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IMMIGRATION AND THE EXTREME RIGHT: AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT VOTING TRENDS IN WESTERN EUROPE

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Abstract

Western European politics have been marked over the last couple of decades by a fierce debate about the place of Europe's increasingly large immigrant population in society. Across the continent, far-right parties campaigning on nationalistic platforms opposing immigration have seen great electoral success. The debate is undoubtedly becoming more heated as more immigrants pour into the area, and these anti-immigrant parties seem to have established themselves in the political arena. Immigration does not appear to be slowing down at any point in the near future, so what is going to happen to these far-right parties as we move into the future? My research sought to answer this question and offer a more optimistic outlook on the situation. The most popular opinions view the relationship between immigrant population size and anti-immigrant electoral support as a simple positive linear correlation, meaning that there is little hope that the existing enmity will do anything but increase. I hoped to show that the relationship is, in fact, curvilinear. In the case of these immigrants, a curvilinear relationship would indicate strong xenophobic voting until the immigrant population becomes so large that the non-immigrants become more accustomed to the presence of those that they formerly viewed as "outsiders." What I discovered was that an alternative hypothesis provided the best description. As the immigrant population increased, the support for the far right actually decreased. This "contact hypothesis" shows that the increased population leads to increased interaction with immigrants and the weakening of stereotypes perpetuated by the extreme right.

Introduction

As Europe moves forward into the 21st century, it faces a stark new reality. The end of the Cold War, combined with the burgeoning integration that would lead to the European Union as we know it today, raised hopes of a more peaceful and successful Europe for the new millennium. However, issues of migration did not take long in exposing deep fault lines in this new, unified European community. Conflicts are no longer along ideological lines of capitalism versus communism, but rather along lines of ethnicity and religion. Strong national allegiances are slowly giving way to concerns and questions about the very nature of the nation's identity. The undeniable truth of the past several decades is that the face of Europe is changing, facilitated in part by historically low birth rates among so-called "ethnic" Europeans.

Responses to these demographic shifts have varied, with some viewing them as an opportunity for further development,

and others seeing them as a challenge to perceived European values. Some of the most vehement reactions come from far-right anti-immigrant political parties. Though these groups have yet to achieve governing status in most governments, their voices have proven to be very influential in the immigration debate. A mere glimpse of recent headlines shows this to be true, as a series of measures have been implemented that disproportionately affect immigrant communities.

In recent years, European immigration research has focused on the motivations for anti-immigrant attitudes. Existing studies have examined the relationship between these attitudes and the size of the outgroup, in this case, immigrants. This relationship is typically explained as a result of one of two phenomena: competition or contact theory, each of which is discussed further. My aim was to propose and subsequently test a set of hypotheses which reconcile these two theoretical approaches by incorporating elements of both into a single parsimonious model. At the center of my proposed model and the innovative aspect of my research, is the replacement of the linear models used in both contact and competition theories with a curvilinear description of the research question proposed here: what is the relationship between levels of electoral support for far right anti-immigrant parties and the size of the immigrant population? I turn first to a discussion of the patterns of migration in Europe and then of the political responses to those patterns.

History of the Migrant Influx

The massive migration that marked the second half of the 20th century in Europe was born out of the rubble of the Second World War. The reconstruction of a continent ravaged by war required more than the mere replacement of damaged and destroyed buildings. Entire economies and societies had to be rebuilt. While much of the money for the reconstruction efforts was supplied by the United States through the Marshall Plan, there was not enough labor to support the rapidly growing economy of the reemerging Europe. As a result, many countries began to look beyond their borders to find new workers, actively recruiting through two primary methods: guest worker programs and colonial migration regimes.

The clearest example of a nation that used the guest worker approach is Germany, whose program for *Gastarbeiter* brought in workers from southern Europe and beyond, particularly Turkey. The government established a series of bilateral agreements with each country to allow workers to move to West Germany in order to support and drive the economic boom. Between 1955

and 1973 alone, the West German government recruited over 2.5 million of these guest workers (Boswell, 2005). Under the plan, workers were to return to their home countries during economic slowdowns, with the hope of returning to Germany once the economy rebounded. Initially, the *Gastarbeiter* program saw spectacular success, and during the first major postwar recession, many did return to their homelands (Hansen 2003).

The great colonial powers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries faced many of the same issues as Germany after the war, but approached the recruitment of labor in a different way in order to take advantage of the resources provided to them through the territories still under their rule. Among these were Great Britain, Belgium, and France. Many of their economies were not seeing the rapid growth of the Germans or other European powers, and were thus less attractive to prospective workers. Rather than initiating bilateral agreements, these countries instead made all inhabitants of their colonies full citizens (primarily as a result of other political pressures), granting a host of unskilled laborers unrestricted movement to the home country (Hansen 2003). Soon South Asians were pouring into Great Britain, as France saw similar movement from Algeria, which was technically a part of the French state rather than a colony.

