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Immigration and Political Competition in Five European Countries: A Comparative Perspective

NICOLA PASINI

Associate Professor of Political Science
Department of Social and Political Studies
Università degli Studi di Milano

ELISA REBESSI

PhD student
Graduate School in Social & Political Sciences (GSSPS),
Università degli Studi di Milano

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Abstract:

Since the last three decades, immigration is one of the major phenomena that have been affecting Western Europe, bringing about several important consequences. Indeed, the issue is plenty of implications, both from a societal and political point of view. Does the immigration issue occupy a central position in the European political system? Even in years in which economic questions captured much of the attention of the principal actors (the institutions, political parties, media and public opinion), does this issue remain a constant presence on the public agenda? It should not of course be excluded that the economic crisis and the concerns linked to it, though not completely overshadowing immigration, may have contributed to changing in part its significance, reshaping the definition of the problem in the eyes of the actors. The paper intends to explore the dynamics that immigration has triggered inside the political system. First, we will examine some data and interpretations of the orientations of public opinion. Secondly, we will analyze the policy offerings that political parties formulate in response to the questions posed by public opinion, related to the issue of immigration. To this end, we will examine the principal electoral programs presented by major political parties for the general elections of five countries (France, Greece, Netherlands: 2012; Italy, Germany: 2013), with a focus on the attention received by the specific issue of irregular immigration and the question of the human rights.

Introduction

Immigration is one of the major processes that have been affecting Western Europe with great emphasis, especially since three decades. The topic is rich of implications and can be studied taking into account several facets. Even during the past few years, in which economic questions drew much of people's attention, immigration remained on the public agenda. Political parties have given answers in terms of policy, particularly of a regulatory nature, aimed at limiting influxes and promoting integration in an attempt to find a position that reflects the preferences of their electorate. In this respect, it is of great relevance to highlight how the party systems respond to issues related to immigration. In this work we consider how the immigration is framed and debated in the general elections of Five European Countries: France, Greece, the Netherlands: 2012; Italy, Germany: 2013. The paper is divided into three sections: in the first some possible approaches to the study of the politicization of immigration are summarized; in the second we provide preliminary clues on sentiments and opinions across Western Europe concerning the priorities that the EU and the national governments should address, comparing in particular the saliences of the immigration and of the economic questions. To this purpose, the European Social Surveys represent a powerful resource and data. In the third section we analyze the political platforms of the main political parties of the countries considered, observing if the immigration issue is present and how it is framed. A focus of attention is directed to the question of the irregular immigration, considered as a possible polarizing issue.

1. Some possible approaches to the study of the politicization of immigration

We consider an issue politicized when it becomes a question of saliency, playing a relevant role in the instances of the electorate as well as in the agenda of the political parties. A necessary condition for politicization is that one or more political parties politicize the theme, as an answer to public opinions' concerns, or as an electoral strategic choice. In general, we consider that political parties' behavior not only reflects the preferences of the electorate, but also shape them, according to the importance attributed to the issues and to the way in which the issues are framed within the

political platforms (Budge and Farlie 1983). To verify the politicization of a specific issue, we can rely on data from extended surveys that, close to the elections, investigate public opinions' expectations; we can access the contents of party manifestos, trace back the most salient events of the electoral campaigns and look at how the issue is framed in the public debate over time. However, given the dynamic relation between voters' preferences and political supply, trying to isolate the "mechanisms" that should explain how and why an issue become politicized requires deep analyses and caution.

For what concerns immigration, the literature identifies some elements as potentially responsible for politicization; these elements attribute to political parties different roles and relevance in the political system. There are studies that confer centrality to the existing structure of party competition, more than on the action of single parties or of specific events. For example, following an "issue competition" approach, political parties should draw attention mainly to issues that put them in a stronger position, inducing opponents to pay attention to issues they would rather avoid (Green-Pedersen 2012). Meguid (2005) argues that the strategies of mainstream parties can alter the salience of issues in the political competition and influence the electoral success of the niche/extreme parties. Bale (2003) focuses on cases in which the mainstream right-wing parties are incentivized to address the instances on immigration proposed by the (coalitionable) radical right-wing parties. For Odmalm (2012) parties find difficult to allocate immigration within a specific conflict dimension ("old"- economic, or "new"- sociocultural, Inglehart, 1971, 1977 Kitschelt, 2004) and therefore they develop strategies to build degree of ownership (strategic advantages) of the issue, more than concentrating on positional competition. Alternative perspectives pay more attention to societal inputs to party political agenda, focusing on the importance of public attitude with respect to immigration, on the role of specific events and of their media coverage (Green-Pedersen, Krogstrup 2008). For example, Colombo and Sciortino (2004) study the politicization of the immigrant question in Italy as an independent variable, looking

