Result
Far Left	Left	Left	Constrained	No Movement
Center Left	Left/Stagnant	Mixed	Unconstrained	No Movement
Center Right	Right	Right	Unconstrained	Conservative Shift
Far Right	Right	Right	Constrained	No Movement

> *H3: An increase in the proportion of country residents born outside of the EU between 2014 and 2017 cause a shift in party positions on [a]immigration and [b]European integration for center right parties, but not for other ideological party groups.*

In the following section, I define and operationalize the key variables in this study. I then offer an identification strategy to test these hypotheses in naïve (but informative) and causal frameworks.

4. Data and methods

To test the hypotheses posed in the previous section, I employ two analyses. First, I examine the correlation between changes to country-level population shares of non-EU born residents and changes to issue positions on immigration and European integration. While this analysis addresses the question posed at the onset of the paper, it is unable to substantiate a causal claim, given that the independent variable is likely endogenous to issue-positional changes. In response, I employ an instrumental variable strategy and run a set of 2SLS models using a shift-share instrument. However, given limitations in the available data for fine-grained country-of-origin statistics, I analyze the effect of asylum applications as a proxy for immigration and demographic change.

4.1 Outcome variable

My outcome variable of interest is relative changes in issue positions. I include three issues in my analyses. The first two are immigration and European integration. These issues are logically tied to trends and policy debates throughout the European 'Refugee Crisis.' I include a third variable,

the environment, as a placebo test. Environmental issues are not explicitly tied to asylum, immigration, or diversification (over this time period), so I should not expect any systematic shift in such issues positions as a function of diversification or asylum applications.

I operationalize party position change using the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES) from 2014 and 2019 (Bakker et al. 2020; Polk et al. 2017). The CHES asks country experts to rate parties on multiple issue-positions on scales of 1 (very liberal) to 10 (very conservative). The CHES has been shown as convergent to other measures of party positions, including those from the Comparative Manifesto Project as well as voter assessments of party positions (Bakker et al. 2015). To gain a measure for positional *shift* throughout the 'crisis,' I subtract issue position scores in 2019 by scores in 2014. This operationalization strategy acts somewhat like a party fixed effect, as parties are measured relative to their past selves. Furthermore, because parties are nested within countries, the strategy also controls for time-invariant country level covariates. I define the measure as:

$$\Delta_{Y_i} = Issue\ Score_{2019} - Issue\ Score_{2014}$$

I use 2014 and 2019 scores because they are the nearest measures of pre- and post-treatment positions in the CHES. If parties are reactive to real changes in demography relating to non-EU residents, then the degree of positional change on these issues should correlate to degrees of demographic change. One limitation of this operationalization strategy is that my sample is limited to only parties that existed in both 2014 and 2019 (though I also include parties that changed names between the time periods as single units).

4.2 Explanatory variable

The main explanatory variable in this study is changes to demography brought about by immigration. I am interested in whether the level of demographic change within countries throughout the 'crisis' influences party positions. Given that I measure party positions at the national level, I measure demographic change at the national level as well.

I employ data on 'country of origin' to examine the effect of racial and religious 'outsiders' to the European mainstream. Importantly, not all countries of origin are treated the same by natives (Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2015). Given limitations to fine-grained data on country of origin for residents of each EU country, I employ a crude measure to assess the proportional change of residents born outside of the EU. This likely underestimates any

effect of diversification from migration that I might find, given that some of these residents largely conform to the white and Christian mainstream present in most European countries.

I create a measure for demographic change in the proportion of non-EU-born residents from Eurostat (2021b), which provides yearly data on a variety of country-level statistics. Data represent populations on January 1 of the year. To get a measure of demographic change from 2014 to 2017, I find the proportion of non-EU-born residents (which does not necessarily imply citizenship) out of the total population for each country on both January 1, 2014, and January 1, 2017. I can then subtract these proportions to get a measure for the change in proportion of non-EU-born residents over the time period for each country:

$$\Delta_{non\,EU\,born} = 100 \times \left(\frac{\text{non EU born}_{2017}}{\text{Total Pop}_{2017}} - \frac{nonEUborn_{2014}}{TotalPop_{2014}} \right)$$

From 2014 to 2017, most EU countries (21 of 27) underwent a process of increasing their share of non-EU born residents.

