



The Relationship Between Immigration and Nativism in Europe and North America

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Executive Summary

Mass migration is thought to be a major factor behind the rise of the radical right.¹ But while there clearly is a relationship (particularly in Western Europe), the connection is not as straightforward as is often assumed. Higher levels of immigration in the three regions examined in this report — North America, Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe — do not automatically correlate to more votes for radical-right parties.

The success of radical-right parties has been uneven in Europe. Since 1980, there have only been a handful of radical-right parties in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe which have had “moderate” electoral success (that is, gained over 15 percent of the vote in two or more elections). Even parties with huge recent gains, like the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), have yet to prove their longevity and thus do not confirm the long-held stereotype that the region is a “hotbed” of nationalism. There is no strong evidence that the recent economic crisis has led to a clear rise in extremist politics; while some like Jobbik have made striking gains in recent elections, others have lost (as in Belgium’s Flemish Interest [VB] or France’s National Front [FN]).

Immigration is also not the only salient issue for the radical right. In Central and Eastern Europe, where there is still relatively low immigration, radical-right parties tend to focus on indigenous minorities (notably the Roma). And in Western Europe, where immigration is central to political discourse, the ideology of radical-right groups is also linked to fears of crime and corruption. Immigration, however, does play a critical role, and is seen as a multifaceted threat on the cultural, religious, security, economic, and political fronts. The discourse on immigration is similar in the United States, although Islam plays a less dominant role than in Western Europe.

Nativist groups have had a marginal effect on immigration policy in all three regions. The main reason they lack direct policy influence is simply because they are rarely part of government. However, in the three Western European countries where nativist parties have made it into government (Austria, Italy, and Switzerland), they have been instrumental in introducing more restrictive immigration policies. In Central and Eastern Europe immigration is simply a nonissue; although the region has seen more radical-right government participation, the focus has been on national minorities rather than immigrants. In the United States, nativist actors have had indirect effects on policy at best, as the nativist voices within the Republican Party, for example, have not made it into prominent positions in government.

Political parties are not the only relevant actors, as several Eastern and Central European countries have strong nonparty groups such as neo-Nazis and extreme-right skinhead gangs. Nonparty organizations are also relevant in the United States and Canada, neither of which have significant nativist political parties. While these groups may have a discernable effect at the local and community levels, they do not have a direct effect on policy. And in the United States and Canada, nativists confront strong pro-immigration forces in the political and public debates.

The relationship between immigration and extremism is unclear and complex. Many assumptions are based upon feeble empirical evidence — suggesting the need for more cross-national data projects.

¹For purposes of this paper, we define the radical right as a broad grouping of political parties and nonparty organizations which share characteristics of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism.

Rising numbers of immigrants do not automatically translate into increasing extremism; immigration has to be *translated* into a political issue, which has not happened everywhere.

While nativist sentiments and organizations have played a role in the tightening of immigration laws — particularly those regarding asylum — they have lost the big battle, as both Western Europe and North America are increasingly true multicultural societies.

I. Introduction

Migration is as old as mankind itself, yet it has increased dramatically in scope and consequences in recent decades. Millions of people migrate or have migrated as transportation has become affordable, opportunity has expanded, and countries have become increasingly connected.² While the vast majority of migrants stay fairly close to their homeland, a growing group sets out for farther shores, most notably Western Europe and North America.

This report focuses primarily on the effects of migration on political extremism in three industrialized regions: North America, Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe. Although all three regions are internally diverse, they share some key features that are relevant: In North America, both Canada and the United States have long traditions as countries of immigration; Western Europe has seen mass immigration since the end of World War II (although some countries, France and the United Kingdom among them, experienced it much earlier than others, such as Ireland and Spain); and Central and Eastern Europe have only been confronted in recent decades with generally low levels of immigration and higher levels of emigration.

The focus of this report will be on the political extremism of the host population, or the native born, not of the immigrants. While extremism among some immigrant groups, ranging from Turkish nationalist groups to Arab jihadists, has increased, this will only be addressed indirectly, in the ways in which it has influenced the immigration debate in the host country. The report primarily focuses on the various nativist reactions to immigration. Nativism, simply stated a combination of nationalism and xenophobia, is “an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state.”³

The report’s first section defines and introduces the main nativist actors by region. It also highlights the different ways in which nativists mobilize in the different regions and their respective strengths and weaknesses. The second section discusses the importance of migration to the identity and political relevance of the nativist actors, and analyzes how these actors frame migration and how central it is to their discourse and electoral success. The third section shifts the focus onto how nativist actors have affected migration policies in their country. The fourth section broadens the focus by looking into the public effects of nativist actors. The fifth section focuses on the various ways in which states and societies have tried to counter the nativist actors; while the sixth section touches briefly on the effects that the recent economic crisis has had on immigration and nativism in the three regions. The final section summarizes the main findings of the report and addresses some best practices for dealing with anti-immigrant extremism.

² The reasons for migration are diverse and are influenced by so-called push and pull factors. Push factors are those that push the migrants away from their own country, which are mostly economic (e.g. poverty) or political (e.g. civil war). Pull factors are those that pull the migrants towards their new country, which are also mostly economic (e.g. high standard of living) and political (safety and security); although much recent migration to Western Europe has been personal, such as family building and reunion.

³ Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

II. The Main Nativist Actors

The extremists discussed here go by many different, if often related, names. Academics and journalists use terms like “xenophobes,” “nativists,” “racists,” “right-wing populists,” the “radical right,” “radical right-wing populists,” the “extreme right,” “(neo-)fascists,” and “neo-Nazis.”⁴ While the intrinsic details of the definitional debates don’t concern us here, it is important to provide at least some broad clarifications of the main terms used. As mentioned previously, the overarching category we are concerned with is nativism, as defined above.

There are two fundamental distinctions that are relevant here: right-left and radical-extreme.⁵ However, these relative terms don’t help us much in a broad inter-regional comparison. At the same time, the socio-economic distinction between a pro-state left and a pro-market right seems at best secondary to the main concern of this report. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, the distinction between left and right is in line with that of Italian philosopher Norberto Bobbio, who differentiates on the grounds of the attitude toward (in)equality.⁶ In this interpretation, the left considers the key inequalities between people to be artificial and wants to overcome them by active state involvement, whereas the right believes the main inequalities between people to be natural and outside the purview of the state.⁷

The distinction between extreme and radical is not merely of academic importance, but can have significant legal consequences. For example, in Germany extremist organizations can be banned, whereas radical groups cannot.⁸ To keep things simple, this report defines extremism as anti-democratic, in the sense that the key aspects of democracy — majority rule and one person, one vote — are rejected. Radicalism, on the other hand, accepts the basic tenets of democracy, but challenges some key aspects of liberal democracy, most notably minority protections. Hence, there is a fundamental difference between radical and extreme forces, which have significant consequences for the way (liberal) democracy can deal with them.

The main groups that this report will deal with are the radical right.⁹ These groups accept both inequalities and basic democracy, but espouse an ideology that challenges minority protections. The

⁴ Paul Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008); Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*; Frank Decker, *Der neue Rechtspopulismus* (Opladen, Germany: Leske & Budrich, 2004); Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay, eds., *Shadows over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1994); Frank Elbers and Meindert Fennema, *Racistische partijen in West-Europa. Tussen nationale traditie en Europese samenwerking* (Leiden, Netherlands: Stichting Burgerschapskunde, 1993).

⁵ The distinction between left and right goes back to the French Revolution (1789-1799), when supporters of the Revolution would be seated on the left side of the French parliament and opponents on the right. More generally, the term left has been associated with “progressive” forces, while the right is deemed “conservative.”

⁶ Norberto Bobbio, “Rechts und Links. Zum Sinn einer politischen Unterscheidung,” *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 39, no. 5 (1994): 543-49.

⁷ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*.

⁸ Uwe Backes, “Extremismus und politisch motivierte Gewalt” in *Demokratien des 21. Jahrhunderts im Vergleich: Historische Zugänge, Gegenwartsprobleme, Reformperspektiven*, eds. Eckhard Jesse and Roland Sturm (Opladen, Germany: Leske & Budrich, 2003).

⁹ This is not to argue that nativism is exclusive to the radical right, or even to the right per se (as some left-wing parties have at times voiced nativist arguments as well, particularly at the local level), but only that the radical right has nativism as one of its core ideological features.

most important representatives of the radical right, at least throughout Europe, are political parties; in Europe, parties dominate politics. Radical-right parties share an ideology that includes core features like nativism, authoritarianism, and populism.¹⁰ In addition, we will look at nonparty organizations, both of the radical and extreme right. The most important groups, at least in terms of physical threats to immigrants, are violent extreme-right groups like neo-Nazi organizations and skinhead gangs.

Western Europe

Since the early 1980s there has been a third wave of postwar radical-right parties that has been much more successful in electoral terms than the previous two waves. That said, the development and success of radical right parties in Western Europe has been quite uneven.

The *pater familias* of the contemporary radical right is the French National Front (FN), which was founded in 1972 as a collection of radical and extreme-right groups. Under the charismatic leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen it gained its electoral breakthrough in the mid-1980s and although its parliamentary representation would be mostly minimal, because of the French electoral system, FN has become the leading example for most contemporary radical-right parties in (Western) Europe.¹¹ Many parties have adopted the FN propaganda and slogans, and some have even copied their name and logo (for example the Belgian National Front).

While most contemporary radical-right parties are relatively new, having been founded since the 1980s, some have much longer institutional legacies, although often not as radical-right parties. The most important, in terms of gaining electoral success and political power, are the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the Swiss People's Party (SVP). The former developed from a small national(ist)-liberal party into one of the biggest radical-right parties, after Jörg Haider took over the leadership in 1986, while the latter originated as a farmers' party, and changed into a mainstream conservative party in the 1970s, before new Zurich-based leader Christoph Blocher transformed it into a full-fledged radical-right party in the 21st century.

Radical-right parties have been electorally successful (winning over 15 percent in two or more elections since 1980) in only a few West European countries (notably Austria and Switzerland). In about one-third of the countries (such as Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy), they have had moderate electoral success, receiving between 5 percent and 15 percent of the national vote. However, in most West European countries radical-right parties have never had serious electoral support and have polled below 5 percent (see Table 1).