at its contribution to the change of public discourse on immigration over time. Akkerman (2012) makes a comparison of the saliency of immigration issue in countries with and without electorally successful radical right parties and suggests not to overestimate the impact of the radical right and to consider as crucial for politicization also other underlying factors, as media systems and national events related to immigration. The specific leaderships of politicians can play an important role for the politicization of an issue too, as it was in the case of the charismatic figure of Pim Fortuyn, that affirmed in the Dutch political debate the problem of the compatibility between Islamic practices and values and the long tolerant- liberal political tradition of the Netherlands. Alonso and Claro da Fonseca (2010) put in question the role of extreme right parties in increasing the saliency of immigration, identifying globalization and the Europeanization of policy making as additional crucial factors. The perspective we adopt is focused on the positioning of political parties on the immigration issue. In particular, we analyze if the positioning reflects the structure of the current party system or if it tends to put in crisis party system's boundaries and memberships. Party systems would in fact generate from and structure themselves around the expression of the different positions on single issues (Fasano, Pasini, 2004a and 2004b). These positions would attest the presence of cleavages¹, capable of shaping the party system. The issues with this shaping/structuring power are limited and moreover the cleavages change over time. It is possible that a relevant/structuring issue at the time t becomes irrelevant at time t' , having lost its centrality in the political agenda or the positioning of the political parties having changed, making difficult to distinguish among the different positions². We first start looking at the salience of immigration as governmental priority across Western Europe countries, interpreting Eurobarometer data of spring 2012, then we analyze the political platforms of the main political parties, observing if the immigration issue is present and how it is framed. A focus of attention is directed to the question of the irregular immigration, considered as possible polarizing issue.

1 Martinelli (2012) argues for example that immigration involves nationalism in its cultural and ethnic dimension, as "cultural cleavage".

2 There are public issues that do not allow heterogeneity of positions within political parties or even within coalitions of parties; there are others that allow this heterogeneity without significant consequences on the party system.

2. The limited salience of immigration and the rise of the economic issues in the EU public opinion: a socio-political interpretation

The challenges of the socio-economic and demographic transformations that characterized the West European countries between mid-1970s until the first 2000s lead to an increasing saliency of the immigration issues in the policy agendas of parties. Globalization and its transformation of the national political space is one of the factor that accounted for the relevance of immigration in electoral competition (Kriesi et al., 2006). However, the economic depression dragging down Western Europe since 2008 has shifted worries of the public opinions towards materialist issues like unemployment, welfare state service, wage levels and the like. Therefore, these topics are came back to the center of the political scene. The following table, that reports data from Eurobarometer, shows the limited salience of the immigration issue, as governmental priority, for the large majority of European citizens:

Tab. 1 – Main concerns of Europeans at European level, at national level, at personal level. Spring 2012

Issues	UE (%)	Own Country (%)	Personal level (%)
Economic situation	54	35	19
The state of public finances	34	19*	-
Unemployment	32	46	21
Inflation	15	24	45
Immigration	9	8	3
EU's influence in the world	7	-	-
* Government debt			
Source: Eurobarometer, 2012a, questions QA7a, QA8a, QA9			

From these data it is possible to see that immigration occupies the fifth position; it is mentioned only by the 9% of the interviewed as one of two main problems on which the European Union should concentrate its efforts. Considering the data referring to the

national governments, the percentage is still lower. For what regards the activity of the European Union, concerns for the economic situation are at first place, followed by the state of public finances. At national level, a consistent part of the Europeans thinks that the respective national governments should implement measures against unemployment. Finally, at personal level inflation is seen as the main problem. More than two third of the respondents consider the national economic situation as negative. In this vein, the peak was reached in 2009, when the percentage was equal to 78%. We consider useful to compare the importance that the issues “immigration” and “economic situation” should assume at national and at European level for the citizens of the five bigger European countries plus Greece and the Netherlands.

