Immigration, Euroscepticism and the Rise and Fall of UKIP

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Abstract

This paper presents a case study of the emergence of the issue-linkage necessary for a cross-cutting EU cleavage to become electorally salient. We argue that a key political decision on immigration in 2004 facilitated the emergence of a new dimension of party competition and growth in popular support for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) leading eventually to the 2016 EU Referendum. To examine this thesis we trace the impact of the UK's government's immigration policy on (i) rising immigration, (ii) the political salience of immigration, (iii) the increasing association between concern about immigration and Euroscepticism, and (iv) the emergence of a cross-cutting dimension of party competition coalescing around support for UKIP. The analysis combines information from official immigration rates, media reporting on immigration, Mori polls, Continuous Monitoring Surveys, and the British Election Study.

Introduction

In their introduction to this special issue, Rovny and Whitefield (2018: 1) identify its key focus as being "how the character and content of the issues that underpin party competition may be affected by what we refer to as 'turbulent times'". Our contribution to this aim is to demonstrate how the salience, content and structure of issue dimensions can be transformed as an *unintended* consequence of the policy decisions of governing parties. We therefore depart from a concern with the strategic positioning of parties that has more typically received attention in the comparative politics literature.

Our focus is on Britain and the emergence of a cross-cutting dimension of party competition over the country's membership of the European Union. Britain's relationship with the EU has been the source of the most significant party-voter realignment in the country's recent history. From being a fringe party led by an LSE academic (Alan Sked) UKIP became for a while the third national party in terms of popular support and is still (2018) Britain's largest party in the EU Parliament. This success progressed slowly at first: popular awareness and support simmered quietly for a few years before UKIP managed to gain 15.6% of the vote in the 2004 European Parliament Elections and actually pushed the governing Labour Party into third place in the 2009 European Parliament elections. By 2013, support for the party had peaked at approximately 15% of the electorate, leading to both EU Parliament success (27% of votes and most seats) and 13% of the popular vote (though with only one seat) in the 2015 General Election. Moreover,

UKIP's significance far exceeded its representation at Westminster. Its presence on the Eurosceptic end of the political spectrum prompted Prime Minister David Cameron to promise his MPs and the country that, should it be elected, a Conservative government would hold a referendum on EU membership - a promise that had far more impact than expected when made.

How and why did this happen? To answer that question, we need to consider the conditions that led to UKIP's rapid rise in support. UKIP is often thought of as a radical right-wing 'challenger party'. Such parties are typically linked with positions on issues such as European integration that have not received sufficient representation by mainstream parties (e.g. Wagner, 2011, Adams *et al*, 2006), though authoritarianism, nationalism, populism, and welfare-state/labour market chauvinism have also been included as part of their definition (e.g., Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007; Wagner and Meyer, 2017). Some challenger parties have achieved electoral success and in doing so have opened up new dimensions of competition, or extended and polarized already existing ones (Adams et al 2006; Meguid 2008; Hino 2012; Wagner 2011; van de Wardt *et al.* 2014; Jensen and Spoon 2012).[1] Explanations of the rise of these parties have sometimes focused on the consequences of the Euro crisis. For Hobolt and Tilley (2016: 971) voters "choose challenger parties because they offer a rejection of, and an alternative to, the mainstream response to the crisis". In some cases, however, these parties emerged independently of the 2008 financial

[1] They are also referred to as, amongst other terms, 'niche parties' (e.g. Meguid 2008), but we will use 'challenger parties' for sake of economy and clarity.

and ensuing Euro crises. The rise of Pim Fortuyn's List Party by 2002 in the Netherlands is an obvious case. By the turn of the century, the mainstream parties had failed to respond adequately to the electorate's concerns about immigration and the cultural integration of the Muslim minority (Van Kessel, 2011). And in Britain too, as we shall see, the conditions were appearing for immigration to emerge as a defining issue even before the financial crash.

Understanding the rise of UKIP

The most influential explanations of UKIP's popularity have emphasised its appeal to the 'left-behind' losers of globalization described in *Revolt on the Right*, for whom UKIP is 'a working-class phenomenon. Its support is heavily concentrated among older, blue-collar workers, with little education and few skills' (Ford and Goodwin 2014, 270). However, others have found that the self-employed, traditionally the most right wing of the social classes, are as solidly pro-UKIP as the working class themselves (Evans and Mellon 2016). UKIP's success could never have been achieved without substantial support from within the professional and managerial middle classes - the contemporary working class is simply too small (Evans and Mellon 2016). Comparative research likewise finds that the self-employed and small employers such as shop-owners, generally appear to provide important sources of radical right party support (Kitschelt 1995; Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002; Ignazi 2003; Ivarsflaten 2005; Arzheimer and Carter 2006). More generally, the 'revolt of the left-behind' has difficulty

explaining the *timing* of UKIP's emergence from being a fringe party to one that represented one pole of, arguably, the key political issue dimension of the current era. The left-behind are not a new phenomenon in post-industrial societies (Evans and Tilley 2017).

In contrast to this focus on major social transformations, our thesis is that the primary catalyst for the emergence of the EU dimension to British politics, and UKIP's popularity, was political. Specifically, the decision taken in 2004 to open Britain's borders to EU accession countries. The emergence of an EU immigration dimension of political competition occurred only after this decision, by a Prime Minister heading a uniquely successful Labour Government, had set in train the process required for its increased salience. Central to which was the inability of the government, any government, to respond to rising public concern about immigration. Although British immigration policy had previously responded to public opinion in a thermostatic way by restricting its levels, this was no longer possible as free movement between member states was and is a fundamental EU principle. This lack of a policy mechanism to enable a thermostatic response resulted in a new dimension of political choice emerging in which attitudes towards the EU were increasingly 'fused' with concerns about immigration. The ultimate consequence of this process – Brexit - clearly was not intended by Mr Blair, arguably the most pro-EU of British Prime Ministers, but political decisions often have a life beyond the aims of their makers. The unexpected outcome of the 2016 EU Referendum then had the consequence of removing

UKIP as the focal point of this new dimension and a return, at least temporarily, to two-party politics (Mellon et al 2018).

To build our argument we first consider how Britain's relationship with the EU featured previously in electoral politics and why its impact on the dimensionality of political competition was muted until party movements provided the pre-conditions for the emergence of a new issue dimension. We then examine the 2004 accession decision and how it helped shape the ensuing social and political context leading to the emergence of UKIP, the re-shaping of political allegiances and, ultimately, Brexit. In doing so, we chart the impact of the key issue to have shaped this new cleavage – EU immigration - as it became more salient and more firmly connected with opposition to the EU itself, before translating into substantial support for UKIP and eventually the calling of the referendum.