With the global economic slowdown resulting from the 1973 oil crisis, the vast majority of economic and labor immigration ground to a halt. However, rather than stopping the migrant flow into Europe, this halt simply shifted the reason for movement. Governments began limiting the influx of workers and implementing measures to encourage existing workers to move back to their native countries. However, these measures had the unintended effect of solidifying the presence of existing workers. Business owners did not want to lose well-trained and experienced labor without the hope for replacements willing to work for low pay. The immigrants themselves were hesitant to leave, fearing that they would not be able to return once the economy had regained speed (Lucassen, 2005).

The Germans went so far as to limit the amount given as family allowances for children abroad, but instead of forcing the workers to return home, their children came to Germany (Lucassen, 2005). Across Europe, the primary reason for migration became family reunification, and the wives, children, and parents of immigrant workers began to move to rejoin the young males that had moved to find work. Early attempts by European governments to limit family immigration were met with stiff human rights opposition and were often foiled in courts, thus allowing reunification to move forward. During this period, the labor migration that did occur was restricted to high skilled laborers (Geddes, 2003).

The shift to family reunification heavily impacted native European views of immigrants. Whereas many members of the first wave of labor immigrants had been tolerated given their contribution to economic development, the influx of non-working migrant women, children, and elderly was viewed as more of a cultural threat. It was at this point that the considerable difference in birth rates between immigrants and natives began to manifest itself. The decision of many immigrants to remain in place for

the long term, coupled with the arrival of their families (and the resulting offspring), produced a rapidly expanding immigrant population while native populations stagnated (Statham 2003).

The changing face of Europe will have major consequences for the future, especially in the area of religion. What was once a homogenously Christian (overwhelming Roman Catholic) Europe has already begun to disintegrate, as the major influxes of non-European immigrants come from regions of Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia with predominantly Muslim populations. The growth of Islam across Europe is one of the greatest lines of conflict that has been established between immigrants and native Europeans. It is a trend playing out across the continent. While ethnic European birthrates plummet, Muslim immigrant birthrates remain very high. The total Muslim population of Europe is projected to double by 2015, while ethnic Europeans are likely to decline by 3.5 percent. The trend is even larger in cities, many of which are expected to be half foreign or more within the century (Shore, 2006).

The Political Response

The growth in immigration has been mirrored in many areas by a rise of numerous far right anti-immigrant political parties that have capitalized on a spreading xenophobia within Europe. These parties are not geographically constrained to a single country and have gained footholds in a number of nations that have long been heralded as examples of liberalism and tolerance. In fact, one of the most successful examples of this phenomenon is the *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (SVP) of Switzerland. In the 2007 federal elections, the SVP was able to garner 28% of the vote, the highest vote total for any single party in Swiss history. The SVP has been able to rally support around its extremely restrictive immigration policies, including a controversial ban on the construction of minarets that was approved via national referendum in late 2009. At the time of the vote, there were only four minarets in the entire country, none of which were used for a call to prayer (Erlanger, 2009).

Another famous example of a far right party that has thrived on its anti-immigrant positions is seen in France. The post-crisis era saw the rise of *Front National*, a far-right party that found its cause in the anti-immigrant movement. Led by archconservative Jean-Marie Le Pen, *Front National* saw modest electoral success, consistently exceeding 10% in multiparty federal elections, and gaining seats in the European Parliament. Le Pen's strongest support came as a result of his vocal criticism of immigrant groups. In 1984, 39% of the National Front voters cited immigration as their primary concern, and in 1986, this number jumped to 60% of the same voting group (Golder, 2003). Today, *Front National* advocates for the cancellation of family reunification immigration, shortening the permitted stay from 10 to 3 years, and sending criminals back to the country of origin (Front National, 2010).

The *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, Austrian Freedom Party, traces its roots all the way back to the Nazi occupation of Austria. Though it was not officially formed until 1956, as the conglomeration of three different right-wing groups, it was strongly associated with the fervently nationalistic and

conservative positions of the Nazi party. It saw little success for most of the Cold War, typically garnering just 6-7% of the national vote. By the early 1980s, the party was beginning to splinter, as many of the more conservative elements were unhappy with the increasingly liberal leadership of Norbert Steger.

Both the party's goals and its subsequent fortunes underwent dramatic shifts in 1986 when Jörg Haider supplanted Steger as head of the party. It was at this point that the FPÖ began taking on a more stridently anti-immigrant image, a perception that Haider readily fostered and used to help boost the party to nearly 10 percent of the vote in November of the same year. Just over a decade later, the Freedom Party had become a force to be reckoned with in Austrian politics. It shocked outside observers by capturing almost 27 percent of the vote in the 1999 federal elections, enough to push the party into second place and into part of a governing coalition with the center-right Austrian People's Party. Though few parties outside of the government were willing to deal with the Freedom Party, it managed nonetheless to legislate a more restrictive immigration policy that ultimately cut asylum applications by more than a half (Luther, 2004). The following years saw a tapering off of support for a party that best functioned as a voice of opposition, and support was further deflated when Haider himself died in a car accident in 2008.

Interestingly, the United Kingdom and some countries of Southern Europe have not seen comparable political movements against immigration. While parties espousing such positions certainly exist, they have not come close to replicating the success of Front National or the FPÖ. The reason for this lack of success is unclear. It may be a result of any number of differences across European nations, ranging from structural factors, like minor party access to the ballot, to individual level factors, such as voter tolerance or lack thereof.