Tab. 2 - Comparison between Immigration and Economic Situation in 2012 in 7 European countries, according to the priorities that the EU and their national governments should address

Country	Immigration (%)		Economic Situation (%)	
	UE (mean 9)	Own Country (mean 8)	UE (mean 54)	Own Country (mean 35)
France	14	12	52	29
Germany	9	9	49	16
Greece	11	7	66	66
Italy	5	3	53	42
Netherlands	4	3	75	56
U.K.	12	21	53	31
Spain	6	2	67	61
Source: Eurobarometer, 2012b, T35, T36 e T29, T30				

The economic crisis generates higher worries than immigration. Only in the U.K. a significant part of the citizens seem to classify immigration as a governmental priority. In France immigration registers a value quite higher than the mean, while in Italy and in the Netherlands the salience of the issue is minimal. The importance of the issue registered its main fall between the spring and the autumn 2011, when the total of respondents that classified immigration as one of the two principal tasks that the UE should have addressed passed from the 20% to the 9%. This data remained unaltered in the following semester. It seems that a **kind of step back towards materialist**

issues, due to the economic crisis, is taking place in Europe. One question we address is if this renewed attention of the public opinion to traditional themes with an economic and social focus has significant consequences on parties strategies. Changing the worries and the priorities that structure the public debate, do the electoral behaviors change as a consequence? Given this redefinition of the concerns and the expectations of the European citizens on the different levels of government, what are the consequences on the politicization of immigration? What are the strategies adopted by the mainstream and by the extreme parties? Trying to answer these questions, the way in which the issue immigration is framed in the policy offerings of the major parties for the general elections of France, Greece, Netherlands, Italy and Germany is analyzed.

3. The immigration issue: party positioning and policy offerings in the political programs

We consider the general elections of 5 european countries: France (President 22-Apr-12, House: 10-Jun-12), Greece (House: 6-may-12 and 17 June-12), the Netherlands (House: 12-Sept-12), Italy (House: 24-Feb-13) and Germany (22-Sept-13). After analyzing the position of the political parties in the countries along the dimensions “economic issues”, “left-right” “immigration salience” and “immigration policy” - elaborated from expert survey's data (2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data))- we look at parties' electoral programs to assess how the immigration theme is treated: does the issue constitute a priority for the mainstream parties and for the radical right wing parties? How is the theme of immigration framed? Particular attention is paid to the way in which the question of irregular immigration is addressed.

The dimension “economic issues” describes the parties in terms of their ideological stance on economic issues: parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy; parties on the economic right emphasize a reduced

economic role for government: privatization, lower taxes, less regulation, less government spending and welfare state. 0 = extreme left, 5 = center, 10 = extreme right. The dimension “leftright” collocates the parties in terms of their overall ideological stance. 0 = extreme left, 5 = center, 10 = extreme right. The dimension “immigration salience” indicates the importance/salience of immigration policy for the parties. 0 = not important at all, 10 = extremely important. The dimension “immigration policy” describes the parties' position on immigration policy. 0 = strongly opposes tough policy, 10 = strongly favors tough policy. The survey includes political parties that obtain at least 3 percent of the vote in the national election immediately prior to the survey year or that elect at least one representative to the national or European parliament.

3.1 France

The general elections in France saw the victory of François Hollande in the presidential turn- the first for the left since 1988- making Holland the second Socialist president of the Fifth Republic after François Mitterrand. The Socialists won an absolute majority of seats in the National Assembly two months later. Marine Le Pen, the new leader of the far-right Front National (FN) led her party to its highest ever score in a presidential contest (17.9% of votes, obtaining the third place in first-round results). In the electoral campaign, where the economy was the core theme, other issues emerged, as education, law and order and social integration. Le Pen, that inherited the FN leadership from her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2011, was one of the key figures of the election campaign, focusing on issues dear to the far-right, as law and order, immigration and exit from the euro (Kuhn, Murray 2013). Before concentrating on the immigration issue in the electoral programs of the main parties, a short analysis of party positioning relative to the year 2010 follows:

Tab. 3 - Mean position of French parties on economic issues, left-right dimension, immigration salience and immigration policy in 2010

Party Name	Economic Issues	Leftright	Immigration salience	Immigration policy
FN (Front National)	6.5	9.8	9.8	10