4.3 The instrument

An important challenge to estimating the effect of demographic change on party positions is that the treatment (demographic change) is non-random. Migration patterns will likely follow some ordered sorting pattern that is tied to party positions. Such endogeneity could arise from formal processes (like parties passing legislation relating to immigration) or from informal processes (like party positions creating reputations of hostility or openness). I work around this issue by employing a shift-share instrument often used in the literature on migration (Boustan 2010; Calderon, Fouka, and Tabellini 2020; Card 2001).

While using this instrument, however, it is necessary to know the specific countries of origin for migrants in a country. However, thorough data for all European countries in this regard does not exist to my knowledge. Detailed data does exist, however, on the country of origin of asylum applications to each EU country. Asylum applications serve as a useful proxy for the overarching concept of demographic change throughout the 'crisis,' as it logically increases the salience of issues of diversity, migration, and the European Union within EU countries. I examine asylum applications from the five largest countries of origin for asylum seekers throughout the crisis: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Nigeria (BBC 2018).

The shift-share instrument predicts asylum applications throughout 2015, 2016, and 2017 (heightened years of the 'crisis') based on pre-crisis asylum applications and continent-level application trends by country of origin. Essentially, the instrument measures differential exposures (country-level) to a common shock (continent-level) (Goldsmith-Pinkham, Sorkin, and Swift 2020). Logically, if a country is already host to asylum seekers from one country in 2014, we may expect further sorting into said countries for future applicants. I am therefore minimizing concerns of endogeneity and reverse-causality by predicting migration from variables that are plausibly exogenous to country- and party-level issue position shifts during and after the 'crisis.' The instrument takes the following form:

$$Z_c = \sum_o \left[\frac{N_{o,c,14}}{N_{o,14}}\right] \left[\frac{A_{o,15-17}}{P_{c,14}}\right]$$

Where c is the county of interest, o is the country of origin of an applicant, and time periods are signified as specific years. Z_c is the instrument that predicts asylum applications (weighted by the population of country c in 2014) from Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Pakistanis, and Nigerians between 2015 and 2017. The equation can be understood as the interaction between shares of applicants from these countries in 2014 and shifts in application trends to all of Europe between 2015 and 2017. The ratio $\left[\frac{N_{o,c,14}}{N_{o,14}}\right]$ is the share (out of all European countries) of applications from country o to European country c in 2014. $A_{o,15-17}$ is the total asylum applications to all European countries between 2015 and 2017 from country o. $P_{c,14}$ is the total population of country c in 2014, which standardizes the measure to gauge the relative magnitude of applications per country. The instrument satisfies the exclusion requirement for instrumental variables because *predicted* asylum application patterns from pre-'crisis' data would not introduce any new mechanisms or pathways that could affect the outcome of interest. While the shift-share instrument is not without its critics, the analysis, paired with the naïve approach, presents a more robust case for the theory presented in this paper.

This instrument is highly correlated with actual asylum applications to countries between 2015 and 2017 (weighted by country population) (R=0.81). It is also correlated with the variable for demographic change. Though not exactly tracking onto demographic change, the measures correlation coefficient of 0.45. While an imperfect proxy for demographic change and

immigration, the analyses still provide a causal examination of the suggestive results from the naïve analysis. In performing these analyses, it is thus necessary to adjust the wordings of the hypotheses presented in section 3 such that changes in the explanatory variable do not reflect variation in the proportional change 'of country residents born outside of the EU between 2014 and 2017,' but rather, variation in 'relative asylum applications to a country between 2015, 2016, and 2017.'