The emergence of the pre-conditions for dimensional realignment

For many years, the EU was 'the dog that didn't bark' in British electoral politics. Labour itself was somewhat hostile to joining the European Economic Community before and after the 1975 referendum, but Harold Wilson, the leader of the party in government, successfully obtained strong support for staying in the EEC (Saunders 2016). In contrast, Eurosceptic figures such as Enoch Powell and Tony Benn failed to have any significant impact. Concern about immigration was not a decisive influence on vote

choice despite the Enoch Powell's infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968 and the social unrest in the 1970s associated with far-right anti-immigration groups (Billig 1978; Fielding 1981).[2] In general, there was little sign of a new electoral alignment along a social dimension of political competition (Heath et al. 1990).

Although there was little evidence of the EU or immigration becoming an issue influencing vote choice in the 1980s, the Labour Party's 1989 policy review saw it shift from hostility to a more pro-EU position at the end of the decade. At that point Labour started to become the more "pro-European" of the two main parties. As Bartle (2009) notes, these differences were even more appreciable in 1997, 2001 and 2005. By the 2001 election, analyses of the party manifestos indicated that Europe was a "major point of party contention" (Bara and Budge 2001). The systematic evidence of the manifesto project also corresponded with scholarly analyses of the shifting positions of the parties (Nairn 1972; Denman 1995; Turner 2000; Forster 2002).

[2] Analyses of the impact of responses to a question on have 'too many immigrants have been let into this country' in the 1960s and 1970s show an increase in its effect in 1970 following that speech. People who agreed were slightly more likely to vote Conservative and they perceived a much larger difference between Labour and Conservatives on immigration in 1970 than they had done in 1964 or 1966 (Butler and Stokes 1974), but it didn't last (Heath et al. 1990).

As long as Labour maintained a Eurosceptic position, mirroring that of many of its traditional working class supporters, the opportunity for Europe to become a cross-cutting issue was muted. Once they abandoned that position, the seeds of realignment were sown. This policy reversal was given sharpest emphasis following the emergence of Tony Blair as party leader in 1994 and Prime Minister in 1997 and Labour's re-branding as 'New Labour'.[3] This period saw the traditionally Labour voting and eurosceptic working class start to lose their allegiance to Labour (Evans 1999). Between the landslide of 1997 and the sweeping Labour victory of 2001 the only noticeable defection away from Labour to the Conservatives was by voters who did not like Europe (Evans 2002). But they were small in number. The EU still did not have the power to re-shape political alignments.[4]

The catalyst

Why did this change? Our contention is that a key catalyst leading to the creation of a combined European Union/immigration dimension to British party competition was the Labour government's decision to implement

[3] The same 1997 election saw James Goldsmith's Referendum Party attempt and fail to force the Conservatives to agree to a referendum on membership of the union (Heath et al. 1998).

[4] It might have done so had Gordon Brown not prevented Britain from joining the Euro, but his efforts in this respect diffused what could have become a basis of mobilization given the public's opposition (Evans 2003).

immediate open borders with the 10 EU accession states rather than imposing transitional controls on immigration. All other existing EU members, with the exception of Ireland and Sweden, applied these controls, which concentrated migrant flows towards Britain, Ireland and Sweden (Europa.eu 2011).

How did this decision come about? While UKIP has claimed that Labour followed an intentional policy of encouraging mass migration in order to boost the city of London and future ethnic minority voters (United Kingdom Independence Party, 2016), the evidence suggests that the policy came from an incorrect assessment of the likely number of migrants.

One key piece of evidence the Labour government relied on when deciding whether to impose a transition period on free movement was a now infamous Home Office report that concluded that "net immigration from the AC-10 to the UK after the current enlargement of the EU will be relatively small, at between 5,000 and 13,000 immigrants per year" (Dustmann et al. 2003). In fact, the rate of increase in workers born in EU accession countries has been closer to 127,000 per year (Vargas-Silva and Markaki 2015).[5]

While the Home Office report does state that "If Germany imposes a transition period for the free movement of workers... we would not think that

[5] It should be noted that these figures differ somewhat from estimates using the International Passenger Survey. However, all studies agree that the number of immigrants from the AC-10 countries to the UK exceeded the Home Office estimates by many multiples.

more than one in three immigrants who had intended to migrate to work in Germany would instead migrate to the UK" (Dustmann et al. 2003, p.57). What the paper does not explicitly state anywhere is that this "small fraction" could constitute 6.6 times as many immigrants from accession countries as the stated forecast.[6] The paper was not technically incorrect but did a poor job of communicating the crucial importance of Germany's choice to impose transitional controls.[7] The British government's decision not to impose such controls therefore appears to be a relatively non-strategic decision based on incorrect expectations that the effects would be minor - and has been belatedly recognized as such by its primary proponent.[8]

The effects of accession country migration

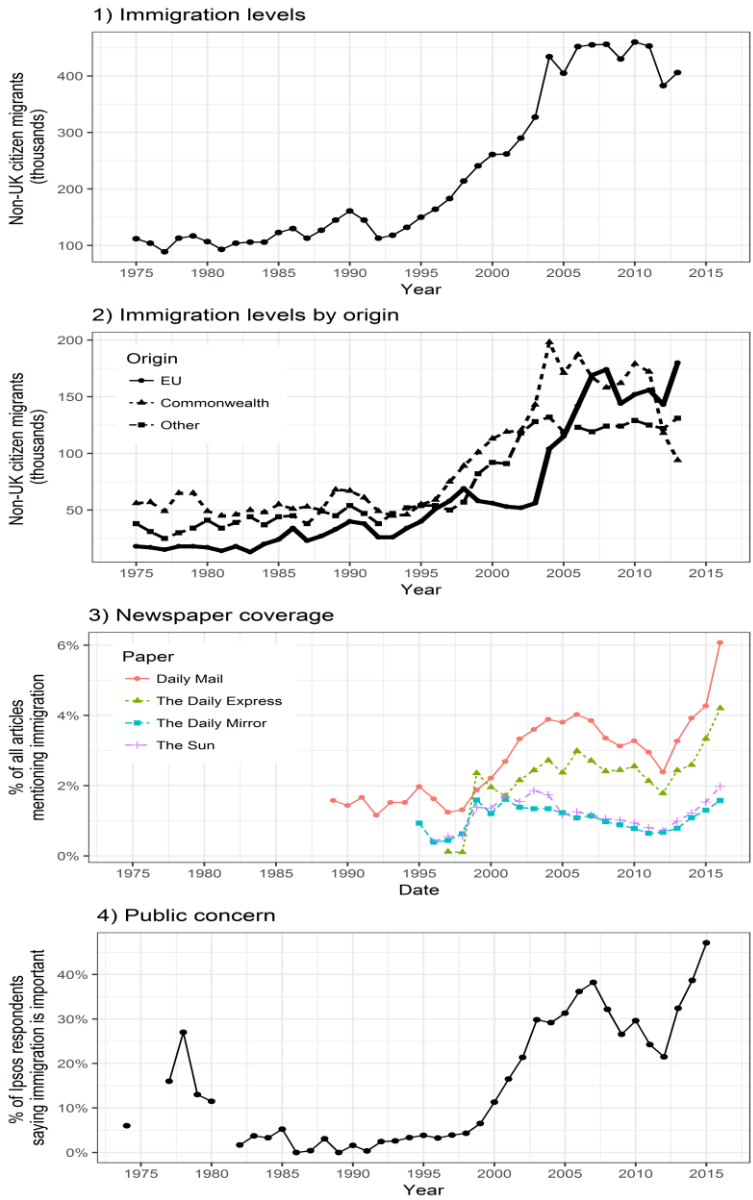
[6] The highest forecast of annual net immigration to Germany in the paper is 209,651 (table 6.4). The highest numerical forecast that the paper shows for the UK is 12,568. Therefore the multiple of additional immigrants can be calculated as: ((209651 / 3) + 12568) / 12568 = 6.56. This calculation is never conducted or hinted at in the Home Office paper: https://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/mar/24/how-immigration-came-to-haunt-labour-inside-story