MODEM (Mouvement Democrat)	5.2	5.1	5.6	4.7
MPF (Mouvement Pour la France)	6.1	9	9.1	9.1
NC (Nouveau Centre)	5	5.8	6	4.7
PCF (Parti Communiste Français)	0.7	1.1	7	3.3
PRG (Parti Radical de Gauche)	3.8	3.6	5.8	3.5
PS (Parti Socialiste)	2.4	2.7	6.7	3.7
UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire)	5.5	7.2	8.8	8.4
VERTS (Les Verts)	2.6	2.5	6.3	1.6
Source: 2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data). Bakker et. al (2012)				

The political parties that attribute the highest salience to the immigration issues are the extreme right-wing *Front National* (FN) and *Mouvement pour la France* (MPF), both strongly favoring tough policies on immigration. The center-right *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP) seems to assign a higher priority to the immigration issue than the *Parti Socialiste* (PS), the two parties advancing very different policies on the issue.

Looking at the 2012 electoral programs, it is possible to notice that the immigration issue is very shortly mentioned by both the Hollande PS and the Sarkozy UMP, both referring to the fight against the illegal immigration:

“Je conduirai une lutte implacable contre l’immigration illégale et les filières du travail clandestin. Je sécuriserai l’immigration légale. Les régularisations seront opérées au cas par cas sur la base de critères objectifs” (Projet Présidentiel François Hollande, 2012)

“Nous combattons l’immigration illégale et nous veillerons à maîtriser nos flux migratoires pour favoriser une intégration dans de meilleures conditions de ceux qui font en toute légalité le choix de la France. La France est diverse mais elle se veut unie. Nos valeurs communes sont le ciment de cette unité” (Projet UMP 2012)

On the contrary, on the project of Marine Le Pen one entire section is dedicated to immigration and the issue is quoted several times along the program. The issue is declined mainly along a “law and order” frame. The fight against illegal immigration occupies a front rank space: explicit references to the deportation of illegal migrants, to the reduction of the legal immigration in general, to the block of the procedures of regularization and to the suppression of the *ius soli* are made. Nationality, for the party of Marine Le Pen, must consist in total assimilation: “*La naturalisation se mérite et sera soumise à des conditions strictes de présence paisible et prolongée sur le territoire, en situation légale, de maîtrise de la langue française et de preuve d’assimilation*”. The “laïcité”, central reference of Marine Le Pen electoral campaign, is used as opposed to multiculturalism. Islam is represented as a threat to French society (Almeida 2013).

3.2 Greece

The elections of June 2012, that saw as main themes the severe economic crisis and political instability, took place only six weeks after the previous elections of May and resulted in the breakdown of the two-party domination of the political scene during the previous 40 years, the socialist PASOK (Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα—Panhellenic Socialist Movement) and the conservative ND (Νέα Δημοκρατία—New Democracy). The two parties that had been ruling Greece in single-party governments obtained in fact a combined vote of about 30% and a low number of parliamentary seats, that prevented them from forming a majority government. One of the main winners of the first turn was SYRIZA (Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς - Ενωτικό Κοινωνικό Μέτωπο), the Coalition of the Radical Left, that quadrupled its results of 2009 and became the second electoral force in Greek politics. Golden Dawn (Λαϊκός Σύνδεσμος – Χρυσή Αυγή), extreme right-wing and anti-immigrant political party, obtained parliamentary representation for the first time, gaining about 7% of the votes. The election results of June confirmed the decline of PASOK and the rise of anti-establishment political forces. Political polarization focused largely around ND and SYRIZA, both parties raising their votes, but neither of them being able to form a single party government. New Democracy’s marginal win over SYRIZA led to the formation of

a coalition government between ND, PASOK and DIMAR (Δημοκρατική Αριστερά – Democratic Left).

Tab. 7 - Mean position of German parties on economic issues, left-right dimension, immigration salience and immigration policy in 2010

	Economic Issues	Leftright	Immigration salience	Immigration policy
DIKKI (Dimokratiko Koinoniko Kinima)	2.6	5	6	4
KKE (Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas)	0.09	0.3	6.9	2.2
LAOS (Laïkós Orthódoxos Synagermós)	5.9	8.8	9.5	9.8
ND (Néa Dimokratía)	6	6.8	7.7	7.8
OP (Oikologoi Prasinoi)	2.6	2.2	7.1	0.6
PASOK (Panellinio Sosialistikó Kínima)	5.6	4.3	7.5	5.1
SYRIZA (Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás)	1	1.5	8.8	0.6
Source: 2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data). Bakker et. al (2012)				

