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Crises of Mobility, Mobilities of Crisis:

Studies on Movement and Disruption

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Crises of Mobility, Mobilities of Crisis: Studies on Movement and Disruption

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IMPRIMATUR

La Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de l'Université de Neuchâtel, sur les rapports de M. Gianni D'Amato, directeur de thèse, professeur, Université de Neuchâtel ; Mme Anita Manatschal, professeure, Université de Neuchâtel ; M. Pieter Bevelander, professeur, Malmö University, Suède ; M. Dominik Hangartner, professeur, ETHZ, Zürich ; M. Swen Hutter, professeur, Freie Universität, Berlin autorise l'impression de la thèse présentée par M. Marco Bitschnau en laissant à l'auteur la responsabilité des opinions énoncées.

Neuchâtel, le 30 novembre 2022

Le doyen
Louis de Saussure

Summary

This dissertation explores the concepts of mobility and crisis in two particular configurations: that of *crises of mobility* (i.e., the crisification of human movement) and that of *mobilities of crisis* (i.e., the emergence of such movement during or because of a crisis). After providing a basic outline of both concepts, it introduces a series of five articles that are, each in its own specific way, concerned with one of these configurations. Article I and Article II deal with the politicization of immigration against the backdrop of major economic and refugee crises. They reveal quite divergent discursive patterns, hint at the importance of crisis shocks, and can be read as an argument to avoid the temptation of overgeneralization. Article III is a comparative analysis of how international student mobility has been governed in Germany and the UK—two prominent countries of destination that nevertheless differ greatly in their policy approach. Harking back to politicization, it highlights the role of *politicizability*. While international students are viewed as students in Germany, they count as politicizable) internationals in the UK. Article IV shifts the focus toward opportunity structures; it illustrates how the 2015-16 refugee crisis allowed the far-right PEGIDA movement to reinvent itself. Finally, Article V is a review article that seeks to combine the dispersed literatures on misperceptions about immigration, their causes, consequences, and how they relate to crises.

Keywords

Mobility, migration, crisis, politicization, opportunity structures, misperceptions

Résumé

Cette thèse explore les concepts de mobilité et de crise dans deux constellations particulières : celle des *crises de mobilité* (c.-à-d. la crisification des mouvements humains) et celle des *mobilités de crise* (c.-à-d. l'émergence de tels mouvements pendant ou à cause d'une crise). Après avoir présenté les grandes lignes de ces concepts, elle introduit une série de cinq articles qui se concentrent chacun à leur manière sur l'une des constellations. Les articles I et II traitent de la politisation de l'immigration dans le contexte des grandes crises économiques/financières et des réfugiés. Ils mettent en évidence des modèles de discours divergents, soulignent l'importance des chocs de crise et peuvent être lus comme un argument contre la tentation de généraliser à l'excès. L'article III est une étude comparative de la manière dont la mobilité internationale des étudiants a été réglementée en Allemagne et au Royaume-Uni, deux pays de destination importants, qui diffèrent toutefois fortement dans leur approche. Revenant au thème de la politisation, il fait ressortir le rôle de la *politisabilité*. Alors que les étudiants internationaux sont considérés comme des étudiants en Allemagne, ils sont perçus comme des étrangers politisables au Royaume-Uni. L'article IV se penche sur les structures d'opportunité ; il montre comment la crise des réfugiés de 2015-16 a aidé le mouvement d'extrême droite PEGIDA à se réinventer. Enfin, l'article V est une synthèse qui vise à combiner la littérature éparse sur les perceptions erronées (*misperceptions*) de l'immigration, ses causes, ses implications et la manière dont elles sont liées aux crises.

Mots-clés

Mobilité, migration, crise, politisation, structures d'opportunités, perceptions erronées

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Declaration

I declare that the following doctoral thesis titled

Crises of Mobility, Mobilities of Crisis: Studies on Movement and Disruption

was composed by myself, that the work contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated otherwise in the text, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification at the University of Neuchâtel or any other institution.

I further declare that all parts of this thesis that were published before submission are identified as such, and the publication outlet specified.

Ingolstadt, 19 October 2022

Foreword

The work on this thesis, a collection of articles about mobilities, crises, and their entanglements and intersections, commenced in early 2019 in a quite orthodox fashion. The following year, its advancement was, however, complicated—as so many were—by the COVID-19 pandemic, the aftermath of which is still felt: All the more am I glad to present it today.

While it is no secret that the conduct of research in the social sciences can (and sometimes has to) be a solitary exercise, I want to acknowledge some of those who accompanied me throughout the last four years. First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to my doctoral advisor Gianni D'Amato, who, with his combination of Italian charm and Swiss pointedness, has guided me through this unique experience. He always had an open ear, was supportive but never imposing, nourished my independence, and broadened my scholarly horizon.

I also thank my co-authors and the four members of my doctoral committee for their commitment and support. A special debt I owe to Philipp Lutz with whom I have entertained thus far, and hope to continue entertaining, a fruitful research relationship. There are many others who have supported me with their comments, advice, questions, and good wishes—too many to list them all, I am afraid, yet I am grateful to them in like manner.

Lastly, I want to thank the members of the NCCR – on the move, in the context of which this thesis came to fruition, the *équipe* of the SFM (particularly Christine Diacon, Robin Stünzi, Hoang-Mai Verdy-Diep and—even though he has left us—Lorenzo Piccoli), and the team of

the GSPP/CSHE that has so generously hosted me during my research stay at the University of California, Berkeley (particularly Anne MacLachlan).

Ingolstadt, 19 October 2022

List of Abbreviations

AfD	Alternative for Germany
BAföG	Federal Training Assistance Act
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CSU	Christian Social Union in Bavaria
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019 (SARS-CoV-2)
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
FDP	Free Democratic Party[1]
IP	Individual Project
ISM	International Student Mobility
KfW	Credit Institute for Reconstruction
MP	Member of Parliament
NCCR	National Centre of Competence in Research
NZZ	Neue Zürcher Zeitung
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEGIDA	Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident
PMI	Prime Minister's Initiative
RAF	Red Army Faction
SOM	Support and Opposition to Migration
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany
UK	United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
US	United States (of America)
WHO	World Health Organisation

[1] This German party is not to be confused with the Swiss FDP.Die Liberalen.

1 Introduction and Overview

The following dissertation consists of five articles linked to its overarching theme of mobility and crisis, three of which have been published in peer-reviewed international journals so far. Together, they form a set of *variations on a theme* but are also connected to another: either because of cross-references, because they arise from each other, or because they approach the same problem from a different topical or methodical angle. More rhizomatic than holistic in nature, they cover ground at the intersection of movement and disruption—and thus at a meeting-place of promise and peril, where a web of rules, narratives, perceptions, opportunities, and logics of action intertwines with the lived and experienced agency of *people on the move*, their families, supporters, advocates, and opponents. In this regard, it is the purpose of this dissertation and its articles to provide a glimpse into the realities of human mobility in an era, in which the sword of Damocles (that is the disruptive and unforeseen), although appearing less threatening than in previous times, entails the *novum* of complete and all-pervasive ubiquity.

Despite the articles being diverse in character, they also share a number of similarities in regard to their content and analytical lens. Barring one, they all deal with the interplay of mobility and crisis in a (comparative) West European context,[2] covering recent and less-recent developments in Switzerland, Germany, and the UK (a selection rooted in research pragmatism but also in the wish for comparability), and thus embedding themselves into a spatiotemporal setting characterized by anxieties and change. Employing the eponymous framework of *crises of*

[2] Even though there has been much scholarship on migration and mobility over the recent decade, the field remains, at least in parts, "dominated by North American scholarship […] Until recently, research was strictly anchored in the nation-state experience of the receiving countries" (Martiniello 2013: 8).

mobility and *mobilities of crisis* and exploring three concepts of inquiry (politicization, opportunity structures, misperceptions), they investigate mobility as both the subject of crisis and as something that becomes visible through it. In doing so, they correspond to the historical-comparative angle of the *NCCR – on the move*'s IP 22 project[3] as well as to work conducted as part of the SOM project (Van der Brug et al. 2015), and convey insights to an audience larger than those exclusively interested in mobility. In fact, since this dissertation is located at the junction of migration studies, political sociology, comparative politics, and, to some extent, political psychology, it seeks to cross disciplinary bridges and prove that the various empirico-analytical entanglements of mobility and crisis are no less rich and colorful than the concepts themselves. The five articles it is composed of (which will be briefly introduced in the following as well as in more detail in Chapter 5), are, in order of their publication date:

(1) Bitschnau, M., Ader, L., Ruedin, D., & D'Amato, G. (2021). Politicising immigration in times of crisis: Empirical evidence from Switzerland.[4]

In this dissertation: **Article I.**

(2) Bitschnau, M., Lichtenstein, D., & Fähnrich, B. (2021). The "refugee crisis" as an opportunity structure for right-wing populist social movements: The case of PEGIDA.[5]

[3] The project titled "Mobility, Diversity, and the Democratic Welfare State: Contested Solidarity in Historical and Political Comparative Perspective" ran from 2018 to 2022 and contributed to the NCCR's second phase.

[4] Published in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 47(17), 3864–3890.

[5] Published in: *Studies in Communication Sciences*, 21(2), 361–373.

In this dissertation: **Article IV.**

(3) Lutz, P., & Bitschnau, M. (2022). Misperceptions about immigration: Reviewing their nature, motivations and determinants.[6]

In this dissertation: **Article V.**

(The two remaining articles have not been published yet but are either under review or have been revised and resubmitted ("R&R") to a journal at the time of writing.)

(4) Bitschnau, M., Ruedin, D., Hellström, A., & Sundström, M. Similar disruptions, different reactions? Refugee crises and the politicisation of migration in Sweden and Switzerland.[7]

In this dissertation: **Article II.**

(5) Bitschnau, M. A garden of forking paths? Divergent patterns of governing international student mobility in Germany and the United Kingdom.[8]

[6] Published in: *British Journal of Political Science*, no issue assigned at time of submission. Later assigned to 53(2), 674–689 (2023).

[7] Title as of 19 October 2022. Title and contents may be subject to future changes.

[8] Title as of 19 October 2022. This article was published after submission of this thesis in *Comparative Migration Studies*, 11, No. 24 (2023).

In this dissertation: **Article III.**

"Politicising immigration in times of crisis" (Article I) was the original point of departure for this dissertation. Exploring the politicization of immigration during two major economic crises, I find divergent discursive patterns—the labor migrants of the 1970s soon became political targets, while the mobile *Schengen* beneficiaries of the 2000s enjoyed ample "residence rights and social security benefits that their predecessors did not" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 3875) and were consequently much more complicated to capitalize on. This was a first indication that the impact of crises is more nuanced than one may initially assume: to a great extent, it appears to depend on the specific domestic context. In a follow-up article, "Similar disruptions, different reactions?" (Article II), I additionally include Sweden and replace the economic crises with refugee crises, detecting a similar variation that casts an even more critical light on any mono-causal and monodirectional conception of crisis, especially in cases, in which there is no clear crisis shock but rather a period of rising concern.

The two following articles deviate from this setup but stay true to the dissertation's overall theme, with "A garden of forking paths?" (Article III) zooming in on a constellation, in which a particular form of mobility emanated from the notion of crisis, becoming its *emblème*, so to say: international student mobility, the governance of which I study in Germany and the UK from the late 1990s. I here find that imaginaries of crisis-like threat have contributed to notable differences in politicizability, with international students being viewed as students in Germany but as internationals in the UK. "The 'refugee crisis' as an opportunity structure" (Article IV) investigates, by contrast, how the emergence of the 2015-16 European refugee crisis revitalized

the far-right PEGIDA[9] movement, which had lost most of its appeal in the months before. The crisis, I find, offered PEGIDA a chance to recast its primary objects of animosity—Muslims—as refugees and redirect its strategic messaging.

A common element across economic and refugee crises is the perception of immigrants as a threat to the non-immigrant population. In the case of economic crises, they are often depicted as a burden placed on the shoulders of an ailing nation, as scroungers and parasites who either steal jobs from others or are at the brink of turning into a permanent underclass, whose unemployment will bring public welfare to its knees (Schierup 1985). In the case of refugee crises, such fears are complemented by (often stronger) notions of cultural strangeness and hostility. Immigrants, in other words, make great scapegoats in times where many people seek to rationalize "their [anti-immigrant] views, increasing their willingness to engage in anti-minority behavior by lowering the […] social sanctions from doing so (Bursztyn et al. 2022: 1). Ultimately, it was this dynamic that led me to the subject of misperceptions—with "Misperceptions about immigration" (Article V) to be understood as a first attempt to review and integrate dispersed literatures on the attitudinal consequences of immigration threats. Immigration misperceptions, I furthermore note, are common, hard to correct, and linked to a variety of determinants (ranging from ideology to media reporting).

In sum, these five articles paint a comprehensive picture of mobility and crisis where there are no Mondrianian geometries but rather Rothkonian surfaces; a chorus of colors that blend into

[9] PEGIDA is an acronym for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlands* (i.e., Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident). PEGIDA offshoots in other cities have usually retained the second and third syllable but replaced the PE with the first letters of their own city, e.g., DÜGIDA in Düsseldorf.

each other and challenge the conventional wisdom that still regards refugee crises as *a priori* politicized or neglects that—as in the case of Article III—not all crisis impacts must be rooted in material crises. In the end, it is (as so often) the context that matters; the domestic particularities and sensibilities that are more relevant than any predetermined signification. This will be elaborated in closer detail over the next two-hundred pages, where the reader will find the following: a conceptual exploration of crisis and mobility, combined with some considerations regarding their intersections as *crises of mobility* and *mobilities of crisis* (Chapter 2); a similar exploration of the three more concrete and operational concepts of inquiry that are politicization, opportunity structures, and misperceptions (Chapter 3); a review of the methods used and data collected (Chapter 4); a summary and limited discussion of all articles (Chapter 5); and a concise (as Lichtenberg notes, "a man who writes a great deal and says little that is new writes himself into a daily declining reputation")[10] conclusion to weave together the insights gathered (Chapter 6). In addition, there is a bibliography (Chapter 7) and an appendix consisting of the full (published or submitted) versions of the articles.

[10] Aphorism 43 from the *Sudelbuch* ('Notebook') D. Translation by R. J. Hollingdale (1990).

2 Conceptual Background: Core Concepts

As evidenced by its title, *crisis* and *mobility* are the essential terms of this dissertation; a conceptual bracket that holds the different elements (i.e., articles) it consists of together, shapes their mutual relations and subjects them to a particular regime of significance and intelligibility. Both of them are, however, characterized by a wide array of academic and non-academic meanings inscribed in their semantic form (and sometimes mired in considerable ambiguity), which warrants a few more words about their meaning, use, and overlap. Crisis, for instance, is a term that has become almost inescapable these days, repeated *ad nauseam* and applied to a host of (often disconnected) events. Just like the 'scandal suffix' *-gate* has developed a life on its own over the last five decades,[11] crises permeate all aspects of modernity—we *kriegen die Krise* if something does not go the way we want; we have *une crise de nerfs* if we suffer from psychological distress; we work through our quarter-life and mid-life crises; and, ultimately, find our existence embedded in a myriad of crises large and small, present and anticipated, solvable and containable, easy to respond to and thoroughly *wicked* (e.g., Menkhaus 2010; Schiefloe 2021).

As regards mobility, it is no less ubiquitous: A term that can apply to everyone and everything, all the more in an age that views movement as a key condition of being and rests on an ontology of perpetual motion (Nail 2018). This section therefore seeks to introduce either concept, reflect

[11] Notable examples include *Obamagate* (former U.S. President Barack Obama allegedly ordering to spy on the Trump campaign); *Gaetzgate* (U.S. Representative Matt Gaetz placed under criminal investigation after sex trafficking accusations); *Ibizagate* (then-FPÖ chairman Jörg Haider offering government contracts to a false Russian heiress); *Pussygate* (the *Access Hollywood* tape of Donald Trump and Billy Bush surfacing); and *Gamergate* (an online controversy about sexism, progressivism, and representation in the video game industry).

about them, and highlight how they relate to each other. In doing so, it gives the reader a solid conceptual foundation from which everything that follows can be assessed.

2.1 Crisis

As the etymology of the term betrays, a crisis has historically been a moment of decision. The Greek term *krísis* (κρῐ́σῐς), Reinhart Koselleck shows in the third volume of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (an English translation is available: Koselleck 2006), used to denote a medical situation in which static suffering gives way to rapid recovery or to no less rapid decline. It is this a scenario closely related to that of the gambler who puts all his money on red at the roulette table; the politician who seeks to raise his profile at the steep price of scandal; or the utopian whose options are limited to finding redemption or falling victim to despair. In all these cases (and in many more), a decision is rendered that, at a moment's notice, improves or deteriorates the status quo drastically.[12] In more probabilistic terminology, on may speak of a *high risk/high reward* scenario: although the outcome is uncertain at the point of decision, its impact will be of great significance in any event.[13]

Although the medical context disappeared over time (or, more precisely: gave way to a semantic pluralism), the decisionist connotation and the corresponding oscillation between salvation and damnation, remained at the core of the crisis concept—this, however, not in the sense that human agency would be considered inevitable (*not-reacting* and *not-deciding* is a possible and sometimes surprisingly successful response)[14] but as the more general insight that there will be

[12] See the line from Hölderlin's *Patmos* (1803/1808): *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch*.

[13] One may recall that the Greek *pharmakon* (φάρμακον) similarly denoted a substance that could be both poison and cure, with the difference merely one of one's constitution and dosage (Paracelsus: *sola dosis facit venenum*).

[14] There are obvious similarities between this point and the Schumpeterian notion of *creative destruction*: the idea that the economic structure is continuously revolutionized from within, with the revolutionary impetus often

an impact one cannot escape. The crisis represents the point in time where this fateful decision or non-decision is due but has not been rendered yet (Koselleck 2006); where there is no clarity about the outcome but only that there will be one (see Boin 2004). However, in recent decades, this openness, according to which a moment of crisis may also entail a return to the status quo ante, has gradually made way to more negative readings and the close association of crisis with threat. Evoking notions of "insecurity, misfortune, and test, [crisis today] refers to an unknown future whose conditions cannot be sufficiently elucidated" (Koselleck 2002: 236). As a concept, it has turned from the decisionist *moment of truth* to a more unspecified *period of discomfort*, which may get worse but not morph into a genuinely positive scenario.[15]

Besides this shift, there has also been a multiplication of crises in the recent past, i.e., the "enormous expansion" (Koselleck 2006: 397) of meanings also entailed an expansion of crisis manifestations. In today's world, we find a plethora of political, economic, and societal crises; psychological and medical crises; ethical and humanitarian crises; crises of virtue, leadership, and

coming from crises (cloaked as disruptions) and *within* to be understood as independent of any central planning or decision-making. A more practical example from the recent past include Germany's former Chancellor Angela Merkel, who was often criticized for *sitting out crises*. On non-response as a tool of crisis communication, see also Verhoeven et al. (2014).

[15] There are numerous instances in which crisis is used to merely describe an extended period of weakness and decline; we speak of the *crisis of the churches*, the *crisis of the trade unions*, or the *crisis of a football club* in this way. At least in the first two cases, the invocation of crisis (as a result of social change) has become an expected ritualized practice in which both journalists and the affected church/trade union leadership take part: One may term this an institutionalization of crisis. (Somewhat paradoxically, this very institutionalization can also turn into a self-destroying prophecy.)

religion.[16] Capitalism is (if one is to believe its critics) in a crisis since time immemorial, and the environment at least since the early 1970s.[17] Not to speak of institutional macro-crises like the one in which the European institutions find themselves time after time (e.g., Brunazzo 2022; Schimmelfennig 2018; Voltolini et al. 2020). What is more, most of these crises do not happen in isolation but tend to engender each other: the financial crisis of 2007-09 led to an economic crisis, which caused a sovereign debt crisis, which in turn triggered an institutional crisis and—as some have claimed—a crisis of democracy (e.g., Kriesi 2018). As democratic backsliding is correlated with instability, and instability with economic dysfunction, the ground may already have been laid for the next economic crisis (setting in motion an inescapable *circulus vitiosus*). One crisis brings forth the other, with the social edifice either crumbling after a while or developing protection mechanisms to cope with the sentiment of a perpetually looming disaster.[18]

[16] There have been several efforts to create typologies of crises, which, however, often include natural disaster or similar catastrophes. One comparatively nuanced approach comes from Gundel (2005), according to whom crises can be typologized on the basis of a combination of predictability (i.e., the time, manner, or place of a crisis can be assumed) and influenceability (i.e., the occurrence of a crisis can be prevented, or its harmful impact minimized). While Gundel departs from a conception of crisis that I believe rests too heavily on materiality, he admits that societal crises would belong to the upper right quarter of his matrix: hard to predict and hard to influence.

[17] How much simpler were the times when John Platt could still argue (in a contribution for *Science*) that "there is only one crisis in the world. It is the crisis of transformation" (1969: 1115).

[18] Of course, there are also cases—most notably in autocratic regimes—where the invocation of a perpetual crisis that threatens the nation is a popular tool of those in power to solidify their position and curb popular protests (McConnell 2020). It is no surprise that, e.g., Qadhafi in Libya proclaimed the crisis of popular sovereignty under both communism and capitalism and advocated a state of permanent revolution (e.g., Alexander 1981).

So manifold are the crises today—"are we entering an era of concatenated global crises?" Biggs et al. (2011) ask not without reason—that the concept is arguably in one, too. In many instances, it is employed without care and resembles more a cliché than a serious category of analysis: If everything that is even remotely problematic or difficult is elevated to the rank of crisis,[19] the term does not mean much but subjective discomfort. As Harold James argues, crisis is therefore an "example of the inflationary diffusion of language, or when terms are used so indiscriminately and often that they lose meaning" (2021: 262). And Koselleck concurs with this assessment (2006: 399; see also Hopkins 2021; Voltolini et al. 2020) when he expounds that the…

> "…concept of crisis, which once had the power to pose unavoidable, harsh, and non-negotiable alternatives, has been transformed to fit the uncertainties of whatever might be favor of a given moment. Such a tendency toward imprecision and vagueness however may itself be viewed as the symptom of a historical crisis that cannot as yet be fully gauged."[20]

This metastasizing vagueness, a phenomenon that plagues a great many concepts in the social sciences and humanities (as I have recently pointed to in a different context, see Bitschnau and Mußotter 2022), casts doubts on the analytical merit of crisis and may even tempt one to abandon the term altogether. And yet, I argue, there are insights about crises that can be harnessed analytically; more precisely, there are insights that provide us with the conceptual tools to make crises a serious object of inquiry rather than a mere complaint. However, we have to be aware of a few particularities in this context: First, and most importantly, crises are first and foremost products of perception. This may appear obvious but cannot emphasized strongly enough—to

[19] Or, as McConnell puts it, "The sheer range of events and episodes captured under the 'umbrella' of crisis include volcanic ash clouds, terrorist attacks, water contamination episodes, school shootings, plane crashes, diplomatic relations, economic recessions, policy fiascos, budget deficits, and cyber-attacks" (2020: n.p.).

[20] See also Lindley, who simply defines as crisis characteristics "that they are not normal and […] bad" (2014: 2).

call an event a crisis or describe it as crisis-like (see German: *krisenhaft*) only carries meaning (and, by extension, political relevance) in as much as the alleged crisis is perceived as a crisis. Granted, there often is a material component as well, but focusing too much on materialities is not helpful to meaningfully distinguish between crises and non-crises.[21] If we were to strictly privilege material criteria, it would seem inconsistent, for instance, to call the COVID-19 pandemic a crisis but withhold the same label from the diseases of civilization that cost many times more lives each year.[22] No less inconsistent would it be to talk about an opioid crisis in the U.S. but neglect the many more deaths caused by legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco.

This emphasis on perception may perhaps sound more constructivist than it is intended to be. Still, the bottom line remains: There is no line in the sand that allows us to distinguish a crisis from what is considered normalcy (Drennan et al. 2015), and there is no crisis indicator but our collective disposition.[23] This also applies to crisis length (e.g., McConnell 2020), perhaps one of the most interesting elements of crisis (which also plays a major role in two of the following articles, where gauging the start and end points of specific crises was a major methodical concern; see Chapter 4), but in any instance a crucial one. Usually, crises are characterized by a moment of surprise—as in the definition of Seeger and Sellnow (2016)—but McConnell calls the assumption that they "arrive without warning" a "stereotype" (2020: 5) and highlights the

[21] Needless to say that it betrays a myopic understanding of social reality to equate it with material reality.

[22] Note that one could, of course, make the argument that COVID-19 was a real crisis because of its suddenness and disruptiveness. Still, in mid-2022, both of these qualities have long disappeared—yet people continue to speak of the "COVID crisis" as if it were something entirely new.

[23] However, this perspective has been questioned as well. For instance, Boin (2004) argues that it inevitably causes us to miss certain events or processes that would (and should) qualify as crises but do not align with our perception.

existence of creeping or slow-burning crises such as deforestation or population growth. More recently, the issue of climate change, and to which degree it constitutes a crisis, has drawn new attention to the temporal conditionalities of the concept and the degree to which it can be subjected to prognosis and projection.

Second, the perception of a crisis is not so much the perception of the public but of those whose opinions get public*ized.* Contemporary crises are, in fact, chiefly media phenomena as most people have only mediatized access to them.[24] The proverbial man in the street does not know from his personal experience about pirate attacks at the Horn of Africa, the war on drugs in the Philippines, the burning down of the Amazonas rainforest, or the postindustrial despair in the American Midwest (let alone the many other crises around the globe) but conceives of them in the form conveyed by the news. Likewise, he does not know who to blame for crises—a particularly popular media frame (An and Gower 2009)—or how to resolve them. In some cases, European integration comes to mind, the media has also engaged in active *crisification*, turning setbacks into existential threats and fanning the flames of public discontent (Davis Cross and Ma 2015). In light of both its power to create crises and its incentives to do so ("bad news is good news"), it is only consequential that Koselleck has considered press and TV outlets to be "above all" responsible for "[the great inflation of] the use of the term" (Koselleck 2006: 399). In any case, the preeminent role of the media for the construction of crises needs to be

[24] A good overview of different forms of crisis reporting can be found in Cottle (2009). See also the apt dictum of Rosenthal, Boin and Comfort: "If CNN defines a situation as a crisis, it will indeed be a crisis […]" (2001: 12).

acknowledged;[25] two of the articles in this dissertation (I and II) focus on media claims rather than other discursive practices for precisely this reason.

Third, the idea of crises being powerful semantic tools (e.g., Edelman 1988; McConnell 2020), the extent to which "coverage contributes to the construction of socially shared understandings and dominant representations [of crises] which have further consequences for attitudes, emotions, and behaviour" (Greussing and Boomgarden 2017: 1750),[26] but also the use of crisis as a buzzword in communication (Udris 2019) shows how pervasively the link between crisis and different notions of normativity is. As normative preconceptions shape our perception of the world most fundamentally, they also provide us with a comprehensive framework of events, constellations, and *topoi* that may become sites of crisis. For some, global warming is a crisis (and even the most pressing crisis of the present), but for others it is only an elaborate hoax;[27] for some, rising energy prices constitute a crisis, but others may consider them a mere nuisance and perhaps even a necessary evil to promote and ensure energy independence. Labeling something a crisis implies, in practical terms, that this something is a snag in the fabric of normalcy that ought to be mended.

This normativity becomes especially visible in cases where the labeling of an event as crisis is met with objections, or where there is some agreement about the existence of a crisis but not

[25] Jelínková (2019) highlights this with respect to the 2015-16 European refugee crisis: Although there was little material crisis impact (e.g., irregular border crossings) in Czechia, the Czech media ran hundreds of articles depicting refugees as a security threat imposed by the European Union, thus advancing narratives of crisis.

[26] The authors refer here specifically to the 2015-16 European refugee crisis.

[27] Needless to say that the scientific consensus does not attribute equal valence to both of these views.

about how to refer to it. Refugee crises, the subject of two of the following articles (II and IV), are particularly contested, with critics complaining that the arrival of refugees is cast as problematic—and not the circumstances that left them with no choice but to become refugees in the first place (for an example of changing terminologies in this context; see also Goodman et al. 2017). As the careful reader will observe, this is a viewpoint my co-authors and I shared when writing these articles (e.g., footnote 1 in IV). In retrospect, this was however inconsequential as the presence of hundreds of thousands of refugees was almost universally viewed as a crisis at the time. Placing too much emphasis on the subject of crisis is one thing; but if perception is to be considered the decisive measure, then it must be the guideline here as well.[28]

In sum, the notion of crisis remains difficult to grasp: It is rooted in perceptions, shaped by the media (i.e., by institutionalized practices of information selection and transmission), and rests on a wide range of normative premises. Yet, despite these confines, it is possible to make sense of the term as long as one is conscious of the fact that it is a *category of practice* that has no fixed meaning beyond what has been discursively attributed to it. In the theoretical section of Article I (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 3866), I therefore define crises as moments of…

> "…collective awareness that the inner mechanics of the complex social and economic machineries that structure our everyday lives and provide us with meaning have suddenly stopped working the way they are supposed to. In so doing, they cause a moment of disruption that is […] characterised 'by three general attributes: surprise, high uncertainty, and threat.' (Seeger and Sellnow 2016)."[29]

[28] One may agree that refugees have been dealt a bad hand by fate, which should give them the right to some protection measures, but still concede that the tragedy of their situation does not alter the fact that the character of their presence is essentially that of a crisis. The question is however: *what kind* of crisis and *for whom*?

[29] As indicated, the quote from Seeger and Sellnow only encompasses the part starting with "by…".

While one might view this definition as too broad or unspecific, it has the advantage of linking traditional aspects of crisis to three praxeologically relevant elements: communality ("collective"), perception ("awareness"), and the normativity of normality ("they are supposed to").[30] No definition of crisis is perfect (e.g., Lindley 2014; McConnell 2003; 2020), and neither is this one, but it may serve as a solid point of departure to take a closer look at real-world crisis manifestations. This does not make the concept less elusive but helps us to understand how an event becomes a crisis, and a crisis *more than an event*. In the end, any crisis is "to a considerable extent […] what people make of it" (Boin et al. 2018: 34), how they view it, and how they behave as a response. The subject ought to be approached with this very thought in mind.

[30] It goes without saying that this definition can only be applied to the social (including political) and economic structures it aims at. Private crises and tragedies—death, illness, unemployment—are not covered by it.

2.2 Mobility

Like in the case of crisis, the etymological roots of the second term, mobility, reach back to antiquity—yet they must be searched on the fora of Rome and Mediolanum rather than in the infirmaries of Athens or Thebes. There, *mōbilis* described the quality of being loose and easy to move, be it a tool, a sword, or even a tooth.[31] In our times, the concept has, however, left the sphere of inanimate objects and is also applied to populations who may move in space (spatial mobility) or climb their society's socioeconomic hierarchy (social mobility); both combined find their most pointed figurative expression in Bauman's (2000) dichotomy of the vagabond and the tourist, who similarly epitomize a hyper-mobile life that is, however, characterized by starkly different conditions and constraints.[32] As mobility is so ambiguous a term and denotes, in its most basic form, little more than a movement from A to B (without any further indication of the reasons or aims, see Cresswell 2006), its relationship to migration is intricate and not always easy to grasp: Sometimes, the terms are used synonymously, other times in strict opposition to each other; sometimes, migration is theorized as a sub-form of mobility (i.e., a mobility that applies to humans,[33] is spatial rather than social,[34] long-term rather than short-term, and essentially linked to the historical rise of the nation state), other times, migration and mobility

[31] Plinius Secundus writes in his *Naturalis Historia* (21, §180) about a remedy "ad dentium mobiles firmandos".