[7] We thank Tom Steinberg for referring us to the discussion on page 57.

[8] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/19/tony-blair-admits-did-not-realise-many-migrants-would-come-uk/?WT.mc_id=tmgliveapp_androidshare_AnjSzsdxpSsP

The impact of immigration from the accession countries on UK immigration levels were substantial. It maintained the already high levels of immigration that had occurred since the late 1990s (panel 1, Figure 1). Most significantly, however, it changed the composition of immigration into the UK by displacing commonwealth immigration as the largest source of foreign immigration (panel 2, **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 1: immigration: levels, media reports and concern



Key: Panel (1) total levels of immigration of non-UK citizens to the UK by year (thousands of immigrants) and (2) broken down by EU, Commonwealth and other sources origin; (3) levels of coverage of immigration in four tabloid newspapers, and 4) Ipsos-MORI trends (1974-2015) on what percentage of voters mention

immigration as an important. Source: Ipsos Mori: “What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?” “What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?” Concern is averaged for each year over all surveys fielded in that year.

Voters then reacted to the increase in EU immigration. Monthly Ipsos-MORI data on what issue voters think is the most important (panel 4 in **Error! Reference source not found.**) show that immigration concern peaked in the mid-2000s just after accession migration started. Concern inevitably fell away at the height of the economic crisis of 2008/2009 as the economy dislodged it as the most important issue facing the country, only to rapidly elevate in the following years.

The ‘transmission belt’ of concern

The mechanism connecting actual immigration rates to public concern is not necessarily straightforward. After all, people cannot observe national immigration rates directly, so they must either learn about immigration through their own local experience or through the media.

There is some weak evidence for local experience. Recent research has looked at the question of whether anti-immigrant attitudes are related to the level of immigration to an area (Kawalerowicz 2016). As with research in the United States (Newman 2013), it concludes that only a small amount

(6%) of the total variance in attitudes towards immigrants is attributable to differences across constituencies, with the remaining (94%) varying at the individual level. Though immigration rates are predictive of anti-immigrant attitudes, immigration levels are not, and immigration rates are less predictive of anti-immigrant sentiment where there is a larger existing foreign-born population.[9] These findings also hold for the salience of immigration as an issue in our analysis (just 4.7% of variance in the salience of immigration is at the local authority level), with the exception that the level of the foreign-born population is also predictive of anti-immigrant attitudes even after controlling for individual covariates (see Appendix tables A.3 and A.4).[10] Nonetheless, the bulk of the evidence suggests that local experience of immigration accounts for only a small proportion of the variation in either attitudes towards immigration, or its salience.

Media reporting of immigration rates from the EU does, however, appear to provide information that feeds public concern. This can be seen by comparing panels 3 and 4 of **Error! Reference source not found.**, which show how closely newspaper coverage corresponds with both immigration levels and levels of concern about immigration. The correlations between immigration levels, newspaper coverage and public concern are shown in

[9] This relationship may be better explained by a non-linear relationship between immigrant levels and sentiment, but the wider point stands that any specification explains only a small proportion of the variance in attitudes.

[10] The marginal effect of moving from the lowest to highest immigration rates is around 3 percentage points for people in areas with the lowest levels of prior immigration, so the effect is modest even at its largest extent.

Table 1. The strongest correlation is between public concern and the Daily Mail's coverage (r=0.97), although all the relationships are very strong. Once these time series are modelled simultaneously, as shown in Appendix table A.2, there is no remaining effect of actual immigration levels on public concern about immigration after controlling for the Daily Mail's coverage and a linear time trend. This suggests that the vast bulk of concern over immigration is mediated by media coverage and is not the result of direct observation by voters. While there is no direct effect of immigration rates, the Daily Mail's coverage is sufficiently strongly correlated with actual immigration (r=0.89) that public concern tracks the actual rate of immigration closely.[11]

[11] The close link between immigration and media coverage could result from a number of processes: deliberate attempts to influence policy, a reflection of the principal agent relationship between voters who dislike immigration and the media who try to find stories their readers are interested in, or a simple reflection of the supply of available stories to cover.

Table 1 Correlations of immigration importance (Ipsos-MORI), coverage of immigration in the Daily Mail and Daily Express, and total immigration levels (International Passenger Survey)

	Immigration importance	Daily Mail	Daily Express	Immigration levels
Immigration importance				
Daily Mail	0.97			
Daily Express	0.83	0.91		
Immigration levels	0.86	0.89	0.76	

The links between immigration, media coverage and public concern are impressively strong, but immigration still need not have evolved into a powerful political issue. To understand why EU immigration had such an impact we need to consider how parties typically deal with issue concerns via their policy implementation. In this respect, as noted earlier, policy is often conceptualized as following a thermostatic model (Wlezien 1995), where a policy output such as redistribution is reduced when it gets too far above the level that public opinion prefers and that public concern

subsequently decreases in response to this correction. As a result, policy and public opinion remain in step in the long term, although subject to over-corrections in the short term.