Looking at the parties positioning dated 2010, the party that registered the highest salience on immigration is the radical right-wing populist LAOS³ (*the Popular Orthodox Rally*), strongly promoting tough policies on immigration. To the left-wing SYRIZA party is attributed a high salience of the immigration issue too, but with policies that predictably go in the opposite direction. As anticipated, the 2012 electoral campaign was characterized by the dominance of the issues related to the management of the Greek economy and by the eventuality of the exit from the eurozone. Nonetheless, immigration and welfare issues were highly politicized too. It must be said that the immigration issue became an increasing concern among Greek public opinion because of the growing perceptions of the inadequacy of national government on controlling the flow of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers. As Ellinas (2013) notices, since the 1990s, the country passing from being a “net sender” to be a “net host” of migrants,

3 LAOS in the last 2012 elections dropped below the 3% threshold and failed to secure any seats in parliament.

skepticism arose among Greek public opinion about immigration. The economic crisis aggravated the challenges posed by the issue, providing an opportunity for the political mobilization of frustrated voters, concerned with the need to stop uncontrolled migration flows. The main actor of the politicization of the immigration issues is Golden Dawn party (GD). As other Greek extreme right-wing parties (e.g. LAOS), GD promotes very tough positions on immigration and citizenship. In its statute, the party declares itself “*against the demographic alteration, through the millions of illegal immigrants, and the dissolution of Greek society, which is systematically pursued by the parties of the establishment of the so-called Left*” (GD 2012a, p. 2, in Ellinas 2013). Nationalism is defined as “*the third major ideology of History*”, the state is equalized with the nation, citizenship with ethnicity (GD 2012b and 2012c, in Ellinas 2013). The necessity of the deportation of the irregular migrants and the exacerbation of the penalties for who illegally entry the country are part of the GD program, as the concession of political rights only to Greek people and their descendents, the rest of the population being entitled only to civil rights. The ideological profile of the party is strengthened by the violent activity of its members and leaders.

In the SYRIZA electoral program for the elections of May, one paragraph is dedicated to the immigration issue, which is framed, as obvious, in opposite terms with respect to GD. The EU Dublin II Regulation- establishing the criteria and the mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application- is strongly criticized. SYRIZA proposes to facilitate family reunifications and the acquisition of citizenship, especially for the minors, and it is against any limitation of the access to education and health services for migrants.

3.3 The Netherlands

After the minority government led by Mark Rutte (VVD) and sustained by the New Right Freedom Party (PVV) collapsed, the early general elections of 12 September 2012 saw two main winners: the Liberals (VVD) and the Labour Party (PvdA). The outcome provided the basis for the formation of a VVD-led coalition of Liberals and the Labour Party, while the Freedom Party (PVV), under the leadership of Geert Wilders, resulted

as the biggest loser⁴.

Tab. 6 – Mean position of Dutch parties on economic issues, left-right dimension, immigration salience and immigration policy in 2010

	Economic Issues	Left-right	Immigration salience	Immigration policy
CDA (Christen-- Democratisch Appel)	6.5	6.2	6.2	7
CU (Christen Unie)	5	5.3	5	4.9
D66 (Democraten 66)	5.5	5	6	3.3
GL (Groen Links)	3	2.5	6	2.6
PVV (Partij voor de Vrijheid)	5.2	8.6	9.9	10
PvdA (Partij van de Arbeid)	3.5	3.8	6	5.1
PvdD (Partij voor de Dieren)	3.5	3.3	2.6	3.5
SGP (Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij)	6.5	7.7	5.2	8.1
SP (Socialistische Partij)	1.5	1.6	6.1	6
VVD (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie)	8.2	7.8	7.4	8.4
Source: 2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data). Bakker et. al (2012)				

In 2010, the right-wing *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) registers the highest salience on the immigration issue and a 10 score on immigration policy (the party very strongly promotes tough policies on immigration). It is followed, but with lower scores both in immigration salience and immigration policy, by the economic liberal *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en and Democratie* (VVD). The Labour Party *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA) registers only a 6 score in immigration salience and its position on immigration policy is “moderate” (5.1). Some scholars (e.g. Van Genugten, 2013; Biassoni Pasini 2013) noticed how, especially from 2010 to 2012, a shift in the Freedom Party's (PVV) political agenda occurred, passing from a great emphasis on anti-immigration issues to anti-Europeanism. Geert Wilders, leader of the party, electoral heir of Pim Fortuyn- whose LPF (List Pim Fortuyn) was the first Dutch new-rightist political party to gain considerable electoral success- initially continued the rhetoric of freedom and the use