[32] Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye use the term motility (derived from motion) to describe "the potential and actual capacity of goods, information or people to be mobile *both* geographically and socially" (2004: 75). For an analysis of Bauman's dichotomic characters see also Kristensen's chapter in the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*.

[33] Occasionally, migration metaphors can also be found in the animal kingdom, e.g., *bird migration*. Note that this describes, however, a circular rather than a monodirectional movement as said birds will return the following year.

[34] While migrating may affects an individual's social disposition, these are but consequences of the spatial move. Moreover, at the moment of decision, they are potentialities rather than actualities.

appear as coequal poles between which different facets of human movement oscillate. Among others, researchers of the NCCR – on the move have devoted great effort to the theoretical and empirical study of this *migration-mobility-nexus* and its policy implications.

For example, the NCCR's website offers four distinct conceptualizations (enablement, continuum, hierarchy, opposition), some of which have already been fleshed out in impressive detail. Another approach comes from Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (2020) who identifies migration with a space perspective and mobility with a flow perspective. And finally, I myself distinguish between three readings (see Bitschnau and D'Amato 2022):[35] The continuum that is a *Möglichkeitsraum* (space of opportunity) between both concepts and adapts dynamically to reconfigurations and reappropriations of either; the process that may appear as a historical trajectory from migration to mobility[36] or as its reflection (e.g., via the *new mobilities* paradigm; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2012); and finally the Simmelian dyad that conceives of migration and mobility as mutually constitutive. One could ask, of course, why this matters here—but it becomes relevant once we remember that migrants and their descendants remain key protagonists for the governance of mobility. In fact, despite the myriad of other mobilities that exist in today's world (goods, services, ideas, etc.), they are at the forefront of mobility understood as a matter of contestation.

Still, the term remains vague, which has caused some researchers to question its terminological substance. Even proponents of the *new mobilities* paradigm such as Peter Adey conclude that it lacks "pre-existing significance in and of itself. [Instead, it] is given or inscribed with meaning" (2010: 36), which suggests that to understand mobility and make sense of it, this meaning

[35] This article had not been published when this thesis was submitted. It was later published in *Migration Studies*.

[36] Understood here as the dominant (if not hegemonic) form of human movement.

must be understood first. Any such endeavor is, however, complicated by the fact that mobility (as a political category) remains well in the shadows of migration. We usually speak of migration as it is firmly embedded in a web of meanings: a migrant comes from somewhere and goes somewhere; he possesses a clear identity and a destination. Mobile, by contrast, is a label that can be attributed to anyone, from the British pensioner who lives on the Algarve and returns to his native homeland twice a year, to business travelers, tourists, soldiers stationed abroad, and Aargau housewives occasionally going on a shopping spree in Constance. From this viewpoint, it may have been more logical to write a dissertation on *crises* and *migration*. And yet, besides the fact that the migration label would be rather out of place in the context of Article III (which is about the discursive migranticization of a mobile group), there is something about mobility that makes the term more appealing: the fact that even in the case of an actual migration crisis, the notion of crisis is rarely linked to permanent settlement but to the *moving* of people in the present, to a fluidity that migration does not capture well enough.[37]

But how do crises come into play here? How do they enter the realm of mobility? In two ways, I argue, and the reader may have already surmised them: First and foremost, there are *crises of mobility*, i.e., mobility—in whatever form—is made a crisis by being perceived and discussed as such. The aforementioned refugee crises come to mind, yet there are many other crisis configurations. Some may be about mobility as a concept that permeates our present-day culture, others about particular mobilities as contested modes of social and political expression,[38] and

[37] There are also concerns and anxieties that relate to permanent settlement (housing, integration, etc.)—but in the moment of crisis, they are secondary to the coming and going of people, which bears the mark of mobility.

[38] Consider only the case of climate activists who protest against commercial flights and new highways (or researchers who are skeptical of conference travel for similar reasons).

others again about those who make use of them and are rendered crisis subjects. These subjects find their life plans shaped and often disturbed by attributions of crisis: Immigrants come under pressure because of an economic downturn that causes unemployment to rise and calls for their deportation to swell; travelers find themselves unable to visit their families and friends in the U.S. because the country's president engages in the language of crisis and has imposed a travel ban *until we can find out what the hell is going on* (see Clapton 2022); transnational businesspeople find their mobility, and hence their careers, disrupted by the border closures during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. All these dilemmas echo the decisionist origins of the crisis inasmuch as the mobilities under its thrall may either thrive or collapse.

Yet, on the other hand, there are also *mobilities of crisis*, i.e., mobilities that are not the subject of the crisis but emerge from it or become visible through it. We know that materiality, exposure, and plasticity can matter a lot to people confronted with a crisis situation (e.g., Hangartner et al. 2019) for they reshape our perception; COVID-19 is once again the most notable example for this.[39] The crisis fulfils exactly this function: It casts light on mobilities that have escaped public attention so far; and it remodels the mobile core of others. For instance, the immigrant who found his prospects diminished because of a crisis may gain a different understanding of his situation and the socio-legal limitations it entails. He may even use it as an opportunity to critically reassess his role as a mobile individual or explore other kinds of mobility. More concretely, one could cite the example of Brexit, which was a *crisis of mobility* in the first place (as it was an event driven by an anti-mobility impetus and perceived as a crisis), but also gave rise to countless *mobilities of crisis*. It put almost unrestricted mobility, the right of EU citizens

[39] I have made more detailed remarks on the pandemic's unique crisis materiality in a contribution for the *Progressive Zentrum* (Bitschnau 2020).

to study, work, and live in the UK and *vice versa*, into a never-ending limbo of promises, hopes, threats, and backroom deals. The British expatriate living in Berlin, the Spaniard who wants to move to his girlfriend in Kent, even the almost archetypical Polish plumber—they all saw their mobilities suddenly dragged into the limelight, and needed to readjust to this new reality: What had laid dormant for years, was now brought back on the agenda. In this way, *crises of mobility* and *mobilities of crisis* can be understood as different sides of the same phenomenological coin: One is about the mobile being turned into a crisis, while the other is about it arising from one.[40]

[40] Chapter 5 gives a summary of the five articles that explore this; they themselves can be found in the appendix of this dissertation. Note, however, that there is no direct reference to the *crises of mobility* or *mobilities of crisis* in the articles. Although they were written with these concepts in mind, they are not conceptual pieces and address different academic audiences.

3 Conceptual Background: Concepts of Inquiry

For it is the central aim of this dissertation to study crisis and mobility not as abstract categories but in some of their manifestations, it is crucial to first concretize the instances to be examined in this regard. Precisely because crisis and mobility are such broad background concepts, they need to be paired with more clearly delineated *concepts of inquiry*. In the following, I consider this an umbrella category for concepts that are more easily operationalizable and better suited to be the subject of empirical research. To use a botanical metaphor, the core concepts are the trunk of this dissertation, whereas the concepts of inquiry are its different branches: they depart from the core concepts but soon develop a life on their own.

There are numerous possible concepts of inquiry, yet this dissertation focuses on *politicization*, *opportunity structures*, and *misperceptions.* Their selection (and the writing of the articles subsumed under them) did not follow a specific script—even though they are closely linked—but was the result of a dynamic process that started with the politicization focus of the NCCR's IP 22 and the previous work that was conducted by its members during the SOM project (Van der Brug et al. 2015). Both articles deriving from this endeavor (I and II) trace politicization against a particular background: first economic crises; then refugee crises. They are complemented by another article (III) that does not so much explore politicization, but identifies politicizability as an important explanans in the context of mobility policies. The article on opportunity structures (IV) is, in turn, more interested in the harnessing of crisis and follows a classic case study approach. Still, it recognizes that the notion of opportunity structure is bound to the politicization and political preselection of specific issues. Finally (Article V), I also take a look at immigration misperceptions as a category *sui generis*.

3.1 Politicization

The first three articles of this dissertation concern the link of crises and *politicization*—a sometimes strange-seeming tongue-twister that nonetheless has a long history in political research.[41] Although it has been conceptualized and operationalized in different ways, it relates, at its core, to the intentional elevation of an issue into the sphere of the political. Not that this issue must have been non-political—in the sense of being devoid of political meaning before—but politicization turns into a proper part of politics by putting it on the discursive agenda (e.g., de Wilde 2007; Palonen 2003). We talk about a politicized environment when people discuss issues such as climate change or LGBTQ rights in a spirited manner; and we talk (political theorists sometimes with chagrin) about a *de*politicized environment when there is little discussion, and the decision-making process is mostly technical. Of course, not every issue is suited for politicization or politicization research. Most of the latter has thus far been conducted about the process of European integration (e.g., Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter and Kriesi 2019; Kriesi 2016; Turnbull-Dugarte 2019), which is, at least in some way, the result of the fierce debates about the fate and future of the EU.

Politicization, as understood and operationalized in Articles I and II, is the product of the *salience* and *polarization* of an issue. It does not focus on molding specific issue properties but on turning them into objects of controversy: "they draw more attention (i.e., more salience) and

[41] Research on politicization can be traced back to Schattschneider's "socialization of conflict" (1960: 40). Palonen (2003) notes that the term itself first appears in the title of German economic historian Karl Lamprecht's 1907 book *Die Politisierung der Gesellschaft*, however in the sense of an increased societal interest in political affairs. The term was then introduced to French and English during the interwar period.

are discussed more controversially (i.e., more polarization)" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 3864).[42] The exact degree of either depends on the issue at hand but is much influenced by the political culture and institutional idiosyncrasies of a given society. For instance, abortion is usually considered a polarized issue because each debate seems to boil down to see it either as a sacrosanct expression of bodily autonomy (in which case every restriction is morally reprehensible) or as a plain and cold-blooded killing (in which case every restriction is a moral imperative); however, as it is perceived as a settled issue in most of Western Europe, it is not really salient and therefore also not really politicized.[43] The same holds conversely for an issue such as economic growth, which may be salient but is insufficiently polarized: Only a tiny minority of de-growth activists would question the growth orthodoxy, whereas most people would conceive of it as a valence issue—i.e., an issue where "only one side of the debate is legitimate, or all positions are effectively the same" (Van der Brug et al. 2015: 7; see also Nelson 1984).[44]

Questions of mobility (and of migration in particular[45] seem to fit the politicization equation well (e.g., Grande et al. 2019; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2019), especially since they concern something that is not confined to the sphere of the abstract but profoundly material: the continuous presence of others. Different from other issues, mobility and its ramifications are hard to escape from as they are entrenched in the fabric of sociality.

[42] There are other conceptualizations that include, e.g., *actor expansion*. See footnote 1 in the article.

[43] The situation is different in the U.S., especially after the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) that ended the status of abortion as a constitutionally guaranteed right.

[44] In this case, there may be differences about the best way to increase economic growth but not about its necessity as such After all, even the adherents of *green growth* etc. agree with the basic tenets of a growth-based economy.

[45] Most related work deals with migration exclusively. Even books such as Vicki Squire's "The Contested Politics of Mobility" (2010) tend to understand mobility as *migration+* and not as a category of its own.

Their politicization, one may thus assume, is a phenomenon inherently related to crises—in the form that the emergence of a particular crisis can increase both the salience of immigration and (since immigrants are a prominent outgroup and target in situations of social turmoil) its polarization in the discursive arena. Notably, Hutter and Kriesi (2022) have found such an effect in different European countries with regard to the European refugee crisis.

Yet, while heightened politicization in a crisis that is migration-specific may tell us something about this concrete case, it does not say much about the general impact of crises.[46] I therefore study two economic crises in Article I, the 1973-74 oil crisis and the 2007-09 financial crisis, which were both related to immigration issues. I furthermore consider refugee crises in Article II; refugee *crises*—plural—since I not only study the European refugee crisis, the politicization of which has already been examined (e.g., Gianfreda 2018; Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Hutter and Kriesi 2022; Krzyżanowski et al. 2018) but also the now almost forgotten Balkans refugee crisis of the 1990s. Complementing these historical-comparative analyses, Article III looks into the politics of student mobility, and how the politicizability of international students has shaped different policy outcomes.

[46] One can reasonably assume that the subject/object of a crisis always has a good chance to become politicized. It is almost automatically more salient and, except in rare cases, subject to heated debates. This holds for refugee crises as well as for economic crises, political crises, and even most natural catastrophes.

3.2 Opportunity Structures

As mentioned before, crises are not only a particular class of events but also a common feature of what we call modernity[47]—some may go as far as calling them its superstructure, others its master signifier, and yet others would turn things around and posit that contemporary life itself is little but the symptom of a larger structural crisis: "It acts as an ideational force and principal ideology, sublimating the contradictions of history in the effects of civilization: *It makes crisis a value* […]" (Baudrillard 1987: 64). Be that as it may, there is no shortage of crises that dominate the present; some of them man-made, others natural, others again an eclectic mix of both. These days, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is certainly the *crise du jour* (and the metronome for political decision-makers), but the climate crisis, cost-of-living crisis, and COVID-19 crisis still provide decent competition. With crises continuously appearing, fading, and re-appearing, they become valuable *opportunity structures*.

Known in social movement research as critical events (e.g., Espeland and Rogstad 2013; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Staggenborg 1993),[48] these opportunity structures can be conceived of as possibilities to alter the trajectory of the present (Gamson and Modigliani 1989) and thus as providing incentives to engage in collective action (Tarrow 1994). In principle, any event can be an opportunity structure (e.g., an election, a death, a tax raise) but they are "more favorable for certain groups and challenges than others" (Berclaz and Giugni 2005: 17; see also Kriesi 1995). A typical example of the recent past is the anti-nuclear movement (e.g., Kitschelt 1986)

[47] See also Koselleck: "Crisis becomes a structural signature of modernity" (Koselleck 2006: 372).

[48] A major precursor here is Charles Tilly's seminal *From Mobilization to Revolution* (1978). It has been pointed out that there are as many attempts to define the phenomenon as there are studies.

that had several opportunities from the 1960s—most notably the 1986 Chernobyl disaster—to seize the moment and lobby for change. Yet migration appears no less as a possibility; just as it can be politicized, it can also be an opportunity structure used by actors who want to promote or prevent[49] social change. (Both concepts are, in fact, linked since the existence of a topical opportunity structure indicates greater salience and may foster polarization as well.) This even more in cases of crises as McConnell (2020: n.p.) summarizes:

> "One should always remember that when a crisis destabilizes established norms, policies, institutions, and coalitions of interest, then there will always be some actors (including, at times, governments) that are happy to see a new course being charted in the form of institutional restructuring, policy change, new ideas, and new policies."

In other words, one man's crisis can be another man's opportunity and *vice versa*.[50] This, however, does not mean that both concepts are the same in a categorical sense. Although they have become largely obsolete by now, the decisionist origins of crisis clearly point at a necessity (a decision *must* be rendered), whereas an opportunity structure is a potentiality that also can be ignored and not taken advantage of. In the more modern understanding of crisis, there are likewise elements (threat, uncertainty, and surprise) that do not apply to opportunity structures *per se*: their uncertainty is limited, and they do not have a threatening character, at least not for the actors who see them for what they are. In addition, crises do not possess the same strong links

[49] Although the term is linked to progressive social movements, an opportunity structure does not need to favor progressivism or change at all. By contrast, opportunities may arise that help those fighting for the status quo.

[50] This is also why Van der Brug et al. (2015) describe opportunity structures as one of their four types of explanations for politicization (structural; top-down; initiated by authorities).

to the idea of collective agency; a crisis can mobilize people but also paralyze them,[51] whereas an opportunity structure is an *opportunity* and nothing else. In this sense, the two concepts may be coextensive with each other in some contexts, but remain distinct regardless.

In the case of migration, crises may provide the backdrop against which the opportunity arises. We may here think of the *crises of mobility* sketched before, but in particular of refugee crises, which bring to the fore a fiercely contested kind of migration: inescapable, unwanted, and morally charged. In Article IV, I apply this assumption to the case of the far-right German PEGIDA movement and trace the effect the 2015-16 European refugee crisis (the response to which was an opportunity structure for anti-immigration actors) had on its identity formation and strategic messaging. PEGIDA, as the name suggests (the I stands for Islamization) rose to prominence by appealing to Islamophobia rather than xenophobia—yet when their slogans became dated and a new opportunity presented itself, they had to reconsider their strategy.

[51] This has been the case as regards environmental crises but also some economic crises: they have caused feelings of despair and powerless but did not really spark a collective response. In some cases, a crisis may even appear as a *force majeure* event that is beyond our control. *Gott würfelt nicht*, and neither can he be protested against.

3.3 Misperceptions

The last concept of inquiry to be outlined here belongs more to the realm of political psychology: immigration misperceptions. Misperceptions are perceptions that stand in sharp contrast to the best evidence we have at a given moment (Flynn et al. 2017): If the sky is blue and clear but my conversation partner insists on it being grey and cloudy, he either does not know and makes a guess or he believes he knows[52] and is mistaken. Requiring evidence as a precondition also means that a misperception is not a value judgment as most claims, frames, and positions analyzed in the other articles. To give but one example, it would certainly be no misperception to say that *Aston Villa FC is the best Premier League Club* since 'best' can refer to a multitude of qualities (including something as banal as affection). Yet it would be a misperception if one were to add that it is the club that has won the most games or scored the most goals last season. In analogy, calling immigration or immigrants *bad*, *harmful*, or even a *menace to society* does not qualify as a misperception. It may be dubious, xenophobic, and essentialist, but as there is no consensus about the meaning of *bad* or *harmful*, there is also no empirical evidence to possibly weigh such ascriptions against.[53]

Misperceptions are ubiquitous and neither bound to any specific issue nor a product of modernity (even though their proliferation has been greatly aided by the rise of first the mass media and later online platforms). One may rather consider them an epistemological defect that is an

[52] This would be a mere lack of information but no misperception. A true misperception never cloaks itself as a guess, precisely because those holding it usually operate from a position of certainty and conviction.

[53] This all the more, as immigration may have negative impacts (at least to some groups and in specific situations).

inextricable part of our *conditio humana*.[54] Just like stereotypes and prejudices—two related but not equal categories[55]—their manifestations are traditionally the domain of social psychology (e.g., Kelly 1993; Pronin 2007) but have spread to neighboring disciplines in recent years: Ipsos, for instance, regularly conducts its *Perils of Perception* study in a host of countries (37 in the most recent 2018 edition), measuring misperception on issues such as crime, sex, climate change, and: human mobility. Still, the literature about such mobility misperceptions, or (since they privilege immigration) *immigration misperceptions* is dispersed across research areas and thus difficult to benefit from. While this is, to some extent, the natural consequence of different interests and research agendas, it is corroborated by the diversity of such misperceptions. They assume many shapes and may range from simple innumeracy (i.e., overestimations of the share of immigrants in a spatial context),[56] to sophisticated conspiracy theories such as the one of an alleged *Great Replacement* (a term coined by Renaud Camus).[57]

As there are numerous insular and isolated insights regarding immigration misperceptions but little that brings them together, Article V is an attempt to provide the first ever comprehensive

[54] For instance, Dio Cassius writes in his *Historiae* (53.19.3–4) of the difficulties of separating perceptions from misperceptions: "[…] many things that are not happening are talked of as if they were, many genuine events are unknown, and just about everything is talked about in a way that is different from the way it really happens. And certainly both the size of the Roman empire (sic!) and the frequency of events make accuracy concerning them very hard to achieve." Commenting on this, Gibson dryly notes: "Perceptions were often all that was available" (1998: 124).

[55] Stereotypes are generalized beliefs about an individual or group (positive and negative); prejudices, by contrast, are generalized feelings and attitudes toward them (negative).

[56] Usually one's country, region, city, or neighborhood (e.g., Herda 2010; 2019; Strabac 2011).

[57] Various kinds of misperceptions can also reinforce each other as shown by e.g., Martini et al. (2022).

review. Drawing on theoretical and empirical research from social psychology as well as from economics, demography, and political science, it takes stock of common misperceptions, categorizes them, looks closely into their motivations and assesses their determinants. The issue of crisis is here present in indirect form: crises may emerge because of certain exogenous factors[58] that are hard to foresee or control; yet what happens when they *have emerged* is something that a society can have influence on (Boin and 't Hart 2003). They may, for instance, do what the first three articles have explored—use the crisis to politicize some forms of mobility (especially if there is, as in the fourth article, a suitable opportunity structure). But politicization does not come out of nowhere, and misperceptions may contribute a lot to attitudes on immigration: The more prevalent they are, the harder is it to establish a policy consensus on the matter.[59]

[58] Of course, this is not always the case as there may also be systemic crises. But even in these cases, there is often an exogenous element that provokes a dilemma or reveals some weak spots. For instance, there have always been systemic vulnerabilities within the eurozone; yet it needed an external event (the 2007-09 financial crisis) to form the preconditions for the sovereign debt crisis.

[59] There are some other reasons why misperceptions may increase polarization. Most notably, those beholden to them are more likely to turn their fears into action and advocate major change. As they perceive reality differently (and feel threatened because of this perception), they cannot ever be really satisfied by policies that are based on what they believe to be *fake.*

4 Methodological Considerations

As the reader may assume, these five articles, although all linked to the tension between crisis and mobility, employ a variety of different research methods—the dissertation as such may, in turn, be described as relying on both qualitative and quantitative approaches. More specifically, Article I and II are quantitative in nature; they rely on large-N datasets of claims, which were then subjected to statistical analyses. Conversely, Articles III and IV are qualitative and build on text excerpts (in the case of III) and additional interview data (in the case of IV), with Article V falling outside the qualitative/quantitative dichotomy.[60] In the following, I first give a brief outline of the methods chosen for each article, and elaborate on relevant details, i.e., the data identification, data collection, analytical treatment, and methodical constraints. I do so with the intention of providing the reader with a basic overview that is, however, not nearly as detailed as the reflections in the articles themselves. Also, I do not make a case for or against a specific methodological setup; instead I emphasize that all methods in the repertoire of social science can be of value for deepening our understanding of the world we live in—ultimately, successful research is less about the method itself and more about how it is executed.[61] That being said, I would argue that a diversity of methods is helpful to study phenomena that manifest themselves in different ways at different times, yielding different (and sometimes even conflicting) results.

[60] While it synthesizes the results of (both quantitative and qualitative) studies, it links them to established theories and, most importantly, posits a connection between different threats and types of immigration misperception.

[61] This does not mean that method choice is meaningless; only that there can be multiple ways to gain insights.

Out of the five articles, the first two are the most alike (as far as the methodology is concerned): Since one (Article II) is, in some respect, the extension of the other (Article I), their setup and constraints are quite similar. As described previously, both these articles are interested in the *politicization* of immigration during different crisis periods—the first one examines two economic crises (the 1973-1974 oil crisis and the 2007-09 financial crisis) while the second one shifts the focus to two refugee crises (the Balkans refugee crisis of the 1990s and the European[62] refugee crisis of 2015-16). Both do so by following Van der Brug et al. (2015) in examining claims published in relevant Swiss (and, in the case of Article II, Swedish) broadsheets. These claims are defined as "purposive and public articulation of political demands, proposals, criticism, or physical attacks" (Koopmans et al. 2005: 254) that, in a number of possible ways, may affect the interests of the claims-maker (also referred to as *claimant*) or other actors. They were statistically analyzed with regard to the core elements of politicization—polarization and salience—as well as to actor diversity/behavior, and frame use.

Article III is also concerned with politicization, but in another way: it focuses on the politicizability of international students and its role for cross-country differences in the governance of international student mobility. In principle, it would have been possible to analyze claims here as well (in the form of a time series analysis) —but the article's broader historical-comparative focus calls for a more nuanced understanding of the policy decisions and path dependences

[62] As highlighted, finding the correct crisis terminology can be a difficult task. *European refugee crisis* is the most common term (apart from the more generic *refugee crisis* as a *totum pro parte*) but remains different from *Balkans refugee crisis* for it refers to refugees' destination rather than their countries of origin. It may therefore appear that the crisis was an exclusively European event when it was not. (An alternative is *Syrian refugee crisis* since most refugees hailed from Syria and there was a causal nexus between the crisis and the Syrian Civil War.)

(Page 2006; Torfing 2009) that have shaped said politicizability. For this reason, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews in Germany and the UK. Talking to current and former politicians and civil servants allowed me to draw a more holistic picture of why divergent policies have emerged from similar macro-conditions. I also complemented these interview data with an extensive range of documents, including, but not limited to, party platforms, speeches, executive declarations, third-party reports, and legal provisions.

Article IV does not directly[63] deal with politicization but with the 2014-15 refugee crisis as an opportunity structure. Its empirical basis is a series of transcripts of PEGIDA events collected over a two-year period (2014–16) that are then subjected to a frame analysis, with frames being defined in accord with the definition of McAdam et al. (based on Entman 1993) as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared [world views] that legitimate and motivate collective action (1996: 6).[64] Here I first condensed selected speech segments into frames and then grouped these frames into master frames (e.g., Benford and Snow 2000) that serve as the dominant themes. Finally, and as elaborated before, Article V is primarily a review article.

[63] In practice, there is a substantial overlap between an opportunity structure and the politicization of an issue—usually the former will lead to the latter.

[64] Note that this definition is broader and more social movement-specific than the one used for frame in Articles I and II. The latter, while also referring to Entman (1993), is derived from Van der Brug et al. (2015) and defines frames more prosaically as "communicative tools that highlight particular aspects of reality as a means to enhance their salience" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 3867).

4.1 Data and Data Collection

This methodological variety finds its most apparent expression in the different ways how data was obtained during the research process. For the claims data set of Articles I and II, I first conducted a keyword search to find a sufficient number of articles that contain relevant claims. The claims (Article I: N=2,853; Article II: N=3,593) were then coded and analyzed for the periods previously defined as crisis and non-crisis. Determining the length of each period was perhaps the most difficult problem to solve.[65] Given that crises are first and foremost rooted in our perception, they are necessarily bound to the criterion of *awareness*—a crisis that is unknown to the public may not be a crisis in the sense of this dissertation (and consequently not yield any results). This even more since we live in an age where perception can be easily distracted, and various crises compete with another for attention.[66] How could anyone, under such conditions, tell whether a crisis was still perceived as a crisis at a certain point in time?

Quite fortunately, neither the two economic crises of Article I (the 1973-74 oil crisis and the 2007-09 financial crisis) nor the two refugee crises of Article II (the Balkans refugee crisis of the 1990s and the European refugee crisis of 2015-16) had any notable competition: Rather, the oil crisis was the first major systemic crisis after the Second World War (ending the *Golden*

[65] Interestingly, it is an issue that does not receive much consideration or scrutiny in most empirical crisis research. In many cases, the authors give full years or define crisis periods based on their personal impression alone—some examples can be found in the methods chapter of Article II.

[66] For instance, Stoddart et al. (2021) show that the outbreak of COVID-19 has led to climate change fading into the background: One crisis had—at least in parts—cannibalized the other. The same phenomena could be observed when Russian forces invaded Ukraine in early 2022. This time the tables were turned, and COVID-19 morphed from being the most important crisis in decades into something that more resembles a secondary nuisance.

Age of Capitalism; Marglin and Schor 1990); the financial crisis was a standalone event that followed a period of relative uneventfulness;[67] the Balkans refugee crisis took place in a decade so saturated that people mused about the *end of history*; and the European refugee crisis hit a continent who had just overcome its latest string of crises and was, at most, concerned about isolated acts of terrorism. Never was there a scenario in which one of the crises examined had been superseded, although it is true that people may have felt their effects long after they have fallen behind in the order of attention (McConnell 2020). Still that did not resolve the problem of start and end dates. Regarding the economic crises, it would have been tempting to take a single shock event like the 2007 collapse of Lehman Brothers as a start date—as Udris points out, one may also use "simple and uncontested indicators such as falling stock market prices, state debt etc." (2019: 134) in such cases—but I was not convinced by either.[68] A more sophisticated model would ultimately prove the solution for Article I: Instead of a single start and end date, different dates from the literature were combined and all possible combinations (18 x 25 x 22 x 19 = 7,524) taken into consideration. In the case of Article II, such an approach was not feasible, as the literature did not offer a sufficient number of options. Here I relied on anchor dates instead: For the Balkans refugee crisis, these were, for example, the outbreak of the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo and the signing of the Dayton agreement.

[67] By 2007, the shock of the 9/11 terror attacks, concerns about the 2003 invasion of Iraq (both of which were increasingly perceived as US affairs) and the memory of the *dotcom bubble* had greatly diminished. There was no acute crisis the world was going through when Lehman Brothers collapse.

[68] Especially since neither shocks nor economic indicators necessarily match crisis perception. Even an event such as the collapse of Lehman Brothers was not experienced as a crisis by many—only its later ramifications were.

In regard to Article III, the exact time period to be examined was less of a problem:[69] I decided to cover the period from 1997-98 onwards, with the rationale being the transformative moment, which both countries—Germany and the UK—experienced around this time: energetic third-way politicians breaking up the political consensus of the 1980s (see, e.g., Giddens 1998; Powell 2019). In terms of data collection, I decided to conduct semi-structured elite interviews[70] with a number of relevant stakeholders (semi-structured as I did want to lead in-depth conversations that allowed me additional flexibility, see Dunn 2005), including a former minister of the Schröder cabinet. The main problem was that due to a new round of COVID-19 lockdowns, I had to conduct almost all my interviews via phone or video chat, which comes with its own difficulties (e.g., Christmann 2009; Harvey 2011). As is to be expected from interviews of this sort, they varied considerably in length and style, with some interviewees more willing to go into specific details, some more fact-orienting, some more interested in defending a position or view, and some attempting to take the lead themselves.[71] Not all interviewees consented with recording the conversation for subsequent transcription, in which case I was confined to taking notes. Apart from that, the data collection process went rather smooth; I stopped interviewing upon reaching a point of saturation, and then combined the newly gained insights with established knowledge from the literature and the various additional materials listed in Chapter 4.1.

[69] This in particular as the goal was not to measure a statistical effect during a specific time period but develop a more thorough understanding of policy trajectories in a comparative setup.

[70] As Pearbody et al. noted years ago: "When are interviews an appropriate research strategy? Almost always" (ibid). On the advantages of semi-structured interviews, see also, e.g., Longhurst (2010).

[71] Again, Peabody et al. may be cited about interviewing political and bureaucratic elites: They argue it "can be taught; but ultimately, [talking to them], like sailing, cooking, or playing the piano, is a form of artistic achievement. You can do it well or you can just get by" (1990: 452).

