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Party competition and positions on immigration: strategic advantages and spatial location¹.

Abstract

The literature on party competition suggests that traditional conflict lines have either become obsolete or been replaced by new, less stable, ones. This development points to how political conflict has changed but also to how certain policy positions can be problematic to explain when these are linked to parties' location on 'Old' and 'New' conflict dimensions. A particularly difficult issue has been party position(s) on immigration. Solely focusing on parties' spatial location – on either conflict dimension – is insufficient for understanding the position that parties adopt. The article argues that a more fruitful approach is to simultaneously consider the degree of ownership – *the strategic advantage* – that parties have on particular conflict dimensions and parties' spatial location therein. Comparing parties in Britain and Sweden, the article explores the extent to which this framework explains party positioning in two institutionally different contexts.

Key words: issue ownership, party competition, immigration, comparative manifestos.

Introduction

Party competition has changed significantly over the past decades (Dalton, 2002; Clark, 2008). These changes affect how parties interact with each other and the positions they take (Budge *et al*, 2001). However, certain policy stances are difficult to understand in the light of these changes. The contradictory positions that parties adopt on immigration are indicative of the challenges to understand the changing relationship between ideology and policy positioning. On the one hand, immigration ‘messes’ up party classification (Benoit and Laver, 2007; Budge *et al*, 2001). Parties that are supposed to be on the ‘Right’ are suddenly on the ‘Left’ (and vice versa) once immigration is taken into account. On the other, when parties change their ideological position, they do not necessarily change their position on immigration (Breunig and Luedtke, 2008).

What makes the ‘immigration issue’ so problematic is its diverse and illusive nature (Lahav, 1997). Consequently, parties find it difficult to accommodate immigration within either an ‘Old’ – *economic* – or ‘New’ – *socio-cultural* – conflict dimension (see Hooghe, *et al*. 2002; Inglehart, 1971, 1977, 1987, 1990; 1997, Kitschelt, 2004; Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Kriesi *et al*, 2006). Therefore, parties may end up adopting similar positions on immigration even though their Left-Right position indicates otherwise. This situation poses problems for spatial-theory explanations as well as for understanding the role of ideology in political systems.

At the same time, parties appear to be less ideologically divided (Green-Pedersen, 2007). Increasing goal consensus suggests that competition revolves around the means used and competency, rather than proximity to voters’ preferences; Budge *et al*, 2001). Consequently, parties tend to be trusted on an issue or set of issues which they have a long-standing commitment and association to. Although cleavages may be less apparent or important, parties can still be positively or negatively associated with issues that correspond to ‘Old’ and ‘New’ conflict dimensions and, over time, develop different levels of aggregated ‘macro-competence’ on these (Jennings and Green, 2009). While Jennings and Green do not consider competence on distinct conflict dimensions, parties can become comparatively stronger, and more trusted, on *specific* conflict dimensions thus developing degrees of ownership – i.e. a *strategic advantage* - on these.

Although immigration is usually a contested issue, it nevertheless displays certain valance characteristics. Mainstream parties, albeit not always the electorate, tend to agree on the direction of immigration policy. Since parties rarely appear to change ideological position in response to changes in public opinion (Budge, 1994, Adams *et al.*, 2004), positioning seems more related to the changing dynamics of party competition. Competition around immigration is thus expected to be around which party that is 'better' at delivering this goal and how parties communicate this effectively to the electorate.

However, immigration can also, much like European integration (Hooghe *et al.*, 2002), be an orthogonal issue. Therefore, parties need to assimilate – and frame – immigration so it corresponds to the position on the conflict dimension where they have a strategic advantage. E.g. if a party occupies a market-liberal position and is perceived to be, overall, more competent on economic issues, then their position on immigration will be framed in a way that is compatible with this ideological orientation and conflict dimensional advantage. The presence of issue competition does not always mean the absence of positional competition. Instead, both types of competition usually co-exist (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008). This suggests that even parties that offer a *positioning* choice behave in the same way and will frame their alternative so it is compatible with this combination of strategic advantage/spatial location.

Studying parties' relative degree of ownership, in the form of strategic advantages, highlights the inherent 'either/or' scenario that issue ownership theory assumes - either a party owns an issue/set of issues or it does not. This dichotomy becomes problematic if ownership scores are very close. Focusing on strategic advantages *and* spatial locations is of further importance since traditional conceptualisations of ownership primarily deal with why certain issues are emphasised rather than the determinants behind adopted positions.