¹⁰ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*.

¹¹ Jens Rydgren, "Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia: Some converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden," *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 1 (2003): 45-68.

Table 1. Support in Parliamentary Elections for Radical-Right Parties in Western Europe, 1980-2010

Country	Party	Highest Ever	Most Recent
Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria Austria Freedom Party (FPÖ)	10.7 (2008) 26.9 (1999)	10.7 (2008) 17.5 (2008)
Belgium	National Front (Belgian) (FNb) Flemish Interest (VB)	2.3 (1995) 12.0 (2007)	2.0 (2007) 12.0 (2007)
Britain	British National Party (BNP)	0.7 (2005)	0.7 (2005)
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DFP)	13.8 (2007)	13.8 (2007)
France	National Front (FN)	14.9 (1997)	4.3 (2007)
Germany	The Republicans (REP)	2.1 (1990)	0.4 (2009)
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	5.6 (2009)	5.6 (2009)
Italy	Northern League (LN)	10.1 (1996)	8.3 (2009)
Netherlands	Centre Democrats (CD)	2.5 (1994)	---
Portugal	National Renovator Party (PNR)	0.2 (2009)	0.2 (2009)
Spain	New Force (FN)	0.5 (1982)	---
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)	2.9 (2006)	2.9 (2006)
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	28.9 (2007)	28.9 (2007)

Source: Election Resources on the Internet: Western Europe, Manuel Álvarez-Rivera, <http://electionresources.org/western.europe.html>

In addition, many of the (once) successful radical-right parties passed their peak in the late 1990s. In fact, the prototype FN itself seems to be close to a meltdown, with no clear successor to its aging leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Even Flemish Interest (VB) seems destined for a decline; having lost fairly substantially in the local and regional elections of 2006 and 2009, respectively. The only three real powerhouses are the Austrian FPÖ, which has bounced back from internal strife and electoral defeat; the Danish People's Party (DFP), which for the second time in a row provides essential support for the minority government; and the Swiss SVP, which, despite no longer taking part in the Swiss government, is the most popular party in the country in terms of public support.

There are a few parties that could be counted as radical right, but at least for the purposes of this report are borderline cases. Most notably, the Norwegian Progress Party has been an ideologically eclectic and chaotic party, which at times has supported a strong anti-immigrant agenda. With 22.9 percent of the national vote in 2009, it was the second largest party in Norway. Another party that is sometimes considered radical right is the Dutch Party of Freedom (PVV) of Geert Wilders. The party was founded in 2005, gaining 5.9 percent in the 2006 parliamentary elections. Today it is often the most popular party in the Netherlands in opinion polls. Although the PVV takes some very strong anti-immigrant positions, the party differs from the (real) radical right by virtue of its exclusive focus on Muslim immigrants and a relative openness to non-Muslim immigrants.¹²

¹² In addition to these political parties, there are various extreme and radical-right nonparty organizations. Many are sectarian and cater to a few hundred people (at best) in their country; e.g. the various neo-Nazi *Kameradschaften* in Germany or small radical student groups like the Union Defense Group in France. A few groups work in Europe or even worldwide; for example, the infamous neo-Nazi skinhead organization Blood & Honour, which has (small and often barely active) branches in all three regions, or the esoteric International Third Position. Some of the most notable organizations have developed only recently, focusing almost exclusively on Muslim migrants; for example, the English Defence League (EDL) or the organization Stop the Islamification of Europe. However, this latter group is mainly successful because of the tight connection to politicians from radical-right parties (including the DFP and VB).

Central and Eastern Europe

Although the parties and party systems of Central and Eastern Europe are not yet as institutionalized as in the western part of the continent, political parties are also the main actors in the former communist part of Europe. While received wisdom holds that Central and Eastern Europe is a hotbed for nationalist extremists, radical-right parties are hardly more successful in Central and Eastern Europe than in “Old Europe.”¹³ (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Radical-Right Parties in Eastern Europe with the Largest Share of Support in Parliamentary Elections, 1990-2010

Country	Party	Highest Ever	Most Recent
Bulgaria	National Union Attack (NSA)	9.4 (2009)	9.4 (2009)
Croatia	Croatian Party of Rights (HSP)	5.0 (1995)	3.5 (2007)
Czech Republic	Assembly of the Republic - Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (SPR-RSČ)	8.0 (1996)	---
Hungary	Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIÉP) Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	5.5 (1998) 16.7 (2010)	0.0 (2010) 16.7 (2010)
Latvia	Popular Movement for Latvia-Zigerista Party (TKL-ZP)	15.0 (1995)	---
Poland	League of Polish Families (LPR)	8.0 (2005)	1.3 (2007)
Romania	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	19.5 (2000)	3.2 (2008)
Russia	Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR)	22.9 (1993)	8.8 (2007)
Serbia	Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	29.5 (2008)	29.5 (2008)
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS)	11.7 (2006)	11.7 (2006)

Source: Election Resources on the Internet: Western Europe, Manuel Álvarez-Rivera, <http://electionresources.org/western.europe.html>; Wikipedia.

Only in four countries have radical-right parties ever gained over 15 percent of the vote; however, in two of them, the respective parties have since lost most of their support (the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, or LDPR, and Greater Romania Party, or PRM), while in the third, the party has recently split (the Serbian Radical Party, or SRS). The newest star on the radical-right front is the Hungarian Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), which started with a bang but still has to prove its longevity. In only four countries was the most recent score also the highest support score for parliamentary elections since 1990, while in two other countries the parties no longer have independent parliamentary representation (Croatia and Poland).¹⁴ In other words, as in the western part of the continent, radical-right parties are without significant electoral support in a majority of Central and Eastern European countries.

Central and Eastern Europe does seem to have a stronger nonparty radical right, which includes old mainstream nationalist organizations like Slovak Motherland (Matica Slovenská) in Slovakia, revisionist organizations like the Marshal Antonescu League in Romania, or orthodox-religious organizations like Radio Maria in Poland.¹⁵ However, in most cases their political relevance has been closely related to the electoral strength of the domestic radical-right party or to their relationships with idiosyncratic post-communist parties like the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) or

¹³ Cas Mudde, “Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe,” *East European Politics and Societies* 19, no. 2 (2005): 161-84.

¹⁴ In Croatia, HSP is still represented in parliament, but as part of a larger, not radical-right, electoral coalition.

¹⁵ See Cas Mudde, ed., *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999).

the Socialist Democratic Party of Romania (PDSR), both of which have lost most of their power since the 1990s. Finally, several Central and East European countries have significant neo-Nazi groups and extreme right skinhead gangs; most notably Russia and Serbia.¹⁶ Unlike in much of the West, these groups are still growing and are seldom confronted with strong state or anti-racist resistance.

North America

The United States and Canada have very different political systems from each other and it is therefore unsurprising that the structure of their nativist movements also differs significantly. They do share two main features though: (1) there are no significant nativist political parties; (2) nativists confront strong pro-immigration forces in the political and public debates.

Canada has no nativist political parties. The Nationalist Party of Canada is a tiny white supremacist organization that is not registered to contest elections; although some members have run in local elections (with very marginal returns). Some people consider Canada Action a nativist party because it wants to halve the level of immigration to Canada. However, this would bring it down to US levels, which are among the highest in the world, therefore this is hardly a nativist position. In recent years there has been a toughening of the discourse on immigration in elections in Quebec, under pressure from the Democratic Action of Quebec (ADQ), but the effects seem marginal in terms of policy, and short-lived and regional in terms of discourse.¹⁷ Moreover, the ADQ's call for "reasonable accommodation" might be radical within the very pro-multicultural context of Canada, but is far removed from the policies supported by nativist parties in Europe.

There are some groups that try to lobby mainstream parties and the public to support a drastic decrease in migration. Arguably the most prominent is Immigration Watch Canada, and even its party members do not want to do away with immigration entirely. Instead, they want to bring immigration levels back to 50,000 a year; according to the organization, this would constitute "about 20 percent of the current annual 260,000 intake."¹⁸ In addition, there are some small neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups, often Canadian branches of US-based groups.¹⁹

Although the United States boasted some of the first nativist parties in the world, notably the Know-Nothing Party or American Party in the mid-19th century,²⁰ they have been nonexistent or irrelevant throughout the 20th century. The only recent example of a notable nativist party was the Reform Party under Patrick J. Buchanan in 2000. Since then, the Reform Party has supported non-nativist politicians for the US presidency.

¹⁶ Hilary Pilkington, Al'bina Garifzianova, and Elena Omel'chenko, *Russia's Skinheads* (London, UK: Routledge, 2010); Anti-Defamation League (ADL), *The Skinhead International: A Worldwide Survey of Neo-Nazi Skinheads* (New York: ADL, 1995).

¹⁷ Will Kymlicka, *The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada and Research Themes on Canadian Multiculturalism 2008 -2010* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2010), 16.

¹⁸ Immigration Watch Canada, "Who are we? Why have we organized?" www.immigrationwatchcanada.org/.

¹⁹ One of the few significant groups still active is the National Alliance in Ontario, now that the Heritage Front (1997-2005) and the Aryan Guard (2006-2009) have been dissolved.

²⁰ See, for example, John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

The United States does count a broad variety of nativist nonparty organizations, however, most of which are politically marginal at the federal level. This includes virtually all white supremacist groups, including the various incarnations of the formerly powerful Ku Klux Klan, and neo-Nazi and skinhead gangs. It should be noted though that while these groups have no relevance in the political arena, their often highly local presence does at times adversely influence the life of immigrants in the area.

The most prominent organization of anti-immigration politicians is arguably the House Immigration Reform Caucus (IRC), which, according to its Web site, is “an organization dedicated towards identifying legislative solutions to address the issue of illegal immigration.”²¹ Although the IRC was created, among other reasons, “to create a much-needed forum in Congress to address both the positive and negative consequences of immigration,” it almost exclusively focuses on the negative aspects and all the legislation it supports is aimed at restricting illegal immigration.²² The outspoken anti-immigration politician Tom Tancredo, a Colorado Republican who sought the Republican presidential nomination in 2008 on an immigration-control platform, founded the caucus in 1999 and was its first chairman. Representative Brian Bilbray (R-CA) has run the caucus, which has 95 members (all but four are Republicans), since 2007.²³ Despite its clear anti-immigration stand, the IRC is careful in its wording and does not use an openly nativist discourse.