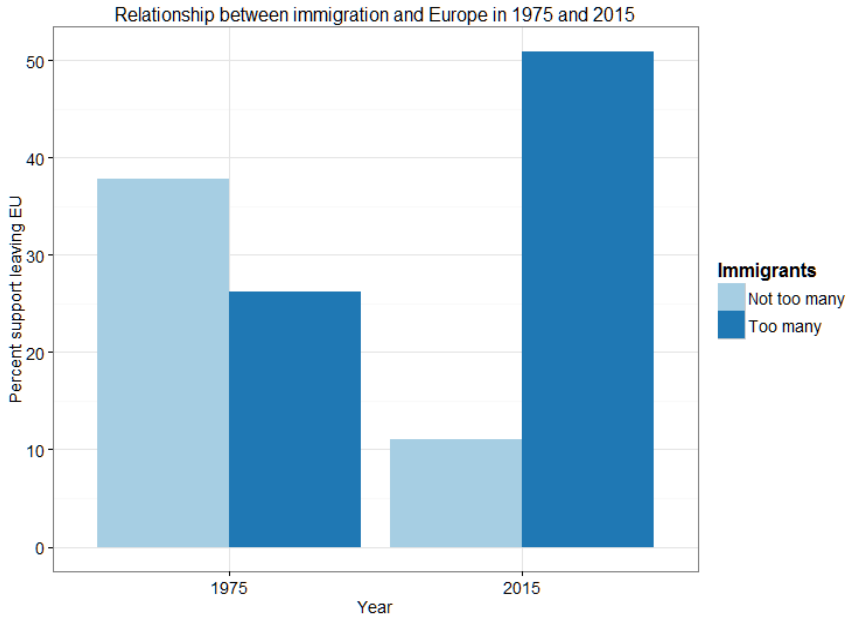
British immigration policy previously responded to public opinion in a fairly thermostatic manner, with governments strengthening asylum policy and border controls in response to public concern over immigration (Jennings 2009). However, the rapid growth of EU immigration changed this relationship, with both concern and levels of immigration rising over an extended period. The fact that immigration between member states is defined as a fundamental freedom within the EU seriously limited the ability of any government to adopt policies that would limit it. In fact, we can see evidence of attempts at a response by the government in panel 2 of **Error! Reference source not found.**, which show that commonwealth migration plummeted a few years after increased EU accession migration began. However, while voters have responded 'thermostatically' to rising immigration by becoming more concerned, there has not been the usual restrictive policy response. As a result, immigration continued to be high and public concern rose yet further. In such circumstances, a new dimension of politics can become sufficiently salient to begin driving vote choice in what is normally a unidimensional system of party competition.

The changing relationship between EU and immigration attitudes

One might expect that immigration and the EU would always have been tightly linked issues, given that arguably both are related to the rejection of cosmopolitanism. However, if we look at this question by comparing the relationship between EU preferences and immigration attitudes in the 1975 EEC referendum and in 2015, we find a very different picture. In figure 2 we compare EU preferences among people who think there are too many immigrants, using evidence from the 1975 EEC referendum (Crewe, Robertson, and Sarlvik 1975) and the 2015 British Election Study post-election face-to-face survey (Fieldhouse et al. 2015a).

In 2015, a respondent's attitudes towards immigration were an extremely strong predictor of their EU attitudes, with 51% of respondents who believe there are too many immigrants supporting Leave, compared with just 11% of those who didn't think there were too many immigrants. In the 1975 EU referendum, by contrast, the difference was far smaller (12 percentage points) and in the *opposite* direction.

Figure 2 The relationship between believing there are too many immigrants and support for leaving the EU in 1975 and 2015



Source: BES post-election face-to-face surveys

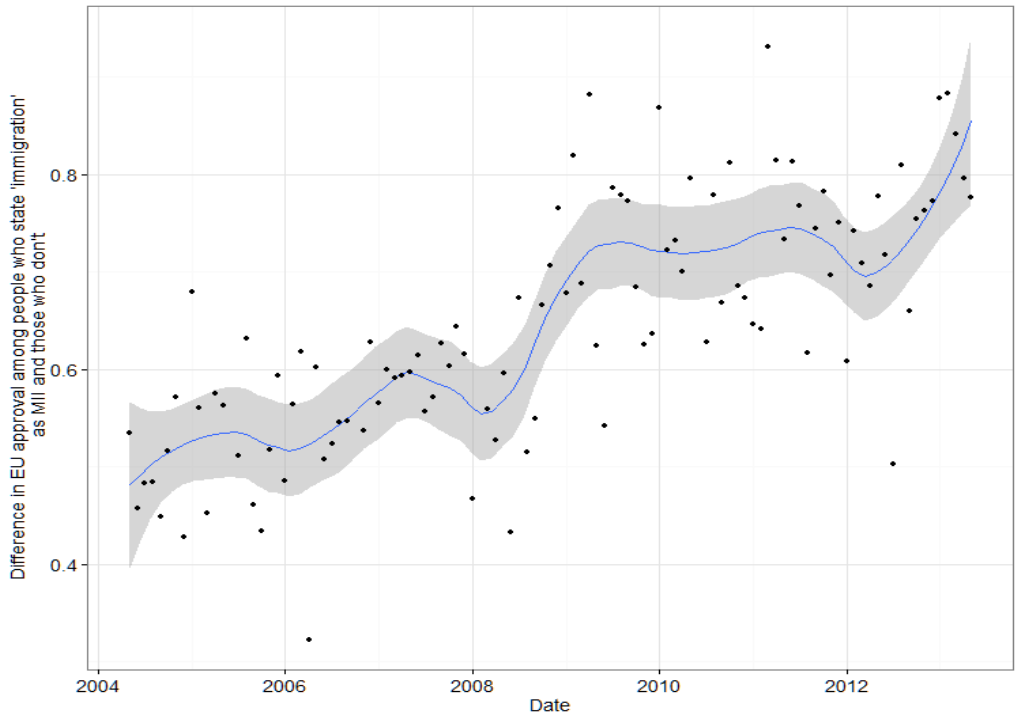
Many other things will have changed of course since the 1975 referendum, so it would be unwise to infer too much regarding the reasons for the changing nature of this linkage from two time points. However, we can examine the extent to which voters attitudes towards the EU and immigration are linked over time in a more granular way using more contemporary data by examining the British Election Study Continuous Monitoring Survey (Sanders and Whiteley 2014). This survey is undertaken every month and

asks which political issue is currently most important to respondents, and also enquires about their level of approval of the EU.