Finally, for Article IV, I first transcribed four different series of PEGIDA events (two in the summer and two in the winter) and then condensed statements and claims related to migration and Islam into frames and later master frames (e.g., Entman 1993).[72] Here, unexpectedly, the transcription itself proved to be the greatest challenge as many speeches (all recorded and uploaded to YouTube by a PEGIDA-affiliate) were frequently interrupted by audience responses such as shouting, clapping, or booing, which made some segments difficult to understand. The events covered were chosen randomly within each series as I wanted to avoid cluster effects;[73] at times, they also included organizational remarks or footage of the protest walks (PEGIDA's famous *Spaziergänge*) that had to be taken out first. Of course, as with any piece of research, there are limitations to these articles. To list all of them would be well beyond the possibilities of this chapter, so I will limit myself to a few rather cursory remarks (more details can be found in the articles themselves): Articles I and II did not include the form of politicization that took place on social media platforms and in alternative media outlets; by focusing on broadsheets, they only paint part of the overall picture (and do not tell us much about the representativeness of the claims or claims made by non-categorized actors); Article III is quite broad in scope but does not shine much light on additional developments below or above the national level (e.g., European, regional, local). Article IV, in turn, is more of a snapshot and, albeit consistent in its argument, rests on a relatively narrow empirical foundation.

[72] For the first step, I mainly relied on Jecker's (2014) adaptation of Entman's concept.

[73] The primary goal of Article IV was to investigate the impact of the 2015-16 refugee crisis on PEGIDA's strategic messaging, which made it necessary to include events before, during, and after the apex of the crisis.

5 Summary and Discussion of the Articles

This section provides the reader with an overview of the findings the five articles have yielded. As most of them included several hypotheses (and sub-hypotheses), I will only summarize the main results and how they specifically relate to *crises of mobility* and *mobilities of crisis*.

While the fact that immigration has become more politicized over the last decades is beyond dispute (e.g., Grande et al. 2019), the question of a general crisis impact remains unanswered so far.[74] Do crises affect the discussions and deliberations of this most prominent kind of long-term mobility? Do they, as one may expect *prima facie*, lead to heightened politicization or were other factors more important for shaping the immigration discourse? This was the central issue of Article I, which analyzed the effect of two economic crises (the 1973-74 oil crisis and the 2007-09 financial crisis) on the politicization of immigration. Interestingly, the findings show disparate effects: greater salience and polarization for the oil crisis but the very opposite for the financial crisis—a difference that could be based "on the degree to which immigrants were affected by both crises" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 3875). Evidently, it was easier to politicize saisonniers who faced high unemployment and were subject to limited legal protection than it was to politicize the skilled and needed (e.g., Wanner et al. 2016; Zufferey 2018) Schengen population of the 21st century. Similar differences were observed for actor diversity and frame use, which corroborates the idea that *not all crises are created equal* (especially not in terms of issue politicizability and actual politicization efforts by different actors).

[74] To be understood as an effect that transcends a single crisis and suggests a more general pattern.

However, the mere observation of significant inter-crisis differences in Switzerland does not mean too much as findings obtained there may be hard to generalize (the Swiss case making for a *Sonderfall* is a truism bordering on a cliché),[75] which raises the case for a more comparative perspective. This perspective is offered in Article II by combining the Swiss with additional Swedish data and slightly readjusting the focus: Given that the politicizability of immigrants seems to depend strongly on the crisis context (i.e., the degree to which they are linked to the crisis),[76] one would assume to find a notable politicization effect during refugee crises—i.e., periods where *immigrants* appear as the object and cause of the crisis and not just as scapegoats only selected by virtue of their outgroup status.[77] Yet, surprisingly, a heightened level of politicization could not be observed in either of the crises examined here (the 1990s Balkans refugee crisis and the 2015-16 European refugee crisis). For instance, more salience did only become apparent during the European refugee crisis in Sweden, and polarization patterns were even more mixed. (Important events such as the 2009 Swiss minaret referendum trumped both crises in terms of impact.) All in all, the crisis effect appears to be limited on the claims-level. It must be said, however, that there are significant differences in terms of actor behavior that broadly align with the assumptions. Yet these differences exist between actor groups and *not* between crisis and non-crisis periods.

[75] In this case, there were however some peculiarities to consider, i.e., Switzerland's consociational and consensus-oriented setup, the early rise of anti-immigration sentiment, and the dependence on foreign labor that had required Switzerland to balance economic interests with cultural fears (e.g., Piguet 2006; Ruedin et al. 2015).

[76] In theory, this link can also be positive—for instance, in the context of labor shortage ('crisis in our hospitals').

[77] Refugees are often considered to be tantamount to immigrants and *vice versa*. Hence, studying the politicization of migration during refugee crises means studying in a context of politicizability, irrespective of legal definitions.

In the end, both articles underline that the entanglements of mobility and crisis are not always clear but must be subjected to a more cautious and context-sensitive analysis. Both economic and refugee crises can arise in the form of *crises of mobility*: the first by turning anxieties into anger towards immigrants, and the second by making immigration the crisis subject. Yet, how these crises play out seems to depend on a range of factors, including, to name a few, previous politicization levels, other crises and conflicts, legal provisions for immigrants, geographical proximity (see also Heidenreich et al. 2019), and the existence of alternatives to the status quo. Still, with more and more articles seeing the light of day, from Portugal (Carvalho and Carmo Duarte 2020), Czechia and Slovakia (Kovář 2022) to Denmark and the UK (Temizisler et al. 2022), shedding a light on the role of complexities might be warranted. They may well have a discursive impact but there is no automatism of any sort.

I explore the issue of politicizability in closer detail in Article III, the interview-based exploration of why Germany and the UK govern student mobility so differently. It stands out as the sole article in this selection that puts the focus not on migrants but on a different mobile population (Riaño et al. 2018). Here it was puzzling to find that Germany and the UK—both highly popular destinations for international students with great economic clout, an aging population, and a similar political trajectory in recent years[78]—pursue divergent strategies with respect to

[78] As explained in the article, both countries entered the new millennium with a young and energetic Social Democratic *third way* leader at the helm (DE: Schröder since 1998; UK: Blair since 1997). After initial successes, these governments were, however, voted out of office, and the Social Democratic revolt fell victim to a long (and in the British case ongoing) period of center-right dominance (DE: Merkel from 2005 to 2021; UK: Cameron, May, and Johnson since 2010). A similar comparative approach was followed by Wenzelburger and Staff (2017) with regard to law-and-order policy.

ISM: Germany follows a *benefit now/contribute later* script that regards international students as a cherished resource to ensure the country's competitiveness in the future; it thus balances an universalist education policy (e.g., no tuition fees) with a generous right to stay. By contrast, the UK follows the inverse *benefit later/contribute now* script that combines a commodified education environment (e.g., Beech 2018; Findlay et al. 2017) in which international students are given the role of customers (Lomer 2017) with the promise that a British degree will benefit them on the global labor market. Exploring possible reasons why the UK, despite its financial dependence on international students, has become more restrictive in its approach to ISM (Levatino et al. 2018), I find that the categorical politicizability of those studying abroad was and is crucial: In Germany, they were seen as *students* and excluded from most immigration debates and controversies, while in the UK, they were cast as *migrants*. Theirs were thus *mobilities of crisis* (i.e., mobilities shaped by a crisis imaginary) that, somewhat ironically, would later contribute to a *crisis of mobility*: the anti-mobility revolt that was *Brexit*.[79]

Looking at the transformative quality of the 2015-16 European refugee crisis, i.e., its suitability as an opportunity structure[80] for the ailing PEGIDA movement, Article IV approaches politicization from yet another angle.[81] The crisis, it shows, offered PEGIDA a chance to adjust its

[79] The crisis imaginary in this case is the depiction of international students as scroungers and bogus students, or, more specifically, the notion of crisis (control loss, British students disadvantaged, etc.) that migranticized them.

[80] As crises often tend to do: they "provide highly attractive *opportunity structures* to foster the creation of […] frames, [as they encourage] many people to raise their voices and engage in collective action" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 363).

[81] Yet there is little English-language research on it. Probably most well-known are a (slightly outdated) article by Dostal (2015), a more recent discourse analysis by Volk (2020), and a revised and translated version (2018) of

original Islam-centered agenda through the simultaneous "culturalization of refugees and […] ethnicization of Muslims" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 36): The greater the perception of crisis, the greater the movement's prospects to incorporate some crisis aspects into its logic of action and the more promising its efforts to enhance its "oppositional potential against the government" (Gianfreda 2018: 103). Once again, the case of PEGIDA proves that not all crises are created equal. For a far-right movement with a clear focus on the presence of strangers, the opportunity structure that emerged from the fallout of the 2015-16 refugee crisis (a proper *crisis of mobility*) was a perfect fit.[82] By contrast, PEGIDA faced difficulties to gain new and mobilize old supporters during the COVID-19 pandemic (Volk 2021)—on the one hand, because street rallies were not allowed for most of the pandemic; but, on the other hand, because it is hard to link an anti-Islam message to the experience of lockdowns, mask mandates, and school closures than to the arrival of refugees. In this sense, the fears induced by the crisis was a godsend that helped PEGIDA to revitalize its mass appeal, but they were so in view of a proximity that may not be the case for other actors. For example, it would be hard to imagine Germany's pro-immigration center-right to benefit likewise from such a scenario (e.g., Bale and Rovira Kaltwasser 2021).

As previously outlined, Article V is a review that systemizes and synthesizes insights on immigration misperceptions—their nature, motivations, and determinants—from a range of disciplines and derives conclusion from them. (It is the first ever review of this kind.) The most important findings are that misperceptions are ubiquitous and, in a majority of cases, relate to

Vorländer et al.'s *PEGIDA* (2015). There is also other more fine-grained research but little to none that focuses explicitly on the crisis nexus.

[82] The same is true for the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), which similarly harnessed the opportunity provided by the crisis to stir dormant anti-immigration sentiment and recover electorally (e.g., Muno and Stockemer 2021).

either the nature of immigration (e.g., the population share or sociodemographic characteristics of immigrants), its effects (e.g., on wages or unemployment), and its governance (e.g., border control and irregular immigration). Here the article goes beyond merely reviewing the literature and makes an original contribution: It links these categories of misperceptions to distinct issue-related threats (economic, cultural, security-related; see, e.g., Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014) that lead to *directional motivated reasoning* and cause misperceptions[83] in the first place. The more distorted perceptions get in response, the greater one's cognitive disposition to give precedence to threatening information. As one may deduce, the result is a vicious circle of threat feelings and mental readjustments of reality that only elicit them:[84] People who feel threatened by immigrants seek and process information that confirms this threat, which then leads to more misperceptions, which, in turn, makes them feel threatened even more.

Instead of the *crises of mobility* and *mobilities of crisis* that were prominent in the previous articles, the focus here lies on the threatening properties[85] that make immigration a phenomenon that is, in fact, contributing to both constellations: To the former because it reinforces the perception of migration as something that is dangerous and needs to be avoided (those suffering from heavy immigration misperceptions may regard immigrant crime or the economic implications of immigration as crisis).[86] And to the latter as different mobilities may become relevant

[83] For instance, the experience of economic threat may reinforce misperceptions about the effects of immigration.

[84] This is also the reason why misperceptions are difficult to correct (e.g., Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Even providing people with correct information often fails to diminish their susceptibility for them. For recent research on the consequences of conspiracism and intergroup conflict forming a vicious cycle, see Hebel-Sela et al. (2022).

[85] One may recall that according to Seeger and Sellnow (2016), threat is an essential crisis characteristic.

[86] One immigration misperception often gives rise to others. For example, the wrong perception of the immigrant share may engender misperceptions regarding the impact of immigration (Semyonov et al. 2008).

or are remodeled through misperceptions about them and their entrenchment in crisis. The consequence of all this is not only a largely underexplored[87] and multi-layered socio-psychological defect, but also a multi-level challenge to democracy (Flynn et al. 2017).

[87] Most research on immigration misperceptions focuses on (a) innumeracy and (b) the industrialized world.

6 Concluding remarks

This dissertation has explored different constellations where crises and mobilities meet another, be it in the form of the former topicalizing and harnessing the latter, or the latter (as a perception, imaginary, notion—but also materially) emanating from the former. Given the wide array of issues covered and the rhizomatic rather than linear nature of this enterprise, it may be difficult to derive *lessons learnt* in the usual manner; yet there are a few elements that still shine through the thicket of topical variance and warrant to be highlighted in closing. First, *crises of mobility* do not cause similar impact across time and space but are strongly context-dependent. Echoing Boin's assessment that they "[often thrive] on fragmentation and variety" (2004: 166), I observe notable inter-temporal differences in Article I, inter-country differences in Article II, and a marked (and actor-specific) crisis impact in Article IV that I and II alone would not have given any indication of. There is, I argue, a tendency to ignore this fragmented and sometimes outright contradicting diversity in favor of what may be called *crisis absolutism*: the belief that the properties of a particular crisis are phenomenologically self-evident and carry a discernible, if not supracontextual, significance. (The idea of crises being *more than events* appears here in the doctrinaire form of a premature historization.)[88]

Although there is no need to go as far as H. G. Wells and conclude (perhaps inspired by Marx's famed juxtaposition of tragedy/farce in the preface to the *Eighteenth Brumaire*?) that every *crisis of today is the joke of tomorrow*, I interpret the diverging findings on issue politicization (Articles I, II and III) as well as PEGIDA's (ultimately short-lived and unsustainable) efforts as symptoms that *crises of mobility* are more diverse in their impact than the attention attributed

[88] See also the current debates in the Germanosphere about the Russo-Ukrainian war/crisis as a *Zeitenwende*

to them would suggest. In general, the "ongoing novelty of our epoch" (Koselleck 2006: 398), which this focus on crises ought to demonstrate, often does not live up to its promise—at least not at the level of the canonical crises that too often monopolize an entire crisis category (e.g., "the" refugee crisis; "the" financial crisis) —but turns out to be less determinative than domestic particularities, institutional path dependencies or macro-social *longue durée* developments (see, with reservations, Article III). The epistemological privileging of the crisis as the decisive category of social inquiry may have some merits but can easily lead one astray as well. In this, it much resembles popular narratives (such as those about the *rise of populism*),[89] which often generalize developments bound to a certain context and simplify complex social entanglements for the sake of diagnostic consistency. The same holds for most *mobilities of crisis* in as much as they appear to be contingent: more anchored in the constellations of the moment than in any trans-momentary essence. Put differently, the belief that the crisis label is meaningful in itself seems conceptually short-sighted and empirically untenable.

Yet, despite all this, there remains a fundamental affinity between crisis and mobility as categories naturally aligned with each other. Sudden and shock-like disturbances of the traditional order provide (and always will) ample opportunities and incentives to scapegoat visible outgroups, revel in ingroup nostalgia, and cultivate threat perceptions, which, as shown in Article V, may eventually entail misperceptions and rising anti-immigration sentiment (for the case of the 2007-09 financial crisis; see also Vogt Isaksen 2019). With rising immigration numbers to Europe, diversifying mobilities, and a growing crisis obsession (again, perception is key), there is, in any case, considerable potential for further inquiries into crisis-mobility configurations.

[89] The probably best-known challenge to this trope comes from David Art (2020). I have also offered a threefold critique of the scholarly obsession with populism (2022) that is, however, not part of this dissertation.

While this does not imply any particular effect at the empirical level, it still points at a conceptual symbiosis worthy of consideration. "Wenn man sich überlegt, wo 1979 eine Krise herrscht, ist es leichter zu sagen, wo nicht"[90] is the opening line of a 1980 article by the late Germanist Renate Bebermeyer, who, already back then, seemed puzzled, if not bewildered, at the sight of the crisification of everything. With COVID-19 still lingering in many regions of the world, the Russian invasion of Ukraine about to approach its first anniversary, stock markets tumbling, global energy security under threat, and inflation rates skyrocketing, there will be, in all likelihood, no shortage of crises for the foreseeable future; and with this no lack of opportunities to investigate them in terms of their mobilitarian entanglements.

[90] German original. Translation (M. B.): "Pondering about where there is a crisis in 1979 [is quite hard]. It is easier to tell where there is none." The original quote is from an unnamed author of the German weekly *Stern* (1979).

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Appendix: Articles I–V

This appendix consists of the five articles listed in the introduction. They are here arranged in the following order (name and page number):

(1) “Politicising immigration in times of crisis” (pp. 77–110).

(2) “Similar disruptions, different reactions?” (pp. 111–141).

(3) “A garden of forking paths?” (pp. 142–172).

(4) “The ‘refugee crisis’ as an opportunity structure” (pp. 173–199).

(5) “Misperceptions about immigration” (pp. 200–238).

Each article is prefaced by a title page with its title, bibliographic data, and list of co-authors.

Article I

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ARTICLE I

Politicising immigration in times of crisis:

Empirical evidence from Switzerland

Marco Bitschnau, Leslie Ader, Didier Ruedin, and Gianni D'Amato

Abstract

The present article investigates the politicisation of immigration in Switzerland during two major socioeconomic crises: the oil crisis of the 1970s and the financial crisis of the late 2000s. Based on 2,853 newspaper claims from 1970 to 1976 and 1995 to 2018, we measure and compare differences in salience, polarisation, actor diversity and frame use between crisis and non-crisis periods. We find that while claims-making on immigration was indeed more salient, polarised, and diversified during the oil crisis, the empirical data for the financial crisis are inconclusive or even show a slight decrease. Nonetheless, we still find a notable increase in the use of identity frames during both periods. We conclude that while crises may affect claims-making about immigration and affect the politicisation of the matter, their contextual links to particular immigrant groups appear to be of importance as well. Crises do not increase politicisation automatically but might provide important opportunity structures that foster it.

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Author contributions

MB, LA, DR, and GD designed and conceptualised the study; MB, LA, and DR collected the data; DR performed the statistical analysis; MB, LA, DR, and GD wrote the final manuscript.

Keywords

Politicisation, immigration, integration, claims-making, crisis, Switzerland

Introduction

We live today in a world of massive social and economic transformation (Beck et al. 1994; Crouch 1999; Beck 2016), the rhythm and pace of which are largely dictated by the repeated occurrence of sudden events of disruption—crises. While varying in form and scope, they have in common their substantial impact on public opinion and institutional agency. From a systemic perspective, they pose challenges that society must overcome; from a discursive perspective,

however, they constitute opportunity structures that render some issues more pressing than they were before the crisis onset (Wieviorka 2012). As a result, these issues attract more attention (i.e., they become more salient) and are discussed more controversially in the public sphere (i.e., they become more polarised). Both are aspects of a phenomenon commonly referred to as politicisation (e.g., Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter et al. 2016; Green-Pedersen 2012).[98]

All issues can become politicised if the circumstances are right, but some are more prone than others. Immigration is such an issue. Finding itself at the heart of public debate in Western Europe (Fumarola 2020; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2019; for Switzerland see Skenderovic and D'Amato 2008) and having galvanised support for right-wing politics across the continent (e.g., Campani 2019; Inglehart and Norris 2019; Vieten and Poynting 2016), it has become a popular object of contestation whose susceptibility to politicisation is reinforced by the fact that immigrants, border crossers, and related out-groups have a tradition of being scapegoated for various social ills and difficulties. Our history books are full of such cases, crossing countries and centuries and constituting a troubling legacy (Castles et al. 2020; Kleinschmidt 2003).

However, there are surprisingly few empirical data on the politicisation of immigration (notable recent exceptions include Grande et al. 2019 and Van der Brug et al. 2015),[99] whether in

[98] Some conceptualisations of politicisation add further dimensions, such as actor expansion (e.g., Grande and Hutter 2016; Hutter and Grande 2014), whereas others define it merely 'as a matter of saliency' (Green-Pedersen 2012: 117). Politicisation is here conceptualised quite narrowly as a combination of salience and polarisation, and cover actor diversity looked into separately.

[99] An earlier piece on politicisation processes in the European Union (with a focus on Italy and the United Kingdom) has been provided by Buonfino (2004), while the work of Carvalho and Carmo Duarte (2020) is an example of a more current single-country study

times of normalcy or crisis. We want to fill this research gap by examining the politicisation of immigration during two distinct crisis periods: the oil price shock of 1973 (the 'oil crisis') and the crash of the U.S. subprime mortgage market in the late 2000s (the 'financial crisis'). Although both crises were primarily economic in nature, they soon turned into watershed moments that went on to define much of their decades and alter the social, political, and cultural climate in Europe and beyond. In fact, few—if any—crises during the last fifty years were as devastating and strongly felt as those two.[100]

Our analysis of claims appearing in major Swiss newspapers reveals an increase in the salience and polarisation of immigration during the oil crisis but not the financial crisis. Due to greater actor diversity and a higher share of identity frames during both crises, we nevertheless suggest a more general pattern of politicisation or, at least, a relevant change in the discursive treatment of the issue. In short, we find systematic evidence that crises impact claims-making on immigration and its politicisation. While these findings are significant, the precise scope of the crisis effect appears to be context-dependent, thus limiting their generalisability and necessitating a closer look at individual cases. It is of importance that the conditions are right, but when they are, crises can be crucial opportunity structures for actors who want to politicise immigration.

Immigration and periods of crisis

[100] One could think of political events, such as 9/11, but our understanding of crisis is more holistic and implies institutional failure and a lasting socioeconomic impact. Other possible crises (e.g., the second oil crisis in 1979, the Asian financial crisis in 1997, and the dot-com bubble crash in 2000) were much less powerful and limited to only one region or sector—they did not engender the same degree of socioeconomic disruption.

Most scholarly accounts of immigration to Europe consider it both the cause and result of the deep-seated adjustments and transformations that the continent had to undergo in recent history (Castles, et al. 2020; Lucassen and Lucassen 2013). Its origins can be traced back to the immigration regimes of the 19th and early 20th centuries: political arrangements that were anchored in narratives of nation building and competition. In the wake of the World Wars that followed and reshaped Europe's map, these regimes were subjected to major overhauls (Messina 2007). Most initial postwar immigration policies, for instance, were tailored to ensure a constant supply of labour from Southern Europe and the postcolonial periphery—a workforce the reindustrialising cities of the North desperately craved (e.g., Akgündüz 2012; Soysal 1994). Starting in the 1960s, policies were implemented that improved the legal status of these labour migrants and began to integrate them gradually into the expanding national welfare regimes. Viewed as indispensable to the economic interests of host societies (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1973), they were not only allowed to stay but to embark on a journey that would, in numerous cases, find its end with the acquisition of citizenship.

A first departure from this golden era of growth, the *trente glorieuses*, as the French economist Jean Fourastié called them, came with the oil crisis of 1973. Being the first economic disruption in post-war Europe, it accelerated the disintegration of the labour based Fordist consensus and ushered in a new age of diversified immigration policies that would unfold against the backdrop of large-scale societal transformations, such as globalisation, securitisation, and human rights institutionalisation (Castles et al. 2020). Concomitantly, the view on immigration also changed, with questions such as border control or worker quotas becoming first supplemented and then replaced by those of immigrant integration. It did not take long before these integration matters, cherished by some as courageous and progressive but scorned by others as legitimising

repressive policies, began to cause controversies in their own right (e.g., D'Amato and Ruedin 2019; Ruedin et al. 2015). In fact, from the 1990s onwards, the epicentre of most immigration debates in Europe had shifted towards issues such as language acquisition and the display of religious symbols (Van der Brug et al. 2015).

The lens through which we approach this trajectory is *crisis*. We define it in broad terms as a collective awareness that the inner mechanics of the complex economic and social machineries that structure our everyday lives and provide us with meaning have suddenly stopped working the way they are supposed to. In so doing, they cause a moment of disruption that is typically characterised 'by three general attributes: surprise, high uncertainty, and threat' (Seeger and Sellnow 2016: 10; see Seeger et al. 2003). According to Habermas (1988), one may moreover distinguish between system crises and identity crises, two different but closely linked concepts based on a 'broader distinction between system and lifeworld' (Thompson 2012: 61). A system crisis is material in character and arises when the integrative capacity of a system has reached limits, thus causing it to falter and eventually collapse. In contrast, an identity crisis is concerned with the collective identity that people have symbolically appropriated and now perceive as being threatened by the looming demise of the existing order. Despite this apparent dualism, crises are not static; they may evolve, seep into other areas, or change their shape over time. For example, a system crisis can morph into an identity crisis once governing institutions cannot mount enough support to sustain their legitimacy anymore.

What is characteristic of crises is that they are typically accompanied by a contestation of norms and values that were consented to by society before. As trust in established institutions erodes and the inability of the system to placate discontent becomes more apparent (Siegenthaler 1993;

Tanner 2014), the principles of exclusion and inclusion grow in significance. Clear-cut boundaries between their own in-group and prominent out-groups allow people to make sense of the crisis and regain a sense of control (e.g., Tajfel and Turner 1986; Bukowski et al. 2017; Fritsche et al. 2013; 2017) after their life-worlds have crumbled. Authors such as Mair (1998) and Kriesi et al. (2008) have long pointed to the immanent link between larger societal developments and the politicisation of certain issues—crises, in this sense, can be seen as moments in which this intricate process is squeezed into a narrow time interval. As the immigration debate is primarily organised around the opposition of a (native) in-group and (immigrant) out-groups, one could assume that it becomes both more salient and more polarised under crisis conditions (see Triandafyllidou 1998: 601–603).[101]

(1) Salience expectation: There are more claims on immigration in crisis periods than in non-crisis periods (greater salience).

(2) Polarisation expectation: Claims differ from each other more strongly in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods (greater polarisation).

Since they cast doubt on previously uncontested beliefs and values, crises provide marginalised voices with opportunities to popularise their message and take part in shaping the public debate. Historically, this has enabled social movements and issue-driven civil society organisations to

[101] It is also imaginable that the salience of immigration declines rather than grows, thus becoming superseded by the material consequences of the crisis (e.g., unemployment; poverty; chaos) and generating less support for actors seeking to politicise the issue (Knigge 1998). However, since the two crises examined in this article go beyond the material dimension, we still regard an increase as the more likely scenario.

establish themselves on the political stage (e.g., Kerbo 1982; McAdam et al. 1996). We consider it possible that new actors emerge during the crises examined but do not expect it. Rather, we expect existing actors to exploit these crises by making claims that they would perhaps not make otherwise. Because crises structurally advantage non-established actors who are given a chance to push for change successfully, getting discursively involved may appear as a strategically prudent move. After all, there is a 'multivalence of crises' that 'opens up the opportunity for rallying people behind visions of a new order' (t'Hart 1993: 40).

(3) Actor diversity expectation: A more diverse range of actors makes claims in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods (greater actor diversity).

When actors engage in discourse and make claims about an issue, they usually give a rationale or justification for their argument. In other words, they use certain frames, i.e., communicative tools that highlight particular aspects of reality to enhance their salience (Entman 1993). Making claims about immigration, actors can foreground frames that relate to instrumental considerations, collective identity, or moral principles.[102] Due to the link between crisis and identity (e.g., Habermas 1988; Tanner 2014), one may assume that claims with identity-related framing appear more frequently during crises.[103] Because the contrast between in-group and out-groups is at their core, immigration issues seem particularly susceptible to such frames. To give but a

[102] Distinguishing between these types of frames goes back to Habermas (1993) and has been used, for instance, in European Union policy studies (e.g., Lerch and Schwellnus 2006; Sjursen 2002).

[103] Hierro and Rico (2019) have shown that the perception of economic crisis can trigger feelings of national pride, especially among lower-class individuals (who are usually most affected by the crisis fallout). In such cases, the economic difficulties caused by the crisis are compensated for through an increased feeling of national attachment.

few of many possibilities, anti-immigrant activists may perceive the presence of foreigners not only as an economic burden which their crisis-stricken nation should not have to shoulder any longer but also, in more populist terms, as a failure of irresponsible elites who could not reunite the people behind an identitarian top-down crisis narrative (Imhof 1993). Progressive activists, on the other hand, may view the crisis as a critical juncture that entails the chance to popularise inclusive narratives of belonging. With identity presumably surging during crisis periods, one would expect instrumental frames to become less relevant: A society concerned with renegotiating categories of inclusion and exclusion may tend to disregard these more rational arguments until the crisis is over and new norms have been established (or old norms revitalised).

(4) Identity expectation: There is a higher share of identity frames in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods.

(5) Instrumentality expectation: There is a lower share of instrumental frames in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods.

Data and methods

We employ the approach of Van der Brug et al. (2015) with minor modifications as to increase our research efficiency. Rather than identifying articles by manually searching through printed newspapers, we work with an extensively tested set of keywords (see Appendix 1) to preselect potentially relevant articles in a digital repository. This does not affect the selection of articles or the coding process, however, which are performed in the same way. For the dataset of Van der Brug et al. is limited to the period from 1995 to 2009, we extend it with data from two more

periods (1970 to 1976 and 2010 to 2018), encompassing both crises and yielding 2,853 claims. As in Van der Brug et al., we use a fully randomised list of dates and include broadsheets and tabloids from Switzerland's two most important language regions: *Le Matin* and *Le* Temps[104] from the French-speaking region and both *Blick* and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from the German-speaking region. Not only does this make our study consistent, but the exclusive focus on newspapers also allows for greater comparability across time and helps to avoid the rather limited substance of most social media data (e.g., Edwards et al. 2013).[105]

We use our two crises, namely, the oil crisis of the early 1970s and the financial crisis of the late 2000s, as predictor variables. As there is a lack of agreement about their duration, we work with a set of plausible dates derived from the literature and use model averaging while making the boundaries of all definitions and the corresponding uncertainty transparent. This set consists of 18 definitions of the oil crisis and 25 definitions of the financial crisis. In addition to the latter, we select 22 starting points and 19 end points from a crisis chronology compiled by Guillén (2011), deriving 418 combinations (see Appendix 2). Instead of attempting to find the single best definition, we use the aforementioned model averaging. Thus, we work with 7,524 (18 × 418) combinations based on Guillén's list.[106] and 450 (18 × 25) more combinations based on the literature, which we employ as a robustness check to ensure that our findings do not rely on only one source but match the scholarly consensus.

[104] With its predecessors *Journal de Genève* and *Gazette de Lausanne*.

[105] While actors can make claims in different contexts, most empirical studies rely on newspapers to document politically relevant claims (for a discussion, see Van der Brug et al. 2015). Here, selection bias is a rather limited problem (Earl et al. 2004; Mügge 2012).

[106] The dates from this list receive preference by virtue of their depth and internal consistency.

We use four different aspects of politicisation, namely, the two core elements of salience and polarisation as well as actor diversity and frames, as outcome variables. Following the rather broad understanding outlined in Koopmans et al. (2005: 254), we define claims as 'purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticism, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors.' According to this reading, a claim consists of up to four elements (but not all claims consist of all elements): an actor (claimant) who makes the claim, an issue that is addressed by the claim, an object actor who is affected by the claim, and a frame that provides justification for the claim. Claimants are divided into six types: governmental/judicial actors; legislative and party actors;[107] media actors and journalists; minority, pro-immigrant and religious actors; anti-immigrant actors; and civil society actors.[108] Frames are divided into the three types listed above: instrumental, identity, and moral frames.

Salience is operationalised as claim frequency, and polarisation as the degree to which different claimants agree or disagree with one another. For the latter, we introduce a positional variable that uses a five-point scale to classify claims as positive (i.e., pro-immigration; multicultural) or negative (i.e., anti-immigration; monocultural). We evaluate them by adjusting Van der

[107] Claims by representatives of parties are coded as belonging to the second category, regardless of the party's position on immigration (Van der Brug et al. 2015).