The most important anti-immigration actors in the United States are single-issue groups that are able to connect to mainstream media and politicians. This includes the various organizations linked to John Tanton, a retired Michigan ophthalmologist who has been instrumental in creating a host of anti-immigration organizations.²⁴ Among the most active and influential Tanton organizations are the grassroots group NumbersUSA, and the lobby group Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). In certain regions, notably in the South, more openly racist groups like the Council of Conservative Citizens and various neo-Confederate groups like the Heritage Preservation Association also are active in the immigration arena and have connections to some mainstream politicians.²⁵

III. Immigration and the Radical Right

The rise of radical-right parties is considered to be closely linked to the phenomenon of mass migration, particularly in Western Europe. Indeed, the German political scientist Klaus Von Beyme defined the “third wave” of “right-wing extremism” as a response to mass immigration and the consequent development of multicultural societies in Western Europe.²⁶ But while there clearly is a relationship, it is not as straightforward as is often assumed. Moreover, immigration plays much less of a role in elections in North America and, particularly, in Central and Eastern Europe.

²¹ House Immigration Reform Caucus (IRC), “Home: Immigration Reform Caucus,” www.house.gov/bilbray/irc.

²² Building Democracy Initiative, *Nativism in the House: A Report on the House Immigration Reform Caucus* (Chicago: Center for New Community, 2007).

²³ IRC, Membership, www.house.gov/bilbray/irc/members.shtml.

²⁴ Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), *The Nativist Lobby: Three Faces of Intolerance* (Montgomery, AL: SPLC, 2009).

²⁵ See, for example, SPLC, *Communing with the Council: When a race hate scandal engulfed a right-wing group in 1998, politicians ran for cover. They didn't stay away long* (Montgomery, AL: SPLC, 2004), [/www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2004/fall/communing-with-the-council](http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2004/fall/communing-with-the-council).

²⁶ Klaus Von Beyme, “Right-Wing Extremism in Post-War Europe,” *West European Politics* 11, no. 2 (1988): 1-18.

Western Europe

Much of the literature on the West European radical right considers the phenomenon to be first and foremost a majority response to the perceived threat of mass immigration. In fact, some authors go even a step further and consider radical-right parties by and large as single-issue parties, referring to them as “anti-immigrant parties.”²⁷ However, the single-issue thesis is inaccurate on at least two counts: first, radical-right parties have a broader ideology and stress different issues, and second, people vote for radical-right parties on the basis of different issues.²⁸

Radical-right parties share a core ideology of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism.²⁹ The three core ideological features are closely linked to three major political issues: immigration, crime, and corruption. Hence, radical-right parties are clearly not single-issue parties. That said, immigration features prominently in both the internally and externally oriented literature of these parties.³⁰ In line with their nativism, migration and migrants are seen as multifaceted threats. At least four frames are used in the propaganda of West European nativist movements.

The predominant frame is cultural, in which migration is seen as a threat to the cultural homogeneity of the home nation. Depending on how strictly the nativist ideology is interpreted, migrants are considered to be either unable or unwilling to assimilate in the host culture. And as the nation is flooded by a “tsunami” of migrants,³¹ the core of its culture is threatened. Some parties even go so far as to speak of a “bloodless genocide.”³²

At least since the horrific terrorist attacks of 9/11, a *religious* frame has accompanied the cultural one. Increasingly the immigrant is seen as a Muslim, not a Turk or Moroccan. While Muslims have been migrating to Western Europe since the 1960s, their numbers and visibility increased significantly since the 1980s, in part as a consequence of family reunification and growth in asylum seekers. Today, by conservative estimates, approximately 13 million Muslims live within the European Union (an estimated 2.5 percent of the EU population). Virtually all Muslims live in Western Europe, most notably in Germany (3.4 million), France (3.5 million), and the United Kingdom (1.6 million). Countries with the relative largest Muslim populations include France (5 percent) and the Netherlands (6 percent).³³ In many West European countries the Muslim population is relatively

²⁷ Wouter Van der Brug, Mendert Fennema, and Jean Tillie, “Why Some Anti-immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed: A Two-Step Model of Aggregate Electoral Support,” *Comparative Political Studies* 38, no. 5 (2005): 537-73; Rachel Gibson, *The Growth of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe* (Ceredigion, UK: Edwin Mellen, 2002); Meindert Fennema, “Some Conceptual issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-immigrant Parties in Western Europe,” *Party Politics* 3, no. 4 (1997): 473-92.

²⁸ Cas Mudde, “The Single-Issue Party Thesis: Extreme Right Parties and the Immigration Issue,” *West European Politics* 22, no.3 (1999): 182-97.

²⁹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*.

³⁰ See Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*, 70-7.

³¹ Dutch PVV leader Geert Wilders often refers to a “tsunami of islamization” (e.g. *Volkskrant*, October 7, 2006).

³² BBC News, “BNP Leader Defends Policy on Race,” April 23, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk/politics/8011878.stm>.

³³ European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Muslims in the European Union: Discrimination and Islamophobia* (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006).

young and growing much faster than the non-Muslim population; for example, in both Austria and Switzerland the Muslim population quadrupled between 1980 and 2000.³⁴

While much of Islamophobia is in fact cultural xenophobia, the religious angle adds important aspects to the debate. Most importantly, nativists consider Islam a fundamentalist religion; VB leader Filip Dewinter, for example, flat out denied the possibility of a moderate Islam.³⁵ Painting the average Muslim immigrant as an Islamic extremist, they argue that Muslims threaten key aspects of western democracies, such as the separation of state and church, the equal position of women, and gay rights (although many radical-right parties are themselves too homophobic to take up this point).

The third most important theme is security, in which immigration and (petty) crime are linked. Some parties argue, in line with ethnopluralist ideology, that immigrants become criminals because they have been uprooted from their natural environment. Radical-right magazines are full of short news articles about criminal offenses, such as murder and rape, committed by “aliens.” They argue that immigrants are much more likely to commit criminal acts than the host population, but that the real level of crime is being kept from the public by politically correct politicians. Moreover, they decry the allegedly soft way in which the state deals with these criminals and want them to be either expelled or punished more severely. As in the case of the religious frame, the security frame is used not just by the radical right. Particularly after 9/11, the immigration debate in Europe and North America has become “securitized,” i.e. immigration policy is increasingly made in light of national security.³⁶

In recent years the security frame has come to include the link between migration and terrorism. With the migrant increasingly defined in religious terms, and the various Islamist attacks on the public radar, nativists create a dark picture in which Muslim immigrants are considered the “fifth column” of the Muslim empire. The ultimate goal, they warn, is “Eurabia,” a Euro-Arab axis that is connected by Islam and will be fiercely anti-American and anti-Zionist.³⁷

Oddly enough, while the Eurabia thesis is limited to the margins of the radical right in Europe itself, it is widely popular within mainstream conservative circles in the United States. It is popularized in the books of people like Bruce Bawer, with telling titles like *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within* and *Surrender: Appeasing Islam, Sacrificing Freedom*, which are published by highly respectable publishing houses (Random House and Doubleday, respectively), and reviewed positively in even liberal publications like the *New York Times*.³⁸ *While Europe Slept* was even nominated for the National Book Critics Circle award, which did raise some critique.³⁹

³⁴ Martin Dolezal, Marc Helbling, and Swen Hutter, “Debating Islam in Austria, Germany and Switzerland: Ethnic Citizenship, Church-State Relations and Right-Wing Populism,” *West European Politics* 33, no. 2 (2010):171-90.

³⁵ “Multicultureel betekent multicrimineel”, *Metro*, June 15, 2005.

³⁶ See, for example, Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia and Simon Reich, eds., *Immigration, Integration, and Security: America and Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); Christopher Rudolph, *National Security and Immigration: Policy Development in the United States and Western Europe since 1945* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

³⁷ Bat Ya’Or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).

³⁸ Stephen Pollard, “The Appeasers,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/07/26/books/review/Pollard-t.html.

³⁹ Patricia Cohen, “In Books, A Clash of Europe and Islam”, *New York Times*, February 8, 2007, www.nytimes.com/2007/02/08/books/08circ.html.

The fourth frame employed in nativist discourse is economic. Here immigrants are depicted as a financial burden to the host society, as they take jobs away from the natives and/or drain social benefits. A popular slogan among radical-right parties is “xxx.xxx unemployed, why are there xxx.xxx immigrants?” This is often combined with a welfare chauvinist agenda, in which welfare programs are supported, but only for the natives. The argument is that if the immigrants are sent back to their own country, there will be enough money to provide decent services to the natives.

The fifth and final frame is *political*, in which immigrants are seen as mere tools of sinister political forces. With varying degrees of conspiracy theories, some more anti-Semitic others more anticapitalist, mass immigration is presented as a willing plot of (inter)national politicians, business leaders, and trade union leaders to strengthen their own position at the expense of the “regular guy.” Moreover, in line with their populism, the elite (seen as a homogenous corrupt entity) is accused of covering up the real costs of immigration and of muffling the people through anti-discrimination laws and political correctness.

Many studies have looked into the relationship between the number of immigrants and the number of votes for radical-right parties in Western Europe. So far the results have been highly contradictory, which is in part the result of the use of different datasets, indicators, and units of analysis. For example, some authors have found a clear positive correlation between the number of foreign-born citizens and the electoral success of a radical-right party in a country,⁴⁰ while others have not.⁴¹ Similarly, some studies show a significant positive correlation with the number of new immigrants⁴² or asylum seekers⁴³ at the national level, but others find a negative (cor)relation or none at all.⁴⁴

This is not to say that immigration and immigrants do not play an important role in the electoral success of radical-right parties. But the relationship is not as simple as is often assumed: that the more immigrants in a country, the higher the electoral success of a radical-right party. Immigration is not inherently a political issue; in fact, while mass immigration started in most West European countries in the 1960s or 1970s, it only became a salient political issue in the 1980s or 1990s. To

⁴⁰ See, for example, Matt Golder, “Explaining Variations in the Success of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe,” *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003): 432-66.