4 With a loss of 9 seats in the Lower House

of “progressive arguments” (De Koster et al. 2013) at the far-right wing of the political spectrum, arguing in particular against the threat of Islamic culture to the Dutch liberal, tolerant tradition. Few pages of the PVV program are devoted to the immigration issue and they contain tough statements against the Islamic religion and its symbols, describing Islam as a kind of “totalitarian ideology”. The rest of the program, emblematically entitled “*Their Brussels, our Netherlands*” consists of tough anti-European concerns.

The VVD party dedicates instead a notable and detailed part of its electoral program to the themes of integration and immigration. The issue is not framed exclusively following a law and order dimension; several aspects, especially relative to integration, are considered. The newcomers are encouraged to acquire a full place in society that passes through the understanding and acceptance of Dutch society and through working. The quality of the integration courses and examinations for migrants and asylum seekers should be improved, a compulsory language test for children should be introduced. The access to social security for foreigners has to be limited. Subsidies to religious activities, interfaith dialogues, mosques, churches or religious communities are not considered as competence for the government. Core values of Dutch society - such as the equality of men and women, heterosexual and homosexuals, believers and unbelievers are considered as not negotiable. Culturally based violence as genital mutilation, honor killings must be detected and severely punished and can lead to the loss of the residence of the offender. The uncontrolled influx of low-skilled migrants in recent decades should be stopped. The European Directive on family reunification should be modified, enhancing the age and income requirements. Active investigation against illegal immigration and deportation are pursued. The PvdA party program does not contain a section dedicated to the immigration issue, which is however mentioned inside the paragraph on the broader theme of integration.

3.4 Italy

The general elections of 24-25 February 2013 for the Italian Parliament saw the center-left coalition led by the Democratic Party (PD) obtaining the majority of seats in the

Chamber of Deputies, while narrowly defeating the center-right alliance led by the former President Silvio Berlusconi, leader of the People of Freedom (PDL) party, in the popular vote. The new populist, anti-establishment movement of Beppe Grillo (Five Star Movement) became the third force. In the Senate, no political group or party obtained a complete majority, and after the reconfirm of Giorgio Napolitano as President of the Republic, a coalition between Centre-left and Centre-right, led by Enrico Letta of the PD, was formed.

Tab. 4 – Mean position of Italian parties on economic issues, left-right dimension, immigration salience and immigration policy in 2010

	Economic Issues	Leftright	Immigration salience	Immigration policy
AN (Alleanza Nazionale)	5.2	7.3	7.8	6.8
IDV (Di Pietro-Italia dei Valori)	4.7	4	3.8	3.8
LN (Lega Nord)	7.3	8.5	9.7	9.8
MpA (Movimento per le Autonomie)	4.5	6.2	5.5	5.6
PCI (Partito dei Comunisti Italiani)	1	0.8	7	1.4
PD (Partito Democratico)	3.5	3.2	6.1	3
PDL (Popolo della Libertà)	7.5	7.5	7.8	8.2
PSI (Partito Socialista Italiano)	3.3	4.1	3.6	2.8
RC (Partito della Rifondazione Comunista)	0.6	0.5	7	0.6
SD (Sinistra Democratica)	1.8	2.1	7.6	1.3
SEL (Sinistra e Libertà)	1.7	1.6	7	1.2
SVP (Südtiroler Volkspartei)	5.5	5.7	5	7.2
UDC (Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e dei Democratici di Centro)	5	5.3	4.8	4.8
VERDI (Federazione dei Verdi)	2	1.7	7.8	1.1
Source: 2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data). Bakker et. al (2012)				