4.4 Control variables and analysis subsets

I incorporate two confounding variables in my model that could plausibly affect both migration patterns and party position shifts. These include both the vote share of far right parties in 2015 (onset of the 'crisis'), as well as the party vote share in 2015. Electoral results are relevant in that they may lay the foundation for country-specific immigration regimes, signal a society's openness to migrants, and constrain/free a party to shift its positions.

My analysis also accounts for both incumbency status at the onset of the 'crisis,' and party prototype. As my hypotheses suggest, I expect different results based on both variables. To address these predictions, I perform analyses on a variety of data subsets. First, I divide the sample into incumbents and non-incumbents in 2015. Second, I divide the sample into four crude categories of party prototypes. I simply separate parties by the expert assessments of parties' general Left-Right position in 2014 (pre-treatment) into the following categories: far left [0-2.5]; center left (2.5, 5]; center right (5,7.5]; far right (7.5,10].

4.5 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for the full sample are presented in Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the incumbency and party prototype subsets can be found in A1 of the Appendix. By simply observing the descriptive data, I notice a relevant trend in party positions. From 2014 to 2019, parties appear to have shifted to the right on Immigration and European integration. This may be indicative of a general trend, whereby regardless of national demographic change, continent-wide stories about the 'Refugee Crisis,' immigration, and pressure on asylum systems may have pushed parties to slightly more conservative immigration stances, and more skeptical stances towards the European Union.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on full dataset

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	180	0.242	1.315	-3.500	5.389
EU	180	0.184	0.677	-1.824	2.571
Environment	180	-0.063	0.950	-2.506	2.500
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	180	0.351	0.774	-2.332	2.333
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	180	0.496	0.633	0.003	2.226
Shift-Share Instrument	180	0.488	0.668	0.003	2.896
Controls					
Far right vote share (2015)	180	9.633	7.967	0.000	37.580
Party vote share (2015)	180	14.940	12.587	0.000	60.100
Heterogenous Divisions					
Incumbency (0=opp., 2015; 1=gov., 2015)	180	0.294	0.457	0.000	1.000
Party Prototype (1= far left, 4 = far right)	180	2.567	0.928	1.000	4.000

4.6 Identification strategy

Throughout all models in both the naïve and IV analyses, I aim to identify the impact of demographic change or weighted asylum applications on issue position shifts. Thus, the estimand of interest, across all models, is the β coefficient from the following general form regression:

$$\Delta Y_p = \alpha + \beta * X_c + \gamma Q_p + \epsilon_p$$

Where β is the estimand of interest, ΔY_p is the change in policy position from 2014 to 2019 on an issue for a party, X_c is the value of the explanatory variable at the country level, and Q_p is a vector containing the confounding variables described above. In the naïve OLS analyses, X_c represents the change in proportion of non-EU born residents in a country. In the IV analysis, I run 2SLS models to assess the causal impact of asylum applications where X_c represents weighted asylum applications between 2015 and 2017 to country c, as predicted from by the shift-share instrument in the first stage regression.

5. Results

5.1 General trends

To assess H1, I examine the full sample of parties in Table 3. I abbreviate the outcome variable issue labels, where Imm. represents immigration, EU represents European integration, and Env. represents environment. In the naïve model, the coefficient for demographic change is positive and statistically significant only for immigration. In general, it appears that larger levels of

diversification correlate with more conservative shifts on immigration (supports H1a), but not European integration (does not support H1b). With the IV analysis, I notice a similar pattern. Positions on immigration shift in a more restrictive direction as a function of increased weighted asylum applications. However, there is no significant movement on positions on European integration resulting from relative variation in levels of asylum applications. It is also relevant to note the weakness of these results—while I find significant effects in the 2SLS models, I find no significant effects in the OLS model using actual asylum applications for immigration (though I find the opposite pattern for European integration).