⁴¹ Anthony W. Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration to Western Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Christopher Wendt, “Toward a Majoritarian Model for Western Europe” (paper presented at the 99th annual American Political Science Association meeting, Philadelphia, August 28-31, 2003); Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

⁴² Duane Swank and Hans-Georg Betz, “Globalization, the Welfare State and Right-wing Populism in Western Europe,” *Socio-Economic Review* 1, no. 2 (2003): 215-45; Marcel Lubbers, “Exclusionistic Electorates: Extreme Right-Wing Voting in Western Europe” (PhD dissertation, Radboud University Nijmegen, 2001); Pia Knigge, “The Electoral Correlates of Right-wing Extremism in Western Europe,” *European Journal of Political Research* 34, no. 2 (1998): 249-79.

⁴³ Wendt, “Toward a Majoritarian Model”; Lubbers, “Exclusionistic Electorates.”

⁴⁴ Hermann Dülmer and Markus Klein, “Extreme Right-wing Voting in Germany in a Multilevel Perspective: A Rejoinder to Lubbers and Scheepers,” *European Journal of Political Research* 44, no. 2 (2005): 243-63; David Jesuit and Vincent Mahler, “Immigration, Economic Well-being and Support for Extreme Right Parties in Western European Regions” (paper presented at the conference “Immigration in a Cross-National Context: What are the Implications for Europe?” Bourlingster, Luxembourg, June 20-22, 2004); Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right*; Hanspeter Kriesi, “Bewegungen auf der Linken, Bewegungen auf der Rechten: Die Mobilisierung von zwei neuen Typen von sozialen Bewegungen in ihrem politischen Kontext,” *Swiss Political Science Review* 1, no. 1 (1995): 9-52.

become a salient political issue, immigration has to be (made) visible to a significant section of the population. Once this has happened, different narratives will emerge and there will be a political struggle over the right narrative.

In many countries, notably the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the hegemonic narrative was for a long time a positive one, which saw multiculturalism as an enrichment of national culture.⁴⁵ Only since the late 1980s has this started to change, with more and more leading political and societal actors subscribing to various interpretations of the multiculturalism-as-problem/threat narrative (see below).

Central and Eastern Europe

In Central and Eastern Europe immigration levels are still very low. According to a recent Eurostat report, virtually all Central and Eastern European countries had fewer non-European Union (EU) immigrants per 1,000 inhabitants than the EU average in 2006.⁴⁶ The only two exceptions were the Czech Republic and Slovenia. Moreover, while immigration into Central and Eastern Europe is still relatively low, emigration from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly into western EU countries, has been rather high since 2004, when most of the countries joined the European Union. For example, in 2006 an estimated 290,000 Polish and 230,000 Romanian migrants lived in other EU countries.⁴⁷

Consequently, few political actors, radical right or otherwise, have made immigration an important issue in their propaganda. Although the number of immigrants has been rising slowly but steadily in recent years, and immigrants have become more visible in many of the larger cities in the region, including Budapest and Prague, radical-right parties tend to focus on indigenous minorities (notably the Roma) rather than immigrants. And while anti-immigrant attitudes are at least as widespread in the East as the West of the continent,⁴⁸ so far few Central and East European voters have considered immigration a key concern.

One of the few exceptions is Slovenia, where the radical right responded to the influx of Bosnian and Serbian refugees from the Yugoslav civil war in the early 1990s.⁴⁹ However, even here the impact was relatively modest and only short-lived, despite continuously high levels of former-Yugoslav immigrants. In later years the Slovenian National Party (SNS) moderated its ideology and shifted its primary focus to Croats and Roma.⁵⁰

The most recent exception is Russia, where the single-issue party Russian Movement against Illegal Immigration (DPNI) was founded in 2002. While electorally irrelevant, its emergence does signify the rising salience of the immigration issue in Russia. Most interesting is the striking similarity between its anti-immigration positions and those of the radical right in Western Europe. The group

⁴⁵ Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration*.

⁴⁶ Ann Herm, "Recent Migration Trends: Citizens of EU-27 Member States Become Ever More Mobile While EU Remains Attractive to Non-EU Citizens," *Eurostat*, no.98 (2008), 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁸ Mudde, "Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe".

⁴⁹ Tonci A. Kuzmanic, *Hate-Speech in Slovenia: Slovenian Racism, Sexism and Chauvinism* (Ljubljana, Slovenia: Open Society Institute, 1999).

⁵⁰ Tomas Trplan, "Slovenia," in *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Cas Mudde (London: Routledge, 2005).

links migrants to societal problems and even shares the Islamophobia. For example, the DPNI states that “migrants from the Caucasus states and from Central and South-Eastern Asia are the first part of the foreign expansion.”⁵¹

North America

North America, finally, has a much longer history of mass immigration. Unlike the European countries, Canada and the United States are officially immigration countries. This means that they not only accept relatively large groups of immigrants annually, but also that they (try to) regulate the influx of immigrants. Consequently, the annual number of new (legal) immigrants is fairly constant, which makes it less explosive as a political issue. That said, illegal immigration, estimated in excess of 10.8 million people as of January 2009,⁵² particularly from Latin America, will at times explode onto local and national public agendas in the United States, not in the least through the advocacy of anti-immigration organizations and politicians.

The discourse on immigration in the United States is quite similar to that in Western Europe. In fact, there is a contact between nativists in both regions. For example, British National Party (BNP) leader Nick Griffin spoke at the annual meeting of American Renaissance in Virginia in 2006, while Pat Buchanan met with VB leader Filip Dewinter and Frank Vanhecke in Washington, DC in 2007.⁵³ As in Western Europe, cultural, religious, security, economic, and political themes are prevalent. There are some subtle differences, which are described below.

First of all, in many cases the cultural theme is more racial in the United States. This is in part a linguistic matter; apart from in the United Kingdom and United States, the term “race” is no longer used in European languages. Whereas Americans might be taught that all races are equal, Europeans are taught that there is only one race, the human race. Consequently, much of the racial nativism in the United States is very similar to the cultural nativism in Europe (for example, that of Pat Buchanan). Still, classic racist ideas are found in some nativist groups in the United States, mostly white supremacist and neo-Confederate, that are limited only to the absolute neo-Nazi fringes in Europe.

Second, with regard to security, Islam plays a less dominant role among US nativists. Oddly enough, it seems to be most present among neo- and paleoconservatives, who see the threat predominantly in Europe. As mentioned earlier, a good example is the Islamophobic book *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within*. While this book has some popularity among European nativist groups, it seems to be the American conservative’s bible on contemporary Europe and has received positive reviews in many mainstream media. Interestingly enough, few neoconservatives write such alarmist essays on the United States, while most paleoconservatives consider the “Mexican threat” more pressing.

The most prominent and prolific writer on “alien invasions” of the United States is Pat Buchanan, whose nativist books can be found in all major bookstores. In his book *State of Emergency*, he argues

⁵¹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 71.

⁵² Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Immigration Statistics, *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2009*, (Washington, DC: DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2010), www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/publications/ois_ill_pe_2009.pdf.

⁵³ Anti-Defamation League (ADL), *Pat Buchanan: Unrepentant Bigot* (New York: ADL, 2009), www.adl.org/special_reports/Patrick_Buchanan2/extremists.asp.

that Mexico is slowly but steadily taking back the American Southwest.⁵⁴ This is the key threat according to American nativists. They refer to it as the “Aztlán Plot” for “*la reconquista*,” or the recapture of the lands lost by Mexico in the Texas War of Independence and the Mexican-American War. While these ideas are far removed from those of mainstream political actors in the United States, most notably the two main political parties, they were expressed in Lou Dobbs’ program on CNN and by various right-wing talk radio hosts. Moreover, Buchanan himself is a well-known pundit on the national TV network MSNBC.

IV. Effects of Political Extremism

While public attitudes and, particularly, political violence are important aspects of politics, the true test of power is in whether or not nativist actors have influenced policies. It is worth distinguishing two different types of influence: direct and indirect.

Direct influence means that nativist groups directly influence immigration policy, either by implementing it themselves or by (directly) making other actors implement it. Indirect influence works more slowly and unclearly; nativist actors influence non-nativist actors, who would then implement anti-immigrant policies — obviously, establishing “influence” here is problematic.

Direct Effects

Overall, there are very few cases of nativist actors directly affecting immigration policy in all three regions. The reason is simple: only in a few cases have nativist actors been part of government (see Table 3). Moreover, most of these cases were in Eastern Europe, where immigration has so far not been a major issue, not even for nativist parties. Where nativist parties have been represented in the parliament, but not in the government, their law initiatives have mostly been boycotted by the governmental (and even most other oppositional) parties. In other words, nativist parties have had relatively few direct effects on politics, even on immigration politics.

In Western Europe only four nativist parties have made it into government so far: the Northern League (LN) in Italy (2000-2005, 2008-), the FPÖ and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) in Austria (2000-2006), and the SVP in Switzerland (2005-2007). However, the few academic studies of radical-right parties in office all agree on one thing: they have been “instrumental” in introducing more restrictive immigration policies.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Patrick J. Buchanan, *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2006).

⁵⁵ Franz Fallend, “Are Right-Wing Populism and Government Participation Incompatible? The Case of the Freedom Party in Austria,” *Representation* 40, no. 2 (2004): 115-130; Andrej Zaslove, “Closing the Door? The Ideology and Impact of Radical Right Populism on Immigration Policy in Austria and Italy,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 1 (2004): 99-118; Reinhard Heinisch, “Success in Opposition – Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Public Office,” *West European Politics* 26, no. 3 (2003): 91-130; Michael Minkenberg, “The West European Radical Right as a Collective Actor: Modeling the Impact of Cultural and Structural Variables on Party Formation and Movement Mobilization,” *Comparative European Politics* 1, no. 2 (2003): 149-70.