Looking at the 2010 survey data, the right-wing and territorialist party of *Lega Nord* (LN) attributes the highest saliency to the immigration issue. It is followed by the center-right *Popolo della Libertà* (PDL) and *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN- then flown into the PDL) parties, proposing tough policy on immigration, and by the left-wing parties *Partito*

della *Rifondazione Comunista* (RC), *Sinistra Democratica* (SD, then flown into SEL), *Sinistra e Libertà* (SEL), *Federazione dei Verdi* (VERDI), viceversa strongly opposing tough policies. The center-left *Partito Democratico* (PD) attributes a lower salience (6.1) to the immigration issue than the PDL (7.8) and than the more leftist parties (RC, SD, SEL, VERDI). In general, the positioning of political parties on the issue immigration shows a clear distinction between the “progressive” and the “conservative” space, constituting an ordering criteria for the Italian party system. The polarization observed is mainly ideological, based not on a substantial dimension (e.g. capital-labour), but on an order-security/freedom-responsibility distinction⁵ (Fasano, Pasini, 2013). In the 2013 Italian elections issues linked to the economic recession and unemployment played a main role in the political platforms. The issue of immigration was addressed mainly by the Democratic Party, PD, with its proposal for a new law on immigration and asylum right. The current Bossi-Fini law on immigration is described in the party political program as characterized by an exclusively securitarian frame, that too often caused the restriction of the fundamental human rights and that was completely inefficacy in dealing with the problem of foreign workers living illegally. The necessity of changing the measures that classify the illegal immigration as a crime and of finding alternative solutions to the identification and expulsion centres (“CIE”) are mentioned. The policy priority is a new citizenship law for the children of non -EU immigrants, born and raised up in Italy.

In the PDL program the only reference to the immigration issue is in a section dedicated to citizens security, where the necessity to strengthen fight against illegal is mentioned. In the Northern League (NL) party program, the immigration issue receives few attention too. The main reference, as in the PDL program, is to the fight against illegal immigration and to the necessity of reinforcing and implementing the policies of expulsion of irregular migrants and of better defining bilateral agreements with the countries of origin. In the program of the Five Star Movement of Beppe Grillo the immigration issue is never mentioned.

5 The distance between the two sides of the political spectrum, considering the parties' positioning on immigration, is confirmed also in the regional and municipal electoral competitions. However, from the point of view of the implementation, the distance between the policies adopted by centre-left and the center-right coalitions appears definitely lower (Pasini, Plebani 2011).

3.5 Germany

General elections in Germany will take place on 22 September 2013; 598 members of the Bundestag are going to be elected. In the previous elections of 2009, the *Christian Democratic Union* (CDU), the *Bavarian Christian Social Union* (CSU) and the *Democratic Free Party* (FDP) won the elections and formed a center-right government with Angela Merkel as Chancellor.

Tab. 5 - Mean position of German parties on economic issues, left-right dimension, immigration salience and immigration policy in 2010

	Economic Issues	Leftright	Immigration salience	Immigration policy
CDU (Christlich-Demokratische Union)	6	6.1	6.9	6.6
CSU (Christlich Soziale Union in Bayern)	5.5	7	7.7	7.9
FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei)	8.1	6.6	5.5	4.1
Grunen (Bündnis '90- Die Grünen)	3.8	3.6	7	1.7
LINKE (Die Linkspartei/Partei des)	1	1.3	5	3
SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei)	3	3.6	6.4	4.8
Source: 2010 Chapel Hill expert survey (raw data). Bakker et. al (2012)				

In 2010, the political party that attributed the highest saliency to the immigration issue is the Christian Democratic and conservative *Christlich Soziale Union in Bayern* (CSU), which has also the toughest policy positions. For what concerns the saliency, it is followed with lower scores by the green party *Bündnis '90- Die Grünen* (Grunen), that strongly opposes tough policies, and by the *Christlich-Demokratische Union* (CDU), with a 6.6 score on immigration policy. The *Sozialdemokratische Partei* (SPD) seems to attribute a lower salience to the issue (6.4) and to have an intermediate position on immigration policies.

In the 2013 CSU program, some key words related to the immigration issue are globalization, cultural identity and in particular the idea that solidarity “needs” identity.