[108] Each claimant was assigned to only one group. For instance, we categorised a member of the Swiss *Nationalrat* (National Council) with anti-immigrant views as a legislator (2) and not as an anti-immigrant actor (5). The same principle applies, e.g., to a journalist (3) working for a civil society organisation (6) or a cabinet member (1) also holding a party office (2).

Eijk's (2001) measure A to a range from 0 to 1: a value of 0 indicates universal agreement (i.e., all hold the same position) and a value of 1 universal disagreement (i.e., all hold opposed positions). To calculate actor diversity, we use the Herfindahl-Hirschman index on different actor types, where s_i stands for the share of all claims in a period made by a certain type:

$$H = \sum_{i=1}^{N} s_i^2$$

Our research strategy combines descriptive statistics[109] that compare claims inside and outside the crises with multivariate regression analyses that introduce additional control variables. We employ ordinary least squares (OLS) models, with the outcome variable y_i depending on the aspect of politicisation under examination (i.e., the share of claims fulfilling a certain criterion), and aggregate all claims into the 119 quarters of the calendar year to obtain meaningful results. The predictor variables measure the impact of the oil crisis (X_{oil}) and financial crisis (X_{fin}). Given our many crisis definitions, we present the kernel densities of the regression coefficients β_1 and β_2 over 7,524 linear regression models. As stated, we also use control variables, namely, the decade in which the claim was made (to account for unspecified time effects) and significant events (e.g., landmark court rulings; popular initiatives) that may have affected claims on immigration independently of the crisis context (see Appendix 3):

$$y_i \sim Normal\ (\mu, \sigma)$$

$$\mu_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{oil} + \beta_2 X_{fin} + X_{control}$$

[109] For details, see Appendix 6.

Since we are interested in the distribution of coefficients from the regression models (reflecting multiple definitions of crisis), we do not use hierarchical models. The coefficients are unbiased. As suggested (Berkhout and Ruedin 2017), we also include differences at the claims level with respect to the share of actor types [not when actors are the outcome variable, e.g., media; reference = other], share of frames [not when frames are the outcome variable, e.g., identity; reference = other], and share of claims focusing on integration [reference = immigration].

Findings

First, we analyse the salience of immigration, with the outcome variable measuring the number of claims made per quarter of the calendar year (Figure 1). Our regression framework enables us to statistically adjust for noncrisis effects and compare the salience of immigration in crisis to that in noncrisis periods. However, the results match our *salience expectation* only in parts. As expected, we find more salience for the oil crisis but, surprisingly, lower salience for the financial crisis. Our most common estimate for the oil crisis lies between 5 and 20 additional claims per quarter (mean: 15; median: 14; standard error: 12), with several definitions suggesting even greater salience (as shown by the second peak in Figure 1). In contrast, the estimate for nearly all financial crisis definitions is to the left of the grey zero line. The most common results indicate 50 articles fewer per quarter (mean: −59; median: −49; standard error: 32), but since there is a second negative peak at around −120 articles per quarter, there are a couple of definitions for which the salience of immigration is even substantially lower.

(Figure 1; see end of article)

We keep this regression framework but change our outcome variable to polarisation: a higher value implies more polarisation, while a lower value implies less polarisation (Figure 2). The results are not too clear, for we see regression coefficients to both the left and right of the zero line. The larger part of the oil crisis coefficients is to its right and hints at slightly higher levels of polarisation (mean: 0.02; median: 0.02; standard error: 0.03). However, most financial crisis coefficients fall to its left, thus suggesting less polarisation and greater actor agreement (mean: −0.05; median: −0.04; standard error: 0.05). As both effects are small, our findings remain too inconclusive to confirm our *polarisation expectation*.

(Figure 2; see end of article)

Second, we want to know whether the composition of claimants is more diverse during crises. Higher values indicate more diversity here, while lower values indicate less diversity (Figure 3). We find substantially more diversity for the oil crisis, with no single crisis definition yielding a negative estimate (mean: 0.18; median: 0.17; standard error: 0.04). However, there is no effect for the financial crisis, as the coefficients on both sides of the zero line are roughly equal, and the peak is only barely to its left (mean: 0.00; median: 0.01; standard error: 0.04). Because of these conflicting findings, our *actor diversity expectation* is only confirmed for the oil crisis.

(Figure 3; see end of article)

To add more nuance to our understanding of the claimants involved, we run regression models where the share of claims made by an actor type is the outcome variable (Figures 4 and 5).[110] We find that the share of government actors (often members of the Federal Council or executive agencies) is around 10 percentage points higher during both the oil crisis (mean: 0.10; median: 0.10; standard error: 0.05) and the financial crisis (mean: 0.09; median: 0.10; standard error: 0.07) than during noncrisis periods. This is still true when we employ the financial crisis dates from the literature in lieu of those derived from Gullién's list. Furthermore, the share of party actors is lower in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods, although more so during the financial crisis than during the oil crisis. Similar models for media and civil society actors are somewhat more ambiguous and point to fewer claims during the financial crisis but more claims during the oil crisis. Lastly, anti-immigrant actors seem to play no big role in either crisis. We assume that this is a byproduct of the coding operationalisation we inherited from Van der Brug et al. (2015; for a discussion, see Meyer and Rosenberger 2015).

(Figure 4; see end of article)

(Figure 5; see end of article)

Third, we want to know whether there are more identity frames and less instrumental frames in times of crisis. As mentioned before, identity frames refer to symbolic aspects of collective identity, such as traditions, mores, values, or beliefs held by the in-group. Instrumental frames follow pragmatic or utilitarian arguments instead. They either appeal to the public interest or emphasise issue-oriented policies (e.g., to reduce crime, propel growth, or enhance government

[110] Figure 4 shows the share of government actors while Figure 5 shows the share of party actors. Further regression models for both media actors and civil society organisations can be found in Appendix 4.

efficiency).[111] In our first regression model, the outcome variable is the share of identity frames, which is higher in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods (Figure 6). The effect is slightly more pronounced for the financial crisis (mean: 0.09; median: 0.07; standard error: 0.10) than for the oil crisis (mean: 0.04; median: 0.04; standard error: 0.04) but statistically sound in either case, thus validating our *identity expectation*. In our second model, we measure instrumental frames and find a reverse pattern: their share is lower in crisis periods than in noncrisis periods (Figure 7). Once more, there are some differences between the oil crisis (mean: −0.17; median: −0.16; standard error: 0.06) and the financial crisis (mean: −0.03; median: −0.03; standard error: 0.07), but still sufficient evidence in both crises to confirm our *instrumentality expectation*.

(Figure 6; see end of article)

(Figure 7; see end of article)

Discussion and conclusion

Examining the politicisation of immigration during two major crises in Switzerland, this article investigated (i) the salience and polarisation of the issue, (ii) the diversity of the claimants, and (iii) the nature of the frames used. Contrary to our expectation concerning (i), we found increased salience for the oil crisis but not for the financial crisis. In retrospect, we consider this divergence to be based largely on the degree to which immigrants were affected by both crises.

[111] The third type—moral frames, for which we had no clear theoretical expectation—pivots on the concept of human rights and moral principles that exist independently of one's national or cultural background. A regression model can be found in Appendix 5. However, the results are less conclusive and depend, at least in the case of the financial crisis, quite heavily on the crisis definition employed.

Many of the claims from the oil crisis relate to the situation of seasonal workers, who were deemed useful in times of prosperity but considered expendable once the economy began to contract. Even though Switzerland lost 330,000 jobs due to the oil crisis, the number of unemployed increased by only 25,000 persons (Flückiger 1998)—the rest consisted of immigrants whose permits were not renewed and who had to leave the country at a moment's notice.[112] In both discourse and practice, their fate was inextricably linked to the parameters of the oil crisis, how long it would last, and how much damage it would cause.

By the time of the financial crisis, however, the Swiss labour market had become more liberal, and immigrants from the European Economic Area found themselves in a secure position (e.g., Steiner and Wanner 2019). They enjoyed residence rights and social security benefits that their predecessors did not, shielding them from the fallout of the crisis and disincentivising political attacks—which may also explain the relative inconclusiveness of our *polarisation expectation*. Of course, one may ask why these privileges did not become a source of backlash from those eager to use the crisis as an opportunity structure. The answer is that they were and still are an essential part of Switzerland's bilateral treaties with the European Union and hence protected by the so-called *guillotine clause* (if one agreement is terminated, all others are as well). In the face of substantial uncertainty, even critics of the status quo showed little appetite for triggering this option and did not bring up EU immigrants. As Hutter and Kriesi argue, Switzerland saw

[112] In general, the oil crisis forced most European governments to reformulate at least parts of their immigration policy from scratch. Castles (2011: 321) is therefore right when he describes this crisis as an event of 'enormous consequences' that ended the era of guest worker migration and rang in a turn towards long-term settlement. The financial crisis had a more limited, and certainly less transformative impact.

its 'most politicised struggle about Europe in campaigns *before 2008*' (Hutter and Kriesi 2019: 1007; see also Taggart and Szczerbiak 2018 for the low crisis impact on Swiss Euroscepticism).

This interpretation is consistent with the different impact of both crises. Being the first moment of significant disruption after almost thirty years of steady growth shocked the Swiss economy to the core, whereas the same economy proved more resilient during the financial crisis. While it did not escape unscathed from the turmoil that followed the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers,[113] the labour market remained robust and initial discrepancies were 'quickly compensated by solid real GDP growth' (Afonso and Visser 2014: 241). In this situation, the opportunity to denounce foreigners as 'job takers' whose deportation would provide an economic remedy was limited.[114] Not that this is the only explanation—McMahon (2018) found no traces of negative politicisation even in countries where the crisis coincided with high unemployment (i.e., Spain and Italy), thus suggesting that other contextual factors, such as the stability of the party system and entry barriers for new actors, do matter as well. The financial crisis may have provided an important opportunity structure, but not every opportunity can be taken advantage of easily.

Similarly, our expectation on (ii) was largely borne out for the oil crisis but not for the financial crisis. Again, it makes sense to highlight the link between the crises and the immigrant context.

[113] Swiss GDP shrunk by 2.2% in 2009 (compared to +2.1% in 2008), the largest decrease since 1975.

[114] This argument aligns with ethnic competition theory, which stipulates an innate connection between the perception of increased labor market competition and the development of anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g., Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Lancee and Pardos-Prado 2013). However, even though Billiet et al. (2014) have suggested that there is a more holistic relationship between economic crises and ethnic threat, we should be careful not to confuse threat perception with issue politicisation. These are distinct variables, and while there may be a directional effect, politicisation is driven mainly by those steering the debate in established media outlets.

Because the labour migrants of the 1970s were in a quite vulnerable situation, their traditional champions (civil society organisations and centre-left parties, see Carvalho and Ruedin 2018; Katzenstein 1987) saw themselves forced to speak out in their favour. With the future of several hundreds of thousands at stake, public action became a necessity and previously hesitant actors were pushed to take a position. Notable among them were churches and trade unions, but also journalists: media actors made more claims during the oil crisis than during the financial crisis, often in the form of opinion pieces or commentaries. More consistent but not less conspicuous is the higher share of claims by government actors and lower share of claims by party actors across both crises. We believe that this reflects a feature of crises, namely, the attempt to calm the aroused populace by conveying an impression of control. Doing so can help to contain the disruptive potential of the crisis, prevent other actors from giving critical accounts, and confine the crisis impact to the material (systemic) level. Once such a material crisis has turned into a legitimation (identity) crisis, the situation is usually much harder to control.[115]

The clearest link is between crises and frames. In accord with both our *identity* and *instrumentality expectation*, we found a higher share of identity frames but a lower share of instrumental frames in both crises. This bolsters the argument that crises undermine the stability of the social edifice and raise issues of belonging. With different groups fighting for their place in the post-crisis order, the question of *who is in* and *who is out* becomes central to the discursive sphere—and as members of a prominent out-group, immigrants are common reference objects in this

[115] While government actors made more claims during the oil crisis, this strategy worked better during the financial crisis. Responsibility for this crisis was transferred to financial market actors, allowing governments to maintain and even strengthen their own legitimacy.

battle for identity.[116] That the increase in identity frames was more marked during the financial crisis than during the oil crisis (a rather counterintuitive result given our other findings) could correlate with the presence of identity entrepreneurs who racialise immigrants to raise the spectre of an inescapable outside threat. In this sense, it would mirror the important role of identity for the securitisation of immigration (e.g., Bourbeau 2011; Toğral 2016).

In sum, our findings support the assumption that crises affect the politicisation of immigration, but the various empirical differences between the oil crisis and the financial crisis suggest that contextual factors beyond the crisis/noncrisis dichotomy must be considered as well. Most importantly, it seems that the more directly a crisis is linked to an immigrant group, the better the chances that this group (and immigration as such) becomes politicised. Given the rather early emergence of right-wing populist actors in Switzerland and the country's direct democratic features, the Swiss case may have provided us with slightly different results for the 1970s than other European countries would have. To bolster our understanding of the role played by social change and country context, further research is required still. Such research may also reassess the objects of comparison and include more recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic—an event that entails severe mobility restrictions around the globe (e.g., Piccoli et al. 2021) and promises to change our perspective on human movement for many years to come.

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[116] A corollary may be that identity-based discrimination against immigrants is also higher in times of crisis (Baert et al. 2015; Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016).

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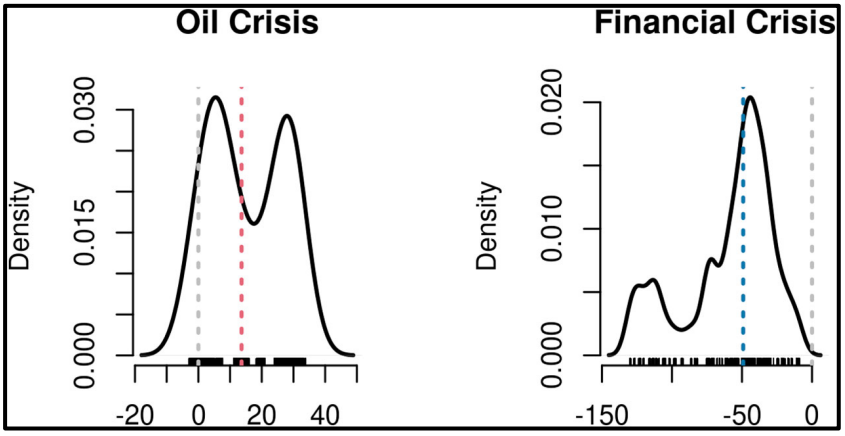
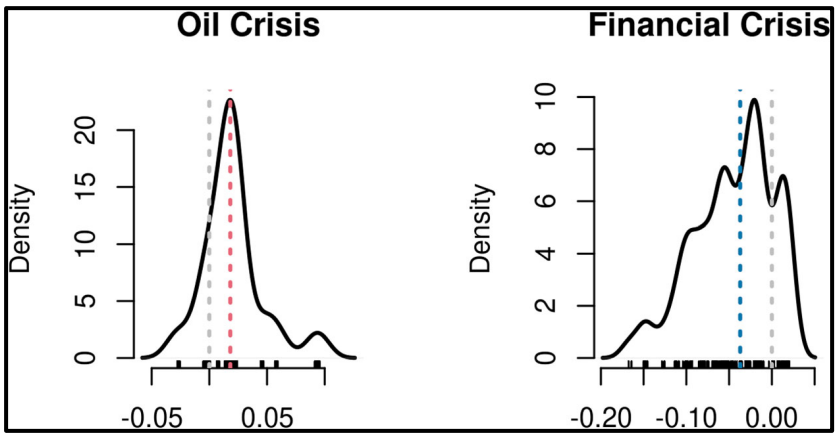
Figures (Article I)

Figure 1: Salience of immigration



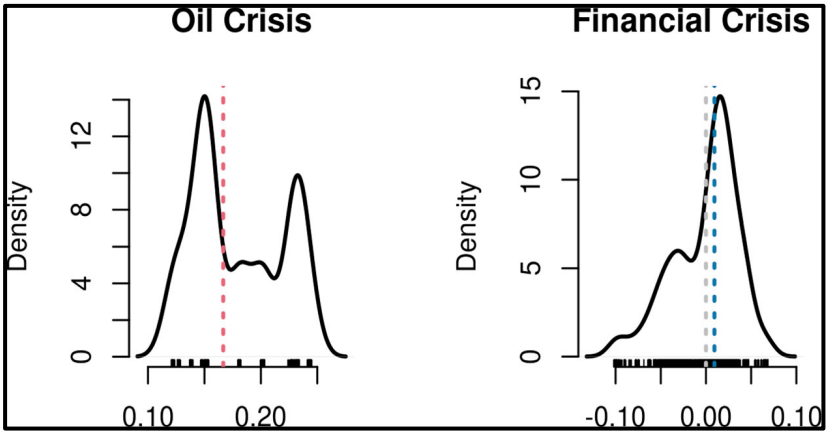
Notes: Salience of immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=5. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is the number of claims per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e., no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the different models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to −38 (median: −20; SE: 32).

Figure 2: Polarisation over immigration



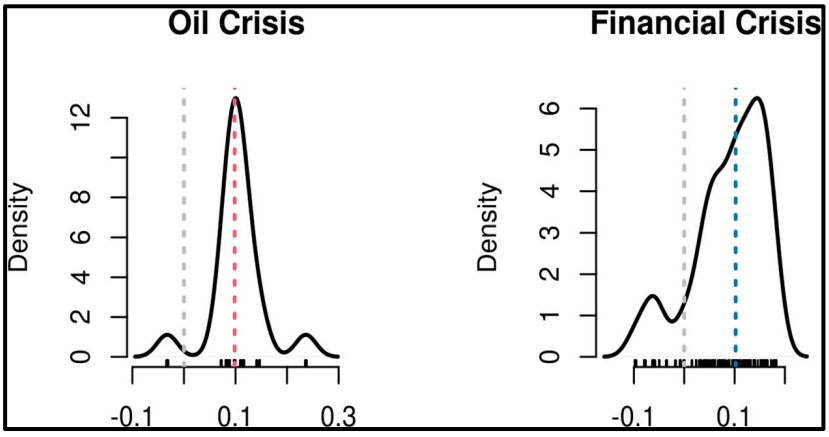
Notes: Polarisation over immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=0.01. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is the degree of polarisation per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e., no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the different models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to −0.05 (median: −0.04; SE: 0.04).

Figure 3: Actor diversity of claims about immigration



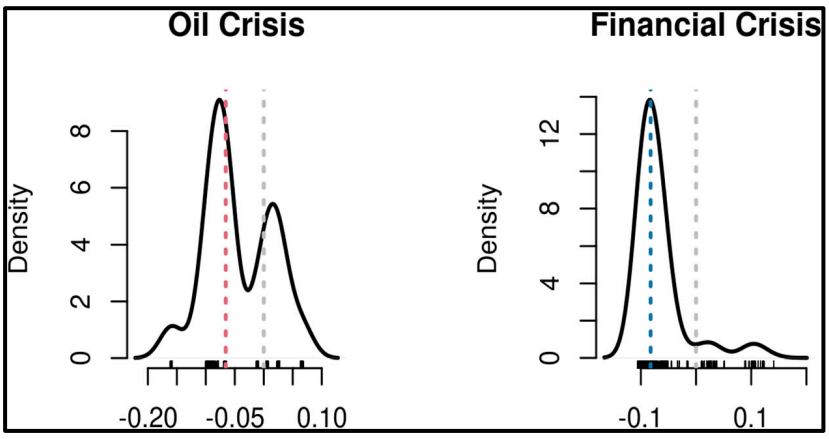
Notes: Actor diversity of claims about immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=0.01. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is actor diversity in claims per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e., no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the different models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to −0.01 (median: −0.01; SE: 0.05).

Figure 4: Claims by government actors on immigration



Notes: Claims by government actors on immigration in Switzerland during the oil and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the two crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=0.02. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is the share of claims by government actors per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e., no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to 0.06 (median: 0.06; SE: 0.08).

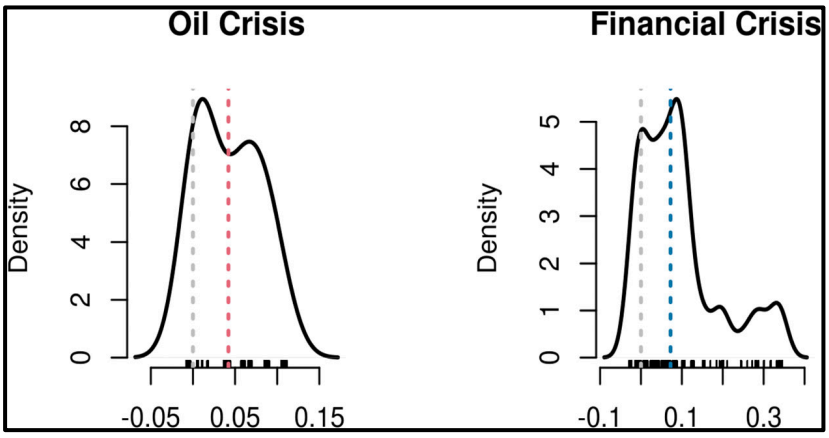
Figure 5: Claims by party actors on immigration



Notes: Claims by party actors on immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the two crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=0.02. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is the share of claims by party

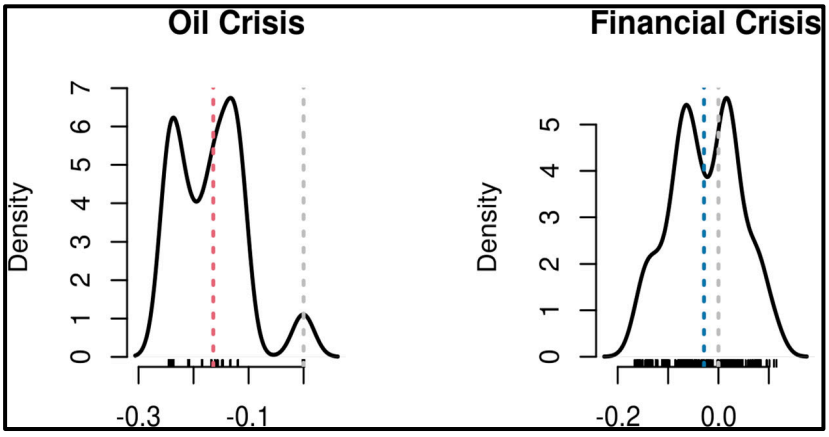
actors per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e., no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to −0.01 (median: −0.03; SE: 0.08).

Figure 6: Identity frames in claims on immigration



Notes: Identity frames in claims on immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the two crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=0.02. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is the share of claims with an identity frame per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e., no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the different models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to 0.10 (median: 0.06; SE: 0.10).

Figure 7: Instrumental frames in claims on immigration



Notes: Instrumental frames in claims on immigration in Switzerland during the oil crisis and financial crisis (regression analysis). Explanation: The two panels show the distribution of the coefficients from N=7,524 regression models—each model relies on different dates to define the period of the two crises. Only the coefficient of the crisis indicated is shown in each panel. The rug plot at the bottom shows the distribution of the estimates, while the black line gives the kernel distribution of the statistical effect of the oil crisis (left panel) and financial crisis (right panel), with bandwidth=0.02. Higher values indicate more coefficients with a given estimate. The outcome variable is the share of claims with an instrumental frame per quarter of the calendar year. The grey dashed line indicates zero, i.e. no difference in salience for the crisis, and the red and blue dashed lines show the median coefficients as a single-number summary across the different models. Control variables are not shown. With the alternative set of financial crisis definitions, the mean estimate changes to 0.01 (median: 0.04; SE: 0.08).

Article II

"Similar disruptions, different reactions?

Refugee crises and the politicisation of migration in Sweden and Switzerland"

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ARTICLE II

Similar disruptions, different reactions? Refugee crises and the politicisation of migration in Sweden and Switzerland

Marco Bitschnau, Didier Ruedin, Anders Hellström, and Marie Sundström

Abstract

We explore how refugee crises have affected debates on immigration in Sweden and Switzerland, two countries that are among the most popular European refugee destinations. Analysing claims from Swedish and Swiss newspapers during the Balkans refugee crisis of the 1990s and the European refugee crisis of 2015-16 (N=3,593), we find (1) diverse patterns of politicisation, with greater polarisation in Switzerland but higher salience peaks in Sweden; (2) no significant inter-actor differences in terms of attacking/defending the status quo; (3) significant inter-actor differences in terms of frame use. We conclude that despite their proximity to migration issues, refugee crises do not automatically lead to a more politicised discourse on immigration. A crisis effect may exist—but no determinism; instead, factors such as the domestic context and relative *shock value* of crises seem of importance and ought to be considered when investigating them.

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Author contributions

MB and DR designed the study; DR ran the statistical models; MB and DR analysed the results; MB wrote the first drafts of the manuscript; MB, DR, AH, MS wrote the final manuscript.

Keywords

Refugee crisis, politicisation, immigration, claims, Sweden, Switzerland

Introduction

Be it the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or the failure to contain inflation: crises large and small are quintessential for how we approach the world and our role in it. They allow us to prioritise, that is, to distinguish the urgent from the not-so-urgent, the relevant from the irrelevant, and the core of a matter from its shell. As privileged structures of meaning, they also help us to make sense of the contingencies around us—and yet, they often come at a terribly steep price. The various refugee crises of the past decades, for instance, were not crises in the same way as the housing or currency crisis *du jour* but of a much more existential nature:

an almost endless litany of tragedy and trauma that often sparked a radically altered perspective on life. "They don't want ghost stories anymore", Hannah Arendt noted in *We Refugees*, since "it is real experiences that make their flesh creep" (2007: 266). However, not only refugees but also those who take them in face serious challenges. Within a short amount of time, they must provide sufficient food and housing, develop a sensible integration strategy, and, perhaps most importantly, convince the public that they made the right call. While this is a hard task in itself, it becomes even more difficult when there are widespread feelings of crisis-driven concern.

Consequently, one would expect refugee crises to have a considerable impact on debates about refugees in general and immigrants in particular, especially as both are frequently conflated.[117] They may temporarily strengthen political unity, akin to the *rally round the flag effect* (Mueller 1970),[118] or deepen existing societal rifts. In this contribution, we explore their discursive impact with respect to two different Western European countries: Sweden and Switzerland. Our findings show diverse patterns of politicisation, that is, more polarisation in Switzerland and more salience in Sweden, but no consistent crisis effect across both countries. We also find that governments and civil society organisations (CSOs) deploy distinct framing strategies to elicit their preferred response. While governments attempt to rationalise the debate by foregrounding *instrumental* frames, CSOs resort to emotional *identity* and *moral* frames; yet, in either case, this seems to be more of a general disposition and not necessarily linked to the state of crisis. In sum, our findings support the argument that a *one size fits it all* approach is hardly suited to study the link between crisis and politicisation.

[117] For instance, it is common to overestimate the share of refugees among immigrants (Lutz and Bitschnau 2022).

[118] Such an effect has been also observed for the COVID-19 pandemic (Kritzinger et al. 2021; Yam et al. 2020).

Theoretical background

Politicisation and *crisis* are two concepts that we often encounter in media reports on politics. While this helps us to grasp their meaning intuitively, it also presents the danger of our analytical precision being suffocated by professional agenda setting: If everything is politicised and bears the mark of crisis, one may justifiably ask whether these categories obscure social reality rather than casting meaningful light on it. Politicisation, the first term, can be traced back to the post-war era and Schattschneider's notion of the "socialization of conflict" (1960: 40), although its most fertile ground these days is the field of European Union studies (Carrieri 2020; Hutter and Grande 2014; Hutter et al. 2016; Turnbull-Dugarte 2020). Most definitions and conceptualisations of politicisation also hail from this area—in the great majority of cases, it is operationalised as a combination of *salience* (i.e., the discursive prominence of an issue) and *polarisation* (i.e., the extent to which those who discuss it diverge from another). Some include further elements such as actor expansion (the emergence of new actors, see Hutter and Grande 2014) or operationalise salience in a different manner. Still, the general consensus is that politicisation deals with political conflicts that are manifest rather than latent.

In this article, we follow Van der Brug et al. (2015) and Bitschnau et al. (2021) in limiting the concept to its core elements, and consider an issue politicised that is both salient and polarised. In Western Europe, this does not, or only in rare cases, apply to issues such as growth (salient but not polarised) or abortion (polarised but not salient)[119] but it may well apply to immigration. Few issues have impacted contemporary European politics to a greater degree, with critics

[119] Of course, the situation is different in other parts of the world. In the United States, for example, abortion is not only polarised but arguably among the *most polarised* issues in politics.

lamenting its corrosive impact on social cohesion, supporters praising its economic promise, and scholars stressing, inter alia, its relevance for the success of the radical right (see, e.g., Berman, 2021; Dennison and Geddes 2019; Shehaj et al. 2021).[120] In any case, there are quite convincing reasons as to why it should be seen as a textbook case of politicisation (e.g., Grande et al. 2019; Norocel et al. 2020).

Compared to politicisation, crisis is a much older and less concrete term, carrying a legacy that reaches from the Greek *krisis*[121]—meaning quarrel but also moment of decision—to the Marxist understanding of crises as necessities to prevent capitalism from stabilising (Clarke 1990; for an overview of crisis terminologies, see McConnell 2020). While this diversity of meanings thwarted any chance of the concept ever crystallising into "a basic concept in social, economic, or political language" (Koselleck 2006: 367), its contemporary use aims at the disruptive properties of event constellations characterised by uncertainty and overload. Crises are, above all, moments, during which people perceive the mechanics of the "social machineries that structure our everyday lives and provide us with meaning [as no longer] working the way they are supposed to" (Bitschnau et al. 2021: 3866). This may become apparent through a sudden[122] intrusion of the unknown into known landscapes of meaning, accompanied by the distressing realisation of society's inability to form an immediate response.

[120] This research strand also includes recent analyses of how anti-immigration parties affect the policy positions of the mainstream right (e.g., Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020; Bale and Rovira Kaltwasser 2021).

[121] Ironically, *krisis* has the same stem as the verb κρίνω, the meaning of which is *to divide* (Koselleck 2006).

[122] McConnell (2003) calls suddenness a stereotype and argues that there are also *creeping* or *slow-burning* crises such as climate change, desertification, or violent crime. Evidently, the concept of crisis to be found in this article is much narrower and conceives of crises as moments of rupture and disturbance that are not foreseeable.

Of course, there are many kinds of crises: Some are primarily economic in nature (such as the oil crisis of 1973 or the Great Depression of 1929), whereas others deal with social, political, or moral dilemmas. There are also migration crises, which may be viewed as one of the above or, depending on their context and purpose, treated as genuinely distinct. Some migration crises assume the form of *refugee crises*, which is in as much a contested term as some authors believe it to cast a negative light on refugees and imply that they are responsible for *the crisis*. Not war and persecution appear problematic from this vantage point, but the people escaping them—an interpretation, which anti-immigrant actors may employ to build frames of a beleaguered polity attacked by hostile outside forces (e.g., Davitti 2018; Squire et al. 2021). That said, it remains the most widely used term to denote a crisis in which refugees are the primary object of interest.