Several existing studies analyzing support for extreme right parties (ERPs) at the individual level, for example, have pointed out the strong positive correlation between anti-immigrant or xenophobic attitudes and a voter's likelihood to support an ERP candidate (Lubbers, Scheepers and Gijsberts 2002; Knigge 1998). As Kessler (2005) points out, the relationship is rather self-evident: "These prospective extreme right voters express a host of imagined or real grievances, blaming migrants for perceived reductions in the quality of children's education, abuse of the welfare system, increases in unemployment, and rises in crime, violence, and delinquency" (273).

One key analytical advantage that researchers in the area are presented with is the aforementioned variability across European countries in terms of ERP support, since it allows us to hold certain variables relatively constant while others vary. I return to this theme in my research design section, which follows a discussion of current theoretical explanations for the growth in anti-immigrant sentiments.

Theoretical Perspectives

Competition Theory

Currently, of the two common explanations for anti-immigrant attitudes, the predominant one is the idea of ethnic competition (Knigge 1998, Lubbers *et al.* 2002, Scheepers *et*

al. 2002, Alexseev 2006). It is based in the concept of realistic group conflict theory, which seeks to explain the tensions between groups seeking resources and power in a society (Coser 1956, Duke 1976). Essentially, when one group has access to limited resources, any increase in demand for those resources (i.e. the arrival of an outgroup) becomes a threat to those that originally had access, the ingroup. The closer the relationship between the two groups, the more vigorous the competition between them becomes. Thus, as the size of an outgroup increases, the contact that individuals in the ingroup have with them increases as well. Elevated awareness of the existence of the outgroup in turn leads to an escalation in the level of competition, manifesting itself in increased hostility towards the newcomers (Banton, 1983).

According to competition theory then, migration directly results in an antagonistic relationship between ingroup and outgroup. The basis upon which members of each group delineate themselves from the 'other' may be language, ethnicity, or religion. Distinctions such as these help to clearly delineate the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup, thus eliminating the possibility of boundary dissolution over time.

The question of ethnic competition then turns to the matter of the resources that are being fought over. Some studies have focused primarily on competition for basic needs and resources. Included in this grouping would be issues such as employment and access to education, among other government provided services (Campbell 1965; Sherif 1966). A less tangible but no less potent resource may be that of culture and identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

France's long simmering immigration debate has featured both of these types of resource conflicts, laid bare with tragic consequences in the tumultuous autumn of 2005. In that year, the deaths of two immigrant teenagers sparked a series of riots around Paris and across the country. Thousands of cars were burned by rioters that were predominantly young immigrant men. What had started as anger over the deaths boiled over into a national crisis as the riots became an outlet for many of these working-age men to express their frustrations at the lack of employment opportunities available to them. According to Ford, immigrant rage at pernicious discrimination and dismal job prospects provides an unequivocal example of materialistic competition (Ford, 2005).

Equally contentious was the issue of the 2004 ban on the wearing of headscarves in public schools. Some native French view the headscarf as a symbol of outsiders amongst them, fearing a loss of identity as that population grows. Regardless of the source of inter-group competition, the consequences are similar if not identical.

Thus, according to competition theory, increases in the size of the outgroup, in this case immigrants, will coincide with proportional increases in electoral support for ERPs as a result of increased threat to the ingroup's resource pool. The resulting relationship will be a positive and linear.

Contact Theory

Contact theory posits the opposite effect, arguing that the size of the outgroup actually has a negative relationship with anti-immigrant attitudes. In simple terms, it is easy to vote for

parties that demonize immigrants when one has little contact with those immigrants. As an unknown specter, immigrants can take on whatever characteristics an ERP may wish to apply to them. However, once a voter has contact with immigrants, they are able to make the judgment for themselves, and their conclusion rarely coincide with public portrayals put forth by ERPs.

Williams (1947) points out that most actions undertaken to resolve intergroup conflict rest upon the assumption that increased contact results in personal connections that overcome the competition impulse. McLaren (2003) found evidence to support this theory in the case of European immigration. In her research, those who had multiple immigrant friends perceived the general immigrant community to be a lesser threat than those who had no contact with immigrants.

Early research on the contact hypothesis posited that it only applied in very limited circumstances that were rarely seen. Conditions put forth by Allport (1954) included equal status, common goals, and support for contact from authority. In many of the migration situations seen in Europe, meeting these conditions was practically impossible. Later work expanded on Allport's, saying that contact could increase anti-outgroup sentiment just as much as it could decrease it. Amir (1969) makes this point, citing some of the component ideas of realistic group conflict theory. He then develops Allport's conditions, positing that the contact must be desired, and that it can either occur between members of equal status or a member of the majority and a outgroup member of even higher social status. This difference in socioeconomic status is an important distinction in assessing the validity of contact theory. Essentially, it states that horizontal contact, such as that between a Moroccan immigrant worker and his working-class Dutch neighbor, will result in a much greater shift in attitude than the vertical contact between a wealthy Austrian family and their Turkish house workers.