Considering both analyses together, the models suggest a relatively weak, though significant, relationship between demographic change or weighted asylum applications and party position shifts on immigration. In general, it appears that parties tend to shift in a more conservative direction, at least on immigration, as a function of both related explanatory variables, though the picture is far from decisive.

Table 3: Regressions on Full sample

|	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	**0.294**	0.101	0.141			
	(0.126)*	(0.064)	(0.093)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	180	180	180			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	0.286	0.177	0.194	**0.755**	0.142	0.238
	(0.154)	(0.078)*	(0.113)	**(0.197)*****	(0.097)	(0.141)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				0.778	0.778	0.778
				(0.043)***	(0.043)***	(0.043)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				111.5	111.5	111.5
Observations	180	180	180	180	180	180

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

5.2 Incumbency and opposition

To test H2, I subset the data by incumbency status in 2015. Given the increase in models, Figure 4 shows 95% confidence intervals for the β coefficient of interest across models and analyses (full tables are presented in A2 of the Appendix).

I find support for H2a (immigration), but mixed results for H2b (European integration). The results in Table 2 (from the full sample) appear to be driven mostly by parties in opposition at the onset of the 'crisis.' I find no significant relationships across either model specification for any issues for parties in government at the onset of the 'crisis.' However, I find evidence that parties in opposition are likely to shift towards more conservative immigration policy as a function of demographic change and predicted asylum applications.

Figure 4: Heterogenous Effects, Incumbency Status
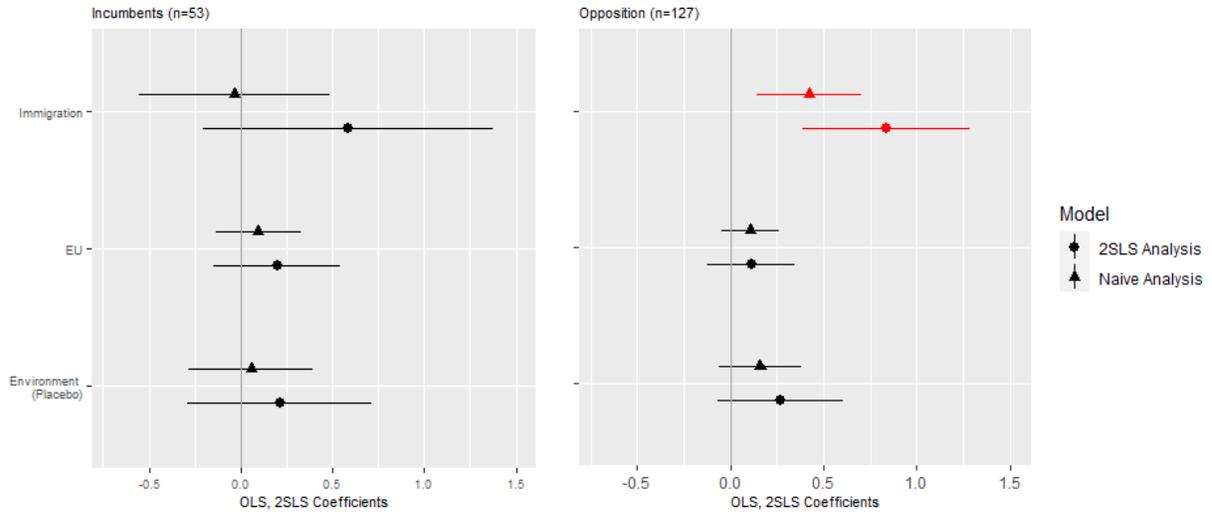
5.3 Ideological prototypes

To examine H3, I subset the data by party prototype. Figure 5 plots 95% confidence intervals for the β coefficient of interest across the various models, like in Figure 4 (tables are also included in A3 of the Appendix). There are two relevant alternative specifications in these models. First, given the results presented in section 5.2, I include incumbency status at the onset of the 'crisis' in my models with both a term for its main effect and interactive effect with the main explanatory variable. Second, in the far right party subset, I exclude the 'far right vote share' control variable, given that its collinearity with the 'party vote share' variable.