Even though there has been rising interest in the politicisation of immigration, the specific role of refugee crises has been the subject of only a few empirical studies thus far. Hutter and Kriesi study politicisation during the 2015-16 European refugee crisis (which they term a migration crisis) and conclude that "with the onset of [the] crisis, immigration has been heavily politicised across Europe" (2022: 16). Still, they do not account for other crises and limit the scope of their analysis to "debates during national election campaigns" and articles published within "the two months preceding Election Day" (ibid: 7). Other research on the European refugee crisis comes from Krzyżanowski (2018a; 2018b), whereas Bitschnau et al. (2021) focus on economic crises only. Most politicisation research, however, is less interested in crises as socio-temporal markers (e.g., Carvalho and Carmo Duarte 2020) or conceives of them as one of many exacerbating elements (e.g., Grande et al. 2019).

Our aim is to contribute to this literature and gain comparative insights into how immigration has been politicised during two major refugee crises: The Balkans refugee crisis of the 1990s and the aforementioned European refugee crisis of 2015-16. Both bear a certain resemblance, even though the first must be thought of as a larger series of conflicts and refugee movements, during which first Bosnia (Valenta and Strabac 2013) and later Kosovo emerged as main crisis theatres. By contrast, the European refugee crisis broke out when poverty and the repercussions of the *Arab Spring* caused millions to escape their war-torn home countries and march toward Western Europe. Unlike the Balkan refugee crisis, for which research is sparse, its discourses have been researched thoroughly (e.g., Brändle et al. 2019; Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Krzyżanowski 2018b; Rea et al. 2019; Wallaschek 2020).

Both crises were major events, the impact of which was felt throughout Europe.[123] However, for practical reasons, this article does not study their politicisation across the entire continent but confines itself to Sweden and Switzerland—two countries that make for a suitable comparison as they were similarly affected yet differ greatly in regard to their discursive setup. Steeped in social democratic traditions, Sweden was, and to some degree still is, characterised by an expansive welfare state, a liberal asylum policy,[124] and a party landscape in which the centre-right had been unwilling to take up immigration issues (e.g., Dahlström and Esaiasson 2013; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008). By contrast, Switzerland always sought to reconcile its needs for affordable foreign labour with fears of *overforeignisation* and a notable reluctance in regard to the integration of immigrants (e.g., Piguet 2006; Ruedin et al. 2015). Whereas Sweden

[123] They were also the most notable refugee crises in post-war Europe, at least prior to the Russo-Ukrainian War.

[124] Historically, this has led to both generous asylum policies and very high admission rates. Until 1985, "almost all applicants were granted asylum" to show "solidarity with the Third World" (Abiri 2000: 13).

strived to adhere to its self-chosen image of a *moral superpower* (Dahl 2006), Switzerland balanced intra-European mobility with barriers for non-European mobility.

Hypotheses

From this double comparative design (two crises studied across two countries), we derive three hypotheses that relate to politicisation (H 1), actor behaviour (H 2 and 3) and frame use (H 3). Our first hypothesis concerns our initial assumption that immigration is more politicised during refugee crises. It may seem like a rather obvious expectation—but given that Bitschnau et al. (2021) found mixed evidence for politicisation during two major economic crises, and Grande et al. emphasised the remarkable "variation [of politicisation] over time and across countries" (2019: 359), it would be premature to treat higher politicisation levels as a *fait accompli*.

Hypothesis 1.1: We expect issue salience to be higher during refugee crises.
Hypothesis 1.2: We expect issue polarisation to be higher during refugee crises.

Our second hypothesis zooms in on the discursive dynamics of the crisis and their implications for strategic actor behaviour. In particular, we focus on two actor groups that play a significant role in formulating a crisis response: governments and CSOs. The former, we assume, have a vested interest in shedding a favourable light on the measures taken to mitigate the "disturbing moods or situations" (Koselleck 2006: 399) that arise from the mass arrival of refugees; their electoral fate could depend on their success. Other actors, by contrast, may be inclined to push for change and pursue a strategy of *negativity* instead (Lilleker 2006)—prominent examples include anti-immigration groups (that view the status quo as too permissive) but also the media

and, of course, CSOs, on which we focus for three different reasons. First, they are clearly and easily distinguishable, especially in comparison to *pro-immigration actors*. Second, they tend to be well represented in the media, which helps to collect data on them. Third, they are likely to fight against government efforts and speak out in favour of radical change.

Hypothesis 2.1: We expect governments to support the status quo during refugee crises.
Hypothesis 2.2: We expect CSOs to challenge the status quo during refugee crises.

Our third and last hypothesis builds on the second as we expect governments to not only defend their course of action but also to attempt calming their electorate with the right crisis narratives. This means that they must give the impression that it is a *crisis management* rather than a *crisis of legitimacy*: the first confines the crisis to the realm of purely managerial politics, while the second undermines the foundation of their rule. Hence, they should be expected to foreground those instrumental aspects of the crisis (e.g., cost-benefit ratios) that are manageable and reinforce the impression of the crisis as an unfortunate *force majeure* event that does not carry any particular meaning. Conversely, CSOs should highlight non-instrumental aspects and attempt to moralise the debate, countering the government's rational crisis management with emotional consternation. In operational terms, this means that we expect governments and CSOs to prefer different crisis *frames* (communicative strategies to fashion shared world views and legitimate collective action, see, e.g., Entman 1993; McAdam et al. 1996).

Hypothesis 3.1: We expect governments to use more instrumental frames during refugee crises.
Hypothesis 3.2: We expect CSOs to use more identity and moral frames during refugee crises.

In line with the findings of Bitschnau et al. (2021), we furthermore expect the share of identity and moral frames to be higher during either crisis regardless of actor type. We derive this final assumption from the insight that crises can serve as *opportunity structures* for underrepresented groups (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Alink et al. 2001 call them *opportunity spaces*), which may seize the moment and exploit the government's discursive vulnerability. This expectation also matches the findings of Bitschnau et al. who report more identity frames during both the 1973-74 oil crisis and the 2007-09 financial crisis and conclude that crises threaten "the stability of the social edifice […] different actors [combat another] for their place in the postcrisis order" (2021: 3876) by defending immigrants or polemicising against them.

Hypothesis 3.3: We expect a higher share of identity and moral frames during refugee crises.

Methodology

To test our hypotheses, we examine immigration-related claims from Swedish and Swiss newspapers articles and analyse their discursive patterns before, during, and after both crises. *Claims* we define as intentional and directional articulations of political demands, be they statements, "calls to action, proposals, criticism or physical attacks" (Koopmans et al. 2005: 254). It is this a definition that does not limit them to the domain of verbal or written expression; a claim can be made in an interview or on the campaign trail but also emerge from street protests or political violence. (To give an extreme example, anti-immigrant assaults that make it into the news must be considered claims as well.[125]) A common feature of all claims is that they do not appear out of nowhere but are *made* by *claimants* for a specific purpose and thus entrenched in subjective

[125] Cinalli and Giugni (2018) follow a similar approach (discursive vs. behavioural dimensions of claims-making).

modes of interpreting the world. In the following, we distinguish between six different groups of claimants—governments, legislators, pro-/anti-immigration actors, media, and CSOs[126]—but, as previously outlined, we take a closer look only at the first and last.

Our claims are derived from three newspapers, all of them reputable broadsheets: *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden), *NZZ* (Switzerland: DE) and *Le Temps* (Switzerland: FR).[127] The first two have been traditionally associated with political liberalism, but there is only little, if any, indication of this playing a role in terms of claims representation (Van der Brug et al. 2005). More relevant is that they have been frequently used in previous research: Claims from the Swiss newspapers have been analysed by Berkhout and Ruedin (2017), Bitschnau et al. (2021), and Van der Brug et al. (2005), while the *Dagens Nyheter* is considered a typical representative of the Scandinavian mainstream press (Steiner 2015). As in the case of Bitschnau et al. (2021), relevant claims were identified via a web archive article search and then coded manually.[128] To keep the data

[126] Governments include executive agencies, legislative actors include party representatives, and pro-immigration actors include minority associations and religious organisations. In addition, each actor is assigned to only one group: Someone who is both a parliamentarian and a journalist, for example, is only coded as legislative actor etc.

[127] We study broadsheets rather than tabloids or a combination—for the latter, see Temizisler et al. (2022) who, however, classify the *Times* as centre-left—for a number of reasons. Inter alia, there are fewer tabloids in Sweden and Switzerland than in e.g., the UK or Germany and there is less of a tabloid culture that shapes public discourse.

[128] As keywords, we used *migrant**, *migration**, *xenophob**, *mosque**, *minaret**, *burqa**, *refugee** *and asylum** in French, German, and Swedish respectively.

manageable, we only sampled a fully randomised list of dates, analysing a total of 3,593 claims (Sweden: N=740; Switzerland: N=2,853) from 1991 to 2020 in total.[129]

Since the crises are our predictor variables, we had to determine their start and end points.[130] The difficulty here is that refugee crises have a notable tendency towards atemporality: As they emanate from the perception that *too many refugees* have arrived in a country within a *too short period of time*, attaching them to definite dates is uncertain at best.[131] Here, more than elsewhere, the crisis label is applied arbitrarily as there are no clear criteria to distinguish between crisis and non-crisis periods.[132] For instance, Brändle et al., in their analysis of solidarity claims during the European refugee crisis, only cover the period between August 2015 and April 2016

[129] There are two reasons for the different sample sizes: the additional Swiss newspaper, which we have included to account for Switzerland's linguistic diversity (and because some of the data were already there), and the availability of Swiss (but not Swedish) data that span the 'inter-crisis' decade between 2000 and 2010.

[130] We provide results for the Bosnian refugee crisis/Bosnian war and the Kosovan/Kosovo war refugee crisis separately, although both can be subsumed under the Balkans refugee crisis framework. As previously remarked, both were mere episodes of a larger conflictual nexus.

[131] One could make the argument that there cannot be any start and end dates at all because the perception of crises is always subjective: "This subjective notion of crisis makes it impossible to neatly demarcate a beginning and an end [since] different actors perceive they are in a crisis in different points in time (Boin 2004: 167). E.g., one may determine the start of a war but not the moment in which this war becomes a crisis for the individual. Of course, as compelling as this argument is in theory, it is of little help for any empirical research.

[132] The number of monthly asylum applications may come to mind but is no perfect measure either. First, because it does not always align with crisis perceptions. Second, because not all new refugees immediately apply for asylum, and the criteria for *who may apply* differ from country to country. And third, because it is questionable if there is a specific figure to be considered *normal*—just as in Eubulides' famous paradox of the *bald man* whose transition to baldness can never be accurately determined.

because this was what they found the "most intense time […] in terms of public salience and contestation." (2019: 715).[133] But since we wanted to measure this salience and contestation in the first place, we had to rely on a series of anchor dates taken from the literature instead. This was easier in the case of the Balkans refugee crisis where we simply used key events of the two wars in Bosnia and Kosovo: April 6, 1992 (Serb military begins to shell Sarajevo), December 14, 1995 (Dayton Agreement), February 28, 1998 (Serb police attacks Kosovan villages), and June 10, 1999 (UN/RES 1244 is adopted). Finding similar date for the European refugee proved more difficult. We eventually selected April 23, 2015 (first emergency meeting of the European Council)[134] and March 20, 2016 (EU-Turkey refugee return agreement enters into force).[135]

While the crises are our predictor variables, our outcome variables are salience and polarisation (H 1.1-1.2), status quo support (H 2.1-2.2) and frame use (H 3.1-3.3). Salience and polarisation are measured in accord with Bitschnau et al. (2021), meaning that we operationalise the former as claims frequency and the latter through a five-point scale (from *positive* or *pro-immigration* to *negative* or *anti-immigration*.) We then evaluate the aggregate by using a modified form of van der Eijk's (2001) measure *A,* ranging from a theoretical value of 0 for universal agreement to 1 for universal disagreement. Support for the status quo is derived from a binary variable

[133] By contrast, Temizisler et al. (2022) cover everything between January 2015 and December 2017 but argue that there "is a consensus among researchers that the refugee crisis began in Autumn 2015" (ibid: 5). We find this claim not convincing—first, we disagree that there is such a consensus; second, even if there were one, it would likely not relate to the *beginning* of the crisis but to its apex; and third, not all authors they cite make such a claim, with some only speaking of mid-2015 as a period of heightened crisis interest (e.g., Webber 2019).

[134] April 2015 is also the first of the seven turning points listed in a UNHCR crisis overview (Spindler 2015).

[135] Refugee movements across the Mediterranean or through the Balkans did of course not begin in 2015 but have been going on for decades (Agustín and Jørgensen 2019). We thus refer to crisis perceptions in a narrower sense.

that indicates whether a claim contains the wish for political change or not.[136] Finally, we follow Van der Brug et al. (2005), in defining instrumental frames as those that link to pragmatic and rational motives, identity frames as those that relate to collective identity, and moral frames as those that highlight human rights or moral principles.[137] Analytically, we use Bayesian multiple regression models in *Stan* (separate models). Both dates and hypothesis were preregistered, and the countries analysed separately. We use non-informative priors that regularise the coefficients to provide robust results. Additional models that also account for GDP, the vote share of the far right in national elections, the number of asylum applications relative to 1990, the average position of party manifestos on immigration (Ruedin and Morales 2019, only available for Switzerland), or immigration policy based on the MIPEX (only sufficient variation in Switzerland) lead to similar substantive results as the main model. This is also the case for the alternative crisis dates.

Findings

With regard to H 1.1 (salience) and H 1.2 (polarisation), our findings differ noticeably between crises and countries. In terms of salience, a notable increase can only be found for the European refugee crisis in Sweden, with the number of claims suddenly mushrooming to an all-time high. However, there is no similar development (but in fact a slight decrease) in Switzerland during

[136] An evident limitation of this binarity is that claims coded as *change* include calls for modest adjustments and radical reform alike.

[137] As remarked earlier (H 3.2), we expect CSOs to employ both more identity and moral frames. In our analysis, we consequently aggregate them as non-instrumental frames.

the same period.[138] The effect of the Balkans refugee crisis is even less clear—while the war in Bosnia leaves no visible traces in either country, the war in Kosovo corresponds to a minor increase of issue salience in Sweden (Figure 1).

(Figure 1; see end of article)

Surprisingly, there is even less of an effect for polarisation. In Sweden, the only significant rise in polarisation spans parts of 2010 and 2011 (and may be linked to the success of the far-right Sweden Democrats in the 2010 general election). Meanwhile, there is a constant up and down in Switzerland, with a low in late 2003 and a notable increase soon after (coinciding with Switzerland joining the Schengen area).[139] Switzerland also shows higher levels of polarisation until the mid-2010s, but there is no evidence that refugee crises are responsible for this (Figure 2).

(Figure 2; see end of article)

When it comes to H 2.1 (governments defend the status quo) and H 2.2 (CSOs attack the status quo), there is no notable effect at all in Switzerland. In Sweden, the government appears even less likely to defend the status quo—during both crises but also in comparison to CSOs. (Figure 3). On the other hand, Swedish CSOs may be a little more likely to attack the status quo than governments, yet, again, there is no evident crisis link in this case (Figure 4).

[138] There seems to be a salience peak in January 2015, which could be crisis-related (but does not match our dates).

[139] After the Bilateral II agreements were signed in 2004, Swiss voters approved of their country's accession to the Schengen and Dublin treaties (June 5, 2005) and the extension of the freedom of movement to the EU's new member states (September 25, 2005). During this periods, intra-European mobility was fiercely debated.

(Figures 3; see end of article)

(Figure 4; see end of article)

By contrast, our findings regarding H 3.1 (governments use more instrumental frames) and H 3.2 (CSOs use more identity and moral frames) are more consistent and support our assumption of relevant inter-actor differences in both countries. But even here the effect of the crisis seems to be limited. Although governments are much more and CSOs less likely to deploy instrumental frames, this trend is, rather counterintuitively, weaker during all crises. In other words, once the crisis has become manifest, governments resort to a diverse frame mix rather than doubling down on economic or security messages. This effect can be found for both countries, but it is stronger in Sweden than in Switzerland (Figure 5).

(Figure 5; see end of article)

A similar pattern can be found regarding CSOs and their assumed preference for identity and moral frames: it undoubtedly exists, but more as a general disposition than a proper crisis effect. In both countries, CSOs have harnessed far fewer non-instrumental frames during the Balkans refugee crisis[140] and an approximately similar number during the European refugee crisis. As in the case of H 3.1, our general expectations about actor behaviour hold, but there is either no crisis effect or it is notoriously hard to grasp (Figure 6).

(Figure 6; see end of article)

[140] There were no claims with an identity or moral frame in our data set for CSO * Kosovo (see Figure 6).

We find further and final confirmation for this as regards H 3.3 (more identity and moral frames during crises), with only Sweden during the European refugee crisis as an outlier. All five other country-crisis combinations show a lower rather than higher share of identity and moral frames. Granted, most differences are small, and there is little that suggests a general framing dynamic on the aggregate level, but given that non-government actors were assumed to have a penchant for identity and moral frames,[141] it is nevertheless a relevant finding. When it comes to moralising the debate, it seems as if CSOs plough a rather lonely furrow (Figure 7).

(Figure 7; see end of article)

Discussion and conclusion

Undoubtedly, crises wield tremendous power over our perception of the world: what issues we think about, how we think about them, and what responses we consider. And still, they are not all-powerful *dei ex machinae* that have suddenly descended from the celestial sphere of fate or chance, but subject to the same communicative constraints that have caused us to regard them as crises in the first place: as threatening events that disturb the routines of society. Above all, however, their impact varies between countries and contexts—what causes chaos and disorder in one situation is at most a side note in another. Our findings give support to such a nuanced understanding of crises; although it is evident that they "have been and will always be with us" (Boin 2004: 169), they are experienced in varying intensities. This becomes especially clear in regard to the intra-country and intra-crisis differences shown above: During the European

[141] E.g., pro-immigration and anti-immigration actors.

refugee crisis, the salience of immigration skyrocketed in Sweden but stagnated in Switzerland; during the Balkans refugee crisis, there were no major shifts at all; we did not find higher levels of polarisation in either crisis; the status quo was neither attacked nor defended as expected; and while the framing strategies of governments and CSOs matched our expectations generally, it was less rather than more pronounced during crises.

What can we deduce from this? At least from the perspective of politicisation, it appears as if the crisis label is of limited importance (at least in cases without a shock event that immediately causes mayhem in society).[142] Of course, there is the caveat that by limiting ourselves to broad-sheets and influential claimants, we do not take into account the less formalised discourses of the European refugee crisis on various social media platforms, for which Dahlgren (2016) and others note a great rise in salience: Where there is no gatekeeper who controls what is published and what is not, whose opinions are to be read and whose not, which actions deserve coverage and which do not, both the nature of the claims and the zeal of the claimants are different. This all the more since nobody in the digital sphere is forced to cloak their opinions in the language of moderation; it is even rewarded to express them in a zealous and uncompromising way. For this reason, it seems not only possible but probable that refugee crises have a stronger effect in other discursive settings.

Second, there is a clear difference between the European refugee crisis and the Balkans refugee crisis. As shown, we find higher issue salience, a frame use in line with our expectations, and, at least in Sweden, a greater share of moral and identity frames for the former but not the latter,

[142] By contrast, the peak of salience in Switzerland corresponds to a major domestic event (the 2009 minaret ban referendum; see Figure 1).

which begs the question of how alike both crises really are. While it is always difficult to compare events from different decades, the European refugee crisis may resemble a shock event to a greater degree—there is a sense of urgency that sometimes appears absent in the case of the Balkans refugee crisis, perhaps because of its more episodic character. Yet, despite all this, we fail to see major differences in polarisation during or after the European refugee crisis, which stands in contrast to scholarship that suggests more restrictive immigration debates from 2015 (for Sweden, see Ekman and Krzyżanowski 2021; Emilsson 2018). If nothing else, this underlines some conceptual limits of polarisation: Measuring actor agreement and disagreement does not give insights into the intensity of a debate, the predominance of specific discourses, or other qualitative aspects. It is, in fact, possible to imagine a scenario, in which there is a more polarised environment but less day-to-day controversy and limited media reporting.[143]

Third and last, the fact that our expectation on frame use holds in general but less so during either crisis is especially puzzling. Again, there is an inter-crisis difference (the results for the European refugee crisis are closer to the non-crisis average), but even if there were none, the bottom line would still be that crises are accompanied by fewer government claims that are instrumental and fewer CSO claims that are non-instrumental. What could explain this oddity? Perhaps, one may ponder, we were wrong in assuming that governments have a vested interest to depict the crisis as a problem of management. Not that this would be an illogical assumption per se, but it seems that governments favour a nuanced strategy of *forward defense* instead: For refugee crises are human tragedies, the appropriation of non-instrumental arguments may have

[143] At least if politicisation is strictly understood as positional distance and not *a priori* identified with intensity.

been helpful to project an image of care and humanitarian commitment.[144] And as for the CSOs, their inclination towards more instrumental frames during crises may be the result of an active engagement with the material realities of immigration (e.g., demands to grant refugees benefits or facilitate family reunification that have been coded as instrumental).

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[144] In Sweden, the progressive government of Stefan Löfven may also have used moral frames since a substantial part of its electorate expected it to showcase some firm humanitarian commitment.

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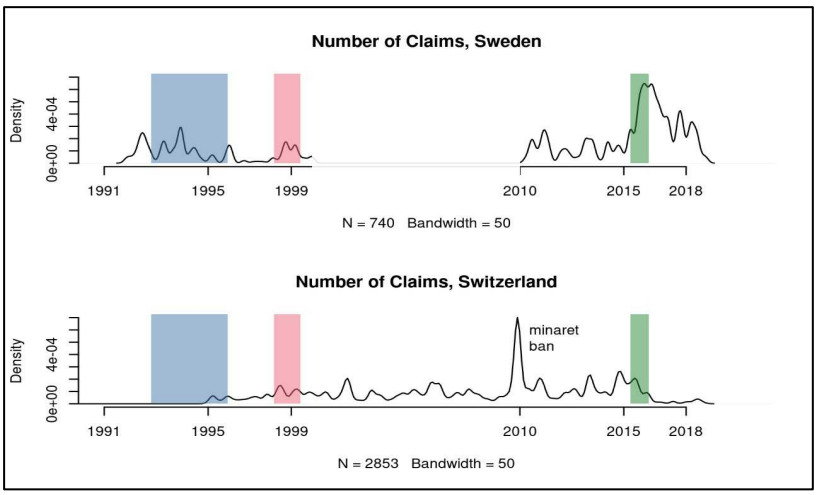
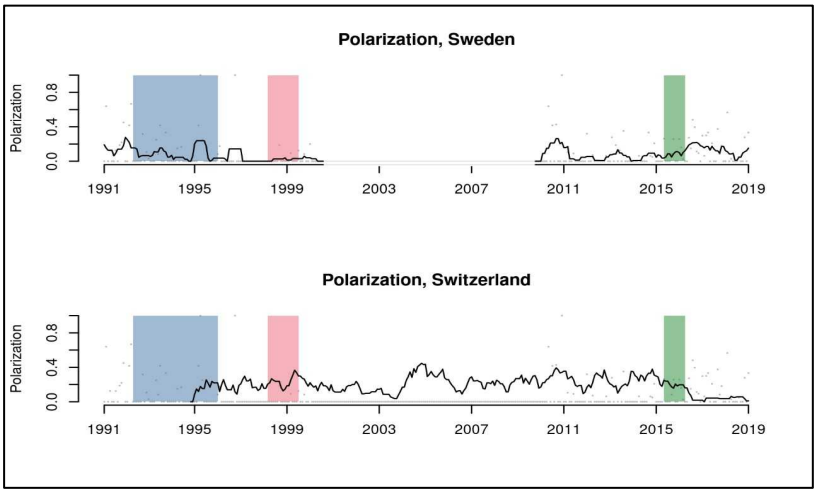
Figures (Article II)

Figure 1: Salience of immigration claims (H 1.1)



Notes: Salience of immigration over time. Shown are the kernel densities of the number of claims on immigration in the newspapers studied. Bandwidth=50 days. No data were collected for Sweden between 2000 and 2009, and for Switzerland before 1995. Highlighted are the Balkans refugee crisis (blue: Bosnia; red: Kosovo) and the European refugee crisis (green). N=3,593 claims (N=740 in SE; N=2,853 in CH).

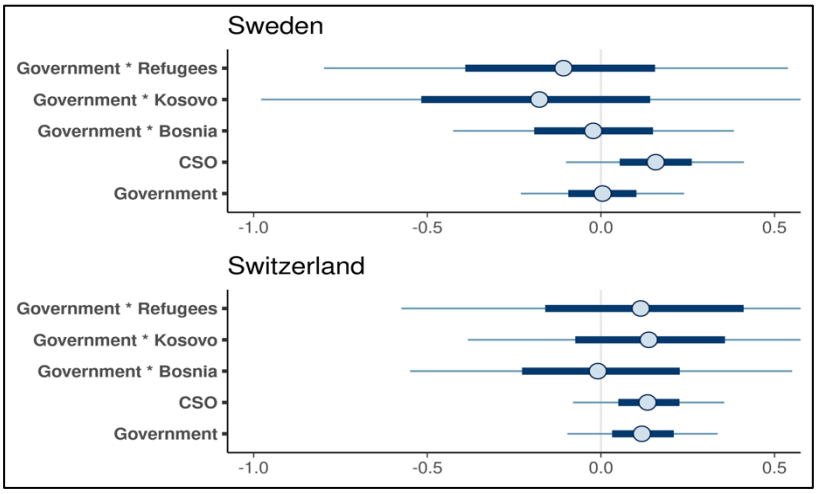
Figure 2: Polarisation of immigration claims (H 1.2)



Notes: Polarisation of immigration over time. Shown is the level of polarisation of the claims on immigration in the newspapers studied for each day (grey dots), and the moving average with N=3 days. No data were collected for Sweden between 2000 and 2009, and for Switzerland

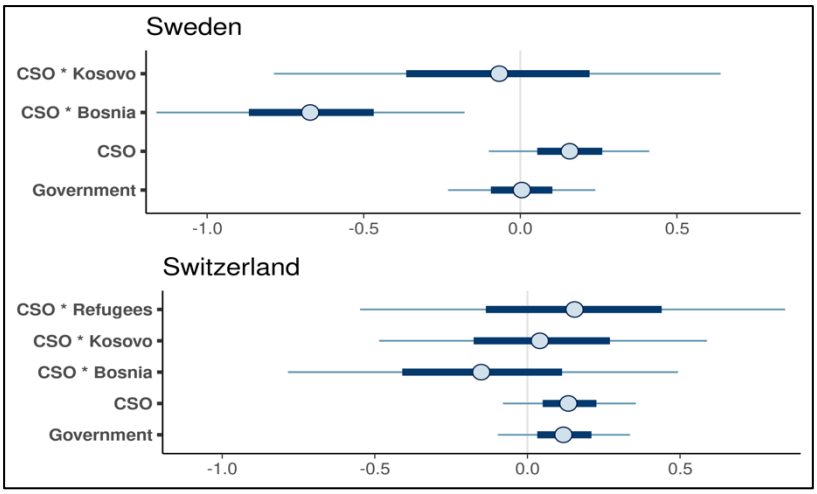
before 1995. Highlighted are the Balkans refugee crisis (blue: Bosnia; red: Kosovo) and the European refugee crisis (green). N=3,593 claims (N=740 in SE; N=2,853 in CH).

Figure 3: 'Defend status quo' of government actors (H 2.1)



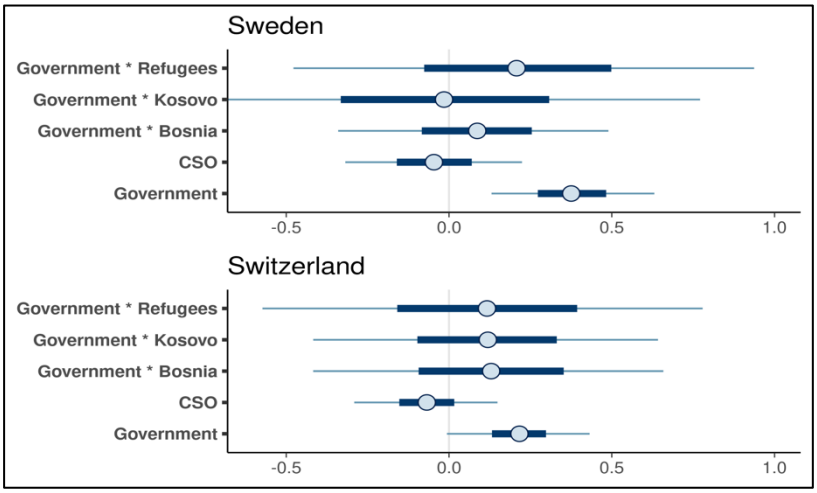
Notes: Shown are the regression coefficients as dots and 95% credibility intervals as bars. Rhat=1.00. Non-informative priors, Normal (0, 1). Other actor types are also included in the model but not shown.

Figure 4: 'Change status quo' of CSOs (H 2.2)



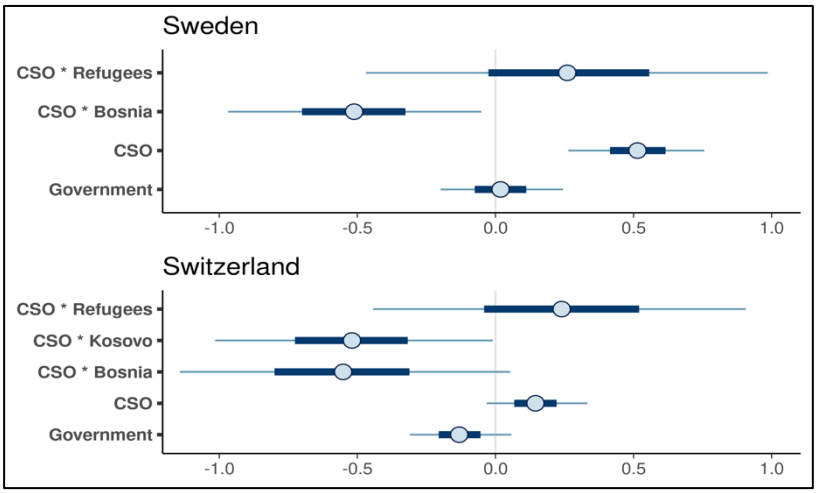
Notes: Shown are the regression coefficients as dots and 95% credibility intervals as bars. Rhat=1.00. Non-informative priors, Normal (0, 1). Other actor types are also included in the model but not shown.