Figure 3 shows the difference between the average support for the EU among respondents who say that the EU is 'the most important issue facing the country' and respondents who say that another issue is the most important. The results show that even in early 2004 there was a positive relationship between concern about immigration and disapproval of the EU. However, the relationship strengthens substantially over time, with the gap in EU perceptions between people who worry about immigration, and those who don't, effectively doubling between 2004 and 2013.[12]

[12] The data for the Continuous Monitoring Survey is not available publicly after 2013.

Figure 3: the growing link between responses to "How much do you approve of Britain's membership of the EU?" and "what is the most important issue facing the country?'



Source: Continuous Monitoring Surveys (monthly) (2004-2013).

Key: Black dots are the monthly CMS surveys. Each black dot displays the difference in approval ratings of the EU between people who think immigration is one of the most important issues (MII) facing the country and those who don't. The blue line describes the best estimate with a polynomial smooth of the changing strength of the relationship over time. The grey area represents the width of the confidence interval indicating a 95% probability that the true score lies within this area.

We also know that anti-EU attitudes rose over this same time period. The 1990s saw relatively high support for the EU with only a small minority wanting to leave the EU entirely. However, support for leaving increased at the same time as immigration and the EU became linked issues and concern over immigration was rising. There were high levels of anti-EU sentiment in earlier periods, but as we know, these were not translated into coherent political opposition. Only when concern about EU immigration became linked with opposition to the EU did it lead to a political breakthrough.

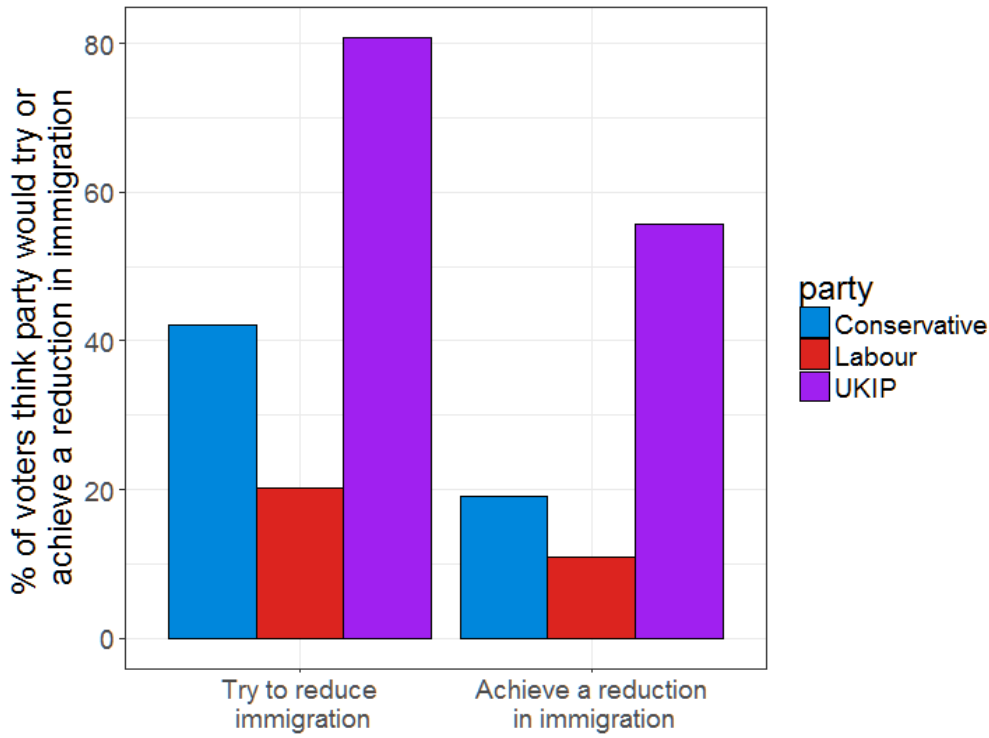
The political consequences

The link between immigration, the EU and authoritarianism provided the perfect opportunity for a radical right party to prosper electorally. Initially, immigration was integrated within traditional two-party left-right competition. The Conservatives took a harder line on the issue, promising to reduce net migration to the tens of thousands. This appeal was relatively successful in the 2005-2010 election cycle when the Conservatives were not in government, so that by 2009-2010 substantial numbers of voters were defecting from Labour because of their handling of immigration (Evans and Chzhen 2013). This was particularly striking given that the country was then also in the midst of a major financial crisis. In the 2010-2015 electoral cycle, however, the impact of immigration and the EU moved decisively from favouring the Conservatives who, once in government, were powerless to implement effective reduction of EU immigration, to favouring UKIP.

Indeed many of the voters that the Conservatives won from Labour and the Liberal Democrats in 2010 by campaigning on immigration subsequently moved onwards to UKIP in 2015 (Evans and Mellon 2016).

The reasons for this reversal are not difficult to ascertain. The Conservative-led coalition government continued to promise to reduce immigration to less than 100,000, and did reduce non-EU immigration but could do nothing about immigration from the EU itself. As a result, EU nationals now formed, for the first time, the plurality of immigrants. As a result, they were presumably even more salient and the government's impotence became even more apparent. As can be seen from answers to a question in the 2015 BES survey shown in Figure 4, all parties are seen to have aspirations that outstrip their ability to reduce immigration, but UKIP is believed to be far-and-away the party most likely to follow through on reducing immigration. Given the growing importance of immigration to the electorate, this gives a basis for expecting substantial levels of immigration-related vote switching to UKIP.

Figure 4: Perceptions of the parties' desire to reduce immigration and their ability to do so



Analysis

To assess the importance of this new EU/immigration dimension to political choice, we model the 2015 vote choice of various groups of 2010 voters looking at how the immigration/EU dimension (as measured in 2010) predicts the flows in the merged 2010 (Sanders and Whiteley 2010) and 2015 (Fieldhouse et al. 2015b) British Election Study Internet Panels.

We proceed as follows. In the 2010 BES panel respondents were asked whether they had felt a series of emotions about immigration. We ran an IRT model on these indicators of whether respondents' feel angry, disgusted, uneasy, or afraid about immigration as well as a binary variable measuring whether respondents said that immigration was the most important issue. Appendix figure A.1 and table A.2 show the IRT model and the item characteristic curves from these models.

Because we run separate models for each 2010 party origin, we also include people who have a different identity to the party they voted for in the non-identifying category on the basis that a party identification with a different party is unlikely to be an impediment to them switching in future. Table 2 shows three separate multinomial models predicting 2015 vote choice for different groups of 2010 voters: Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrats. In each case, EU approval and the latent immigration variable (measured in 2010) strongly predict switching to UKIP in 2015. The only other variable that has a consistent impact is having a strong party identity,

which inhibits switching. Demographics have only minor and inconsistent effects.