The patterns found in these figures similarly support hypotheses 3a (immigration). I only notice a significant impact of demographic change or predicted asylum applications for positions of center right parties. Like the incumbency analysis, I notice a reactionary conservative shift on immigration for center right parties across both model specifications. Interestingly, the predictions on European integration positions are inconsistent with the theoretical model. While H4b and H5b

are supported, I see no systematic shift on in positions towards European integration for center right parties (H6b), but I do see these shifts for far right parties (H7b).

Figure 5: Heterogeneous Effects, Party Prototypes
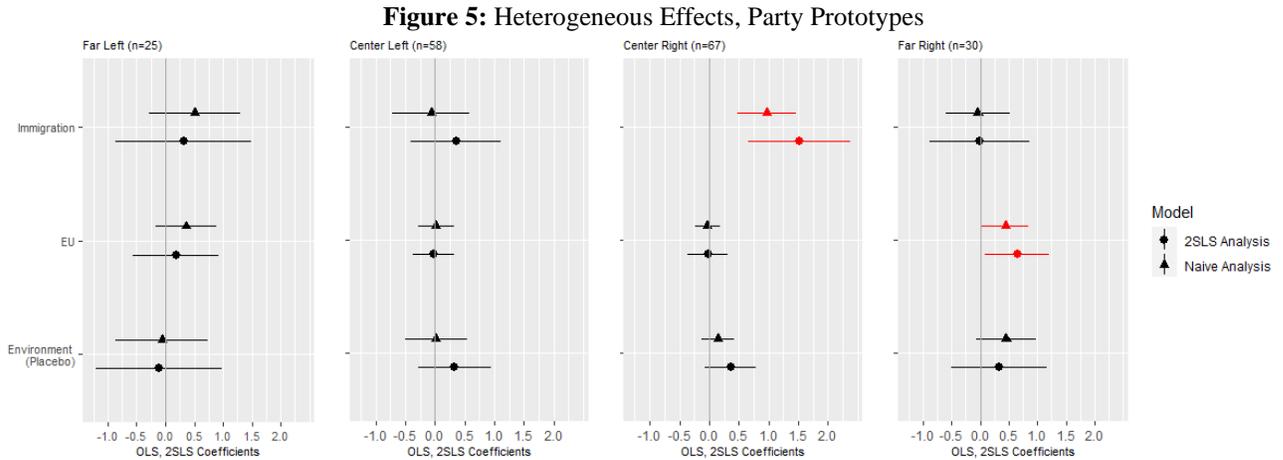
6. Discussion

The theory and hypotheses presented in Section 3 of this paper were largely supported by the quantitative analysis presented in Section 5 for the issue of immigration. At first glance (Section 5.1), it appears that a backlash occurs within political parties in areas of high demographic change or asylum pressure. Put simply, when societies and systems face diversification as a result of immigration, we should generally expect parties to advocate for more closed borders and conservative policy regimes. If this result stood alone, it would be quite problematic. As discussed in the introduction, such a finding suggests a growing adversarial relationship between parties and an increasing subset of the people that they are meant to represent.

However, when parsing through the data in more detail, and theoretically considering the incentives that a party might confront in considering positional shifts, I notice that this overall trend does not apply uniformly to parties. Importantly, *it is those parties in opposition (section 5.2) and those center right parties (section 5.3), that appear to drive the general relationship between demographic change or relative pressure on an asylum system and restrictive position shifts on immigration.* Thus, before expecting a partisan backlash to diversification or immigration, it is relevant to ask: from which parties?