Figure 5: Instrumental frame use of government actors (H 3.1)



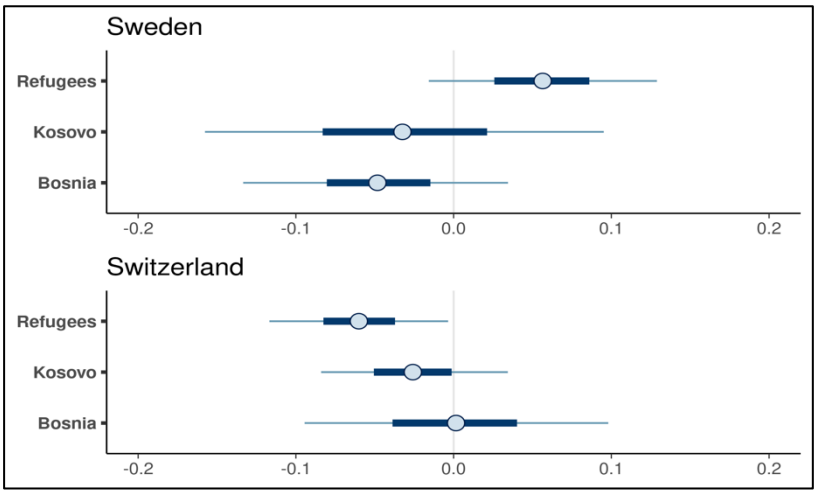
Notes: Shown are the regression coefficients as dots and 95% credibility intervals as bars. Rhat=1.00. Non-informative priors, Normal (0, 1). Other actor types are also included in the model but not shown.

Figure 6: Identity and moral frame use of CSOs (H 3.2)



Notes: Shown are the regression coefficients as dots and 95% credibility intervals as bars. Rhat=1.00. Non-informative priors, Normal (0, 1). Other actor types are also included in the model but not shown.

Figure 7: Total identity and moral frame use (H 3.3)



Notes: Shown are the regression coefficients as dots and 95% credibility intervals as bars. Rhat=1.00. Non-informative priors, Normal (0, 1). Other actor types are also included in the model but not shown.

Article III

"A garden of forking paths? Divergent patterns of governing international student mobility in Germany and the United Kingdom"

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ARTICLE III

A garden of forking paths? Divergent patterns of governing international student mobility in Germany and the United Kingdom

Marco Bitschnau

Abstract

This article investigates how Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) have governed international student mobility (ISM) over the last two decades. While both are among the most popular destinations for international students and have experienced similar political trajectories during this period, they have pursued diverging education and immigration policies to regulate ISM. Driven by a mix of educational universalism and fears of future labor shortage, Germany offers financial benefits and generous *right to stay* opportunities. The UK, by contrast, combines high tuition fees with rather restrictive immigration policies, favoring students who leave the country upon graduation. Drawing on an array of parliamentary reports, policy documents, and interviews with high-ranking politicians and civil servants, this article argues that this divergence roots primarily in the different politicizability of ISM: international students are discursively treated as *students* (belonging to the non-politicized field of education) in Germany but as *internationals* (belonging to the hyperpoliticized field of immigration) in the UK.

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Keywords

Germany, United Kingdom, international students, student mobility, policy, universities

Introduction

Within a few decades, international student mobility (ISM) has grown from the fringes of mobility research to the mainstream, with more international students, here defined as those "who [leave] their countries of origin and [move] to another country for the purpose of study" (OECD 2020: 235), appearing on the educational scene each year (e.g., Riaño et al. 2018; Van Mol 2014). Many move between the popular student destinations of the Global North, others from South to North or North to South, and others again from South to South.[149] Around 5.6 million students, the OECD estimated in its 2020 *Education at a Glance* report, are enrolled at tertiary institutions in a country that is not native to them.[150] For this reason alone, it should not come as a surprise that government strategies to regulate this specific form of contemporary mobility

[149] In fact, the fastest growth numbers come from "students enrolled in non-OECD countries" (OECD 2020: 228).

[150] Data from 2018. In view of an average annual growth of 4.8% since 1998, the current number is likely higher.

(neither labor migration nor driven by war or famine) receive increasing attention, busying the minds of academics and policymakers alike.

Although popular fiction such as Noah Gordon's *The Physician* reminds us that ISM has been subject to an interplay of permissiveness and restrictiveness for centuries, the 20th and especially the 21st century with its emerging *knowledge societies* (Stehr 1994) elicited unprecedented debates about the social implications of mass student mobility: *Brain drain* and *global war for talent* are just two of many buzzwords that rose to popularity in recent years. Especially in Europe and North America, governments have combined education and immigration policies to push ISM in their preferred direction, regulating the *admission* of international students as well as their *employment opportunities* upon graduation. But while one might expect countries that are in a similar position to pursue similar strategies, their policies are often paradoxically different. This article investigates the reason for such a policy divergence in the case of Germany and the UK. It finds that coalition politics and institutional constraints are insufficient explanations, and instead points at the *politicizability* of international students. In Germany, they remained students; in the UK, they were turned into objects of controversy: migrants.

Conceptual background

While ISM has existed since the earliest days of higher education, two macro-developments have contributed to its ascent in particular. The first is educational *expansion*, which can be defined as the government effort to increase tertiary enrolment numbers. Historically, the need to ensure mass access to higher education and dismantle entry barriers arose from the structural transformations of the 1960s and 1970s, when the rise of the knowledge economy changed the

demands of the labor market (e.g., Meyer and Schofer 2007; Meyer et al. 1992).[151] Rather than remaining the privilege of a selected few, attending a university soon became the "expectable thing for one's children, just as a high school education or a telephone or a television set has in the past" (Trow 1962: 236). Notably, this development also *de-privatized* higher education and turned it into a *bona fide* welfare issue: an investment governments had to make to guarantee the future competitiveness of their citizenry.

However, this expansion was only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the rise of ISM; its impact would have been limited without a parallel trend toward *internationalization*, that is, a growing embeddedness of learning in educational contexts beyond the national sphere. Ranging from the establishment of satellite campuses (e.g., Healey 2015) to the creation of exchange programs and being endorsed by policymakers and university administrators in equal measure,[152] it has become a core component of higher education strategies. Yet, different from expansion, which emerged from a constellation of necessity and change, the reasons for internationalization are not directly self-evident. After all, one could assume that a state has no *a priori* interest in providing education to students who are neither its citizens nor contributing to its social security system. Let alone an interest in fostering an industry that advertises its universities as top destinations of study (e.g., Altbach 2013; Beech 2018; Lomer et al. 2018). For the

[151] Side effects of this expansion such as the devaluation of academic degrees and the expansion of job requirements were problematized soon after. Notably, Randall Collins' *Credential Society* (1979) pioneered a new criticism toward an ever-expansive higher education sector.

[152] See, for example, the *Lisbon Declaration* of the European University Association (EUA) and its commitment to facilitating long-term student mobility: "In particular national authorities are urged to adapt immigration laws and visa regulations to enable this strategy to succeed" (2007: 4).

logic of welfare revolves around the idea of *give and take*, one would expect those who *take without giving* to be avoided, not courted.

What could be possible reasons to court them regardless? The first and most obvious that comes to mind is reciprocity: If two countries have roughly similar numbers of *incoming* and *outgoing* students, both could profit from ISM without one taking advantage of the other. However, there is evidently no such balance in the real world as far more Chinese, Indian, or Nigerian students move to North America and Western Europe than the other way around.[153] A second and perhaps more *realist* reason is the pursuit of foreign policy objectives (e.g., Kuptsch 2006; Lomer 2017; Metzgar 2016). A third is the socio-cultural capital that admitting international students may provide for universities (e.g., Lee 2015; Shkoler and Rabenu 2020). Yet, most relevant appears to be a fourth: the belief that international students can be integrated into the *give and take* logic, be it by contributing or by meeting labor market demands (e.g., Bolsmann and Miller 2008; Cantwell 2015; Geddie 2015; OECD 2020). That most are solicited "for the competitive edge they offer" is in fact an assumption so often repeated that it can be described as a "received wisdom in ISM studies" (Riaño et al. 2018: 283; see also King and Raghuram 2013).

Still, this rationale does not properly explain the diversity of ISM policies, which rests on two key aspects of openness. First, there is *educational openness*, for which tuition fees are a good indicator: Fees have the potential to both attract and deter international students and—in cases in which domestic students pay less or nothing—cement a visible hierarchy between privileged domestic insiders and non-privileged international outsiders (Figure 1).

[153] In Canada, Australia, and the US, the ratio between incoming and outgoing students even exceeds 10:1.

(Figure 1; see end of article)

At the same time, there is also *migratory openness*, which can be conceived in terms of admission (studying abroad is contingent on entering the country), but also as time that students are allowed to stay after obtaining their degree (Figure 2).

(Figure 2; see end of article)

Both figures reveal a range of policy options, with two observations being especially striking. First, there are great differences between countries that are seen as top destinations for international students (e.g., Australia, Canada, UK) but no clear geographical clusters: Canada and the US are neighbors, but the former is far more generous in its *right to stay* approach than the latter; likewise, Denmark and the UK are separated only by the North Sea, yet they seem many miles apart in terms of tuition fees. Second, ISM policies seem to deviate from the *three worlds of educational welfare* (Willemse and de Beer 2012) when it comes to the *right to stay*. In fact, some liberal higher education regimes (less stratification but more commodification) are the most restrictive ones in this regard, whereas some conservative regimes (more stratification but less commodification) are relatively flexible. Since almost all OECD states face a similar pressure to internationalize, this mismatch is even more puzzling. Why do these policy paths fork so often when they should be expected to run alongside each other?

Case selection and materials

This question could be asked with respect to any of the countries listed above; yet for practical reasons this article will focus on Germany and the UK. Both are suitable objects for comparison as they are popular destinations for non-EU[154] students and competitors in the global struggle for talent (Kuptsch 2006). In fact, the UK accounts for close to 8 per cent of the international student market, placing it second only behind the US. However, Germany is not far behind and its 6 per cent make it first among all non-Anglophone nations (OECD 2020). In both cases, the number of international students has increased markedly over the last decades. To give but one example, 24,675 Chinese first-year students[155] were enrolled in UK universities in 2007-08—a decade later, this number had already tripled to 76,425 (Universities UK 2020), with Indonesian, Malaysian, or Indian students also coming in droves.[156]

What is more, both countries had a similar political trajectory over the last two decades, beginning with charismatic *Third Way* politicians who set out in the late 1990s to overcome the stasis and scleroticism of the past (Boswell and Hampshire 2017). In Germany, Gerhard Schröder's SPD-Greens coalition convinced many first-time and non-traditional voters with a bold commitment to reform: *Ich bin bereit* (I am ready), his campaign posters read. Meanwhile, in the UK, Tony Blair's 1997 landslide victory appeared as the embodiment of *Cool Britannia*, with the optimism of the new prime minister mirroring the zeitgeist of the era. Like Schröder, Blair

[154] Obviously, a Dane studying in Belgium or a Lithuanian studying in France are international students as well. However, they are not subject to restrictions that would run counter to the freedom of movement enshrined in the EU's *Citizens' Rights Directive* (2004/38/EC) and therefore excluded from this analysis.

[155] Mainland China, without the *Special Administrative Regions* of Hong Kong and Macau.

[156] While the UK attracts more international students, growth rates tend to be higher in Germany. Regularly, they exceed 7 per cent per year (DAAD 2020b).

had promised his voters a "program of change and renewal" (Labour 1997: Ch.1) to meet the needs of the 21st century (e.g., Coates 2000; Newman 2001) and inject innovation into a static system. Because of this, this comparison covers the period from Schröder and Blair's first successes to the British withdrawal from the European Union around twenty years later.

In both cases, I build on an array of written materials including legal provisions, policy reports, and speeches.[157] To complement and contextualize them, I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews (N=13) with politicians, civil servants, and policymakers. Among them were current and former parliamentarians from political parties (Germany: CDU/CSU,[158] SPD, FDP; UK: Conservatives and Labour), representatives of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the British Council as well as a former member of the Schröder cabinet.[159] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were undertaken via phone or video conferencing, ranging from forty-five minutes to around three hours. If recording the interview was not possible or permitted, notes were taken and later transcribed.

Germany: Universalism and *Fachkräftemangel*

A country with a long academic tradition, much of Germany's post-war higher education policy was characterized by the effort to reconcile the Humboldtian ideal (unity of research and studies; comprehensive acquisition of knowledge) with the need for highly specialized degrees that would prepare students for the labor market (e.g., Reihlen and Wenzlaff 2016). While applied

[157] The German *Bundestag* offers a comprehensive online archive of speeches as does the *House of Commons*.

[158] Technically, the CDU and the CSU are two distinct parties with separate structures and leadership bodies.

[159] A list of all interviewees can be found at the end of this article.

Humboldtianism initially had elitist connotations (e.g., Ringer 1969), the tenet that higher education should provide *Bildung* as a cultivation of the whole person was appropriated by progressive forces after the Second World War. During the 1960s and 1970s, new reform universities were established, academic institutions democratized, and the Humboldtian ideal fused with expansionist commitments. The result is a universalist approach that aims to minimize the importance of one's socioeconomic background. Access to higher education institutions is supposed to be based on ability; whoever proves talented enough to pursue a tertiary degree should be given the means to do so. This meritocratic spirit is reinforced by the absence of elite universities in the Anglo-American sense, and only marginal inter-university quality differences: Universities and *Hochschulen* may have their areas of strength, but all of them are to guarantee a sound foundation. Private higher education, by contrast, is confined to specialized fields.

For all its advantages, this approach produced a degree of insularity, and the higher education sector that Schröder's coalition inherited was neither dynamic nor outward-oriented. Instead, low levels of ISM and a provincial outlook raised the question whether the *Land der Dichter und Denker* (country of poets and thinkers) could lose its technological edge sooner rather than later. Aware of this, Schröder's SPD included the slogan *Hochschulen modernisieren* (Modernize universities!) in its 1998 platform, arguing that "Germany's universities need more autonomy and competition […] research and teaching must be internationally oriented" (SPD 1998: 31). A vision widely shared by the SPD's environmentalist junior partner Bündnis 90/Die Grünen,[160] while both education and immigration policy remained in Social Democratic hands: Otto Schily, a former RAF lawyer who had turned into a pragmatic center-left reformist, and Edelgard Bulmahn, *Sprecherin* (spokeswoman) for education policy of the SPD parliamentary

[160] In the following referred to as 'the Greens' or 'Greens'.

group, were tasked with implementing the government's agenda. Both would remain in office (Schily as Minister of the Interior, Bulmahn as Minister of Education) for the entirety of Schröder's seven-year tenure.

Once in government, they soon began to work on legislation aimed at strengthening Germany's attractivity to international students. As the federal government has limited powers in education policy (which is mainly a matter of state policy, a principle known as *Bildungsföderalismus*), most efforts focused on a reform of the immigration system. In 2004,[161] the Bundestag passed the *Zuwanderungsgesetz* ('Immigration Act'), which also included a revised *Aufenthaltsgesetz* ('Residence Act') that reformed a considerable range of immigration laws and provisions. Most importantly from an ISM perspective, it affirmed residence rights for students at German universities (§16b, 1 AufenthG), facilitated family reunification measures (§32, 1 AufenthG), and allowed graduates to stay in the country for up to eighteen months (§20, 3 AufenthG), shifting the dominant paradigm from "a *study and go* to a *study and stay* approach" (Griesbeck and Heß 2016: 55).[162] However, these measures were not uncontroversial for most CDU/CSU MPs still subscribed to familialism and immigration skepticism. In 2000, Bulmahn's predecessor Jürgen Rüttgers called for *Kinder statt Inder* ('Children instead of Indians'), and as late as 2005, some MPs railed against "immigration through the backdoor" (Grindel 2005: 16931).

[161] Although the law was passed on July 30, 2004, and promulgated on August 4, 2004, it did not enter into force until January 1, 2005. Since then, it was revised three times (2007, 2013, 2016), and modified via other laws (e.g., the *Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz* of 2019). Originally, the SPD-Greens coalition had introduced the proposal in 2001 on advice from the *Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung* ('Independent Commission on Immigration') (Griesbeck and Heß 2016).

[162] There were also efforts to direct more financial resources toward the development of recruitment strategies and internationalization of higher education, often via the DAAD (see, e.g., Bode and Davidson 2011; DAAD 2020a).

This stance only began to change when Schröder was defeated by CDU leader Angela Merkel in September 2005. Forced into a *grand coalition* with the stricken SPD, the CDU/CSU leadership showed little ambition to revert the higher education strategy of the Schröder government. Instead, it succumbed to pragmatism, opted for coherence and continuity, and moderated its hardline opposition to immigration. Its only major reform in higher education, the introduction of tuition fees made possible through a Federal Constitutional Court ruling (BVerfG 2005), failed spectacularly. Although most CDU-led state governments passed legislation to charge a *Studienbeitrag* of around 500 euros per semester,[163] the public remained fiercely opposed to the fees. It did not take long until they were seen as politically toxic and abolished again, in at least one case by the same government that had introduced them in the first place. "This was a big mistake by the CDU back then", recalled a long-time SPD MP (#4). "Our universities may not be […] Champions League [level] yet, but at least we can do without this tuition madness. And I think people were afraid that studying would become unaffordable sooner or later." However, the CDU/CSU's federal leadership had already seen the writing on the wall. Occupied with the turmoil of the financial crisis and afraid of stirring more controversy, it soon came to terms with the *status quo ante* and clandestinely approved of state-level rollbacks. Lacking

[163] Tuition fees were introduced by the state governments of North Rhine-Westphalia (Winter 2006; CDU/FDP), Lower Saxony (Winter 2006; CDU/FDP), Baden-Württemberg (CDU/FDP; Summer 2007), Bavaria (CSU; Summer 2007), Hamburg (CDU; Summer 2007), Hesse (CDU; Winter 2007), and Saarland (CDU/FDP; Winter 2007). Today, neither first time nor international students must pay any tuition fees except for Baden-Württemberg where the latter are charged €1,500 per semester. Special regulations apply for refugees, students from developing countries, and those who obtained their *Abitur* from a German high school (*Bildungsinländer*).

political capital to spend on higher education projects, they decided to adopt the Social Democratic internationalization script and paved the way for a cross-party *pro-mobility consensus*.[164]

What solidified this consensus was the narrative of a looming *Fachkräftemangel* that must be prevented. This term, often simply translated as labor shortage, denotes a lack of skilled (academic and non-academic) labor that results from demographic change. "*Fachkräftemangel* became a very big thing back then […] we started to realize that we could lose our economic edge if we don't recruit workers from abroad. Preventing this has been the consensus ever since and nobody in parliament wants to challenge it, except for the AfD,"[165] a former FDP MP said (#3). In fact, "there has hardly been an issue [that] has dominated the debate in the areas of economic and labor policy in a similar way" (Rahner 2018: 12), with influential employer associations also spreading the message that millions of *Fachkräfte* are needed if Germany wants to retain its competitiveness (e.g., Oesingmann 2016; for Asia, see Bruche 2010; Mayer 2014). "In my district, you won't find a 48-year-old tradesman unemployed," Peter Aumer (CDU/CSU) argued in one of many speeches on this matter. "There is Fachkräftemangel! [And we must solve it] urgently" (2019: 14233). None of the other parties would disagree.

It should be noted, however, that despite this appetite for foreign labor, all governments of the last twenty years have carefully avoided the impression that they engage in exploitation or advocate *brain drain*. Efforts to lure international students have, for this reason, always been

[164] In the words of the same MP, "Germany's internationalization agenda was and is a Social Democratic project. Merkel's achievement is that she just left things as she found them."

[165] In fact, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), Germany's most influential right-wing populist party, has no strong position on international students. In its most recent 2020 platform, they are not even mentioned once.

accompanied by a commitment to cooperation and solidarity. For example, when hundreds of thousands of refugees entered Germany in 2014-16, government agencies intervened to provide funds for integration classes and ensure that they could apply for BAföG[166] funds and KfW[167] loans (e.g., Ashour 2021; Streitwieser and Brück 2018). Even though most newcomers did not match conventional *Fachkräfte* criteria, they were still given the same access to the "German educational support mechanisms as all domestic students" (Streitwieser and Brück 2018: 41), furnishing additional proof of the universalist tendencies in German higher education.

United Kingdom: Searching for the ideal student

As in the case of Schröder, modernizing higher education and strengthening Britain's international stature were essential to Blair's political agenda. Supported by Jack Straw in the Home Office and David Blunkett as Secretary of State for Education and Employment, he soon began to flesh out a comprehensive internationalization strategy that would culminate in the *Prime Minister's Initiative* (PMI) of 1999 (e.g., Dodds 2009; Geddie 2015; Lomer et al. 2018). The PMI encompassed different approaches to buttress UK higher education, "increase the number of international students in Further Education by 100 per cent [by 2005]", "market education abroad more professionally" and develop "a new UK education brand" (Blair 1999: n.p.) under the auspices of the British Council (Walker 2014). In other words, nothing less than an overhaul of the country's ISM policy, pursued aggressively and with specific numbers in mind. Despite

[166] BAföG (short for *Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*) is a law regulating federal student grants and loans.

[167] The *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* is a state-owned development bank that offers low-interest student loans.

some criticism, it was initially met with great approval. Many were convinced by its benefits[168] or feared the prospect of dwindling competitiveness, especially in the face of growing internationalization efforts in the US, Australia and Canada. Consequently, the initiative was extended in 2006 (PMI 2)[169] with additional emphasis on quality management and transnational education (Lomer 2018).

Constituting "the first coherent British policy" (Lomer 2018: 312) on ISM, most PMI measures sought to advertise Britain as an attractive destination for students. But there were also immigration provisions aimed at facilitating the educational access of internationals. Student visas became easier to obtain and the labor market was opened to "undergraduates in sectors where we need extra skills [because they] will be able to work in the UK for up to 12 months after graduating" (Blair 2006: n.p.). Yet, this shift toward a selective but expansive *study and stay* approach came to a halt once David Cameron's Liberal-Conservative coalition took the reins after the 2010 general election. The new government (and the Conservative Party in particular) had campaigned on the promise to regain control over immigration, pointing, inter alia, to the abuse of student visa regulations by labor migrants (Carey and Geddes 2010). Fears that were not new,[170] but now stoked in a drastic way. While the PMI's narrative of international students

[168] Particularly popular was the promise that international students would cross-subsidize poorer domestic students by paying high fees: "British exports of education are worth eight billion pounds a year. Money that feeds into our institutions and helps our goal to open up more people to study" (Blair 1999: n.p.). Although Shih (2017) has evidenced such an effect for the US, it must be considered a *legitimation strategy* first and foremost.

[169] The PMI 2 came to an end in 2011. Its *de facto* successor policy, the *International Education Strategy*, did not set any recruitment targets.

[170] In the context of PMI 2, the Blair government had previously announced more efforts to keep out "anyone who intends to abuse the system" (2006: n.p.).

being valuable assets did not disappear, this counter-narrative tarnished their public image and casted them in a dubious light. Increasingly, they were suspected of living off welfare, placing pressure on public services, and being unsuited for anything but minimum wage jobs (Lomer 2018). As Partos and Bale analyze, "the 'bogus' asylum seekers of the 1990s/2000s [were replaced] in the […] imagination by 'bogus' students who attend 'bogus' colleges" (2015: 174).

Over time, this mismatch between the official appreciation of skilled foreigners and the mounting pressure to reduce immigration numbers became more and more evident.[171] During the first years of the new government, border interviews and language requirements were implemented, while an end was put to the post-study work visa program (e.g., Levantino et al. 2018; Lomer 2018; Trevena 2019). Still, neither did this curb international student applications nor did it provide a solution for the problem that universities depended on them financially. In fact, since Margaret Thatcher's decision to charge internationals full fees,[172] they had become quintessential "customers in a higher education marketplace" (Findlay et al. 2017: 27; see e.g., Bolsmann and Miller 2008; Lomer 2014; Marginson 1997; Naidoo and Williams 2015; Tannock 2018), who pay fees far in excess of those charged to domestic students.[173] "I consider higher education one of our most thriving industries" explained one Conservative MP (#11) before adding

[171] International students in the UK are also statistically categorized as immigrants (Lomer 2018); admitting fewer students may have consequently appeared as a relatively easy way to keep migration numbers down.

[172] Means-tested tuition fees for domestic students had been abolished in 1962 but were reintroduced via the *Teaching and Higher Education Act of 1998*, following a recommendation in the *Dearing Report*. Maintenance grants were also replaced by student loans. Because of *devolution* (the delegation of power from Westminster to the subnational level), different regulations were implemented in Scotland.

[173] According to Tannock, tuition fees during the 2016-17 academic year were "on average between 50% and 172% higher [for international undergraduate students]" (2018: 125).

that "an industry, even such a thriving one, is no immigration scheme. We are more than happy to welcome international students. […] But as students. Not as immigrants."

Positions like this are symptomatic of the paradoxical post-2010 logic that continues to encourage ISM to keep British universities afloat but, at the same time, pursues "the curtailing of net migration by the tens of thousands" (Levantino et al. 2018: 372).[174] The ideal student, it seems, would be someone who contributes to the economy, pays his fees, and becomes an ambassador for British culture—but is not physically present. This trends has further intensified in recent years, particularly in the wake of the *Brexit* referendum, an event whose ramifications cannot be entirely assessed yet but whose *anti-mobility* message is hard to overlook. Although it may not affect non-EU students directly, its political dimension, the way in which proponents of the isolationist 'regain control' line triumphed over supporters of intra-European mobility, appears as a confirmation that the needs of higher education are viewed as less important than fears of immigration (Weimer and Barlete 2020). Some may, of course, hope that Brexit will allow the UK to advance the case of a *Global Britain* (Kleibert 2020). But as of now, the country's approach gives the impression that it is dominated by self-centeredness and deep-seated anxieties.

What can explain the *forking paths*?

Germany and the UK both set out to attract international students and open their higher education systems at the dawn of the millennium. But two decades later, they seem to have parted ways. A deeply entrenched universalist legacy, the omnipresent narrative of *Fachkräftemangel*,

[174] This conflict also plays out at the intra-governmental level where e.g., the Business and Education departments develop strategies to solicit international students and the Home Offices others to deter migrants.

and the CDU/CSU's shift on immigration have created a pro-mobility consensus in Germany: international students can *benefit* from the system *now* but are expected to *contribute* to it *later*. Conversely, a commodified higher education landscape and anti-mobility prejudice turned this approach upside down in the UK: international students are asked to *contribute now* but promised that they will *benefit later* from their degrees. However, the reasons for this divergence are still not clear (as both countries are affected by demographic change and future labor shortage in similar ways). Why is there significant policy continuity in one case but a back and forth in the other? Why did the UK change its strategy when Germany did not?

There are several possible explanations, the first stemming from the realities of coalition politics.[175] A coalition between two or even three parties is common in the German party system, and, except for a brief time period between 2009 and 2013, the CDU/CSU has always governed with the post-Schröderian SPD. One could thus assume that the *Unionsparteien* have simply lacked the political capital to enforce restrictive policies against the will of a coalition partner on which they were so reliant. By contrast, the British Conservatives mostly governed alone and did not have to pay much attention to any partners when implementing their political program. The only time when this was not the case—after the 2010 general election—their education policies led, in fact, to open conflict with their Liberal coalition partner (Griffiths 2015).

Related to this is the argument that diverging policies may result from institutional differences. If there is an inclination toward "[m]inisterial and civil servant short-termism, reshuffles […]" and "political hyperactivity" (Barber 2016: 1; see also Herman 1975; Berlinski et al. 2007) like in the UK, relevant actors may be well advised not to think much about long-term consequences

[175] Levantino et al. (2018) stress the importance of party politics in the British case in a more general way.

of their decisions. With cabinet members coming and going,[176] and reforms often being carried out for the sake of *doing something*, there little incentive to pursue a coherent ISM strategy. Consider also that the *Bundestag* puts more emphasis on committee work than the *House of Commons*, that it has some additional consociational and conflict resolving bodies such as the *Ältestenrat* (Council of Elders), and that there is no *leader of the opposition* constantly seeking the spotlight. Unlike Westminster, it is a parliament "programmed for rational debate among sensible people" (Lever 2017: 77) that holds multipartisanship in high esteem.

While these differences must be taken seriously and provide us with valuable insights, I argue that there is yet another, decisive element: the discursive roles of international students, which entail different degrees of *politicizability*—that is, how easily one becomes the object of politicization. In Germany, their role has always been that of *students* (and *future workers*) who belong to the non-politicized field of education. But in the UK, they were turned into *internationals* who belong to the hyperpoliticized field of immigration instead. In one case, they are entirely absent from the immigration debate, while in the other, said debate is rife with images that portray them as *takers* rather than *givers*: as intruders who reap the benefits of the system and hamper the life chances of native youth. In the popular press, this narrative becomes manifest in the dualism of foreign applicants who jump "the queue: Overseas candidates offered uni places with lower grades than UK teenagers" (Bains and Gayle 2012) and local applicants

[176] In the twenty years between 1998 and 2018, there were not only twice as many UK Prime Ministers as German Chancellors (4-2) but also almost three times as many cabinet members concerned with educational matters (11-4): first as *Secretary of State for Education and Employment*, then as *Secretary of State for Education and Skills*, then as *Secretary of State for Innovation Universities and Skills*, and finally as *Secretary of State for Education*.

who, for this reason, feel "betrayed:[177] Top UK universities take foreign students with poor grades over Brits so they can rake in four times as much in fees" (Burnip 2017)—a juxtaposition that would fare rather badly in the German context. As would accusations that "brilliant" students are rejected from medical schools while British hospitals are "plundering staff from the Third World" (Adams 2018).[178]

Yet, in the UK, such stories seem to work well, not least because they are less about international and domestic students than about *foreigners* and *citizens*, about those included by virtue of their nationality and those who contest this privilege from the outside.[179] It must be said, however, that this difference in politicizability is neither the result of fate or coincidence, nor a mere byproduct of British tabloid culture. Instead, if we depart from the notion that political institutions are embedded in a framework of discursive practices, abilities, and potentialities (Schmidt 2008), we soon come across two contrasts. As regards immigration, this contrast is between *integrationist openness* and *sovereigntist insularity*, while as regards education, it is between hardly commodified *universalism* and commodified *particularism*. Once international students became salient enough to be objects of controversy, these contrasts led to diverging

[177] The term 'betraying' is not the creation of a sensationalist journalist but a verbatim quote from the Conservative life peer Andrew Adonis (a former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education).

[178] See also Riaño et al. (2018) who list the idea of *international students as immigrants of doubtful values* (D) as one of five prevalent ISM discourses. Obviously, *international students as sources of income for the higher education sector* (B) and *international students as part of soft power* (E; see also Lomer 2017) also exist. But at least since the mid-2000s, the link between international students and unwanted migration has been predominant.

[179] This link between international students and immigrants has not always been there. For instance, Enoch Powell, in his famous *Rivers of Blood* speech, remarked that "aliens [who came] into this country for the purposes of study or improving their qualification […] are not, and never will be, immigrants" (Powell, as cited in Acton 2011: 3).

degrees of politicizability—low in Germany, high in the UK—which, in the latter case, induced political actors to react and treat them accordingly.[180]

In conclusion, while the politico-institutional setup has contributed to relative policy continuity in Germany and discontinuity in the UK, it is the different politicizability of ISM that explains policy divergences best. German legislators could build upon a sound universalist foundation and a pro-mobility consensus once the narrative of *Fachkräftemangel* had become dominant and the skepticism of the CDU/CSU was vanishing. Meanwhile, their British colleagues had to deal with a more hostile public and stronger popular anti-mobility demands. Given that neither German sentiment toward foreign talent nor British reservations about immigration should be expected to cease soon, it appears likely that this divergence will continue to exist. In Germany, the CDU/CSU have been defeated in the 2021 federal election, losing the Ministries of the Interior and Education to the SPD and Greens,[181] but the threat of future *Fachkräftemangel* is as present as ever and the support for pro-mobility policies remains steadfast.[182] If anything, the Scholz government may push for even more internationalization. Its liberal and multilateral profile would definitely allow for it.