Table 3. Nativist Parties in European National Governments since 1980

Country	Party	Period(s)	Coalition partners (party ideology)
Austria	FPÖ	2000-2002	ÖVP (Christian democratic)
		2002-2005	ÖVP
	BZÖ	2005-2007	ÖVP
Croatia	HDZ	1990-2000 ¹	
Estonia	ERSP	1992-1995	Isamaa (conservative)
Italy	LN	1994	FI (neoliberal populist) and AN (conservative)
		2001-2005	FI and AN and MDC (Christian democratic)
		2008-	PdL (right-wing)
Poland	LPR	2006-2008	PiS (conservative) and Samoobrona (social populist)
Romania	PUNR	1994-1996	PDSR (diffuse) and PSM (social populist)
	PRM	1995	
Serbia	SRS	1998-2000	SPS (social populist) and JUL (communist)
Slovakia	SNS	1994-1998	HZDS (diffuse) and ZRS (communist)
			Smer (social populist) and HZDS
Switzerland	SVP	2005-2007	SPS (social democratic) and FDP (liberal) and CVP (Christian democratic)

¹ HDZ changed into a conservative party after 2000.

The SVP only became a full-fledged radical-right party in/around 2005.

Source: Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties* (updated).

Both Austria and Switzerland tightened their asylum laws at the initiative of the radical right in 2003 and 2006, respectively. Interestingly, the Austrian radical-right governments did not introduce stricter general immigration laws; previous mainstream governments had already done so.⁵⁶ The most notable examples in the Italian case are the Bossi-Fini Law, which came into force in August 2002 and was named after the LN and AN leaders who proposed the bill. The bill aimed to curb immigration, except for highly skilled workers, although it also included a limited amnesty for some unauthorized immigrants.⁵⁷ A more recent law, adopted in August 2009, goes much further, by among other things making illegal presence a criminal offense.⁵⁸

Although most countries will allow nongovernmental parties to submit proposals for legislation, in very few cases does this lead to actual laws. This is even more apparent with proposals from the radical right, which tend to be shunned by the other parties in the parliament (such as the VB in Belgium). There are two important exceptions, however: the DFP in Denmark and the SVP in Switzerland. Although the DFP has never been an official part of the Danish government, it has been the major support party in right-wing minority governments since 2001. As a consequence, the party has played a crucial role in drafting the immigration law of 2002 for the government, which among other things limited grounds for political asylum and stipulated financial requirements for marrying a foreigner.⁵⁹ This law is described as “one of Europe’s strictest immigration laws” by the

⁵⁶ August Gachter, “Migrationspolitik in Österreich seit 1945” (working paper No. 12, Migration und soziale Mobilität, 2008).

⁵⁷ Asher Colombo and Giuseppe Sciortino, “The Bossi-Fini Law: Explicit Fanaticism, Implicit Moderation, and Poisoned Fruits” in *Italian Politics: The Second Berlusconi Government*, eds. Jean Blondel and Paolo Segatti (New York: Berghahn, 2003).

⁵⁸ Aidan Lewis, “Italian Migration Policy Draws Fire,” *BBC News*, March 7, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7880215.stm>.

⁵⁹ “Denmark Passes Tough Migrant Laws,” *CNN*, May 31, 2002, <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/05/31/denmark.immigration>.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁶⁰ Since leaving the Swiss government in 2007,⁶¹ the SVP no longer has direct access to the legislative drafting process. However, because of Switzerland's strong system of direct democracy, which includes referendums initiated by the public, the SVP still plays a significant role in influencing both public opinion and the implementation of Swiss legislation. A recent example of this, which gained much attention and condemnation around the world, was the referendum that banned the construction of minarets, which was passed by 57 percent of the voters and in 22 of the 26 Swiss cantons in November 2009.⁶²

While Central and Eastern Europe has seen more radical-right government participation, only a small minority of governments have included the radical right. Furthermore, this has not had an effect on immigration policies. As said before, immigration is simply a nonissue in the region, even for the radical right; which, instead, focuses primarily on indigenous minorities such as Hungarians, Russians, and "Gypsies" or Roma. In fact, most pressure to implement tougher border regimes came from the European Union, which was worried that Central and Eastern European states did not exert sufficient control of their borders, which were soon to become and now are EU borders.⁶³

The situation in the North America is more complex. Canada has no nativist party with parliamentary, let alone governmental, representation. But while the United States does not currently have any successful nativist parties, unlike in the 19th century (the Know Nothing Party), there are some powerful nativist voices within the main parties, most notably the Republican Party. None have made it into prominent positions within Republican administrations, however. Hence, nativist actors have had at best only indirect effects.

The situation is different at the local and regional levels. Various US communities have tried to limit the effects of illegal immigration by pushing through a broad variety of legislation. Much of this legislation seeks to punish businesses that use or cater to unauthorized immigrants or to exclude unauthorized immigrants from local community services (ranging from schools to hospitals). While in many cases these changes were pushed through by mainstream actors, groups like FAIR have provided technical assistance to several state legislators in passing bills that curtail immigrant rights (e.g. requiring proof of citizenship to get a driver's license, mandatory employer verification, restricting immigrant access to public benefits). Similarly, groups like FAIR and Save Our State (SOS) have been instrumental in pushing for versions of the so-called Illegal Immigration Relief Act, which aims to exclude unauthorized immigrants from housing, in a number of local communities. Moreover, there are other state actors that can foster anti-immigrant sentiment in an area.⁶⁴ A key example here is Sheriff Joe Arpaio from Arizona, who now faces a Department of Justice civil-rights complaint alleging that he discriminated against Latinos while enforcing federal immigration law.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ UNHCR, "Freedom in the World 2009 – Denmark,"

www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,...DNK.4562d8b62.4a6452bfc.0.html.

⁶¹ Technically, SVP leader and Justice Minister Christophe Blocher was ousted from the Cabinet in 2007, in favor of one of his more moderate party colleagues, who was then kicked out of the SVP.

⁶² "Swiss Voters Back Ban on Minarets," *BBC News*, November 29, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8385069.stm>.

⁶³ E.g. Sandra Lavanex, *Safe Third Countries. Extending EU Asylum and Immigration Policies to Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999).

⁶⁴ Justin Massa and Cecelia Abundis, "The New Battleground: Anti-Immigrant Ordinances Attack Housing Rights," *Building Democracy Monthly*, February 2007.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Randy James, "Joe Arpaio," *Time*, October 13, 2009, www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1929920,00.html.

One of the states that has seen the most polarized debates about such measures is California, which despite its progressive image and Democratic legislative majorities, has seen significant nativist campaigns and legislative successes (particularly through referendums).⁶⁶ The most (in)famous of these was Proposition 187, listed on the ballots as the “Save our State Initiative,” which called for strict and punitive measures against unauthorized immigrants. The initiative was co-sponsored by the nativist California Coalition for Immigration Reform (CCIR) and was passed in 1994 by an overwhelming 59 percent of the votes, though it was ruled unconstitutional by a federal court and never implemented.⁶⁷

However, while there are many examples of successful anti-immigration measures at the sub-national level, with or without pressure from nativist actors, there are also countless examples of successful pro-immigration mobilization, particularly at the local level.⁶⁸ For example, since the 1980s a growing group of cities have banned city employees and police officers from asking people about their immigration status. Although the number of cities involved is not very impressive (ca. 30), it does include practically all major cities in the United States (e.g. Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, Washington DC).⁶⁹

Indirect Effects

Obviously, governments don’t make policies in total isolation. They are influenced by the media, public opinion, international organizations, and by other competing political parties. Both opponents and supporters of the radical right have argued that mainstream parties have implemented anti-immigration legislation under pressure from radical-right electoral success. In a few cases the respective governments have acknowledged this. In some of these cases, governments have been criticized for offering what sounded like a convenient excuse rather than a credible explanation. For example, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar all called for stricter immigration laws to prevent the rise of the radical right, despite the fact that their countries have very marginal radical-right parties.⁷⁰

While there are many national and regional differences, one can detect some general shifts in the debate on immigration in Western Europe. First and foremost, there *is* a debate on immigration. Up until the 1980s, the established parties in most West European countries were engaged in a “conspiracy of silence,”⁷¹ or an explicit or implicit agreement to keep immigration outside of the public debate. Mainly due to public pressure, often expressed loudly by the tabloid media, the mainstream parties reluctantly started to address immigration as a political issue, while nativist parties further heightened the salience of the issue.

⁶⁶ See, for example, Dan Ho-Sang, *Racial Propositions: Genteel Apartheid in Postwar California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming 2010).

⁶⁷ Building Democracy Initiative, *Nativism in the House*, 2.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Lisa M. Hanley, Blair A. Ruble, and Allison M. Garland, eds., *Immigration and Integration in Urban Communities: Renegotiating the City* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁶⁹ Jennifer Ridgley, “Cities of Refuge: Immigration Enforcement, Police, and the Insurgent Genealogies of Citizenship in U.S. Sanctuary Cities”, *Urban Geography* 29, no.1 (2008): 53-77.

⁷⁰ John Hooper, Giles Tremlett, and John Henley, “Immigration the key as left faces loss of power,” *Guardian*, May 16, 2002.

⁷¹ Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration*, 86.

Second, the consensus in the debate has shifted in most countries from a (implicit or explicit) pro-immigration to an anti-immigration standpoint. Nowadays, virtually all but a few radical left and green parties consider immigration a fundamental challenge to their society at best, and a threat at worst.⁷² Hence, where mainstream parties in the Netherlands or the United Kingdom tended to sing the praises of the many enrichments of multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s, they now ponder the ways in which “Dutchness” and “Britishness” can be protected against outside influences.⁷³ Overall, right-wing parties have co-opted radical-right positions more often and more radically than left-wing parties; the best examples include the British Conservative Party, the Dutch People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy, and the French Union for a Popular Movement. That said, there are many examples of social democratic, and even communist, parties that have adopted anti-immigration positions in their programs; from the Dutch Labour Party to the French Communist Party.

Third, the debate has shifted from immigration to integration, as in most countries no significant party calls for more immigration. As West European countries do not typically present themselves as immigration countries, and mainstream politicians do not want to encourage immigration, they still have few integration policies in place; despite several decades of immigration. Hence, from Belgium to Norway and from Spain to Denmark, countries are debating what the rights and duties of the host population and immigrants are, with an increasing emphasis on the duties of the immigrants.