Integration is described as a main concern, but the integration model must be “cosmopolitan” and not multicultural. Multiculturalism is strongly criticized. In the CDU program the immigration and integration issues are developed in two main points: “diversity and social cohesion”, and a plan of ten points against the right-wing extremism. Diversity is described as an opportunity and State and society are required to create the conditions for integration and cohesion. Support measures to guarantee equal starting opportunities in preschool for children of immigrants, already present, should be improved; local authorities should increase the proportion of employees with intercultural competence and multilingualism. Multilingualism, the intercultural competence of millions of people in Germany, are recognized as a great opportunity. The necessity for Germany to attract more highly qualified, committed and willing to integrate workers is mentioned. For what concerns the plan against violent right-wing extremism, the main aspects regard the need for a strategically coordinated approach by the Security agencies at federal and state against the violent right-wing, the commitments to the families of the victims, the need for a constitutional revision of data retention (with an extension of retention periods for personal data, when extremism and terrorism are implicated). In the SPD program a section is dedicated to the necessity to have a modern integration policy. Key words are: diversity as a resource, legal equality and equality of opportunity, the idea that at local level public authorities should not be left alone with the challenges of immigration and integration. The necessity to become a naturalization country, as the aim of accepting dual citizenship are clearly stated. Improving the quality of the integration courses and facilitating family reunification, strengthening the intercultural competence of employees are some of the policy priorities. One paragraph is dedicated to refugee policy: a better integration of asylum seekers, the facilitation of their access to the labor market and a more extensive provisions of rights are affirmed. A human rights-based refugee policy, including a solidarity-based compensation, should be pursued at the EU level.

4. Conclusion

One question we tried to address is if the renewed attention of the public opinion to traditional themes with an economic and social focus affects parties strategies. In

particular, we wanted to analyze if in correspondence to changes in the worries and concerns among the public opinions the politicization of immigration registers recurring elements in the considered countries. A first general consideration is that the immigration issue, even if present in the parties' programs, seems to register a loss of salience in the electoral campaigns. A clear distinction between the political offerings of mainstreams and radical parties and a significant difference in the salience attributed to the issue is registered in the cases of Greece and France. In the programs of the mainstream French and Greek parties the immigration theme is hardly mentioned- the only reference is to the necessity of fighting illegal migration. Viceversa, in the manifestos of the extreme right-wing and left-wing parties, the immigration issue receives much more attention, GD sustaining the necessity of the deportation of all the irregular migrants and the exacerbation of the penalties for who illegally entry the country and SYRIZA, on the contrary, arguing against any limitation of the access to education and health services for migrants.

In Italy the theme registers salience only on the program of the center-left PD, while the main center-right parties only mention the necessity of contrasting the uncontrolled migrants landings and irregular migration. The electoral programs of the Netherlands and of Germany mainstream parties seem the most policy-oriented for what concerns the immigration issue. The VVD and the CDU in particular present detailed solutions relative to the integration policies, while the SPD, in the case of Germany, politicizes the issue launching the theme of the dual citizenship. If the question of irregular migration is (obviously) unanimously recognized as a phenomenon to be contrasted, a polarization of the issue is conducted only by the extreme right-wing parties of Greece (GD) and France (FN). If in Germany and in the Netherlands the framing of the immigration issue includes several dimensions (e.g. quality of integration, work, multilingualism, intercultural competences, equality of opportunity...), in the other countries the framing is mainly "law & order" oriented.

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Electoral manifestos

France

FN <http://www.frontnational.com/le-projet-de-marine-le-pen/>

PS <http://www.parti-socialiste.fr/projet>

UMP <http://www.u-m-p.org/nos-idees>

Germany

CDU <http://www.cdu.de/politik-a-z>

CSU <http://www.csu.de/politik/grundsatzprogramm/>

SPD http://www.spd.de/95466/regierungsprogramm_2013_2017.html

Greece

SYRIZA <http://www.syn.gr/gr/keimeno.php?id=26945>

GD <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/kinima>

PASOK <http://www.evenizelos.gr/el/elections-2012-thesis>

Italy

Lega Nord <http://es.slideshare.net/idealistait/programmamaleganord>

Movimento 5 Stelle <http://www.beppegrillo.it/iniziative/movimentocinquestelle/Programma-Movimento-5-Stelle.pdf>

PD <http://www.partitodemocratico.it/doc/250968/una-nuova-legge-quadro-sullimmigrazione-e-sul-diritto-dasilo.htm>

PDL <http://www.pdl.it/programma-elezioni-politiche-2013/>

The Netherlands

VVD <http://files.vvd.nl/verkiezingsprogramma-2012-2017.pdf>

PVV <http://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/verkiezingen2012/VerkiezingsProgramma-PVV-2012-final-web.pdf>

PVDA

http://www.pvda.nl/data/sitemanagement/media/PvdA_verkiezingsprogramma_120912.pdf