On the other side of the Channel, the fact that neither *Brexit* nor the COVID-19 pandemic made a dent in the number of international applicants does not bode well for those hoping for major

[180] More empirical about the politicization of ISM in the UK is needed. It seems, however, as though media and political actors played crucial parts in popularizing the image of the international student as unwanted migrant.

[181] Since December 2021, the Greens govern with the FDP and the SPD in a novel *traffic light* coalition.

[182] This is not necessarily the case for refugee and asylum policy but undoubtedly for international students.

policy adjustments in the UK.[183] The system continues to work, the students keep coming, and most British taxpayers may favor self-sufficient universities and harsh immigration measures rather than the other way round. The forking paths of ISM are thus unlikely to reconverge soon, which entails numerous possibilities for future research. Among them are ethical questions that transcend the simple (if not simplistic) criticism of 'neoliberal' elements in British higher education (Yang 2020) as well as the exploration of ways to *square the circle* and recruit foreign *students* without admitting *immigrants*. In view of the pandemic and its societal repercussions, the promotion and proliferation of online education may merit closer scrutiny to this effect.

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Figures (Article III)

Figure 1: Tuition fee policies in selected OECD countries

Tuition fee policy	**Examples**
Higher fees for IS	Australia, Austria, Canada, *United Kingdom*
Same fees for IS	Chile, France, Israel, Japan, South Korea, Spain
No fees for IS	Denmark, *Germany*, Slovakia, Norway

Source: OECD (2020: 325–327).

Figure 2: Right to stay policies in selected OECD countries

Right to stay	**Examples (OECD) (Months)**
Limited *right to stay*	*United Kingdom* (4)
Moderate *right to stay*	France (12), Netherlands (12), United States (12)
Generous *right to stay*	Australia (24-48), Canada (8-36), *Germany* (18)

Source: Own compilation and illustration based on Trevena (2019). All time periods relate to the usual length of post-graduate work permits. Permit durations in Canada and Australia depend on program duration.

Article IV

"The 'refugee crisis' as an opportunity structure for right-wing populist social movements: The case of PEGIDA"

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ARTICLE IV

The "refugee crisis" as an opportunity structure for right-wing populist social movements: The case of PEGIDA

Marco Bitschnau, Dennis Lichtenstein, and Birte Fähnrich

Abstract

Research on right-wing populist communication is often limited to political parties, with social movements receiving less attention. To help filling this research gap, we examine the frames and master frames of the PEGIDA movement and the role of the 2015 "refugee crisis" in shaping them. Using qualitative content analysis of speeches held at PEGIDA rallies between 2014 and 2016, we identify two master frames, each consisting of five particular frames. Besides an initial master frame about the allegedly looming Islamization of Europe, a second master frame dealing with the Perils of Asylum emerge during the "crisis"—ultimately, both converge, with the latter incorporating central aspects of the former. These findings buttress our interpretation of the "crisis" as an opportunity structure that helped right-wing populist social movements to revitalize their message and broaden their audience. However, its long-term impact still appears limited as PEGIDA's influence has greatly waned in recent years.

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Keywords

PEGIDA, framing, refugee crisis, social movements, content analysis, populism, Islam

Introduction

Over the past decade, the rise of right-wing populism, its challenge to democracy, and its impact on liberal politics has been frequently discussed among both social scientists and political practitioners (e.g., Bonikowski et al. 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019; Wodak et al. 2013). This is all the more true for Germany, where discussions about minorities (e.g., after the release of Thilo Sarrazin's bestseller *Deutschland schafft sich ab* [Germany abolishes itself]), the political fallout of Europe's debt crisis, and the unmasking of the neo-Nazi terrorist group *Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund* [National Socialist Underground] had ushered in an era of rising polarization. In only a few years, the country witnessed the rise of its most successful far-right party in over seven decades (i.e., the *Alternative für Deutschland* [Alternative for Germany], AfD), the popularization of right-wing populist media (e.g., PI-News and Deutschland-Kurier), and the birth of a new protest movement: PEGIDA (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* [Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident]). Appearing on the political scene in late 2014, this Dresden-based group quickly gained notoriety by staging protest rallies against what its supporters perceived as an accelerated Islamization of country and continent (e.g., Rehberg et al. 2016; Vorländer et al. 2018). Unsurprisingly, this message proved attractive to many on the right, and it did not take long until similar but less successful

movements began to become visible in other cities—LEGIDA in Leipzig, DÜGIDA in Düsseldorf, and BÄRGIDA in Berlin, to name but a few.

In some countries, most notably the UK, the PEGIDA label even morphed into a "rallying point appropriated by pre-established radical right activists" (Berntzen and Weisskircher 2016: 56), who were neither connected to the Dresden group nor recognized by its leadership. Most initial research on PEGIDA was socio-demographic and socio-psychological in nature, examining its supporters, their motives, attitudes, and group characteristics (e.g., Daphi et al. 2015; Patzelt and Klose 2016; Vorländer et al. 2018). In contrast, a comprehensive exploration of the content of PEGIDA's messages was (and still is) rather limited. As is scholarship on the communication of populist actors, which gives considerably more attention to political parties (e.g., Ernst et al. 2017; Hatakka et al. 2017; Kalsnes 2019) than to social movements (but see, e.g., Guenther et al. 2020; Nissen 2020). Based on a qualitative content analysis of PEGIDA speeches, this article contributes to overcoming these limitations. Inquiring into PEGIDA's framing and the impact of the 2015 "refugee crisis",[186] it presents insights into the communication strategies of right-wing populist social movements in times of increased political contestation.

Theoretical foundations

Due to its demands, PEGIDA is typically classified as such a movement and thus as belonging to the expanding field of populism studies. Populism, despite having been theorized intensively

[186] "Refugee crisis" is potentially misleading because it may be understood as a crisis caused by those fleeing war and persecution, and not by those who are responsible for their plight or did not provide them with enough support. Distancing ourselves from this reading of the term, we place it in double quotation marks throughout this article.

in recent years, remains a vague concept with a diverse range of meanings. According to Gidron and Bonikowski (2013), it can be *inter alia* understood as ideational (e.g., Mudde 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Stanley 2008), performative/stylistic (e.g., Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Moffitt 2016) or strategic (e.g., Barr 2009; Weyland 2001). While these paradigms entail very different methodological implications, they are not exclusive; rather, their integration into a notion of populist political communication has been proposed (Aalberg and de Vreese 2017).

Populist communication has been associated with a set of stylistic features, most prominently with simplification, emotionalization, personalization, and strategic invocations of common sense (e.g., Mazzoleni et al. 2003; Mudde 2007; Rooduijn 2014). While the populist message attempts to elicit strong feelings, such as enthusiasm and anger, much of its content involves three elements: (1) people-centrism, (2) anti-elitism, and (3) the identification of a hostile out-group (Aalberg and de Vreese 2017; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Kriesi 2014). People-centrism emphasizes sovereignty and unity, whereas anti-elitism evokes notions of a corrupted elite that has become estranged from the people and is incapable of comprehending its true will. Last, to identify an out-group means to designate a collective minoritarian "Other" that, in the populist's imagination, is the beneficiary of the people's misfortune. Some have made the argument that these elements fit the logic of mass media and provide populist actors with the "oxygen of publicity" (Aalberg and de Vreese, 2017: 4) that helps them to spread their message and wield discursive influence (e.g., Mazzoleni 2014; Vorländer et al. 2018). These actors can be specific politicians, political parties, and governments but also social movements, which can be defined as heterogeneous networks that strive for social or political change (or attempting to resist such change) through orchestrated collective action (e.g., Rucht and Neidhardt 2001).

Because they know that competing for a resource as scarce as public attention requires enduring popular support, social movements often try to generate a sense of group identity (McAdam et al. 1996). A handy tool to reach this goal is the use of social media platforms; Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook are the most relevant examples in this regard (e.g., Ernst et al. 2019; Priante et al. 2018). These platforms allow social movements to gain direct access to dispersed and disproportionately young audiences while bypassing traditional information gatekeepers (e.g., Gaby and Caren 2012; Haller and Holt 2019; Stier et al. 2017). Consequently, most youth-oriented right-wing movements focus on connective rather than collective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012) and underscore the importance of digital communication (Bogert and Fielitz 2019; Guenther et al. 2020). PEGIDA differs from this in as much as its online activities are more limited: While Facebook used to be of relevance during the movement's early phase, its main purpose was to address an already sympathetic audience.

To better understand PEGIDA's communication, we studied its frames, which is an established approach in research on collective identities and action (e.g., Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 2019). In the social movement context, frames can be defined as bundles of "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings [of the world] that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam et al. 1996: 6) by highlighting selected aspects of an issue and aligning them with demands (Entman 1993). Still, as social movements are, by nature, heterogeneous, they may not rely on *particular frames* alone but attempt to create overarching *master frames* that attach their goals to an idealized "Us" (Benford and Snow 2000). This strategy is popular among other populists as well: As Rooyackers and Verkuyten (2012) noted in the case of Geert Wilders and his *Partij voor de Vrijheid*, efforts to reframe the public's collective identity and present one's own beliefs as prototypical are crucial instruments in the

populist toolbox. Periods of crisis and uncertainty provide highly attractive *opportunity structures* to foster the creation of master frames. When a crisis emerges, there is a disintegration of norms and beliefs that have been taken for granted (e.g., Rosenthal et al. 1989; Bitschnau et al. 2021), which encourages people to engage in collective action. While this action is often rooted in the ramifications of the crisis, one must not forget that crises are subject to social construction and interpretation. Their cause, outcome, and teleological quality are matters of perception and depend to a far greater extent on one's hopes, fears, or ideological predispositions than on facts and evidence (Seeger and Sellnow 2016; Walby 2015). Just like other actors, social movements may seek to seize the moment and exploit what is perceived as crisis for their own gain: for example, to mobilize supporters and put pressure on the government (e.g., della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Gamson and Meyer 1996) or, in the specific case of right-wing populist social movements, to assign responsibility to elites (Mudde 2004) while casting themselves as advocates of those who unjustly carry the burden of the crisis.

A look into history gives us a more comprehensive understanding of how important crises can be to the success of social movements. One particularly noteworthy example is the catastrophe of Chernobyl in 1986, which not only helped the anti-nuclear movement to garner mainstream attention (Koopmans and Duyvendank 1995) but also paved the way for the anti-nuclear politics of today. Not as lasting (but still impactful) was the rise of *Occupy Wall Street* and other anti-austerity movements in the wake of the economic, financial, and debt crises of the 2000s and 2010s (e.g., della Porta 2012; 2015; Gerbaudo 2017; Langman 2013). Even more recently, a wave of pro-environmental movements, notably *Fridays for Future* and *Extinction Rebellion*, has swept across Europe. Headed by media-savvy activists, they established themselves as relevant stakeholders in a short period of time and have been responsible for various policy

advances since (e.g., in Germany, their presence helped pass the 2019 *Climate Action Law*). But while the aforementioned movements have been progressive in nature and articulated their demands from a countercultural position, others appeal to a more right-leaning audience; in the case of PEGIDA, to an audience agitated by an event commonly referred to as the "European refugee crisis" (e.g., Lichtenstein et al. 2017; Vorländer et al. 2018) and its aftermath.[187] During this humanitarian "crisis", hundred thousand refugees applied for asylum in Europe within only a few months, with the question of their admission and treatment soon turning into a source of perpetual controversy. Even in Germany, the country most affected, the warm and welcoming attitude of the first weeks evaporated with time and gave way to skepticism and suspicion (see Lichtenstein 2021).[188] Calls to close national borders and tighten asylum policies became common by late 2015 and had a positive effect on PEGIDA's discursive power. After having been weakened by scandals and unfavorable press coverage in the months prior, the movement once again attracted a great many *Spaziergänger* [walkers] to its rallies (Kemper 2015).[189] Against this particular background, we examine the role of the "crisis" in PEGIDA's framing by asking the following two research questions:

[187] Chryssochoou (2018) has shown that those who express support for far-right positions in times of crisis are often not challenging the system but disaffected by it. They are *betrayed believers* in search of a new identity that is offered by movements like PEGIDA.

[188] This was particularly the case after the 2015–16 New Year's Eve assaults in Cologne. Stereotypes about the violent and sexually frustrated Arab "Other" (e.g., Boulila and Carri 2017; Weber 2016) dominated the media, and xenophobic incidents became more frequent.

[189] In December 2014 and January 2015, PEGIDA regularly mobilized between 15,000 and 25,000 protesters but lost most of this support over the following months. Due to the heightened salience of the "refugee crisis", these numbers bounced back to around 20,000 by October 2015.

Question 1: Which (master) frames can be found during the "refugee crisis"?

Question 2: How do these (master) frames relate to each other against the "crisis" background?

Methodology

To provide answers to these questions, we analyzed 63 speeches given by 27 speakers at 14 PEGIDA rallies between 2014 and 2016, which we had previously retrieved from a PEGIDA-affiliated YouTube channel. By sharing videos of its rallies, PEGIDA deviates from the more sophisticated audience targeting strategies of other right-wing populist actors (e.g., Ernst et al. 2019; Guenther et al. 2020; Maly 2019), which makes it possible to access its speech contents and frames more directly. Our analysis covers a period that encompasses both PEGIDA's formative stage and the first year of the "crisis." We selected four different series of rallies (i.e., December 2014 to January 2015; July to September 2015; January 2016; June to August 2016) to ensure their balanced distribution over the whole examination period. Each series comprises between two and five recorded rallies, with three to six speeches per rally and a rally duration ranging from 33 to 141 minutes (93 minutes on average). As a matter of principle, we covered these rallies in their entirety; they most often began with organizational remarks and contained extensive footage of the walks themselves. We selected more rallies from the summer periods, as these took place on a bi-weekly rather than weekly basis. As a result, they were longer, less repetitive, and more diverse in terms of content.

We first noted the names and number of speakers, length and number of speeches, guest speakers' affiliations, and speech interruptions. Only four speakers were members of PEGIDA's core team (Lutz Bachmann, Siegfried Däbritz, Tatjana Festerling, and Kathrin Oertel), with most

being guests (18) or representatives from other GIDAs (5), such as the Leipzig and Chemnitz branches. We then started our analysis by extracting statements (defined as coherent and content-related language segments) from speech transcripts that either referred directly to the "refugee crisis" or otherwise included allusions to an external threat (N=418). These statements constituted our data and were coded via the frame elements of problem description, problem cause, problem attribution, and problem intervention proposed by Entman (1993) and refined by Jecker (2014). We included only statements that contained two or more elements and developed our categories and subcategories inductively. The coding itself was conducted by two of the authors who participated in intensive training to ensure consistently high reliability. Both worked independently from each other but met regularly to compare their results and discuss borderline cases. Following Mayring's (2014) approach, the statements were then condensed and systemized until the particular frames could be grouped into holistic master frames.

Findings

Regarding the first question, we find two master frames that convey PEGIDA's central reference points. The first, *Fears of Islamization*, is linked to the movement's original message; it contains expressions of cultural anxiety and seeks to establish a dichotomy between a European in-group and a Muslim out-group. The second, *Perils of Asylum*, emerges during the first few months of the "crisis" but soon becomes dominant. It portrays asylum seekers from Africa and the Middle East as visible embodiments of "crisis"-related disruption and danger.

The *Fears of Islamization* master frame brings together five particular frames: *Cultural Inferiority*, *Historical Antagonism*, *Unwillingness to Integrate*, *Danger of Infiltration*, and *Terrorism*

and Violence. Each represents another facet of how the Islamic threat is imagined. In *Cultural Inferiority*, Islam is described as primitive and incompatible with European values and civilization. This line of thought is strengthened by claims that in Islamic societies, women "possess no worth" (Bachmann, speech held on August 1, 2016), LGBTQ individuals are executed, and non-believers subject to humiliating treatment. By associating Islam with bigotry and showing superficial solidarity with those suffering from extremism, this frame follows the increasingly popular right-wing populist strategy of cloaking Islamophobia in a more acceptable civilizationist jargon (Brubaker 2017). The distinction between the in-group and the out-group is first established and then linked to competing concept pairs, such as superior/inferior, civilized/savage, and progressive/regressive. The second frame, *Historical Antagonism*, eternalizes this hierarchy by interpreting the antagonism between Christianity, secularism, humanism (the Occident: tolerance and rationality), and Islam (the Orient: barbarism and superstition) as embedded in a centuries-old conflict between reason and fanaticism. Whenever both worldviews meet, so the argument goes, they will clash since Islam's lust for power prevents any peaceful co-existence. This conception is reinforced by allusions to, and civilizationist reinterpretations of, past conflicts between Christian and Islamic powers. Violent encounters like the Battle of Tours in 732 AD, where Frankish knights halted the advance of Umayyad raiders, are read as precursors to the fight that PEGIDA claims to be forced to wage today.[190]

The following two frames, *Unwillingness to Integrate* and *Danger of Infiltration*, provide contradictory accounts of contemporary Islamic life in Europe. The former consists of complaints about the refusal of Muslims to peacefully integrate into European societies. After mid-2015,

[190] Further references include the Battle of Lepanto (1571), the Sieges of Vienna (1529/1683), and the Crusades. The latter are interpreted as enterprises aimed at reclaiming Christian lands occupied by an expanding Islam.

it gradually evolves into the deterministic conviction that integration efforts are futile because "these people will never betray their culture" (Bachmann, speech held on August 1, 2016). This pessimistic angle is often accompanied by the argument that Muslim archaisms have been imported to Germany *en masse* and put natives in great danger. Prominently referenced are "honor killings, sharia law, clan leaders, Arab gangs, head kicking, cartoon controversies, burqas, halal slaughtering […]" (Festerling, speech held on September 7, 2015), and other cultural practices that are deemed disturbing, strange, or harmful. By contrast, *Danger of Infiltration* postulates that many Muslims have created the impression of successful integration to infiltrate political parties, media channels, schools, and other institutions and prepare them for an Islamic takeover. Here, Muslims are imagined as natural-born schemers, always waiting for an opportunity to trick naïve "infidels" into believing that they adhere to the tenets of democracy. And since Germany is "governed by madmen" (Horst, speech held on September 14, 2015)[191] who fail to acknowledge the obvious, these alleged Islamic moles have permeated even the highest echelons of power. In a misinterpretation of Taqiyya,[192] it is even claimed that Muslims are allowed, if not ordered, to lie and betray as long as it is in the interest of their religion. While bearing resemblance to conspiracy theories such as Renaud Camus' *Great Replacement*, this fear of the double-faced Islamic infiltrator follows the older tradition of suspecting a foreign *fifth column* in one's country; a trope used for centuries to justify the persecution of religious minorities. Finally, evoking the memory of terrorist acts in which Muslims were involved, *Terrorism and Violence* insinuates the existence of an Islamic master plan to ravage the West by fire and sword. According to this frame, violence is seen as a virtue in Islam, rooted in the teachings of Muhammad and legitimized by Qur'anic doctrine. Terrorism comes "from the heart of Islam"

[191] This speaker's last name is unknown.

[192] A historical practice in Shia Islam of concealing one's faith when under threat of persecution or compulsion.

(Stürzenberger, speech held on August 1, 2016), and those who deny this must either be "blind or paid off" (Däbritz, speech held on July 18, 2016). Different from other frames, Muslims are associated with concrete attacks this time, which leads to an infusion of PEGIDA's discourse with pre-existing post-9 / 11 narratives.

The *Perils of Asylum* master frame also consists of five particular frames: *Asylum Seekers as Economic Burden*, *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat*, *Asylum Seekers as Cultural Danger*, *Asylum Seekers and Political Elites*, and *Asylum Seekers in the Media*. All are varieties of the same sinister theme of political treason and disaster. *Asylum Seekers as Economic Burden* originates in the suspicion that "these people cost us a lot of money" (Wagensveld, speech held on December 8, 2014) and are pampered with state-sponsored amenities (e.g., cell phones;). This "generosity" is rejected as undeserved and contrasted with insufficient funding for schools and other public infrastructure projects. "[Chancellor Merkel,] you allow lazy Africans to plunder our welfare system when they should be rebuilding their own home countries" (Köhler, speech held on July 13, 2015) is a typical complaint in this regard, relativizing the hardships suffered by the "Other" and reproducing narratives of idle Blacks. The populist triad of elite, people, and out-group appears here in clear terms: The elite betrays the people it should serve by squandering the fruit of its labor to accommodate an undeserving out-group. This notion is further reinforced in *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat*, which suspects that many radicals have seized the "crisis" as an opportunity to enter Germany in disguise. Naturally, this is a cause of concern, and speakers such as Lutz Bachmann frequently emphasize that "we can only guess how many of these self-declared Syrians are real Syrians, and how many Islamists, terrorists, and Salafists are among them. I don't even want to think of this scenario" (Bachmann, speech held on September 7, 2015). In contrast to the *Terrorism and Violence* frame, this threat does not origin in

an ethnocultural trait but is the byproduct of political naivety to which the solution could not be more straightforward: “End this solidarity nonsense! And then kick these cutthroats, terrorists, and dirty Islamists out of Europe!” (Stürzenberger, speech held on August 1, 2016).

Less concrete is *Asylum Seekers as Cultural Danger*. This frame pivots on fears that the ontological essence of Germanness is jeopardized by asylum-based immigration. The presence of the “Other” is feared for it may change the ethnic face of the nation, threaten the political order, exert demographic pressure, and subvert existing norms. Georg Tegetmeyer, a far-right activist affiliated with PEGIDA’s Nuremberg branch (Nügida), even invokes the biblical account of the Tower of Babel to illustrate the experience of utter alienation that stems from the impression of being overrun by alien influences: “We walk through cities that have become foreign to us. Do you remember the story of Babylon? We feel the same right now. So many voices, many languages, and we don’t understand them; we don’t understand anything” (Tegetmeyer, speech held on January 4, 2016). As an antidote, it is suggested that there should be greater awareness of German cultural heritage and more respect for majoritarian norms and values. The remaining frames, *Asylum Seekers and Political Elites* and *Asylum Seekers in the Media*, go in a different direction: They do not focus on the refugees but on those responsible for, and supportive of, liberal asylum policies. German politicians (especially Chancellor Merkel) are accused of “inviting” asylum seekers to either replace the electorate or curry favor with industry bosses looking for a pretext to cut the wages of low-skilled natives. Meanwhile, mainstream journalists are attacked for knowing about this plan but keeping silent. Instead of raising their voices in

protest, they rejoice "as they did in 1914 and 1933!" (Wilfried, speech held on July 13, 2015).[193] In the end, both frames depict the elite as a treasonous camarilla of immigration profiteers.

Regarding the second question, our findings address the link between both master frames. Most importantly, we see that their contents converge over time and the differences between Muslims and refugees become blurred. Refugees are increasingly perceived as Muslims, regardless of their skin color, origin, or creed, while Muslims are frequently identified with foreigners and *Schutzsuchende* [protection seekers]. This culturalization of refugees and ethnicization of Muslims becomes particularly visible when PEGIDA speakers argue that "we don't want Muslim refugees [who arrive] holding the Qur'an in their hands, but [we want] persecuted Christians" (Festerling, speech held on July 13, 2015) and that not "one single foreign Muslim should be allowed to enter Europe during the next years. The […] Islamization and terrorization of the Occident must end!" (Däbritz, speech held on July 18, 2016). By implying that all Muslims are non-Europeans, citizens of majoritarian Muslim European countries (e.g., Albania or Kosovo) and converts are excluded from the culturally Christian and spiritually secular Abendland that PEGIDA envisions. However, this convergence between both master frames appears less as a merger and more as an absorption, with the *Perils of Asylum* master frame incorporating key elements of the older *Fears of Islamization* master frame. In other words, PEGIDA's opposition to Islam does not vanish against the backdrop of the "crisis" but becomes a part of it and contributes to the narrative that something dangerous is happening, something that might spell the end of Germany as an ethnically and culturally homogeneous entity.

[193] This speaker's last name is unknown. His statement refers to the uncritical press coverage during the outbreak of World War I ("1914") and the rise of Adolf Hitler ("1933").

Aside from these observations, there are several indications that the rhetoric of PEGIDA speakers grows more vulgar and hostile over time. While there were at least occasional expressions of respect for Muslims in late 2014 (under the condition of assimilation), later speakers invent insulting terms, such as "Korandertaler" (a portmanteau of Koran for Qur'an and the Neanderthal species), "Kassyrer" (another portmanteau that links *kassieren* ["to cash in"] with Syrians), or "Sprenggläubige" (["believers in explosions"], a pun on *strenggläubig* [holding strong religious beliefs], which is often used to describe pious Muslims). Other derogatory terms include "Messermänner" (["knife-men"], alluding to the overrepresentation of Muslim immigrants in violent crime), "Scheinasylanten" (["sham asylum seekers"], invoking strong notions of fraud), "Invasoren" (["invaders"], equating mobilities with military actions), and "Kulturbereicherer" (["cultural enrichers"], meant in a sarcastic and scornful way). This tendency toward rhetorical radicalism is complemented by the desire to be considered the center of resistance, a desire that can be found in both master frames. At its core is the belief that the situation may look grim but is far from hopeless. Too strong is the German warrior spirit that has defeated the enemies of freedom and national sovereignty in the past, be they "the Romans in the Teutoburg Forest, the Turks at the gates of Vienna, or even the troops of Napoleon at Leipzig […]; in the end, we will be victorious!" (Sven, speech held on August 10, 2015).[194] By making such references, PEGIDA poses as a *bona fide* national movement and transcends the local context from which it has originally emerged; by having recourse to events such as the Ottoman siege of Vienna, it also transcends this national context and positions itself as part of a greater and more complex civilizationist project aimed at defending a pan-European identity.[195]

[194] This speaker's last name is unknown.

[195] PEGIDA's Saxonian and Eastern German character is still important. While Western Germany is associated with crime and cultural degeneracy, Eastern Germany appears as the authentic Germany: a place not yet tainted

Discussion

Examining right-wing populist communication from a distinct social movement angle, this article analyzed the frames and master frames of PEGIDA against the backdrop of the "refugee crisis." Our findings suggest the existence of two master frames that consist of five particular frames each. One of them—*Fears of Islamization*—is concerned with PEGIDA's original message, while the other—*Perils of Asylum*—addresses the fallout of the "crisis." Both the appearance of *Perils of Asylum* and the observation that it incorporates some central elements of *Fears of Islamization* mirror findings by Puschmann et al. (2020: 238), whose examination of comments on PEGIDA's Facebook page shows that the "topic Refugees peaks in October 2015, along with asylum applications in Europe," while there is a "relative decline in the topics Islam and the Media." It also becomes clear that PEGIDA saw the "refugee crisis" as an opportunity structure to revitalize its message and reinterpret the meta-contrast between a homogeneous and positively connotated in-group and a threatening and negatively connotated out-group. Already dominant from the outset, this contrast is reinforced by blending distinct out-group characteristics (e.g., religion, ethnicity, immigration status) *ad libitum* and refusing any acknowledgment of their complexity. Islamic societies from the maghreb to the *mashreq* seem monolithic, their mentality being cut from the same transtemporal cloth that allows for neither change nor adaptation. Likewise, at the individual level, the Lebanese student, the refugee from Somalia, and the German-born son of Egyptian immigrants are all regarded as part of the same anti-Occident alliance against which vigorous resistance must be mounted.

by the "multicultural madness" of Munich, Frankfurt, or Cologne. In this sense, PEGIDA localizes "global developments in a peculiar way" (Bock 2019: 224).

Whereas the two master frames give the impression of a threat that is ubiquitous and manifests in different ways, PEGIDA's self-image is clear. Dealing with a "political class" that is viewed as too ignorant to realize what is at stake, too out of touch to care about it, or even supportive of what must be considered high treason, PEGIDA speakers present themselves as authentic champions of an overwhelmed and overburdened people (Volk 2020). This is also expressed by means of a sarcastic and brutal language that seeks to ridicule the "Other" and cultivates a community spirit built upon civilizationist ideas of belonging. Speaking truth to power is what PEGIDA speakers claim to do—and even though these "truths" may be contradictory at times (e.g., immigrants do not integrate versus immigrants are too well integrated), there is an emotional element to them that is of far greater importance than their factual foundation. Although the case of PEGIDA substantiates that moments of crisis bear potential for right-wing populist movements, there are limitations to our examination that must be acknowledged. First, to keep our data manageable, we analyzed only a limited number of rallies and did not evaluate whether PEGIDA's frames affected the political priorities of its supporters and sympathizers. Furthermore, we analyzed a constellation characterized by significant issue proximity: As both master frames were tied into the same undercurrents, PEGIDA speakers had few problems establishing a discursive continuum between fears of an Islamic takeover and of a refugee invasion. Arguably, other crises may provide less fertile ground in this respect as it is more difficult to frame them as similarly meaningful threats to the mystical Abendland that has survived centuries of plagues and catastrophes.

Moreover, one should be aware that the stimulating impact of the "refugee crisis" was temporary rather than permanent and did not prevent PEGIDA from disintegrating and falling into

the abyss of relative irrelevance. While its supporters continue to march in Dresden[196] and have celebrated their 200th *Spaziergang* as recently as February 2020, their numbers today are negligible and their discursive power restrained. In retrospect, PEGIDA appears as a red giant in the vastness of Europe's and Germany's right-wing populist galaxy: luminous and stunning at first but bound to collapse and ultimately fade from our vision. At least in part, this may be the result of the movement's decentralized character (which made it difficult to use frames strategically) and its radical language (which scared off many moderate sympathizers). In any case, PEGIDA proved unable to cement the dialogicality of its frames, with even the AfD developing an ambiguous stance toward what was once seen as its natural ally (Korsch 2016). Thus, if we were to generalize, an inference could be that populist parties enjoy structural advantages over populist social movements. They are (1) more flexible when it comes to adapting their message in the wake of crises, and (2) better equipped to develop long-term strategies to exploit them. But to validate these two assumptions and draw additional insights, more research on populist communication is still required. Such research may include, but is not limited to, comparisons between PEGIDA and other far-right movements, critical discourse analysis that lays bare the determinants of its *modus operandi*, and investigations of how the master frames described in this article have developed after 2016.

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[196] Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PEGIDA's rallies were suspended in early 2020 but later resumed. However, in the face of the pandemic, the sixth anniversary rally of the movement was cancelled by state authorities.

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Article V

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ARTICLE V

Misperceptions about immigration:

Reviewing their nature, motivations and determinants

Philipp Lutz and Marco Bitschnau

Abstract

Across Western democracies, immigration has become one of the most polarizing and salient issues, with public discourses and individual attitudes often characterized by misperceptions. This condition undermines people's ability to develop informed opinions on the matter and runs counter to the ideal of deliberative democracy. Yet, our understanding of what makes immigration so prone to misperceptions is still limited—a conundrum that this review seeks to answer in three steps. First, we take stock of the existing evidence on the nature of misperceptions about immigration. Secondly, we borrow from diverse bodies of literature to identify their motivational underpinnings and elaborate on how the protection of group identity, the defence of self-interest and security concerns can lead to distorted perceptions of immigration. Thirdly, we highlight relevant determinants of misperceptions at the level of both contextual influences and individual predispositions. We conclude that misperceptions about immigration are ubiquitous and likely to remain a key element of immigration politics.