Fourth, the immigration debate has shifted from the cultural to the religious; for example, traditionally the typical Dutch or German immigrant was seen as a Turk, but after 9/11, s/he had become a Muslim. This has had significant influence on the debate, most notably on the anti-immigrant position. Initially, immigration could only be opposed on the basis of economic and cultural grounds. In most countries cultural opposition was outside of the realm of the respectable, as it linked to (ethnic) nationalism. The struggle against Islamist terrorism has shaped the post-9/11 debate about immigration, linking it to religion and security, and widening the scope for anti-immigration positions. Nowadays parties will oppose immigration on the basis of mainstream liberal democratic arguments, rather than marginal nationalist positions. A good example was the infamous Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, who framed his attacks on Muslim immigrants in terms of his defense for gay rights, equality of men and women, and the separation of state and church.⁷⁴ Similar arguments have been made by right-wing Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi as well as left-wing Scandinavian feminists.⁷⁵

The relationship between the strength of radical-right parties and the adoption of anti-immigrant positions by mainstream parties is not always clear, however. For example, while countries like Denmark and France exemplify the received wisdom that strong radical-right parties have pushed mainstream parties “to the right,” other countries do not. The best counter-example is Belgium,⁷⁶ where most mainstream parties are among the most pro-immigrant in Europe, precisely *because of* the

⁷² Zaslove, “Closing the Door?”; Heinisch, “Success in Opposition”; Michael Minkenberg, “The Radical Right in Public Office: Agenda-Setting and Policy Effects,” *West European Politics* 24, no. 4 (2001): 1-21.

⁷³ See also Kymlicka, *The Current State of Multiculturalism in Canada*, 11-3.

⁷⁴ Tjitske Akkerman, “Anti-Immigration Parties and the Defense of Liberal Values: The Exceptional Case of the List Pim Fortuyn,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 10, no. 3 (2005): 337-354.

⁷⁵ Tjitske Akkerman and Anniken Hagelund, “‘Women and Children First!’ Anti-Immigration Parties and Gender in Norway and the Netherlands,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 41, no. 2 (2007): 197-214.

⁷⁶ De Decker et al, “Revitalizing the City in an Anti-Urban Context: Extreme Right and the Rise of Urban Policies in Flanders, Belgium,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29, no. 1 (2005): 152-71.

strong VB. And then there are many mainstream parties, from the British Labour Party to the German Christian Social Union, which have adopted relatively strong anti-immigration positions despite the lack of a successful radical-right party in their country.

A similar point can be made about immigration policies in Western Europe. As far as cross-national comparative studies of immigration laws are available, they show that European immigration policies are increasingly converging, not least because of the cooperation within the European Union.⁷⁷ Recent developments indicate that this will only increase in the future.⁷⁸

*During the last decade, the need for a common, comprehensive immigration policy has been increasingly recognised and encouraged by the European Commission and the EU's Member States. The Commission is therefore now proposing concrete principles and measures – accompanied by a new strategy on immigration governance – on which to base the further development of the common immigration policy over the coming years.*⁷⁹

That said, at this moment the level of convergence is still rather limited. And while there are some important changes that might facilitate further convergence, such as the Stockholm program 2010-2015 and the introduction of Qualified Majority Voting under the Lisbon Treaty, progress is glacial and the European Commission might be an unreliable barometer of such progress.⁸⁰ Most importantly, given their marginal role in the European Parliament and in the European Council, radical-right parties will most likely not play an important role in these initiatives.

The finest hour of the nativist movement in the United States was in 2007, when a major bipartisan immigration reform package, proposed by Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and John McCain (R-AZ), and backed by President George W. Bush, was defeated. While various factors played a role, not least the internal divisions within major progressive forces such as the trade unions, a key factor in the defeat of the bill was the mobilization by nativist organizations like Numbers USA; allegedly the phone system of the US Congress collapsed under the weight of more than 400,000 calls.⁸¹ Moreover, in recent years representatives of nativist, and sometimes outright racist, organizations have become mainstream in the media — appearing most notably on CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*.⁸² They also repeatedly testified as experts to Congress; FAIR claims it has testified to Congress “more than any other organization in America.”⁸³

⁷⁷ Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration*; Terri Givens and Adam Luedtke, “The Politics of European Union Immigration Policy: Institutions, Salience, and Harmonization,” *The Policy Studies Journal* 32, no. 1 (2004): 145-165; Terri Givens and Adam Luedtke, “European Immigration Policies in Comparative Perspective: Issue Salience, Partisanship and Immigrant Rights,” *Comparative European Politics* 3, no. 1 (2005): 1-22.

⁷⁸ An overview of EU-wide immigration initiatives can be found on the EU Web site:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/fsj/immigration/fsj_immigration_intro_en.htm.

⁷⁹ European Commission, “A Common Immigration Policy,” (press release, June 17, 2008),

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/402>.

⁸⁰ For an overview, see Thomas Faist and Andreas Ette, eds., *The Europeanization of National Policies and Politics of Immigration: Between Autonomy and the European Union* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

⁸¹ SPLC, *The Nativist Lobby*.

⁸² In return, Dobbs was awarded the 2004 Eugene Katz Award for Excellence in the Coverage of Immigration by the anti-immigration Center for Immigration Studies (CIS). In November 2009, Dobbs left CNN, after a campaign by immigrant-rights advocates to get him removed and allegedly because of growing unease over his right-wing agenda, and *Lou Dobbs Tonight* is no longer aired on television. Dobbs continues his radio work, which includes *Lou Dobbs Radio* and *Lou Dobbs Financial Report*.

⁸³ SPLC, *The Nativist Lobby*, 9.

While there is no doubt that the “nativist lobby” has access to the mainstream media and politics, its influence should not be exaggerated. Even the defeat of the “amnesty” bill in 2007 was a defensive victory. From their point of view, they prevented the situation from becoming worse. With regard to implementing new legislation, nativists have been much less successful, at least at the federal level. While they have been able to profit from the securitization of the immigration debate post-9/11, most notably with the construction of the border fence, they have also faced a powerful pro-immigration lobby, which includes big business, immigrant groups, and libertarians.⁸⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the situation in Western Europe, where pro-immigration forces have been almost invisible in the debate (see below).

V. Public Effects of Nativism

Effects on policies and other political parties are arguably the most important possible effects of nativist actors, but certainly not the only ones. Nativist actors can also affect the public directly. For example, back in 1955 the famed American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset argued that “radical-right agitation has facilitated the growth of practices which threaten to undermine the social fabric of democratic politics.”⁸⁵ Over the years this belief has become received wisdom, uttered at strategic times in political debates and repeated in the mainstream media. With regard to immigrants, two alleged phenomena have received most attention: an increase in anti-immigrant violence and an increase in anti-immigrant public sentiment.

So far, these assertions have not been supported by academic research, although this is to a large extent thanks to a lack of reliable cross-national data. This might change in the near future, as several organizations have started to collect reliable cross-national data, most notably the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, formerly the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), in Vienna, Austria.

Racist Violence

There are two strains of thought regarding the relationship between radical-right parties and anti-immigrant violence. The majority view holds that “the xenophobic rhetoric [of radical-right parties is] often spilling over into violence.”⁸⁶ One of the few studies that have provided empirical evidence for this thesis was a pilot study in Switzerland in the 1984-1993 period.⁸⁷ In addition, there have been some other studies that have found a slight positive correlation between the electoral success of radical-right parties and the level of anti-immigrant violence.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Dan Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

⁸⁵ Seymour Martin Lipset, “The Radical Right: A Problem for American Democracy,” *British Journal of Sociology* 6, no. 2 (1955): 176-209.

⁸⁶ Jonathan Marcus, “Exorcising Europe’s Demons: A Far-Right Resurgence?” *The Washington Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2000): 31-40.

⁸⁷ Urs Altermatt and Hanspeter Kriesi, *Rechtsextremismus in der Schweiz. Organisationen und Radikalisierung in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren* (Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1995).

⁸⁸ Mudde, “Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe”; Roger Eatwell, “The Extreme Right and British Exceptionalism: The Primacy of Politics,” in *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*, ed. Paul Hainsworth (London: Pinter, 2000); Tore Björge and Rob Witte, “Introduction” in *Racist Violence in Europe*, eds. Tore Björge and Rob Witte (New York: St. Martin’s, 1993).

There is a minority that holds the opposite view that successful radical-right parties actually channel the frustrations of would-be perpetrators away from anti-immigrant violence.⁸⁹ The first cross-national study on the topic, by Ruud Koopmans, concludes that “(i)n general, strong extreme right parties serve to limit the potential for extreme right and racist violence.”⁹⁰ This conclusion was confirmed in a more recent study based on the EUMC data.⁹¹

The problem with all these studies is the lack of reliable cross-national data on anti-immigrant violence. Most countries do not have a central agency that is responsible for collecting these data. Sometimes the information is only registered at the local level, and local police officers by and large determine whether a crime is logged as racist or not. But even if countries do use a centralized and standardized way to register anti-immigrant violence, different countries will use different definitions of anti-immigrant violence.⁹² For example, in some countries, such as Hungary, a crime becomes registered as “racist” only after the police or a judge has ruled it a racist crime, whereas in other states, such as the United Kingdom, the victim can declare whether the crime is racist or not. Obviously, the huge differences in implementation will lead to substantial differences in levels of “racist violence.”

Anti-Immigrant Attitudes

Another argument is that the electoral success of radical-right parties has “infected” the public discourse with anti-immigrant sentiments, which has led to a “tolerance for intolerance.”⁹³ Because of a lack of reliable cross-time and cross-national data, there is little empirical evidence for this thesis.⁹⁴ A comparative study of seven West European countries found that electoral success of radical-right parties does correlate with ethnic prejudice within countries, but has a fairly limited impact on other authoritarian values.⁹⁵ Yet, other studies found an increase in tolerance towards immigrants in countries with strong radical-right parties.⁹⁶

Again, a simple causal relationship should hardly be expected. First of all, radical-right parties reflect existing prejudices as much as they create or unleash new ones. While data are sketchy for the pre-1990s period, various authors have noted long-standing anti-immigrant sentiments in Western

⁸⁹ Minkenberg, “The West European Radical Right”; Harold L. Wilensky, “Migration and Politics: Explaining Variation among rich Democracies in Recent Nativist Protest” (working paper no. 87, Berkeley, Institute of Industrial Relations, 1998).