Table 2 Same vote in 2010 versus UKIP contrasts from Multinomial logistic regression models of 2015 vote choice for different groups of 2010 voters

	2010 Labour			2010 Conservative			Liberal Democrat		
	Coef	SE	P	Coef	SE	P	Coef	SE	P
EU approval	-0.508	0.119	0.000	-0.650	0.088	0.000	-0.698	0.104	0.000
Immigration (latent)	0.706	0.163	0.000	0.394	0.110	0.000	0.773	0.161	0.000
Party ID									
No/different Party ID									
Not very strongly	-0.083	0.415	0.842	-0.480	0.213	0.024	-0.880	0.354	0.013
Fairly strongly	-0.461	0.336	0.170	-0.979	0.179	0.000	-0.615	0.285	0.031
Very strongly	-1.983	0.517	0.000	-1.499	0.241	0.000	-2.042	0.773	0.008

Education									
No qualifications									
GCSE D-G	-0.224	0.541	0.679	-0.454	0.383	0.236	-0.181	0.700	0.796
GCSE A*-C	-0.162	0.390	0.677	-0.453	0.255	0.076	-0.747	0.495	0.132
A-level	-0.132	0.471	0.780	-0.321	0.270	0.234	-0.765	0.536	0.154
Undergraduate	-0.546	0.463	0.238	-0.675	0.273	0.013	-1.025	0.492	0.037
Postgrad	-14.501	707.056	0.984	-0.067	0.369	0.856	-0.850	0.626	0.174
Other qualification	-0.517	0.488	0.289	-0.640	0.272	0.019	-0.583	0.515	0.258
Age	0.006	0.012	0.624	-0.014	0.007	0.027	0.011	0.010	0.279
Female	-0.467	0.262	0.075	-0.291	0.148	0.050	-0.136	0.236	0.564
Constant	-0.249	0.945	0.792	1.750	0.543	0.001	1.715	0.826	0.038

Number of origin voters	1,056	1,588	1,178
Number of UKIP switchers	81	270	130
Pseudo R-squared	0.1381	0.1155	0.0923

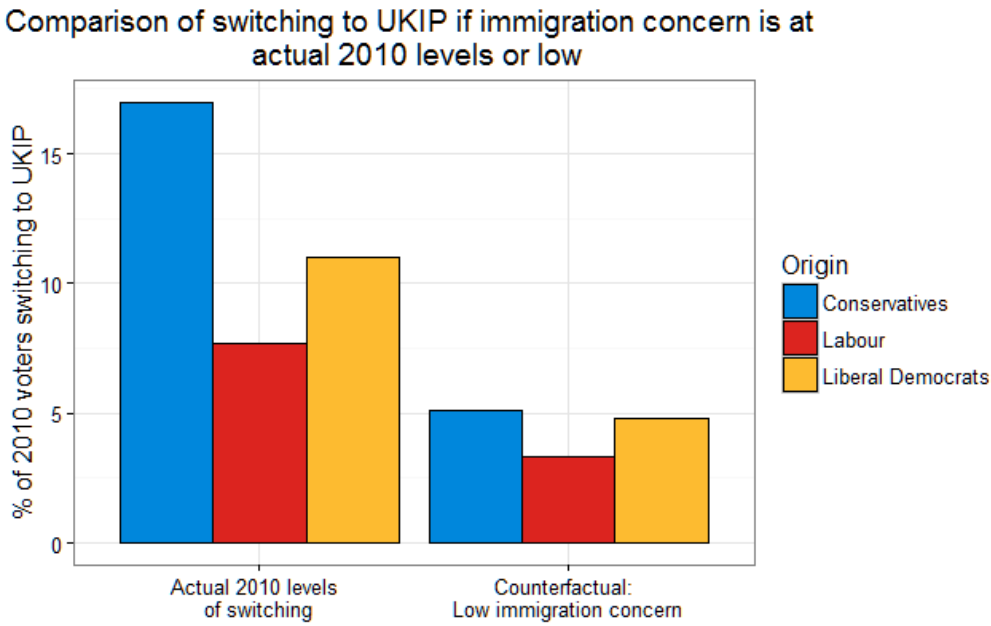
We can get a sense of the importance of EU/immigration concern by considering a counterfactual scenario where respondents did not express any negative emotions about immigration or cite it as the most important issue (15% of respondents fell into this category). Because immigration is so closely linked with the EU, we can also impute the levels of EU approval that respondents would have had (using the regression model in Table A.1 in the appendix), had they not been concerned about immigration. This model predicts levels of support for Europe on the basis of several factors, including a respondent's level of concern about immigration. This imputation of EU approval moves the mean score from 2.81 to 3.38 (out of 5). This predicted level of anti-Europeanness is then used, along with the counterfactual level of concern about immigration, to predict the UKIP counterfactual using the model in table 2.[13]

Based on this simulation, we estimate that the levels of switching to UKIP would have been drastically lower in the absence of a salient immigration dimension in 2015. Figure 5 shows the actual flows to UKIP for respondents in the 2010-2015 models and the estimated flows to UKIP if the immigration/Europe dimension had been weaker. If immigration concern

[13] Note that we only examine voters in England and Wales given the very different patterns of response in the Scottish party system, where UKIP never achieved prominence.

had not been widespread, fewer than 5% of the three main parties' supporters in 2010 would have switched to UKIP in 2015.[14]

Figure 5: Levels of vote switching to UKIP among respondents in the multinomial models under the actual levels of concern and the counterfactual scenario of low immigration concern.



Conclusion and discussion

[14] As we cannot rue of selection effects completely on the basis of this analysis this figure is best treated as a higher bound estimate.

We have shown how the 2004 decision on open immigration from EU Accession countries appears to have unintentionally produced a potent new dimension of politics. Concern about immigration, specifically EU immigration, can be traced to an increase in EU accession migration resulting directly from this decision. The media functioned as an information transmission belt and the electorate responded. The inability of any government to respond thermostatically to this growing concern – illustrated clearly by the coalition government's year on year failure to reduce or even flatten off EU immigration rates – provided the opportunity for a challenger party, UKIP, to fill that representation gap. Thus a spiral of inter-connected immigration fears and Euroscepticism emerged resulting in a dramatic upsurge in support for UKIP, the only occupant of the anti-EU, anti-immigration pole of this dimension.