However, more recent research has shown that contact does not have to occur under such stringent settings. Pettigrew (1998) found that even relatively coincidental contact could result in improved relations between ingroup and outgroup. An earlier study in German schools had found similar results, tying leisure time and the incidental contact with Turks that it provided to decreasing prejudice against the outgroup (Wagner, Hewstone, & Machleit, 1989).

A Tipping Point?

While the competition versus contact theoretical debate has been going on for some time now, there has been little research into a middle ground between the two. Both sides certainly have considerable research and evidence to back up their claims, but interaction between them is notably absent. This is particularly interesting given that both hypotheses seem to fall apart as we approach their extremes. Under ethnic competition theory, a population fully saturated with immigrants would have the highest rates of anti-immigrant voting, a clearly illogical conclusion as these immigrants would be unlikely to vote against their own interests. On the other hand, the contact hypothesis faces issues at the opposite extreme: completely homogenous communities, those devoid of immigrants, would hypothetically have the highest rates

of support for anti-immigrant parties. Again, this does not follow, as the community would assumedly have very little cause to vote against a nonexistent population.

In almost all of the existing literature, the assumption of linearity seems to be taken as a certainty rather than as a part of the hypothesis. Schlueter and Scheepers (2009) even conducted a study testing both hypotheses simultaneously on the same data, finding significant support for both theories. Despite this seemingly contradictory result, the authors failed to present any challenge to the linear model. The possibility of a curvilinear relationship, made up of the simultaneously acting theories, offers a potential solution to this contradiction.

Such an idea has been put forward by Schneider (2007) but even Schneider did not seem to think that the relationship was entirely curvilinear, in that she predicted a "tapering off" of ERP voting rather than a decrease. Her study looked at the issue at the national level, analyzing 20 different EU countries. Two other authors have recently found evidence for a curve, but both are in limited settings. Rather than focusing on all non-European immigrants as the outgroup, one study zeroed in on Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands, and the other looked only at the performance of the Vlaams Blok in Belgium (Rink et al. 2009; Savelkoul, et al. 2010). Again, in both of the cases, the curve seemed to be more of a tapering off than a decrease in support for the extreme right.

Hypotheses

The first two hypotheses that I tested stemmed from the predominant theories of competition and contact. The decreasing access to resources referenced in competition theory indicates a positive linear relationship between immigrant population size and ERP voting, the relationship presented in my first hypothesis. Contact theory led to my second hypothesis, which asserts that increasing immigrant population size will lead, in turn, to increased opportunities for contact and interaction, thus *decreasing* xenophobia and electoral support for ERPs. Whereas the first hypothesis was a positive linear relationship, this second hypothesis postulates instead a negative linear relationship.

A curvilinear relationship would indicate that ethnic competition begins as the stronger factor, driving anti-immigrant sentiment for a time, but once the outgroup population reaches a certain size, the augmented opportunities for interaction with the ingroup lead to a strengthening of the contact theory, bringing the curve back down after a maximum point of anti-immigrant voting. This curvilinear relationship became my third hypothesis to be tested, and in doing so I both incorporated existing theories and also posited a relationship that would fill a gap that heretofore has existed in the literature on ERP support and immigration.

Levels of Analysis

One of the very important matters that had to be addressed in this case was the level of analysis. In the existing literature, the scope of studies varied from continent-wide, analyzing at the national level and including various examples (Lubbers 2002), to looking at subnational units as small as counties in a single country (Alexseev, 2006). The level chosen can have a significant impact on the results, as it also indicates a shift in the resource

pool referred to for competition theory. As Quillian (1996) points out, “The correct unit at which to measure the influences is difficult to define precisely, since people probably picture relations between their own racial group and other racial groups at more than one level (city, state, region, or nation) depending on the context.”

This debate also brings into account a previously mentioned issue about the contact hypothesis, and that is the question of the nature of the contact. If growing immigrant populations are confined to ethnic ghettos, it becomes very unlikely that voters will have the opportunity for chance interactions that would hypothetically be expected to shift their attitudes. In some cases, it may even serve to intensify competition as it adds geography to the list of factors that can be used to draw the boundary between ingroup and outgroup.

A substantial portion of the existing research also looks at the issue at the individual level, examining individual socioeconomic, demographic, and opinion data to see its effect on anti-immigrant voting. For example, McLaren (2003) explores the relationship using survey responses that discuss the threat perception of individual voters, and then links it with immigrant contact and ERP support. Other studies that bring economic level and education into account have shown a significant relationship between those factors and ERP support, and unlike threat perception, these factors can be analyzed easily at a level greater than the individual, and thus were incorporated into my analysis.

In this research, data was analyzed at the first-order civil division level for each nation (the level of administration just below the central state government), as previous research has shown the effect of immigration on voting patterns to be higher when evaluated at the level of smaller units (Alexseev 2006). Additionally, subnational analysis appeared more warranted since public opinion is very rarely homogenous at the national level, but often does begin to demonstrate more convergence as the unit of analysis decreases.¹ Breaking from the typical approach taken by researchers in this field, I concentrated on the subnational analysis, but it spanned across four different case nations in order to test the hypotheses in more varied environments.