⁹⁰ Ruud Koopmans, “Explaining the Rise of Racist and Extreme Right Violence in Western Europe: Grievances or Opportunities,” *European Journal of Political Research* 30, no. 2 (1996): 185-216.

⁹¹ Uwe Backes, “Extremismus und politisch motivierte Gewalt.”

⁹² Robin Oakley, *Policing Racist Crime and Violence: A Comparative Analysis*, (Vienna: EUMC, 2005).

⁹³ Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay, “The Development of Radical Right Parties in Western Europe” in Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay, eds., *Shadows over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

⁹⁴ An exception is Charles Westin, “Racism and the Political Right: European Perspectives,” in Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg, eds., *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

⁹⁵ Robert Andersen and Jocelyn A.J. Evans, “Social-Political Context and Authoritarian Attitudes: Evidence from Seven European Countries” (working paper no. 104, CREST, Glasgow, 2004).

⁹⁶ Tor Bjørklund and Jørgen Goul Andersen, “Anti-immigration parties in Denmark and Norway: The Progress Parties and the Danish People’s Party” in *Shadows over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*, eds. Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

Europe and North America, virtually unrelated to the number of immigrants in the country.⁹⁷ Moreover, while the success of radical-right parties might heighten the visibility of anti-immigrant discourse, it has often also given way to popular and state anti-nativist initiatives (see below).

It is crucial to note that there are many more people with anti-immigrant sentiments than there are anti-immigrant voters. As far as data are available, anti-immigration sentiments were already widespread before the rise of radical-right parties in the late 1980s.⁹⁸ Even in countries with highly successful radical-right parties, like Austria or Switzerland, the majority of people with anti-immigration sentiments vote for non-nativist parties across the political spectrum.⁹⁹

In summary, the success of radical-right parties probably doesn't change many opinions. Rather, it brings existing anti-immigrant attitudes to the fore. Undoubtedly this process is helped by the behavior of mainstream parties, which legitimize the radical-right discourse by borrowing (slightly watered down versions of) it. Simply stated, radical-right parties do not make people nativist, they make people aware of their nativist sentiments and of the importance of these sentiments.

Also, while most West European countries had fairly strong social and legal pressures against expressing nativist sentiment at least until the late 1990s, the success of radical-right parties helped undermine the strength and effectiveness of this "political correctness." That said, radical-right parties were, at best, one of several factors that undermined the pro-immigration consensus. Among some of the other important factors are the (sometimes imagined) crises with asylum seekers, "scandals" involving immigrants (framed in nativist terms by tabloid media) and, of course, 9/11 and the subsequent "War on Terror."

VI. Anti-Nativist Reactions

In the previous sections we have discussed the way in which nativist actors have been able to influence political parties, policies, and publics in order to bring them closer to their own position. This is only one side of the coin, however. The rise of nativism has also provoked anti-nativist reactions, both at the societal and the state level.

Societal Responses

The success of radical-right parties might heighten the visibility of anti-immigrant discourses, but it has also given way to popular anti-racism movements, which put forward pro-immigration discourses. The most famous examples are the British Anti-Nazi League, which was founded in reaction to the (moderate) electoral successes of the National Front in the 1970s, and the French SOS Racism, a direction reaction to the breakthrough of Le Pen's National Front in Dreux in 1983.¹⁰⁰ In addition, in many countries governments at all levels started to sponsor anti-racist and pro-multicultural activities in direct response to radical-right electoral victories. As most important

⁹⁷ Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration*; Martin Schain, *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain and the United States: A Comparative Study* (New York: Palgrave, 2008).

⁹⁸ Messina, *The Logics and Politics of Post-WWII Migration*; Schain, *The Politics of Immigration in France, Britain and the United States*.

⁹⁹ Cas Mudde, "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy," *West European Politics*, forthcoming.

¹⁰⁰ Cathie Lloyd, "Antiracist Mobilization in France and Britain in the 1970s and 1980s," in *Scapegoats and Social Actors: The Exclusion and Integration of Minorities in Western and Eastern Europe*, ed. Daniele Joly (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1998).

media were state-controlled, or close to mainstream political parties, this meant that the dominant discourse remained anti-nativist; or often changed from implicit anti-racist to explicit anti-racist. Even where tabloid media would advance nativist arguments, as in the case of the British *Sun* newspaper or the German *Bild Zeitung*, they would equally strongly come out against nativist actors, ranging from political parties like the BNP and NPD to neo-Nazi groups and violent racist youths.¹⁰¹

Hence, some authors have argued that the successes of radical-right parties “provoke a backlash among those with liberal attitudes.”¹⁰² This seems an overstatement, however. While the anti-racist backlash might have mobilized large groups of people at certain times, it is most likely that it rallied people who were already anti-racist and pro-multicultural. Similarly, it is doubtful that anti-racist mass mobilization has played a big role in the hindering of electoral success of radical-right parties.¹⁰³

There is one area in which anti-racist groups have played an important role: law. Throughout Europe, both East and West, a broad coalition of nongovernmental organizations has pushed for stricter anti-discrimination laws, and the better enforcement of these laws (see below). In the United States, groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) went even further, taking nativist groups to civil court and at times even bankrupting them.¹⁰⁴ The most famous case is *Berhanu vs. Metzger*, which led to the bankruptcy of Tom Metzger’s infamous group White Aryan Resistance.

The situation in the United States is markedly different from that in Europe. Here, the so-called populist backlash against mass migration has often been met by a powerful pro-immigration movement. Moreover, the movement brings together a broad variety of actors, ranging from some of the richest businessman in the country (such as former Republican presidential candidate Steve Forbes) to Latino groups from the poor inner cities.¹⁰⁵ Some of the largest demonstrations in the United States in recent years have been those in favor of comprehensive immigration reform, i.e. with a clear pro-immigration message. For example, in March 2006 some 500,000 people demonstrated in favor of immigrant rights in Los Angeles, while smaller groups demonstrated all over the country.¹⁰⁶ And in March 2010, tens of thousands of people participated in the “March for America” in Washington, DC, urging President Obama to make good on his promise for immigration reform.¹⁰⁷

State Responses

Most countries have treated radical-right parties at least initially negatively. A broad variety of state responses to nativist actors have been implemented, from the ideological to the legal. As indicated above, many local and national governments have spent millions of dollars on anti-nativism/pro-multicultural initiatives in direct reaction to the rise of nativist actors. At various occasions local and

¹⁰¹ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*.

¹⁰² Andersen and Evans, “Social-Political Context and Authoritarian Attitudes”; Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*.

¹⁰³ Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, 247.

¹⁰⁴ George Michael, *Confronting Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in the USA* (London: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Gary P. Freeman, “Client Politics or Populism? Immigration Reform in the United States” in Virginie Guiraudon and Christian Joppke, eds., *Controlling a New Migration World* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁰⁶ “Immigration Issue Draws Thousands Into the Streets,” *Associated Press*, March 26, 2006.

¹⁰⁷ Julia Preston, “At Rally, Call for Urgency on Immigration Reform,” *New York Times*, March 22, 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/03/22/us/politics/22immig.html.

national authorities have hindered nativist groups from freely demonstrating and organizing.¹⁰⁸ In some cases such as Germany, they were merely enforcing existing laws that prohibited certain organizations from demonstrating and organizing, but in other cases the legal basis was at best shaky. For example, in the Netherlands many radical-right demonstrations were forbidden because of the alleged threat of a confrontation with anti-fascists, who had announced a counter-demonstration (rather than simply keeping the two groups apart or banning the counter-demonstration).

The focus here will be on the most important *legal* state response to nativist actors. These regions have fairly strong anti-discrimination laws in place, even though the implementation differs significantly between countries and even regions. In particular, Northwestern Europe and Canada have developed very elaborate anti-discrimination laws, in part directly targeting nativist actors, which are strictly enforced. The United States has a more permissive legal framework, although the introduction of the concept of “hate crimes” and the easier procedures in civil laws (see above) provide state and nonstate actors with significant avenues for legal action. Central and Eastern Europe, as well as much of Southern Europe, have similar legal frameworks to the rest of the European Union, but in many countries the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation is lacking.¹⁰⁹

This is not the place to discuss the ins and outs of anti-discrimination legislation. What is most important for the purpose of this report is the observation that anti-discrimination legislation has increasingly been used against nativist actors, ranging from individuals to organizations. The most famous case was in Belgium in 2004, when the VB party was effectively convicted for incitement to racial hatred. While this didn’t directly lead to a ban of the party, it did make it practically impossible for the party to continue. That said, the successor party, Flemish Interest, is almost an exact copy of its predecessor.¹¹⁰

Other countries have banned, or withheld registration of, political parties on the basis of a variety of laws, including anti-discrimination and explicitly anti-extremist legislation. Some of the most notable cases include the National Democratic Party in Austria, the National Socialist Block in the Czech Republic, and the Centre Party ’86 in the Netherlands. Currently, Geert Wilders’ PVV, which according to polls is the second biggest party in the Netherlands, is facing trial for incitement to racial hatred. Another example is the recent legal case brought against the BNP by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in the United Kingdom, which forced the BNP to amend their constitution and accept non-whites as members.¹¹¹

In most countries, political parties enjoy special legal protections and they are therefore more difficult to ban. A good example of this is Germany, which has the most suppressive legal system regarding “non-democratic” actors, and yet failed to ban the radical-right National Democratic Party of Germany. At the same time, the German Minister of Interior has banned more than 50 “extreme-

¹⁰⁸ Jaap Van Donselaar, *De staat paraat? De bestrijding van extreme-rechts in West-Europa* (Amsterdam: Babylon-De Geus, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Mudde, *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*.

¹¹⁰ Jan Erk, “From Vlaams Blok to Vlaams Belang: Belgian Far-Right Renames Itself,” *West European Politics* 28, no. 3 (2005): 493-502.