In order to test the article's hypothesis, a majoritarian (Britain) and a proportional democracy (Sweden) are compared. The British electoral system usually creates a government consisting of a single party that has parliamentary majority whereas in the Swedish proportional system, minority or coalition governments are the norm. The British 'first-past-the-post'-system furthermore punishes extreme policy positions whereas the Swedish system allows for more polarisation between parties. Swedish politics also permits the opposition to exercise more influence on

policy compared to the British case. In the latter, the government exercises a greater domination over parliament and the parliamentary committees, although the size of the government determines the degree of influence (see also Hobolt and Klemmensen, 2005). While an incumbency-advantage is present in both cases, it is much more linked to a particular party in Britain since the political institutions usually create a single-party government. Being the party in office is often associated with certain advantages, such as name recognition, which, in turn, may be reflected in how the public views party competence (Clark, 2008). The two cases are thus ideal since they differ in terms of their politico-institutional settings and thus allows the article's theoretical approach to 'travel'.

Given the theoretical assumptions and choice of cases, the article proposes the following hypothesis.

H1. Parties will frame their position on immigration (liberal/restrictive) so it corresponds to the ideological position (centre-left/centre-right) on the conflict dimension ('Old'/'New' politics) where they have a strategic advantage.

If the findings supports the hypothesis then parties play primarily to their strengths and are less influenced, and constrained, by context specific institutional factors.

Dynamics of party competition

Spatial theory (Downs, 1957) assumes that parties maximise votes by adopting discrete positions across a policy dimension. Policy positioning and change thereof comes about in the pursuit of votes where electoral feedback allows parties to take calculated risks (Budge, 1994). Different electoral systems either push parties towards the median voter (two-party systems) or polarise them (in multi-party systems)². Although proximity motivations are important for party choice, voters are also influenced by various non-policy factors, e.g. party loyalty or religion. Accordingly, parties and candidates have an incentive to appeal on policy grounds to voters who are

biased toward them for non-policy reasons (Adams and Merrill, 1999). Parties may also be evaluated according to policy *direction*, rather than proximity, and will therefore offer similar, but more extreme, policy positions than those held by their supporters (Rabinowitz and MacDonald, 1989).

However, parties do not always compete on the 'positional-dimension'. If agreement prevails on policy goals, political struggle takes place along the 'valence-dimension' (Stokes, 1963; Green, 2007). A valence approach, Stokes noted, is particularly important for the understanding of political competition when ideological polarisation declines. Increasing issue consensus means that parties are judged on performance delivery rather than on the choices they offer (see also van der Brug, 2004). When valence issues are at stake, parties tend to occupy the same policy space but drawing attention to an issue where there is more or less full agreement is not always an optimal vote winning solution (Riker, 1996). Therefore, parties tend to emphasise differences in terms of how to achieve the valence issue goals (Petrocik, 1996). These differences are ideologically motivated but also relate to parties' past performance and reputation on the issue where this 'track record' generates trust on a specific issue or issues. Parties will then selectively emphasise issues on which they have a strategic advantage, or that they 'own', while de-emphasising others (Budge and Farlie, 1983). Since issue competence levels usually work in tandem (Jennings and Green, 2009), parties are able to build up trust and proficiency on a set of issues that are associated with specific conflict dimensions. This makes parties more likely to emphasise one dimension over the other and the solutions they propose will be compatible with this dimension and the spatial location therein

Consequently, parties tend to behave in two ways. First, following the *principle of dispersion*, if a proposed solution is negatively associated with the valence issue, a party draws attention away from it even though voters may rank that issue highly. Second, according to the *principle of dominance*, the party will instead draw attention to an issue where the electorate agrees with their solution (Riker, 1996). While immigration does not constitute a valence issue per se - elite and public views often differ - it nevertheless contains valence elements since mainstream parties usually agree on the direction of immigration policy (Dummett, 2005) but differ on how to get there.

Through a comparison of mainstream parties in Britain and Sweden, the article explores the changing dynamics of party competition and positioning on immigration.