While my analysis supports this heterogeneous conclusion, we should also be somewhat wary to claim that other parties were non-reactive. The null results found for parties in government in 2015 and for non-center right parties could be a result of small sample sizes, which limit my ability to make precise estimates. Nonetheless, the results suggest that we at least cannot reject the

(null) hypothesis that demographic change or predicted asylum applications have no effect on issue position shifts for such parties. These results are consistent with the theoretical prediction of 'conflicting incentives' for different party prototypes, whereby parties are motivated to shift policy in multiple directions, thus inducing no systematic movement patterns. They are also consistent with the theoretical prediction of 'governing constraints,' whereby parties in government appear to have less freedom to shift issue positions as compared to their opponents in the opposition.

Hypotheses from Section 3 were not as well supported when it comes to the issue of European integration. For the most part, I did not detect systematic movement on the issue as a function of national demographic change or asylum applications. I found that these changes only resulted in more skeptical positions towards European integration for far right parties. From this, I might take three lessons. First, the difference in results when comparing these two outcome variables (changes in immigration positions and changes in integration positions) may suggest distance between the two issues. That is, they may be less parallel (throughout the 'crisis') then originally proposed in this paper. Second, I may have underestimated the degree to which center right parties, in the aggregate, are committed to the 'European project.' Here, the relative salience of their commitments could be driving null results. Third, I may have also overstated the existing polar positions of far right parties on European integration. This is not a new finding. While many far right parties are fundamentally against the EU, considerable variation exists (or existed) within the party family (Lorimer 2020). Thus, the 'crisis' may have been a moment driving these parties towards more cross-national conformity on the integration issue. For center right parties, however, results presented here suggest both a willingness to shift ideological positions (on immigration) in response to major events while still holding firm a commitment to European integration.

7. Conclusion

To understand how, why, and when political parties shift their positions, we must first note the different directions in which they are incentivized. When reacting to high levels of rapid diversification brought about by immigration and refugees, I find that it is only center right and opposition parties that systematically shift towards more conservative positions on immigration. Shifts on the issue of European integration only appear to be predicted by levels of diversification and migration for far right parties. These results, I argue, are the product of aligned incentives when confronting a salient issue for such parties.

Future work could on these issues could further explore the mechanisms proposed. The mechanisms proposed assume that high levels of demographic change or pressure on an asylum system induce issue salience and activate a party to consider the constraints of its status in government, confront its past commitments, reconsider its electoral strategy, and recognize its ideological room to maneuver. While not directly tested, the findings presented in this paper suggest that such mechanisms were, indeed, 'activated' by real changes. Otherwise, we should not have seen the systematic patterns on issue movement for *any party*. However, it is possible that rather than being subject to 'conflicting incentives,' as my theory suggests, other parties may simply not have been 'activated' to confront these logics (which could explain the partial null findings). Further work, possibly employing experimental and/or qualitative methods, could provide more detailed evidence on the causal pathway suggested in my theory.

Additionally, this work could be extended beyond the realm of rapid demographic change. Do such results hold under a slow process of demographic turnover? For example, varying birth rates and more 'regular' migration patterns could also result in the diversification of a society, though it is unclear whether the mechanisms suggested in this paper would be 'activated' in a scenario of gradual change. It could also be useful to perform a similar analysis on a differently operationalized outcome variable. By using the CHES, I gain a sense of party movement in the abstract. However, repeating this analysis on a more concrete measure (for example, one might examine changes in the amount of time candidates dedicate to immigration) might offer further insight into the questions and theory presented here. Finally, the work could be extended by analyzing these patterns at the subnational level. The measure that I use for demographic change, as well as my instrument, are somewhat distant from individual citizens and politicians. Exploring the subnational level could further advance the theory that I propose, while also offering leverage into other measures of local diversity and demographic change.

Though this paper is limited in important ways, it does draw out some important finding. First, I find evidence for a general conservative backlash on immigration to high levels of rapid demographic change and pressure on an asylum system. Second, I find that this backlash is non-uniform. It is driven by center right parties and parties in opposition. Other parties, though, demonstrate no systematic pattern in their movement on the issue. Taken together, this paper can add nuance and new findings to debates of backlash, party politics, and reactions to crises.