The scales and autonomy of first-order civil divisions among my cases varied substantially. The simplest measure of regions is the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) established by the European Union for the purposes of EuroStat, the EU statistical database. The NUTS for all EU countries are divided into 4 levels: NUTS 0 is the national level, NUTS 1 is the next largest, then down to the smallest NUTS 3 divisions. For most of these countries, NUTS 1 is simply an agglomeration of administrative regions with little meaning in the national context. In Austria, Spain, and Belgium, NUTS 2 actually corresponds directly with the first order administrative regions.

However, the NUTS designations for the United Kingdom do in fact correspond with a relevant layer of administration, namely

Government Office Regions, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.² Furthermore, while boundaries of lower NUTS levels typically correspond with voting districts, this is not so in the UK, thus necessitating the use of the NUTS 1 level in its case. Since the data for the control variables all came from an EU database, the indicator variables are all defined within the NUTS regions and using smaller divisions than NUTS 1 would have introduced a great deal of error into the models. Therefore, I worked at the NUTS 2 level in all countries except the United Kingdom. Even given this apparent disparity, there was a rough balance across case nations as each country included between 10 and 20 regions at the specified levels. As well, there was complete balance in terms of the number of elections analyzed with two cycles examined for each of the case countries, thus yielding a total number of 100 observations.

The dependent variable in this case was the percentage of votes garnered by extreme right parties in European Parliament elections. Using the results of a survey conducted by Lubbers (2000), I was able to classify parties in each country. The survey polled 150 European political scientists, asking them to place parties on a left to right ideological scale with 1 being far left and 10 being far right, and to rank these parties by the restrictiveness of their proposed immigration policies. I focused exclusively on parties that qualify as “extreme right” on both of these measures, those with a score greater than nine on each scale.

On the basis of Lubbers’ scale, I chose four countries for my analysis: Belgium, Spain, Austria, and the United Kingdom. There were actually six parties in the final analysis, given the division of Belgium between the Dutch-speaking Flanders and francophone Wallonia as well as the existence of two Spanish extreme right parties on Lubbers’ scale. The parties were: *Vlaams Blok* (VP) of Flanders, *Front National* (FN) of Wallonia, the *British National Party* (BNP), *Democracia Nacional* (DN) and the *Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (FE de las JONS) of Spain, and the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) of Austria. Over the span of time that I measured, some of these parties saw significant organizational changes. For example, the *Vlaams Blok* actually became the *Vlaams Belang* as of late 2004 after a court ruled that the *Blok* had violated laws against xenophobic incitement.

Immigrant population size can be measured in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of this research, I defined that variable as the percentage of non-European Union legal residents. This is because the lack of border controls between EU countries, a result of the 1984 Schengen agreement, makes internal migration more fluid and thus more difficult to measure with precision. Also, the ethnic and cultural boundaries between groups involved in conflict are more substantial with non-EU migrants than with other EU members. While an Italian immigrant in France may face considerable difficulty with regards to language, he is still navigating in a society very similar to his own, with nearly identical values. The same cannot be said for an Algerian in

¹ Unfortunately, I did not have access to individual level data in these areas. Any analysis of the results of this research must therefore avoid the ecological fallacy, that is, using the behavior of the group as a whole to predict the action of an individual.

² Northern Ireland was eliminated from the analysis given that the British National Party did not run in their elections.

France. His color, accent and faith all set him apart from the rest of the “native” population, and he is much more likely to evoke a response as he is more clearly a member of the outgroup under the provisions of realistic group contact theory. While a measure of immigrant population that included illegal immigrants would be ideal, this information is understandably difficult to attain with any measure of validity.

My analysis involved model estimations using multivariate ordinary least squares regression. The models provided coefficients that indicated the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Since I hypothesized a curvilinear relationship between extreme right support and our primary predictor variable, outgroup size, I introduced a quadratic term (squaring the immigrant population size) to test for curvilinearity. While the numerical values associated with this squared term provide little useful information, the sign of the term will tell us whether or not a curve is present. A positive linear coefficient in combination with a negative quadratic coefficient indicates a curvilinear relationship of the sort predicted in my hypothesis (i.e., one resembling the classic normal bell curve).

I also tested for linear relationships with other variables, drawn from the existing research literature on the topic of extreme right electoral support, in order to account for their effect on the general trends. While education level is one of the most widely used predictors of this support, I included income level, economic status, and urbanization, as discussed in the following section.

Cases and Data

My dependent variable was the percentage vote received by the ERPs in the European Parliamentary elections of 2004 and 2009 respectively, derived using information contained in the European Election Database (Norwegian Social Science Data Services, 2011). There are two reasons that the European Parliament elections were used as valid measures of support for this study.³

The first is the centralization of migration-related powers that has occurred over the past two decades. The EU is seeking to and has succeeded in broadening its capability to deal with migration as a Europe-wide issue (Geddes, 2003). The immigration debate has been cast in terms of a monolithic European culture by many of the extreme right parties analyzed here. As put by Geert Wilders in a speech to the British House of Lords regarding Muslim immigration, largely Turkish and North African: “Islam means submission, there cannot be any mistake about its goal. That’s a given. The question is whether we in Europe and you in Britain, with your glorious past, will submit or stand firm for your heritage” (Wilders, 2010). As the identity set in conflict with the immigrant is defined as a pan-European one with a common heritage, it would make sense that voters in perceived conflict with

the outgroup would seek solutions at the Europe-wide level.