Whilst not denying that a challenger parties need to seize the opportunities provided by mainstream party decisions, much as the literature on the role of opportunity structures (e.g. Kitschelt 1995) would expect, our analysis shifts the focus to the actions of the governing party in providing the catalyst for a dramatic surge in immigration concern. In this way, our paper adds to work by others which has pointed to the consequences of government decisions on immigration policy. In Scandinavia, for example, Loxbo (2014) found that only convergence between mainstream parties on immigration policy increased support for the anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats. In contrast, no effect was found the mainstream parties' positions on economic issues: this was not a protest against austerity.

Evidence that political decisions can elevate immigration fears and facilitate the extremely swift emergence of radical right challenger parties has also been found in Germany, where Chancellor Merkel's decision to welcome immigration from outside of the EU in 2016 in response to the Syrian crisis transformed the fortunes of Germany's own radical right challenger party, the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland). Arzheimer et al (2017) track the change in the AfD's fortunes during this period when they re-orientated themselves to become an immigration focused party rather than just an anti-EU party. Immigration gave their EU message far mobilizing power.

The impact of immigration policy is, it should be noted, unrelated to changes in levels in general intolerance in the electorate. The idea that xenophobia is on the rise, leading to a rise in concern about immigration, has been a common theme in literature on 'the new populism' (Mudde 2007; Kriesi 2014). This thesis has little evidence to support it however. For one thing, electorates are now substantially more highly educated than in previous decades and higher education is more strongly associated with tolerance and social liberalism than any other social characteristic (van der Werfhorst and de Graaf 2004; Stubager 2008; Tilley 2005; Evans and Tilley 2017). We would be surprised to see therefore that openly ethnocentric attitudes have increased. If anything, these attitudes have become less negative over time as the population has become increasingly more socially liberal (British Social Attitudes 2017). Analyses of a BES question on the belief that there are too many immigrants asked at various points over the last 40 or so years

(see Appendix figure A.2) confirm that people are, if anything, a little less likely to believe there are too many immigrants in Britain now than they were in previous decades (a trend which continued in 2017). Growing intolerance does not appear to lie behind recent responses to immigration or the rise of UKIP.[15]

Although the electorate is not getting *more* intolerant it does not mean that dislike of immigration is not present. There has always been a substantial anti-immigrant bloc of voters that could be mobilized if the issue became politically salient. The decision to allow unfettered EU immigration ahead of all other major recipient countries has provided the ideal catalyst for this political mobilization.

UKIP and Brexit: the spillover

[15] The role of challenger parties in promoting as well as seizing upon new issues has been highlighted by amongst others, de Vries and Hobolt (2012). However, the rise in concern about immigration is unlikely to be simply a consequence of UKIP's presence: as our over-time data shows, immigration became salient in the public and media agendas before UKIP became an electorally viable party. This is consistent with the findings of extensive cross-country over-time comparisons conducted by Bohman and Hjerm (2016) who find no effect of a radical right, challenger party presence on anti-immigration attitudes.

The significance of EU immigration for the emergence of a dimension of voting in elections is heightened by an even greater impact: Brexit. Although the numbers voting for UKIP are much smaller than those who voted to leave the EU – UKIP gained 12.6% of the vote in the 2015 General Election and 27% in the 2014 European elections, while the leave campaign obtained 52% of the referendum vote share (on a much higher turnout) – this dramatically under-estimates their potential vote.

The reason for this is although it is stable in the aggregate the UKIP vote is extremely volatile at the individual level (Evans and Mellon 2015). Looking at vote intentions from the start of the British Election Study Internet Panel in February 2014 to the general election on May 2015, UKIP held onto only 51.7% of their initial supporters, while 41.7% of their 2015 voters came to the party. This means that the proportion of people who have ever supported UKIP is much higher than their share of the vote at any given moment. Between 2014 and 2016 35% of BES respondents chose UKIP as their party at least once. When these voters are combined with pro-UKIP responses to a propensity to vote question it brings UKIP sympathizers up to 38.7%.[16]

[16] For these calculations we pooled seven waves of the British Election Study between February 2014 and May 2016, and include all vote intention and recall questions for general elections, European elections, local elections, devolved elections (including the London Mayoral race), and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. On the propensity to vote question - "How likely is it that you would ever vote for each of the following parties?" -

These people formed no less than 67.1% of the leave vote in 2016. Support for UKIP and opposition to the EU are closely connected. The same surge of immigration-fueled Euroscepticism that propelled UKIP to prominence influenced the outcome of the 2016 referendum.

Now that Brexit is underway, however, the question arises of whether this new cleavage will abate, UKIP will fade away and business as usual will resume. Initial examinations of the June 2017 election suggest that without its iconic leader, Nigel Farage; with its high levels of inflow and outflow in support; with a majoritarian system disadvantaging its geographically splintered electoral base; and with the Prime minister, Theresa May, taking ownership of 'hard Brexit', this party and its *raison d'etre* appear to have been absorbed by a Conservative Party from which it had taken most of its support.

What does this imply for the left-right dimension of political competition? Scholars have long speculated about whether it has changed its content from being one purely concerning the role of the state in economy, contrasting free market versus redistributive strategies, to one in which this division is fused with a cultural division pitting social conservatives against social liberals (Gabel and Huber, 2000; McDonald and Budge, 2005; Benoit and Laver,

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anyone who gave a score of 6 or higher to UKIP on a 0-10 scale in the last wave was counted as a UKIP sympathizer.

2006; Inglehart et al., 1991; Kriesi et al., 2008). With UKIP's impending collapse and its Brexit mantle taken by the Conservative Party this re-ideological calibration of two-party competition has in all probability been achieved. Unless, of course, the Conservatives fail to deliver hard Brexit. In which case the cycle of realignment may well recommence.

Appendix

Figure A.1 Item characteristic curves from IRT model of 2010 immigration concern in British Election Study Internet Panel (BESIP) respondents

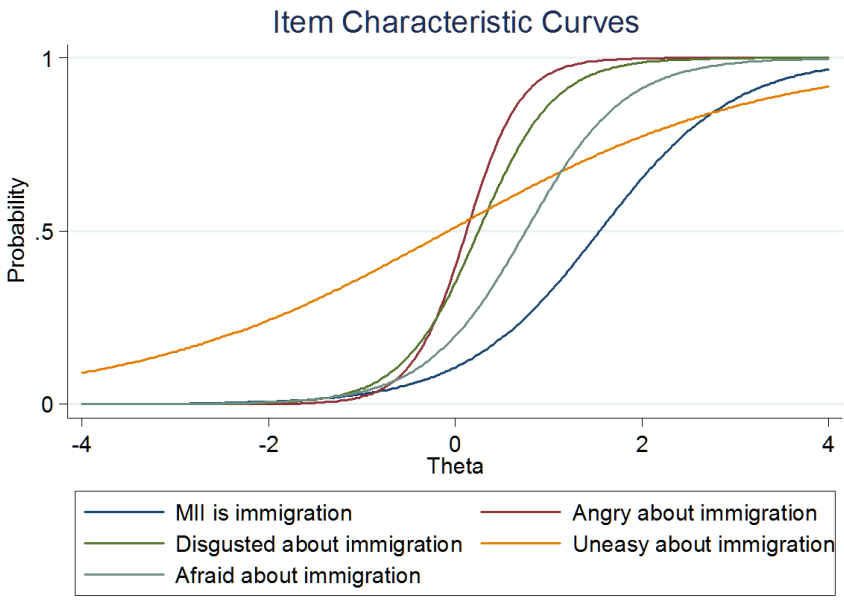


Table A.1 OLS regression prediction of approval of EU membership (5 category dependent variable) used for imputation of EU approval under conditions of low anti-immigrant preferences