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Appendix

In A1 of the Appendix, I provide descriptive statistics for the subsetted models presented throughout section 5 (subsets by incumbency and party family). In A2 and A3 of the Appendix, I provide the relevant tables from the naïve OLS analysis with demographic change as explanatory, as well as the IV analysis with asylum applications as explanatory.

Appendix A.1 Descriptive Statistics, Subsets

Table A1: Parties in Government (2015)

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	53	0.312	1.464	-2.64	3.961
EU	53	-0.019	0.634	-1.824	1.556
Environment	53	-0.029	0.888	-2.000	2.500
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	53	0.376	0.754	-2.332	2.333
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	53	0.476	0.613	0.003	2.226
Shift-Share Instrument	53	0.443	0.641	0.003	2.896
Controls					
Far right vote (2015)	53	9.49	7.783	0.000	37.580
Party vote (2015)	53	25.01	13.227	5.980	60.100

Table A2: Parties in Opposition (2015)

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	127	0.213	1.253	-3.500	5.389
EU	127	0.269	0.679	-1.571	2.571
Environment	127	-0.077	0.978	-2.506	2.400
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	127	0.341	0.785	-2.332	2.333
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	127	0.505	0.644	0.003	2.226
Shift-Share Instrument	127	0.506	0.681	0.003	2.896
Controls					
Far right vote (2015)	127	9.694	8.041	0.000	37.580
Party vote (2015)	127	10.731	9.611	0.000	43.340

Table A3: Far Left Parties

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	25	0.041	0.940	-2.250	2.293
EU	25	0.607	0.651	-0.673	2.124
Environment	25	0.181	0.936	-2.506	2.222
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	25	0.369	0.705	-2.332	1.827
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	25	0.457	0.538	0.008	1.848
Shift-Share Instrument	25	0.407	0.592	0.004	2.896
Controls					
Far right vote (2015)	25	6.743	6.546	0.000	21.100
Party vote (2015)	25	8.568	9.044	0.000	36.300
Incumbency (2015)	25	0.040	0.200	0.000	1.000

Table A4: Center Left Parties

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	58	0.191	1.309	-2.643	3.961
EU	58	0.190	0.652	-1.824	2.045
Environment	58	-0.201	1.098	-2.154	2.500
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	58	0.358	0.724	-2.332	2.333
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	58	0.524	0.696	0.003	2.226
Shift-Share Instrument	58	0.463	0.649	0.003	2.896
Controls					
Far right vote (2015)	58	9.958	8.019	0.000	37.580
Party vote (2015)	58	16.834	13.300	0.430	60.100
Incumbency (2015)	58	0.345	0.479	0.000	1.000

Table A5: Center Right Parties

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	67	0.299	1.525	-3.500	5.389
EU	67	0.077	0.601	-1.700	1.750
Environment	67	-0.129	0.763	-1.7500	2.026
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	67	0.341	0.872	-2.332	2.333
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	67	0.458	0.588	0.003	1.848
Shift-Share Instrument	67	0.524	0.729	0.003	2.896
Controls					
Far right vote (2015)	67	9.683	8.186	0.000	37.580
Party vote (2015)	67	16.079	13.021	0.430	60.100
Incumbency (2015)	67	0.388	0.491	0.000	1.000

Table A6: Far Right Parties

	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Outcome Variables (Δ position)					
Immigration	30	0.382	1.102	-3.000	2.850
EU	30	0.056	0.790	-1.417	2.571
Environment	30	0.152	1.003	-2.200	2.400
EV and IV					
Chang Prop. Non-EU Born	30	0.345	0.724	-2.332	1.827
Asylum Applications (2015-17)	30	0.560	0.697	0.003	2.226
Shift-Share Instrument	30	0.520	0.646	0.003	2.896
Controls					
Party vote (2015)	30	14.017	11.428	1.400	44.870
Incumbency (2015)	30	0.200	0.406	0.000	1.000

Appendix A.2 Incumbency Tables

In A2 of the Appendix, I provide the corresponding tables to the figures presented in section 5.2 of the paper (Incumbency Analysis).