This is done in three stages. First, spatial location (centre-left/centre-right; liberal/restrictive) on two ideological dimensions ('Old'/'New' politics) and one issue dimension ('immigration') is calculated by using a modified version of the Pellikaan-model (Pellikaan *et al*, 2003). Second, the article calculates parties' strategic advantage scores on both ideological dimensions and finally, the hypothesis is tested.

Operationalisation

The article invokes manifestos for the analyses of parties' spatio-ideological location and position on immigration. Studying manifestos is a central data source since they "assess the importance of current political problems, specify the party's position on them, and inform the electorate about the course of action the party will pursue when elected" (Klingemann, 1987:300). Although parties also discuss and disseminate issues elsewhere, manifestos have the advantage of putting forward the aggregate party position even though, obviously, individual members and representatives may disagree with the official party line³. To measure party location on the 'Old' and 'New' conflict dimensions, the article takes the model developed by Pellikaan *et al* (2003; see also De Lange, 2007) as a starting point. The model measures the extent of confrontation between parties on these two dimensions⁴. The Pellikaan-model extends Kitschelt and McGann's (1995) idea of the 'two-dimensional party space' and defines the 'Old' Left-Right dimension as "opposition//...//between statements favouring the 'political redistribution' of economic resources//...//and statements favouring the 'market allocation' of resources" (1995:1). Following De Lange (2007), the central indicators for the 'Old' Left-Right dimension are: 1) Privatisation, 2) Public Sector, 3) Welfare and Social Security System, 4) Labour Market, 5) Taxation, 6) Budget Deficit and 7) Trade and Enterprise policies.

A word search is carried out for the relevant indicators and associated quasi-sentences are then evaluated in order to score the indicated position. De Lange suggests that when statements "predominantly indicate that a party is in favour of state intervention//...//this party receives a score of -1 on that specific issue" (2007:420). Conversely, when it indicates that the party is in favour of more market

influence, a score of +1 is given. When the overall statement is unclear or ambiguous, a score of 0 is given. However, the ‘more state-more market’ – dichotomy does not always make sense on some of the key indicators, for example on taxes. Therefore, this article makes a few adjustments to the way that the scores are calculated. On indicators 4 and 7, scores are allocated as to whether the manifesto indicates more (-1) or less regulation (+1). Similarly, indicator 5 is coded according to whether the manifesto advocates raising (-1) or lowering (+1) taxes whereas on indicator 6, a statement that advocates more public spending is given a score of -1 and less public spending is given a score of +1.

De Lange’s operationalisation of the ‘New’ politics dimension is more complicated since it “encompasses several political questions” (2007:420) and suffers from a lack of consensus on what the key indicators should be (see e.g. Inglehart, 1990; Franklin and Rüdiger, 1992). De Lange, however, maintains that Kitschelt’s three central elements (citizenship/ethnocultural relations; individual freedoms and collective decision making) need to be kept. Further complications arise from how ‘immigration’ and ‘integration of cultural minorities’ are used to measure ‘citizenship/ethnocultural relations’. De Lange’s definition, “statements indicating support for an inclusive and universalistic society [or] support for an exclusive and particularistic society” (2007:420), is more relevant for party attitudes on ‘integration’ and does not fully capture ‘immigration’. There is also some overlap between capturing party attitudes’ on integration and national identity.

Furthermore, none of the indicators captures the perhaps key ‘New’ politics concern – environmental protection vs. economic growth. Therefore, the article modifies the second dimension so it clearly covers ‘integration’, ‘the environment’ and ‘national identity’ in addition to ‘individual freedom’ (‘diversity of lifestyles’/‘ethical legislation’) and ‘collective decision modes’ (‘direct representation’/‘participation in the decision-making processes’). This also provides a better comparative fit since both dimensions now include an equal number of measurement points.

Scores are given according to whether the manifesto indicates diversity of lifestyles to be positive (-1) or negative (+1); favours individual freedom (-1) or a moralistic government (+1); favours direct (-1) or appointed representation (+1); favours more individual participation in decision-making (-1) or more hierarchical decision-making procedures (+1); national identity⁵ to be less important (or inclusive)

(-1) or more important (or exclusive) (+1); Integration: inclusive and universalistic (-1) or exclusive and particularistic (+1); environmental protection (-1) or economic growth to be more important (+1).