	Coef	SE	P
Immigration (latent)	-0.617	0.020	0.000
Education			
No qualifications			
GCSE D-G	0.054	0.083	0.512
GCSE A*-C	0.152	0.058	0.009
A-level	0.418	0.062	0.000
Undergraduate	0.554	0.058	0.000
Postgrad	0.802	0.073	0.000
Other qualification	0.387	0.061	0.000
Age	-0.002	0.001	0.136
Female	-0.219	0.029	0.000
2010 General Election Vote			
Conservatives			
Labour	0.715	0.039	0.000
Liberal Democrat	0.723	0.038	0.000

SNP	-0.952	1.071	0.374
Plaid Cymru	0.508	0.191	0.008
UKIP	-0.534	0.064	0.000
Green Party	0.735	0.142	0.000
British National Party (BNP)	-0.260	0.133	0.052
Other	0.155	0.112	0.166
Constant	2.263	0.096	0.000
Adjusted R-squared		0.390	
Observations		5,501	

Table A.2 IRT model of immigration concern in the 2010 BESIP

	Coef.	Std. Err.	P>z
Immigration: MII			
Discrim	1.382	0.047	0.000
Diff	1.547	0.038	0.000
Immigration: angry			
Discrim	3.415	0.164	0.000
Diff	0.122	0.011	0.000
Immigration: disgust			
Discrim	2.451	0.073	0.000
Diff	0.250	0.012	0.000
Immigration: uneasy			
Discrim	0.591	0.023	0.000
Diff	-0.080	0.029	0.006
Immigration: afraid			

Discrim	1.871	0.049	0.000
Diff	0.755	0.017	0.000

Log likelihood	-43002.948
Observations	16,053

Table A.3: predicting immigration being seen as the respondent's 'most important issue'

	Coef.	Std. Err.	P
Immigration			
Log(change)	0.473	0.188	0.012
Log(level)	0.396	0.089	0.000
Log(change) * Log(level)	-0.122	0.039	0.002
Education			
None			
GCSE D-G	-0.163	0.101	0.106
GCSE A*-C	-0.177	0.073	0.015
A-level	-0.539	0.079	0.000
Undergraduate	-0.941	0.078	0.000
Postgraduate	-1.460	0.119	0.000
Age	0.073	0.010	0.000
Age^2	-0.001	0.000	0.000
Newspaper			
None			
The Express	0.820	0.123	0.000
The Daily Mail	0.844	0.062	0.000

The Mirror	-0.239	0.081	0.003
The Daily Star	0.816	0.194	0.000
The Sun	0.865	0.065	0.000
The Daily Telegraph	0.111	0.100	0.271
The Financial Times	-0.898	0.533	0.092
The Guardian	-2.155	0.222	0.000
The Independent	-1.040	0.246	0.000
The Times	-0.608	0.134	0.000
The Scotsman	-0.292	0.366	0.425
The Herald	-0.821	0.356	0.021
The Western Mail	-0.589	0.389	0.130
Other local newspaper	-0.190	0.121	0.118
Other Newspaper	-0.208	0.096	0.031
Constant	-4.639	0.435	0.000
Log likelihood		-7054.5	
N		14,584	

Table A.3 shows geographic predictors of immigration being a respondent's most important issue. Immigration rates predict concern over immigration but this effect is weaker where initial levels were higher. However, the variance of the random intercepts at the local authority level is extremely low, especially compared to the predictive power of newspaper readership at the individual level.

Table A.4 OLS predicting yearly proportion of respondents saying immigration is an important issue (Daily Mail and immigration levels are standardized)

Group sizes

		Respondents per group		
Group	Groups	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Region	11	579	1,325.80	2,256
Local authority	787	1	18.5	268

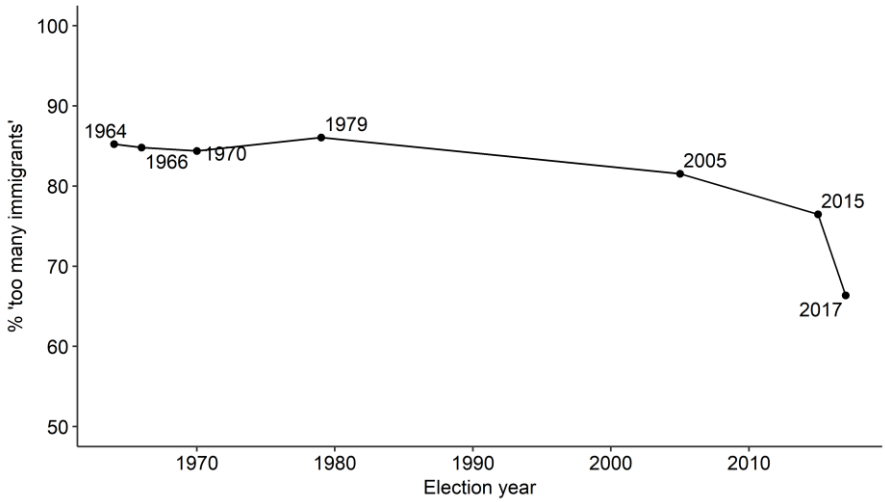
Intraclass correlation

Level	Empty model		Full model	
	ICC	Std. Err.	ICC	Std. Err.
Region	0.021	0.010	0.012	0.006
Local authority	0.047	0.010	0.024	0.008

	Estimate	Std. Error	
(Intercept)	-7.61	3.86	.
Daily Mail	0.10	0.01	***
All immigration	0.03	0.02	
Year	0.00	0.00	.

n=25, Adjusted R-squared: 0.967

Figure A.2: "Do you think that too many immigrants have been let into this country, or not?"



Source: British Election Study post-election face-to-face surveys

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