Table A7: OLS and 2SLS Regressions, Parties in Government (2015)

	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	-0.032	0.094	0.056			
	(0.258)	(0.115)	(0.169)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	53	53	53			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	0.273	0.227	0.400	0.584	0.212	0.199
	(0.316)	(0.139)	(0.200)	(0.393)	(0.248)	(0.171)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				0.795	0.795	0.795
				(0.082)***	(0.082)***	(0.082)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				32.87	32.87	32.87
Observations	53	53	53	53	53	53

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table A8: OLS and 2SLS Regressions, Parties in Opposition (2015)

	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	**0.423**	0.107	0.160			
	(0.141)**	(0.078)	(0.111)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	127	127	127			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	0.304	0.152	0.137	**0.836**	0.267	0.114
	(0.175)	(0.095)	(0.135)	**(0.227)*****	(0.170)	(0.119)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				0.769	0.769	0.769
				(0.052)***	(0.052)***	(0.052)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				76.74	76.74	76.74
Observations	127	127	127	127	127	127

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Appendix A.3 Party Prototype Tables

In A3 of the Appendix, I provide the corresponding tables to the figures presented in section 5.3 of the paper (Party Prototype Analysis).

Table A9: OLS and 2SLS Regressions, Far Left Parties

	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	0.511	0.359	-0.057			
	(0.384)	(0.252)	(0.384)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	25	25	25			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	0.307	0.172	-0.232	0.313	0.186	-0.115
	(0.419)	(0.278)	(0.404)	(0.568)	(0.357)	(0.522)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				0.686	0.686	0.686
				(0.124)***	(0.124)***	(0.124)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				10.01	10.01	10.01
Observations	25	25	25	25	25	25

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table A10: OLS and 2SLS Regressions, Center Left Parties

	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	-0.062	0.020	0.018			
	(0.324)	(0.148)	(0.260)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	58	58	58			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	0.090	0.100	0.161	0.358	-0.016	0.333
	(0.311)	(0.144)	(0.254)	(0.568)	(0.172)	(0.302)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				1.283	1.283	1.283
				(0.130)***	(0.130)***	(0.130)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				30.38	30.38	30.38
Observations	58	58	58	58	58	58

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table A11: OLS and 2SLS Regressions, Center Right Parties

	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	**0.966**	-0.027	0.146			
	(0.249)*	(0.104)	(0.136)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	67	67	67			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	1.034	-0.067	0.354	**1.523**	-0.019	366
	(0.372)**	(0.147)	(0.187)	**(0.431)***	(0.169)	(0.216)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				0.654	0.654	0.654
				(0.058)***	(0.058)***	(0.058)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				36.22	36.22	36.22
Observations	67	67	67	67	67	67

*Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001*

Table A12: OLS and 2SLS Regressions, Far Right Parties

	OLS			2SLS		
Outcome:	Imm.	EU	Env.	Imm.	EU	Env.
Naïve OLS Models						
Demographic Change	-0.041	**0.443**	0.453			
	(0.275)	**(0.198)***	(0.253)			
Controls	✓	✓	✓			
Observations	30	30	30			
IV Models (OLS/2SLS)						
A. Main Estimate						
Weighted Asy. Apps.	-0.193	0.607	-0.005	-0.008	**0.648**	0.332
	(0.342)	(0.219)*	(0.321)	(0.425)	**(0.270)***	(0.404)
B. First Stage						
Predicted Asy. Apps.				0.823	0.823	0.823
				(0.127)***	(0.127)***	(0.127)***
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1st Stage F-Stat				14.4	14.4	14.4
Observations	30	30	30	30	30	30

*Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001*