¹¹¹ Fiona Hamilton, “British National Party Forced to Admit Non-Whites,” *The Times*, September 4, 2009, www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6820847.ece.

right” groups in the last two decades. Similarly, in several Central and Eastern European countries nonparty organizations have faced much more legal pressures than radical-right parties.¹¹²

Finally, nativist individuals have been taken to court by both state and nonstate actors. These individuals have included radical-right politicians, who would go on to lose their political rights. For example, in France various leading members of the National Front have been convicted on the basis of anti-discrimination and historical revisionism legislation (including Bruno Gollnisch, Bruno Mégret, and even Jean-Marie Le Pen). In other countries, radical-right politicians have also been convicted for inciting racial hatred, but they have kept their political rights; for example, FPÖ parliamentarian Susanne Winter in Austria and Centre Democrats leader Hans Janmaat in the Netherlands.

The effects of state actions against nativist groups or individuals go much further than the relatively few convictions, however. First of all, these actions have an impact on the public discourse. Second, they affect the organizational capabilities of nativist groups. In countries with governments who work to curtail nativist activities, which also often have more social stigmatization, nativist groups can have a hard time attracting qualified members and leaders. Third, it leads to debates about how far liberal democracies can go in their struggle against their enemies, without undermining their own liberal democratic values.

VII. The Economic Crisis, Immigration, and Nativism

The association of crisis and extremism goes back more than a century. For example, as far back as 1919, the famous German scholar Max Weber argued that charismatic leaders benefit from crisis situations.¹¹³ But it was particularly the rise of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Party of Germany, in the aftermath of the Wall Street Crash of 1929 that has linked economic crisis and the rise of political extremism. In fact, most contemporary studies of the radical right link its emergence to some form of crisis, thought not always (exclusively) economic, connected to some type of modernization process.¹¹⁴

Despite the strength of this received wisdom, the empirical evidence is very thin. For example, while the Great Depression did lead to the rise of extremist parties in Germany, it did not in many others (e.g. Netherlands and United Kingdom) or the United States. Similarly, neither the Oil Crisis of the 1970s nor the democratic transition in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, which involved massive economic hardship for large portions of the people, led to the clear rise of extremist politics.

The recent economic crisis seems so far to follow this pattern. If one looks at the national elections in European countries, which have been conducted since the global recession really hit in mid-2008, there is no clear trend towards the rise of “extremist” parties, i.e. radical-right parties. While some radical-right parties have gained some striking gains in recent elections, most notably the Hungarian Jobbik in 2010, others have lost, i.e. the VB in Belgium. And even though various radical-right

¹¹² Mudde, *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*.

¹¹³ Max Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987, 8th edition).

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Mabel Berezin, *Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times: Cultures, Security, and Populism in a New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*.

parties have done well in national and local elections, like the Austrian FPÖ and the French FN, they are nowhere near their peaks in the 1990s.

The lack of a clear trend towards radical-right electoral success can also be seen in the results of the elections for the European Parliament in June 2009. Against the striking victory of Jobbik in Hungary (gaining 14.8 percent in its first European election) stands the complete implosion of the League of Polish Families (LPR) in Poland (which had gained 15.2 percent in 2004, but didn't even contest in 2009). Similarly, while much attention in Western Europe went to the large gains of the British National Party (+3.5 percent) and the Dutch PVV (+17 percent), few noted the clear losses of the Belgian VB (-3.4 percent) and French FN (-3.5 percent).¹¹⁵ Moreover, in most European countries radical-right parties did not contest the European elections or they didn't make it into the European Parliament (e.g. Czech Republic, Germany, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden).

Although it is too early to discern clear trends, data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) show that immigration to Europe and North America has actually decreased since the beginning of the economic crisis.¹¹⁶ Some anecdotal evidence even indicates that return migration from the United States has increased in recent years.¹¹⁷ At the same time, immigration has become a less salient issue for Europeans. Whereas 15 percent of Europeans considered immigration to be one of the two most important issues facing their country in September 2007, this had dropped to 9 percent by August 2008.¹¹⁸ This has stabilized since; in October/November 2009 it was still 9 percent as the EU average, though with some striking national variations.¹¹⁹ Most importantly, in the United Kingdom the figure was 29 percent, which served as a reflection and a reason for the sharply increased salience of immigration in the campaign preceding the May 2010 parliamentary elections.

The situation in the United Kingdom seems to be exceptional, however. In most European countries the debate is fully focused on the dire economic situation and the worrying increase in unemployment, but immigration plays little role. In the United States, the political debate in 2010 was dominated by health care and the country's financial system and rising debt load.. However, with health care by and large concluded, and President Obama's promise to propose comprehensive immigration reform, immigration will undoubtedly move to the center of the political debate in the coming months. It remains to be seen how this will impact the further development of the Tea Party movement, although it seems plausible that this will further strengthen already clearly present nativist tendencies in the United States.

¹¹⁵ See, among many others, Bruno Waterfield, Henry Samuel, and Nick Squires, "European Elections 2009: Far-Right and Fringe Parties Make Gains across Europe Amid Low Turnout," *Daily Telegraph*, June 8, 2009.

¹¹⁶ Patrick Barta and Paul Hannon, "Economic Crisis Curbs Migration of Workers," *Wall Street Journal*, July 1, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124636924020073241.html>.

¹¹⁷ Demetrios G. Papademetriou and Aaron Terrazas, *Immigrants and the Current Economic Crisis: Research Evidence, Policy Challenges, and Implications* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2009), www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/lmi_recessionJan09.pdf.

¹¹⁸ *Standard Eurobarometer*, no.70, August 2008.

¹¹⁹ *Eurobaromètre Standard*, no.72, February 2010.

VIII. Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, many of the assumptions about the relationship between immigration and nativism are based upon feeble empirical evidence. In many cases academic research is inconclusive, not in the least because of a lack of reliable cross-national data. Hence, it is absolutely vital that more cross-national data projects are created, and supported over longer periods of time. Recent developments like the EUMC and the European Social Survey are important steps forward. Nevertheless, it is critical that policymakers base their assumptions about policy and law on what we do know. Policy-relevant findings from the literature include:

- *The most extreme reactions to migration and migrants are fomented by the radical or extreme right, not the left, but their popularity is highly circumscribed across North America, Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe.*

The most important extremist reaction to immigration comes from radical-right parties in Western Europe. However, radical-right parties are successful only in a minority of European countries; and not at all in North America. In the United States, the most important nativist actors are nonparty organizations, which are at times well connected to mainstream media and politicians. In addition, extreme-right violence against immigrants is a significant problem in some countries, including Germany and Russia. Research shows that this violence is not directly related to radical-right parties; as far as the perpetrators are active within political organizations, it is in small neo-Nazi groups and skinhead gangs.

- *Migration patterns do not drive radical-right voting although immigration as a political issue has contributed their electoral success.*

There is no straightforward relationship between immigration patterns and radical-right voting. Immigration has to be *translated* into a political issue, which involves many different steps. And while immigration is certainly not the single issue of the radical right, it clearly plays an important role in their propaganda and their electoral success.

- *There is no clear relationship — either way — between rising numbers of immigrants and extremist incidents.*

Logically, with the growth of the immigrant population, anti-immigrant crimes have increased too. However, there is no clear relationship between the electoral strength of a radical-right party in a country and the level of anti-immigrant violence. As the EUMC started to collect reliable cross-national data several years ago, future research might find more conclusive evidence on the exact relationship between the two factors.

- *Have public attitudes to immigrants, largely negative, driven increasing support for radical-right parties? Is globalization rather than immigration a better explanatory variable for support for right wing extremists?*

Mass attitudes towards immigration and immigrants have always been relatively negative, in the sense that at the very least a large minority in every country will hold nativist attitudes. While radical-right groups have clearly profited from this, they tap into only a minority of the nativist population.

- *The radical right frame the immigration debate consistently across countries focusing on two main themes: cultural threat (recently amalgamated as a cultural-religious threat) and a security threat (recently amalgamated as a criminal-terrorist threat). Secondary themes include economic competition and an anti-elite/anti-politics narrative.*

Although individual parties will emphasize specific points more than others in their discourse, all share a roughly similar set of themes. The key theme is cultural, in which immigrants are considered a threat to the cultural homogeneity of the nation because of an inability or unwillingness to assimilate. In recent years, the cultural has been accompanied by a religious theme, in which (radical) Islam is seen as a threat to liberal democratic values. All parties also share a strong security theme, in which immigration is linked to (petty) crime and, increasingly, terrorism. Two secondary themes are the economic, in which immigration is seen as a threat to the wealth of welfare of the nation, and the political, where a corrupt elite is accused of using immigration for its own financial and political gains. Of all these themes, the security, religious, and economic have been most adopted by mainstream actors, though often in watered down versions.

- *States have tightened immigration policies but the radical right is only one causal factor; furthermore counterforces, particularly state-sponsored anti-discrimination laws have blunted the rise of more extremist parties.*

There is no doubt that European countries have tightened their immigration policies in recent decades. However, the electoral pressure of radical-right parties has been only one of many important factors. In many cases the most important policies were implemented well before the radical right became successful. Moreover, European integration complicates the distinction between domestic and international factors. There is an increasing pressure on developing an EU-wide migration policy; while this is yet to be implemented, national policies have already started to converge significantly.

But not everything has gone the radical right's way. In various countries anti-racist and pro-immigrant groups have sprung up in direct reaction to radical-right success, pushing through an alternative, pro-immigration discourse. These initiatives have often been subsidized and expanded by local and national government. Finally, many states have used anti-discrimination legislation to hinder the development of the radical right, including the banning of political parties.

- *There is a complex relationship between immigration and extremism, where some parties have profited, especially in Western Europe though many countries do not have a relevant party — and not at all in Central and Eastern Europe.*

In conclusion, the relationship between immigration and extremism is unclear and complex. Increased levels of immigration have given rise to nativist reactions in Europe and North America, but not yet in Central and Eastern Europe. While immigration has helped some radical-right parties obtain moderate electoral success, most European and North American countries do not have a politically influential nativist movement. And while nativist sentiments and organizations have played a role in the tightening of immigration laws, particularly those regarding asylum, they have lost the big battle, as both Western Europe and North America are increasingly true multicultural societies.

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