The second strength of EP election data is the increased influence that the body has wielded in the last decade. The 2004 and 2009 elections followed a period of growth resulting from the treaties of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Voting reforms had strengthened the Parliament in comparison with the powerful European Commission and Council of Ministers, with the co-decision process giving it an essential veto on many important policy matters. A turning point for the institution came in 1998 when, after years of largely rubber-stamp work, the Parliament refused the budget of EU Commissioner Jacques Santer and eventually forced the resignation of his entire commission due to allegations of corruption and gross mismanagement (Topan, 2002). With a newly empowered Parliament, it is much more likely that voters in recent years would see the body as a potential agent of change to a greater degree than they had prior to 1992.

The makeup of the non-EU immigrant populations in these countries also provided an interesting and useful comparison. The United Kingdom, as a result of its colonial legacy, is primarily a destination for South Asian immigrants. Austria has a more varied makeup. Following the example of its neighbor Germany, it recruited massive numbers of Turkish workers, but there are also sizeable numbers of former Balkan residents who moved to flee the wars there during the 1990s. Spain, unlike the others, has many immigrants from Latin America as it is a natural destination for the continent’s Spanish speakers. Its geographic proximity to North Africa has also led to large Moroccan and Algerian communities in some areas. Belgium’s immigrants are also primarily Moroccan, though they live alongside a considerable Turkish population as well, and were recruited as guest workers.

The four selected countries provided the opportunity to test my hypotheses across a range of demographic configurations. The proportion of immigrants of non-European origin in Belgium is only 2.9%, the lowest of the four and among the lowest in Western Europe, whereas Austria has the largest foreign presence of the four, nearly 7% of their populace (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). The cases also show variance on the side of the dependent variable, as far-right parties like the Vlaams Blok and the Freedom Party have seen considerable success in Belgium and Austria, whereas the Spanish anti-immigrant party, Democracia Nacional, has never generated a significant amount of support.

Choosing an accurate measure of the education levels in each region proved to be a challenge. As with all of the variables, there are no individual level measures for participating voters, so I needed some contextual measure of education levels for the region as a whole. The data that I used came from the quarterly Labor Force Survey (LFS) conducted by member nations under the auspices of EU control. “The EU LFS is a large household sample survey providing quarterly results on labor participation of people aged 15 and over as well as on persons outside the

³ European Parliament elections are under the control of member countries, but provide a more standardized measure. They enable us to eliminate variation introduced by time differences that may have occurred between individual national elections. Elections consist of national parties who then sit in large ideological coalitions once seated in Parliament. The extreme right parties analyzed here all sit as *non-inscrits*, not part of any coalition.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for all variables included in the model.

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Percent support for ERPs	100	.04	27.47	5.64	6.31
Percentage of immigrants	100	.72	13.60	4.57	3.41
Unemployment Rate	100	2.90	26.20	9.28	5.41
Percentage with Tertiary Education	100	12.52	48.54	27.52	7.53
Gross Domestic Product per capita (indexed to EU average)	100	60	256	112.05	34.10
Percentage of region with low urbanization	100	.00	1.00	.25	.24
Valid N (listwise)	100				

labor force. All definitions apply to persons aged 15 years and over living in private households” (EuroStat, 2010). The highest level of education attained was defined on the education levels of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), established by UNESCO in 1997.

The LFS data aggregates these levels into three groups: respondents with only primary level education or none at all, respondents who have completed secondary education, and respondents who have completed tertiary education, be it university or some kind of professional degree. The figures used in this study represent percentages of the total respondents and exclude respondents in the 15-24 age bracket. The logic of this exclusion is that such individuals would in the first instance likely still be pursuing completion of their secondary or tertiary studies, and in the second instance, those under 18 would not have been eligible to vote in the elections being analyzed.

Two different measures were used to determine the impact of economic context upon the dependent variables. The first, unemployment rate, provided a measure of economic competition at the contextual level. Competition theory would predict a positive relationship between the unemployment rate and ERP support, as greater numbers of people looking for jobs would theoretically lead to a heightened sense of competition with the outgroup.

The other economic measure provided a sense of income distribution between regional units. This data also comes from EuroStat’s Labor Force Survey, as I utilized the Gross Domestic Product per capita of each region⁴. To avoid the cross-national distortions that using raw amounts would introduce, I indexed the amounts to the average regional GDP per capita for the entire European Union, setting it equal to 100 and normalizing the other values around it. All amounts were measured in Euros to account for differences in exchange rates.

The final control variable included was a measure of urbanization. While not frequently cited as an important factor in the literature, I included it because of the role that segregation of outgroup communities can play in both competition and contact

theories. As Massey and Denton (1989) find in the case of the United States, the segregation of black communities actually increased when one looks at more metropolitan areas. On a basic level, this makes sense since urban areas would be more likely magnets for immigration and thus have larger immigrant populations. The larger population can then in turn lead to a more self-sufficient outgroup community. The effect of this “ghettoization” is the same under both contact and competition theory. It both limits opportunities for contact and deepens lines of division, leading to more ERP support in both cases.