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Keywords

Misperceptions immigration, motivated reasoning, bias, identity, threat

Introduction

'The only useful approach is to discover why they can swallow absurdities on one particular subject while remaining sane on others.'

– George Orwell, 1945

Issues of immigration have become crucial to contestation in Western democracies, with many people holding views that are embedded in perceptions rather than reality (e.g., Blinder 2015; Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2020). These perceptions are often erroneous or fallacious, ranging from overestimations of the number of immigrants living in one's country (e.g., Herda 2010; Sides and Citrin 2007) to complex conspiracy theories about the purported replacement of Europeans with Africans or Middle Easterners (see, e.g., Gaston and Uscinski 2018). Such misperceptions have gained a foothold in the public space, pervading

online culture (Ganesh 2018; Graham 2016) and right-wing populism (Bergmann 2018; Castanho Silva, Vegetti and Littvay, 2017), contributing to polarization, and undermining people's ability to form reasonable and balanced opinions on the matter. It is thus hardly surprising that these misperceptions have repeatedly been identified as a key determinant of policy preferences and political behaviour (see, e.g., Alesina et al. 2022; Rodriguez-Justicia and Theilen 2022; Semyonov et al. 2008; Sides and Citrin 2007), as well as an obstacle to deliberation and evidence-based policy making (Ruhs et al. 2019). More specifically, the distorted trope of an 'immigrant invasion' has contributed to disruptive events, such as the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency (Gavin 2018). That said, we still lack a systematic account of these misperceptions, their prevalence and their underlying drivers.

This article offers a comprehensive overview of the scholarly research on misperceptions about immigration, which is fragmented and dispersed across several disciplines and research areas: political scientists, sociologists and communication researchers focus on their determinants and consequences for society; psychologists are mainly interested in their underlying cognitive and emotional mechanisms, or in the phenomenon of prejudice; and economists examine how they deviate from the ideal of informed and enlightened agency. Taking this range of perspectives into account, our review encompasses three aspects of misperceptions about immigration: their *nature*; the *motivations* to hold them; and their *determinants*. We first take stock of the misperceptions to be described in the literature and distinguish between three categories related to the *properties*, *effects* and *governance* of immigration. Then, we examine the motivational undercurrents of selective information seeking and biased information processing. Drawing on recent research about immigration attitudes and theories of motivated reasoning, we identify the *protection of identity*, the *defence of self-interest* and *generalised concerns about security* as issue-

specific motivations for biases against immigrants. In a third step, we discuss some factors that have been found to determine misperceptions of this certain type. We conclude by summarizing our key insights and making suggestions for future research.

Varieties of misperceptions about immigration

People rely on mental images to make sense of the realities that surround them in their everyday lives. When they think of a phenomenon like immigration, they think of a mental representation of what immigration means or is supposed to mean (Blinder 2015). If this representation does not correspond to the observable reality, we call it as a misperception, that is, a belief that is 'false or contradicts the best available evidence in the public domain' (Flynn et al. 2017: 128). Misperceptions become manifest in an abundance of ways, for example, as unfounded rumours and suspicions, prejudices, conspiracy theories, and misestimations. Still, they share the epistemic trait of being neither supported by the best available evidence, nor rooted in a mere lack of information. After all, they stem from being misinformed, that is, holding an objectively wrong belief about the answer to a question, rather than just being uninformed, that is, having no answer at all (Kuklinski et al. 2000). Consequently, we define misperceptions about immigration as *evidently false beliefs about immigration*.[198] While biases against immigration have a long history, data on misperceptions have only been collected for a few years, and mostly in Europe and the United States (for a list of studies, see the Online Supplementary Material). In

[198] It should be noted that we confine this review to misperceptions about international migration and exclude misperceptions about internal migration and ethnic/religious minorities, who are often conflated with immigrants. Evidence suggests that misperceptions about such groups are also widespread (e.g., Nadeau et al. 1993).

the following, we distinguish between three distinct categories of misperceptions found in the general public[199] to derive conclusions about their nature and prevalence.

A first category of misperceptions relates to the *properties of immigration*. Perhaps the most prominent is innumeracy, that is, the systematic overestimation of the population share of immigrants living in a specific country, region, or neighbourhood (e.g., Herda 2010; Herda 2019; Lundmark and Kokkonen 2017; Steele and Perkins 2019).[200] It is quite common across Western democracies but has also been evidenced elsewhere, for example, in Latin American and East Asian countries (Ipsos 2015), South Africa (Gordon et al. 2020) and Turkey (Herda 2015a).[201] In a similar vein, people overestimate the size of immigrant flows (Blinder and Schaffner 2020) and the number of immigrants entering their country relative to those heading for other countries (Sides and Citrin 2007: 486). Misperceptions have also been observed for qualitative properties of immigration, such as the demographic composition and social features of immigrant populations. These include equating immigration with settlement and immigrants with refugees (Blinder 2015), overestimating the socio-cultural or geographical distance of immigrants vis-à-vis the native population (Alesina et al. 2022; Herda 2015b), and imagining them as poorer and less educated than they actually are (Alesina et al. 2022). Furthermore, people misperceive the reasons why immigrants leave their countries of origin in the first place. They often consider

[199] Specific groups may deviate from this perception. Perceptions of government officials, for example, have been found to be more accurate than those of the average citizen (Lee et al. 2021).

[200] The degree of immigration innumeracy ranges from single-percentage differences to a multiple of the actual immigrant share. Comparative research on Western democracies suggests that average estimations are about twice as large as the reality (e.g., Citrin and Sides 2008).

[201] Israel and Saudi Arabia, which have high immigrant shares, are rare exceptions: Ipsos (2015) found that people in both countries tend to slightly underestimate the share of immigrants.

access to welfare benefits as their primary motivator (e.g., Dixon et al. 2019; Zimmermann 2019) and either disregard or downplay the need for humanitarian protection (e.g., Mancini et al. 2020; Pedersen and Hartley 2017; Skinner and Gottfried 2017). It is thus not surprising that people overestimate the relative share of those moving for humanitarian and family reasons but underestimate the relative share of those moving for education and work (Blinder 2015).

A second category concerns the *effects of immigration*—its economic, cultural, and security-related impact—on host societies. Regarding the economy, many view immigration as a burden and immigrants as soldiers of fortune with whom they must now share their hard-earned wealth (Caplan 2007; Johnston and Ballard 2016; McLaren and Johnson 2007). Economists have repeatedly refuted this sentiment, underscoring the welfare-enhancing effects of immigration instead (e.g., Dustmann and Preston 2019; Johnston and Ballard 2016; Kemeny and Cooke 2018). A similar gap exists with regard to the question whether immigration is detrimental to wages (e.g., Bansak et al. 2021; Scheve and Slaughter 2001) and employment (McLaren and Johnson 2007): empirical economic research has found minor, if any, effects in either case (e.g., Battisti et al. 2018; Beerli et al. 2021; Friedberg and Hunt 1995; Manacorda et al. 2012; Ottaviano and Peri 2012). These misperceptions are complemented by misattributions, as immigrants are held responsible for job losses, even in cases in which the latter stem from disruptions such as trade liberalization and technological change (Wu 2021).

What is more, perceptions of the fiscal outcomes of immigration (Markaki and Blinder 2018; Martinsen and Rotger 2017) and the number of immigrant welfare recipients are subject to a strong negativity bias (Ekins and Kemp 2021). For instance, despite a positive financial impact of immigration for the UK (Dustmann and Frattini 2014), perceptions of immigrants lowering

the quality of public services are prevalent (Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014). In the area of culture, immigrants and other 'migranticized' minorities are often perceived as distant, accused of defying integration (e.g., Kalkan et al. 2009; Panagopoulos 2006) and distrusted for what is seen as a lack of loyalty to their host societies (e.g., Helbling et al. 2017). Lastly, the link between immigration and security must be highlighted. Across Europe, people believe that immigration increases crime—a perception that is independent of actual crime levels (Ceobanu 2011). Accordingly, they also overestimate the share of crimes committed by foreigners (e.g., Semyonov et al. 2008; Stansfield and Stone 2018), the share of foreigners among the prison population (e.g., IPSOS 2018; Rumbaut and Ewing 2007) and the share of immigrants involved in criminal gangs (Moore-Berg et al. 2022). Terrorism is also associated with immigration (e.g., Skinner and Gottfried 2017), but, again, there is little evidence of a link (Helbling and Meierrieks 2022).

A third category of misperceptions deals with issues of *immigration governance*, such as the belief that Western governments hide their real immigration agendas and suppress unpleasant facts. For example, a 2018 cross-national survey had a significant share of the European population (ranging from about 13 per cent in Portugal to 48 per cent in Hungary) suspecting that the truth about immigration levels is hidden by their governments (YouGov 2018). Similarly, more than half of respondents in the UK and the United States believe that unvarnished information about the real costs of immigration is deliberately withheld from the public eye (Gaston and Uscinski 2018). Other misperceptions in this category are about immigration control: people overestimate the share of immigrants that stay in their countries without a legal permit (e.g., Blinder and Jeannet 2017; Ekins and Kemp 2021; Eurobarometer 2018) and the proportion of migrant children who have been trafficked (Moore-Berg et al. 2022). Many also assume that a

significant number of unauthorized immigrants cast their vote in elections (Ekins and Kemp 2021)—which became particularly widespread in the context of the 2020 US presidential race.

Some of these misperceptions of immigration governance even morph into sophisticated conspiracy theories, according to which governmental and non-governmental actors are controlled by globalist elites that use immigration to alter the ethnocultural composition of their societies (e.g., Bergmann 2018; Davey and Ebner 2014; Gaston and Uscinski 2018). On this explicitly conspiratorial reading, governments are suspected not only of obscuring the unpleasant realities described earlier, but also of deliberately rendering their formerly monocultural countries multicultural. Such theories can take on a life of their own and serve as the foundation of far-right narratives, such as the 'Great Replacement'—a term that denotes the notion that Europeans are being 'replaced' with Africans and Middle Easterners (e.g., Bergmann 2018; Önnerfors 2021). Once only found at the political fringes, many of its elements have been common sense in more current far-right politics. Similarly, instruments of immigration governance, such as the Global Compact for Safe and Orderly Migration (GCM), are presented as cases in which sovereignty is dismantled and mass immigration imposed through the backdoor. These efforts have reaped success: false claims and corresponding pressure have caused some European governments to withdraw their initial support for the GCM and others to waver in theirs.

This overview shows that misperceptions about immigration are diverse in character and prevalence. The literature further suggests that, once adopted, they are persistent and stable, driving people to go to considerable lengths to protect their beliefs (Druckman et al. 2012). Duffy and Frere-Smith's (2014) survey shines a light on this propensity and shows that many participants not only overestimate the number of immigrants in their country but, upon being informed of

the official figures, insist on their estimates being accurate and the official data being false. In other words, they are also prone to believe in second-order misperceptions, that is, misperceptions that exist in order to defend or legitimize others. Related to this phenomenon, yet distinct from it, is a lack of awareness with regard to the proliferation of misperceptions. Research from the United States indicates that people are quite ignorant of how widespread anti-immigration biases are in society (e.g., Earle and Hodson 2020; McConahay et al. 1981) and how much they themselves are affected by the prejudices these biases evoke (West and Eaton 2019).

It must be noted, however, that misperceptions are difficult to measure because we often cannot properly distinguish real beliefs from on-the-spot judgements elicited by the survey-response process (Zaller 1992).[202] In fact, survey questions aiming at misperceptions may measure non-beliefs or expressive responding rather than the sincere opinions of their respondents (Flynn et al. 2017). Bearing these limitations in mind, we can nonetheless derive some conclusions from the evidence presented, most notably, that misperceptions are common across a range of issues and countries, and thus appear to be an innate feature of how people think about immigration. Yet, this does not mean that they are equally common everywhere: we know that the variance of innumeracy levels is impressive, with Scandinavia at the bottom and various Latin American countries at the top of the scale (e.g., Aalberg and Strabac 2010; Eurobarometer 2018; Herda 2018; IPSOS 2015).[203] Furthermore, misperceptions may change dynamically over time, with

[202] For a list of survey items that measure misperceptions about immigration in general social science surveys, see the *Online Supplementary Material*.

[203] The degree of innumeracy can be conceived of as the relative or absolute difference between the perceived and the real share of the immigrant population. When taking relative differences as criteria, misperceptions are usually more pronounced in countries with low immigration levels (Eurobarometer 2018).

immigration innumeracy being on the rise in the United States (Herda 2019) but anti-immigration biases decreasing in Canada (Wilkes and Corrigall 2011).[204] Despite this variability, these misperceptions are directional and not random deviations resulting from blind guessing or a lack of information. They skew towards highlighting aspects of immigration deemed threatening or harmful, and thus carry an inherent *negativity bias* they paint the picture of immigration in far darker colours than reality warrants.

Motivations for misperceptions about immigration

Following this overview of the nature and prevalence of misperceptions about immigration, the second part of this review covers their underlying motivations. Based on Zaller's (1992: 6) understanding of beliefs as a 'marriage of information and predisposition', a growing literature views human reasoning as guided by the tendency to favour those interpretations of the world that align with one's pre-existing beliefs and sentiments (Jerit and Zhao 2020; Kunda 1990; Taber and Lodge 2013). This is even true for situations where such interpretations come at the expense of logical consistency or factual accuracy (e.g., Nyhan and Reifler 2019) because the desire to arrive at their preferred conclusion takes precedence. Consequently, some researchers have argued that *directional motivated reasoning* is the default way in which humans seek and process information and form beliefs (e.g., Flynn et al. 2017; Redlawsk 2002; Taber and Lodge 2006). Whether they do so should depend on what is salient in their minds during information processing (Groenendyk and Krupnikov 2021), which suggests that the form and frequency of

[204] The lack of panel data limits our ability to explain how misperceptions develop over time. However, a panel survey by Meltzer and Schemer (2021) on immigration innumeracy suggests that misperceptions only change at a slow pace.

misperceptions should vary across issues and sub-issues (Flynn et al. 2017; Riek et al. 2006). This has sparked calls for closer examinations of the conditions and motivations at the issue level (e.g., Bayes et al. 2020; Druckman 2012: 206). In the case of immigration, the salience and emotional charge of the issue have been highlighted (e.g., Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005; Johnston and Ballard 2016), yet the question of specific motivations that arise from the nature of the issue remains unanswered.

Our review links insights from the literature on immigration attitudes with theoretical accounts of motivated reasoning and is premised on the distinction between natives and immigrants as two distinct social groups (Berry 2001; Brader et al. 2008; Green et al. 2015).[205] It further builds on a comprehensive body of literature which suggests that the modal response of natives to immigrants is to feel threatened (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Stephan and Stephan 2000), up to the point where merely thinking of immigration is sufficient to stimulate a sense of threat (Homola 2020).[206] Accordingly, group-centric threat sentiment (i.e., the fear of suffering negative consequences from the presence of immigrants), is assumed to be the default reaction of natives to immigration. This notion of immigrants as a threatening out-group has been linked to xenophobic prejudices and stereotypes (e.g., Esses et al. 2005). It generates and nourishes a negative affective state that leads to motivated reasoning, inasmuch as people are guided by threat perception and in-group favouritism, rather than by objectivity (e.g., Boyer 2021; Erisen et al. 2014; Gadarian and Albertson 2014).

[205] Some researchers argue that sorting people into different groups already elicits cognitive biases (e.g., Ellemers et al. 2002). Bursztyn and Yang (2021) find that misperceptions about out-groups are larger than about in-groups.

[206] The sense of immigrant threat does not need any objective foundation, but can stem from subjective perceptions alone (Stephan and Stephan 2000).

The literature about immigration attitudes finds that the experience of cultural, economic and security threats can cause different reactions to immigration (e.g., Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Homola and Tavits 2018; Sniderman et al. 2004). The nature of the threat can be individual (egotropic) or collective (sociotropic), with different threats fulfilling different psychological functions and triggering different responses (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015; Gorodzeisky 2013; Sniderman et al. 2004). This implies that the multidimensional nature of threats and their effects must be kept in mind. In the following, we review the literature to find out how cultural, economic and security threats motivate misperceptions about immigration.

The cultural threat: Social identity

Immigration issues are often tied to debates about sociocultural identity, in which immigrants and their descendants assume the position of a salient out-group (e.g., Burns and Gimpel 2000; Hopkins 2010). In most of these cases, perceptions of cultural threat stem from concerns that immigrants reject values of the host society (Stephan and Stephan 2000). Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, according to which people identify with social groups and share the belief that their in-group is positively distinct from out-groups, can explain such concerns: in order to forge a strong and durable group identity, it is useful to highlight intra-group differences that denigrate the out-group and cast the in-group in a positive light. Perceptions of cultural threat are thus likely to evoke motivated reasoning, with people rejecting accurate information if it poses a psychological threat to their self-concept and group identity (Kunda 1990; Nyhan and Reifler 2019). The more one attaches their identity to a specific social group—such as an ethnicity—the more attention they pay to threats against this group and the more inclined they are to believe in negative information about the out-group that is responsible for the threat (Herrmann 2017). In this respect, misperceptions about immigration can give individuals a fine tool to protect their identity and boost their self-esteem, as the gap between themselves and the out-group becomes manifest (e.g., Brewer 1991; Hewstone et al. 2002; Sherman and Cohen 2006). Hence, the cultural threat motivates misperceptions about the properties of immigration, for instance, that immigrants adhere to incompatible norms and lifestyles (Helbling et al. 2017).

The economic threat: Group competition

The second threat can be traced to the suspicion that immigration may adversely affect one's access to goods. This idea is embedded in what is referred to as 'realistic conflict theory', that is, the in-group's belief that out-groups are competitors in the struggle for limited resources (e.g., LeVine and Campbell 1972; Quillian 1995; Semyonov et al. 2008; Stephan et al. 2009). Realistic conflict theory posits that rational individuals strive to secure their own and their in-group's material welfare and, as a result, tend to perceive the presence of competing out-groups as threatening (e.g., Bobo 1988). Applied to immigration, the native in-group seeks to preserve its privileged position and protect it against immigrants who lack the same institutional access and entitlement. According to Alesina et al. (2022), merely thinking about immigration already reduces people's willingness to share resources with others. In practice, this defence of material interest is most pronounced in fields like education, housing or public services, where resources and opportunities are scarce, and immigrants are perceived as putting additional strain on the system (Esses et al. 2001).

Yet, it is worth noting that group competition is not limited to material goods, but can extend to non-material resources like social status and participation rights (Dancygier 2010). More so than material benefits, the latter are traditionally regarded as privileges of the native population, or those who, by virtue of their birth, constitute the people that politics ought to represent. Such perceptions of economic threat evoke motivated reasoning based on group-specific self-interest[207] and binary categories of deservingness: the deservingness of immigrants is ignored while that of natives is validated (Quist and Resendez 2002). We may therefore deduce that the more a person believes that group competition threatens their economic interests, the more likely this

[207] It should be noted that there is no *a priori* reason to assume that misperceptions rooted in the defence of one's self-interest do really serve this purpose (Elster 2016: 157).

person is to form misperceptions linked to the effects of immigrant presence. A noticeable kind of misperception for which this effect can be observed are zero-sum beliefs, such as the lump of labour fallacy, that is, the idea that the labour market is effectively a zero-sum game with a steady number of jobs. Those who are victims of this fallacy believe that immigrants can only thrive at the expenses of natives or other immigrants, for they are only assumed to be job takers and not job creators (Esses et al. 2001).[208]

The security threat: Public safety

The third threat relates to matters of public safety as immigrants, especially those from Muslim-majority countries, are often thought to be associated with crime and terrorism (e.g., Fasani et al. 2019; Helbling and Meierrieks 2022; Huysmans 2006; Lahav and Courtemanche 2012; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009). For example, Semyonov, Gorodzeisky and Glikman (2012) analyse survey data from 21 European countries and find a correlation between people's fear of crime and the population share of non-Europeans living in their neighbourhood. Using a quasi-experimental design and data from Chile, Ajzenman et al. (2021) similarly show that a strong surge in immigration increased fears of crime but did not raise the actual crime rate. In many countries, immigrant communities are also believed to undermine the rule of law and defy integration efforts (e.g., Fitzgerald, Curtis and Corliss 2012; Givens et al. 2008)—a narrative that culminates in the idea of lawless parallel societies and no-go areas from which state authorities have long retreated (Gruner 2010).

[208] Equating immigration with unemployment is a common strategy of far-right actors to exploit grievances and mobilize voters (e.g., Givens 2005).

The security threat is thus twofold, as it concerns matters of both personal and collective security. Like in the other cases, perceptions of the security threat may evoke motivated reasoning that leads people to misperceive the actual association between immigration and security risks.[209] Empirical research has provided evidence for the assumption that concerns about immigrant crime are crucial for the formation of anti-immigration views (e.g., Ceobanu 2011; Fitzgerald et al. 2012; McLaren and Johnson 2007), and more so if they are accompanied by comprehensive feelings of insecurity and powerlessness. The latter reinforce in-group identification as the in-group is perceived as providing protection against the hostile outside world; a case in point are terrorist attacks, which have been found to increase resentment against immigrants (Helbling and Meierrieks 2022). Although the security threat has received not as much attention as its counterparts, it has become increasingly relevant since the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent securitization of migration (Huysmans 2006).

Determinants of misperceptions

In the third and final part of this review, we assess the contextual and individual factors identified as conducive to misperceptions about immigration. What do we know about the contexts in which they flourish, the predispositions that determine susceptibility and the prospect of corrections? At the contextual level, one can find several analytical foci, with most researchers highlighting the influence of the mass media, political elites and macro-economic conditions.

[209] Coping with insecurity has been identified as a key function of motivated reasoning and a key element of modern-day conspiracism (e.g., Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Imhoff and Bruder 2014).

Concerning the mass media, which has the potential to, at the same time, distort perceptions and enlighten about reality, the literature shows a tendency: most media reports on immigration are negative and depict immigrants as a menace to society (Eberl et al. 2018). Such content is likely to corroborate threat perception and bolster inaccurate beliefs. In a framing experiment, Blinder and Jeannet (2017) found that media depictions of immigration affect the accuracy of the British public's perceptions of immigrants. In the same way, an over-representation of 'foreign crime' articles in an Austrian newspaper led to greater misperceptions among its readership (Arendt 2010). These effects may depend, partially, on the type of media people get their information from; consuming newspapers and online news has been linked with a relative decrease in misperceptions, whereas the opposite effect has been found for social media and television (Aalberg and Strabac 2010; Herda 2010; Meltzer and Schemer 2021).

In sum, there is strong evidence that the mass media's framing of immigration shapes our beliefs about the issue. Political elites, in their capacity as influential actors who shape discourses and perceptions, are a second contextual factor that has drawn considerable scholarly attention. In view of widespread concerns about immigration, they may have incentives to stoke fears and posture as adopting tough stances on the issue (Lutz 2021) by exaggerating its negative effects (Golder 2003). In doing so, they seek to capitalize on the status of immigrants as outsiders onto whom the public can project their anxieties (Cochrane and Nevitte 2014; Dinas and van Spanje 2011). Heizmann and Huth (2021) provide some evidence for this on the macro-level; they find that perceptions of economic threat are more widespread in countries in which political parties adopt a hostile rhetoric towards immigrants. Meanwhile, at the micro-level, experimental research from the United States shows that elite cues of immigrant threat trigger

anxiety (Brader et al. 2008) and elite polarization on immigration reform reinforces the role of partisan reasoning (Druckman et al. 2013).

The assumption that macro-economic conditions have an impact is derived from group threat theory: the worse the economy, the more do people perceive immigrants as competitors (e.g., Quillian 1995). Still, the evidence seems more ambiguous. While cross-sectional studies indicate that perceptions of immigrants' societal impact are more negative in countries with poor economic performance (e.g., Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky 2006; Semyonov, Raijman and Gorodzeisky 2008), recent longitudinal research finds that the attitudinal effect of economic shocks is restricted to those who experience them during young adulthood (Cotofan et al. 2021; Kustov et al. 2021). Yet, despite all of this, the perceived state of the economy remains a better predictor of immigration attitudes than actual economic conditions (e.g., Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Heizmann and Huth 2021; Sides and Citrin 2007).

In addition to these factors, individual traits, such as personal predisposition and contact with immigrants, may also affect people's susceptibility to misperceptions. One key element here is ideology: those who identify as right-wing or hold right-wing convictions (for example, tradition over progress, authority over equality and control over openness) are more prone to misperceptions about immigration, especially to such that highlight the negative social impact of immigrants (e.g., Alesina et al. 2022; Heizmann and Huth 2021; Herda 2019; Johnston and Ballard 2016; Meltzer and Schemer 2021; Semyonov et al. 2006). Nonetheless, some experimental studies have found that individuals across the ideological spectrum succumb to motivated reasoning on immigration to a similar extent (Lind et al. 2022; Washburn and Skitka 2017). This paradox can be resolved by accounting for the different character of people's

ideological tenets. Right-wing ideologies rest on more exclusionary conceptions of identity, emphasize group antagonism and thereby facilitate the perception of immigrants as members of a hostile and visible out-group (Albertson and Gadarian 2015; Blinder and Lundgren 2019; Jost et al. 2003). As a result, individuals with right-wing views are on average more likely to feel threatened by ethnocultural diversity and develop misperceptions in response. Aside from ideology, education also seems to be an important determinant, with higher education levels being associated with more accurate perceptions about immigration (e.g., Aalberg and Strabac 2010; Alesina et al. 2022; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2020; McLaren and Johnson 2007).

A third factor relates to one's immigration experiences and contact with immigrants. Individuals who have themselves migrated demonstrate greater immigration innumeracy (Aalberg and Strabac 2010), as do ethnic minority members (Herda 2010), residents of diverse neighbourhoods (Semyonov et al. 2008) and, to a lesser degree, those who count immigrants among their friends and co-workers (e.g., Herda 2010; Lundmark and Kokkonen 2017). Yet people who live in countries with a high immigrant share have lower innumeracy levels (e.g., Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2020; Herda 2013). Being exposed to immigrants in everyday life may hence contribute to overestimating their population share, but living in a society with high levels of immigration predisposes individuals to more accurate perceptions.

Finally, we ask if misperceptions can be corrected through targeted interventions. In general, the evidence indicates that people are reluctant to reconsider their beliefs when they are presented with accurate information (Duffy and Frere-Smith 2014). Studying misperceptions in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, Rolfe et al. (2018) provided participants of UK focus groups with evidence about the actual economic effect of immigration only to find that their

perceptions remained largely unchanged. Jørgensen and Osmundsen (2022) used a survey experiment to show that while Danish citizens update their beliefs about immigrants' population share and crime rates, they reinterpret this new information to make it consistent with their pre-existing preferences. Hopkins et al. (2019) came to a similar conclusion for the United States, but Grigorieff et al. (2020) found that information treatments have a correctional effect that may even last for several weeks (see also Carnahan et al. 2021; Haaland and Roth 2020). Given these mixed results, information treatments may not be the most effective method to correct misperceptions, but they can still reduce support for anti-immigration policies—especially if combined with an empathy treatment (Moore-Berg et al. 2022). Other studies point out that realistic portrayals of immigrants can have a positive effect on perceptual accuracy (Blinder and Jeannet 2017) or expound how narratives can be a source of perceptions (Dennison 2021). In summary, it does not appear as if people can be easily swayed by exposing them to accurate information; so the most promising interventions focus on reducing affective immigrant threat.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the 'way in which the world is imagined determines ... what men will do' (Lippmann 1997: 25). Yet, the way in which people imagine immigration is often characterized by inaccurate beliefs and falsehoods. This article has offered the first systematic account of such misperceptions by reviewing their nature, motivations and determinants. We found that they are not only diverse, but also directional, that is, marked by a clear negativity bias and revolving around the threatening properties of immigration. We then identified three threats that motivate this bias in different ways: a cultural threat to one's identity and values; an economic threat based on inter-group competition; and a security threat to public and personal safety. Finally,

our review sheds light on the relevant determinants of misperceptions about immigration. We found that individual predispositions, such as right-wing views or low levels of education, as well as the influence of the mass media, explain their prevalence. We also found that misperceptions are resistant to correction and that providing accurate information is largely ineffective in combating them. Reflecting the deep-seated concerns of natives, they are likely to persist as a key element of immigration politics.

To conclude this review, there are lessons to be learned and pathways for future research. Although the literature on attitudes towards immigration is vast and expanding, research dealing with perceptions and misperceptions still constitutes a fragmented field. We believe that this fact leaves a wide intellectual territory uncharted, the exploration of which may allow us to gain more relevant insights into the distinctive role immigration plays in political conflicts.

First, our review underscores that misperceptions about immigration are neither exceptional nor restricted to the fringes of society; rather, they are the norm. Given their pervasive proliferation, it is even more surprising that there is no body of research. Moreover, many studies that measure perceptions bundle them with other attitudinal items (e.g., policy preferences) or use them only as an additional factor to explain immigration attitudes. We hence consider misperceptions (and perceptions more broadly) to be an essential but under-studied aspect of how people develop their attitudes, preferences and behaviours with respect to immigration.

Second, empirical research on misperceptions about immigration has become more common. Yet, some notable shortcomings in its scope and validity hamper the progress of the field. Most survey measurements only capture a narrow range of misperceptions since question items are

confined to innumeracy and neglect the many other forms of inaccuracies that exist. Moreover, there is only little longitudinal survey data that track misperceptions over time and almost no coverage beyond Western democracies. Additional research in these directions would allow us to better understand the scope conditions of misperceptions. Lastly, in terms of methodology, most current measurement instruments fail to adequately capture the distinction between being uninformed and being misinformed. Assuming the latter without empirical evidence entails the risk of overestimating the extent of misperceptions. For this reason, we recommend measuring confidence in or the certainty of one's beliefs to separate non-beliefs from actual misperceptions (e.g., Carlson and Hill 2021).

Third, questions of causality (whether misperceptions are antecedents or rather consequences of immigration attitudes) have not been resolved thus far. Our review has identified immigrant threat as the underlying motivation for misperceptions that may, in turn, reinforce and consolidate this sense of threat. This vicious circle calls for more research in the form of innovative experimental studies that delve deeper into the causal dynamics and feedback effects at work. On a related note, a general lesson from the attitudinal literature is that different threats evoke different cognitive and emotional responses, yet we still lack this differentiation in research on misperceptions. Understanding these causalities would help us to anchor the study of misperceptions in this literature and develop more effective interventions to correct them.

Finally, our understanding of the effects of misperceptions on immigration politics are limited. This bears ample potential for scholarship that explores how they shape the behaviour of citizens and political elites: when do those in power prefer to correct misperceptions, and when do they harness them to pander to the electorate instead? Research has shown that many politicians

employ anti-immigration rhetoric to address the concerns of their constituents but refrain from restrictive policies (e.g., Lutz 2021; Slaven and Boswell 2019). Future research should pay attention to this context and examine the ramifications of misperceptions for political communication, policymaking and liberal democracy more generally.

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