The data on urbanization levels also came from the Labor Force Survey. It provides the number of households in each region based on the population density of their immediate area. There are three levels of urbanization: densely populated (more than 500 inhabitants per square kilometer), intermediate (between 100 and 499 inhabitants per square kilometer), and sparsely populated (less than 100 inhabitants per square kilometer). To facilitate analysis, I turned each of these numbers into percentages of the total respondents divided by urbanization level.

Results

I estimated two separate models using SPSS statistical analysis software. Results are displayed in Table 2. The first model tested my first two hypotheses regarding the apparently contradictory linear predictions of contact versus competition theory. As both of these hypothesized relationships were linear, the quadratic term was not included. All of the tested variables were significant at the .01 level except for the unemployment rate. The model had a very robust adjusted R-square value of 0.489, meaning that the model could account for 48.9% of the variation across cases. The negative estimated coefficient on the predictor variable, percentage of immigrants, indicates decreasing electoral support for the ERPs as immigrant population increases, thus leading me to reject my first hypothesis. My second hypothesis based upon contact theory, by contrast, is supported by the regression analysis.

Model II introduced a quadratic term to test my third

Table 2. Regression results displaying independent variables, estimated coefficient (expressing probability to vote for an extreme right party) and standard error in parentheses; (N= 100)

Variable	Model I	Model II
Constant	10.631 (3.128)**	13.212 (3.647)**
Percentage of immigrants	-0.817 (0.196)**	-1.569 (.586)**
(Percentage of immigrants) ²		0.062 (.046)
Percentage with tertiary level education	-0.333 (0.078)**	-0.346 (0.078)**
Percentage of region with low urbanization	-8.250 (2.294)**	-8.119 (2.286)**
Unemployment Rate	-0.178 (.117)	-0.192 (0.117)
Gross Domestic Product per capita (indexed to EU average)	0.104 (.022)**	0.098 (0.023)**

⁴ One important caveat to the use of GDP per capita is that, given its nature as an average, outliers, typically high outliers, can throw it off and thus it may not provide a full picture of regional income without distribution data.

hypothesis, which posits a curvilinear relationship between immigrant population size and ERP support. The adjusted R-square value was marginally higher: 0.499. In this model, we see a stronger negative correlation with the linear term, but the squared term is not significant. The results of the second model provided greater support for my second hypothesis than for either of the other two hypothesized models, including my curvilinear one.

Discussion

Hypotheses

The strong evidence for contact theory provided by my regression models was initially a surprise, as ethnic competition has been the more dominant theory in much of the existing corpus of literature on the issue. Some aspects of the predictor variable, outgroup size, may have contributed to this result.

The first of these is the matter of my definition of the variable. Due to the limitations of available data, I was unable to get a full sense of the outgroup size. For example, I could not include illegal immigrants or immigrants that have been naturalized and left their original citizenship behind. While this information is available at the national level (Schneider, 2007) and occasionally at lower levels in specific circumstances (Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma, & Hagendoorn, 2010), there are no comparable data on these other segments of the migrant community at the regional level. It is quite possible that the communities with a smaller foreign national community have a large naturalized population that still functions as an outgroup, but goes unaccounted for in this model. Subsequent inquiries would be much enhanced with measurements of both the illegal and naturalized communities, as they would enable a more rigorous testing for the presence of a curvilinear relationship.

The second issue that may have contributed to my unexpected results is the absence of significant time differences in measurement. While the hypothesized curve does not include an explicit temporal measure indicator, it is possible that shifting contextual circumstances may mitigate the competition effect over time. As discussed earlier, immigration has long been framed as a Europe-wide issue, and the recession of the 1970s that began much of the backlash against immigration affected the continent as a whole. The presence of these extreme right parties, regardless of their levels of success, has been a feature of the European political landscape since that era. Ethnic competition theory proposes that increasing migrant presence increases awareness of conflict, thus deepening anti-immigrant sentiment. Given the extensive nature of anti-immigrant rhetoric that had existed for years before the elections analyzed in this study, perhaps the awareness of conflict had already been maximized, regardless of immigrant presence. Such a situation would leave decreases in anti-immigrant voting resulting from contact as the only effect significantly related with the size of the outgroup.

Other Variables of Interest

Most of the relationships with the independent control variables found in these results are consistent with the conventional wisdom of existing immigration research. I decided to use only tertiary education as the educational measure based

on support in the existing literature regarding what aspects of education impact outgroup perceptions. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2007) found that “college education has far greater positive effects on support for immigration than high school education, and finishing elementary schooling actually appears to have negative effects on support for immigration” (Hainmueller, 2007, p. 424). The negative correlation coefficient on the education variable seems to support Hainmueller’s finding that as the percentage of the population that has completed university or comparable studies rises, district-wide (not individual) support for ERPs decreases.

The relationship with urbanization levels also follows the expected pattern. Assuming that ghettoization could occur even in mid-sized urban areas, I utilized the low urbanization level data to explore the relationship with ERP voting. Given that the data used is a percentage that sums to one when combined with intermediate and high urbanization, higher percentages of sparsely populated area mean fewer people living in urban areas, and thus fewer opportunities for segregation. The results illustrate a very strong relationship between ERP vote and urbanization. As the proportion of the population living in sparsely populated areas increases, ERP support drops dramatically.

Unemployment was the only control variable included in the models that did not turn out to be statistically significant. In fact, this too coincides with preceding research. Numerous studies found unemployment rate to have an insignificant effect on ERP voting or threat perception (Lubbers et al. 2002; Scheepers, Gijssberts and Coenders 2002; Rink et al. 2009). However, several of these also found that, when occupational status was included at the individual level, unemployment did have a significant effect, at least on threat perception. Given that such individual measures were beyond the scope of this study, there is little alternative to accepting that at least at the regional level, unemployment is a poor indicator of community-wide anti-immigrant voting proclivities.

The coefficient associated with income, measured here using GDP per capita, presents a more complex issue. It was significant, but indicated a positive relationship. That is, as the income increased, so did the support for ERPs. Given the previously stated relationship with tertiary education, this may seem contradictory, since the wealthier are typically better educated. In fact, though, it does fit with the tenets of contact theory. Recall that the literature indicates that there exist two kinds of contact. Ameliorative effects only derive from horizontal, not vertical, contact. As Amir (1969) emphasizes, the equal status of those involved in contact is essential. As income rises, one is less likely to encounter an immigrant of equal socioeconomic status, since most immigrants initially enter in pursuit of low salary work. Under such conditions, the contact becomes increasingly vertical with increasing income, and thus less effective. As we have already found contact theory to be the dominant phenomenon at play in this case, the income relationship ultimately does comport with expectations.

Conclusion

Though the hypothesized curve did not find support in this study, the results still provide considerable reason for optimism in

Europe's coming years. The dominance of contact theory, whether it is in fact simply the downward portion of a curve that reached its maximum in the past or if it is truly the stronger phenomenon at play, is encouraging. The migrant influx shows no real signs of slowing, and Europe will be required to adapt to the presence of this new community as the community itself adapts to its new surroundings. My findings indicate that they are doing just that.

Though further research will be required to discover if national general election data matches that of the European Parliament elections analyzed here, the trend is occurring as the EP grows in influence and capacity. My results may not inform the impending policies of individual nations, but as the European Union is taking on a more active role in the integration of the immigration regimes of member nations, it seems that restrictive anti-immigrant parties will hold less sway in the creation of the common policy. These results are also important for those ultimately charged with the creation of such policies. While electoral support of ERPs is just one of many measures of xenophobia, this study indicates that programs that encourage contact may aid in integration of immigrants. Irrespective of the national milieu, environs that facilitate greater contact between natives and migrants, particularly horizontal contact, will coincide with decreases in support for those who use xenophobia as a political cudgel in pursuit of elected office.

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Mentor Comments: Professor Jeffrey Ryan's enthusiasm and respect for Andrew's work is clear in the following mentor comments.

From my perspective, not only as an advisor but a scholar as well, Andrew Walchuk's thesis is an exemplar of how an undergraduate student can conduct first-rate scholarship when they commit themselves fully to the endeavor. I have supervised many, many honors theses in my 20-year career here and, quite simply, this is the very best of them all. I could,

of course, go on for pages pointing out in detail how well conceived, constructed and presented Andrew's work is, but instead would like to address two facets of his experience that, to me, represent the drive and temerity that lies at his essence.

The first facet is the extraordinary degree to which Andrew attacked this very ambitious process. From the start, he never looked back, never retreated and never wilted in the face of daunting challenges. We determined early on (actually, in the spring of his junior year) that, in order to appropriately and rigorously test his hypotheses, fairly sophisticated quantitative skills would be needed. As he did not at the time have these skills and as I am generously described as being semi-literate in this area, what did he do? First, he enrolled in an advanced statistical analysis course during his fall senior semester. Then, as he ventured deeper into his analysis, he arranged personal meetings with a faculty specialist who, no doubt impressed by this young man's self-drive and ambition, quickly agreed to tutor Andrew. Later, as he was gathering data, he found gaps in the availability of critical measures for a single case, so what did he do? Rather than simply discard the case and pursue an 'easier' one, he directly called electoral authorities in the relevant country. They quite helpfully provided the necessary data and Andrew, as ever, kept moving forward. This is who he is; voracious for knowledge, relentless in the face of obstacles and possessed of an intellect that is one of the sharpest that I have seen in my professional life. As I tell anyone who will listen, Andrew was a colleague, not a student. I was only along for the ride and a fantastic one at that.

The second facet represents to me the most significant contribution of this work to academia most broadly conceived. To put it in very simple terms, Andrew did his research the way it should be done. This may sound puzzling, but the disturbing truth is that we in our disciplines all too often actually pervert the process of scientific inquiry. How? By 'creatively' selecting our cases, by 'torturing' the data and worst of all, by starting with our conclusions then working our way backwards. Why? Because our professional lives are driven by publication and our journals abet the corruption of research by generally refusing to publish negative results. Andrew, and especially this journal, deserve our highest accolades for having the courage to accept that his hypotheses were not supported by the evidence. This is genuine and pure scholarship and confronted by Andrew's example, we in academia, including me, should collectively hang our heads in shame.