A separate 7-point scale is set up to measure party position on immigration. To capture the full range of migratory types, six distinct categories⁶ are used plus a seventh ('Immigration (in general)') which encompasses any mentions of immigration not covered by the other categories. All categories, except 'Immigration (in general)' and 'Student migration', are scored according to whether policy should be more liberal (-1) or more restrictive (+1). The former two are scored according to whether the issues are considered to have a positive (-1) or negative (+1) effect on society. This way of measuring provides a more nuanced picture of parties' position on immigration compared to the standard measurement used by the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP). The CMP's indicators for immigration - 'Underprivileged Minority Groups: Positive' and 'Multiculturalism: Positive/Negative' – do, again, not capture parties' positions on immigration as they do positions on integration (Budge, 2001; Klingemann *et al*, 2006).

Finally, in order to measure degrees of ownership – *strategic advantage* - on the 'Old' Left-Right dimension, three identical indicators are used– unemployment, taxes and managing the economy. For the 'New' Left-Right dimension, however, only two identical indicators have been found - environment and law and order⁷ (Holmberg *et al*. 1991-2006; Ipsos-Mori, 2009). The scores are calculated by 'simply subtracting one party's 'best party' percentage from the percentage for the party with which it is compared" (Green and Hobolt, 2008:465). This gives a final strategic advantage score on each dimension which allows for an evaluation of the *degree* of ownership in conjunction with the spatial location calculated earlier. Parties were then scored and ranked according to their advantage over other parties. This in effect gives five distinct categories of competence: 1) Ownership (party scores ≥ 20 per cent than the other parties); 2) Advantage (scores ≥ 10 but ≤ 20 per cent); 3) Relative Advantage (score is ≥ 5 but ≤ 10 per cent) 4) Gamble (score is 'close' (-5 to +5 per cent) and 5) No Advantage (party scores $\geq - 5$). Scores are then allocated to each category (5=Ownership to 1=No ownership), added up and divided by the number of parties which gives a final classification of parties' strategic advantage. E.g. in 1991, the Left Party scores an average of 1.5 points thus falling into the 'Gamble' category (3 'Gambles' a 2 points and 3 'No advantage' a 1 point/6 parties) (see further Table. 1).

Discussion

Party positions on 'Old' and 'New' conflict dimensions.

Calculating parties' position on the two conflict dimensions ('Old' and 'New') reveals two things. First, the countries reverse mirror each other in terms of how the political space is organised (see Figures. 1a, 1b, 2a and 2b). The Swedish 'Old' politics scale shows a relatively even spread but with a clear bloc division. This situation is pronounced after 1994 when the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats more clearly establish themselves on the 'right'. The British parties have moved towards the same ideological space on the 'Old' right, a situation which is consolidated post-1997. In both cases, party location is as expected given the electoral systems where an FPTP-system forces parties to become more similar (Britain) and where a PR-system allows for more polarisation (Sweden).

The significant shift by the Moderates towards the centre ground has since 2002 led to a re-shuffling of the political space with the Liberals taking over as the main 'Old' right party, with the Centre Party, and the Christian Democrats occupying the space in between. This has in turn forced the Social Democrats further to the left (-3 in 2006 compared to 0 in 2002) and the Left Party to firmly ground their position on the left flank (-6 in 2002 and 2006). The Greens are, bar 2006, consistently placed inbetween the Social Democrats and the Left Party on the Old 'left'.

On the 'New' politics dimension, however, the situation is the reverse. The British parties are more evenly spread across this dimension although Labour (0 in 1992, -2 in 1997, -1 in 2001 and 2005) and the Conservatives (2 in 1992 and 1997, -1 in 2001 and 0 in 2005) have started to move closer to each other, making the Conservatives a much less obvious 'New' right party. The Liberal Democrats have, in contrast, clearly positioned themselves as the 'New' left alternative (-2 in 1992, -1 in 1997, -6 in 2001 and -4 in 2005). The Swedish parties, by and large, occupy the same 'New' left space. The Christian Democrats hold 'New' right positions during three time periods (+1 in 1991, 1998 and 2006) but a 'New' left position in 2002 (-2). The Moderates start out as a clear 'New' right alternative (+2 in 1991) but move gradually to the 'New' left (-1 in 2006). This development also leads to a positional reshuffle and the Moderates come to occupy the same 'New' left space as the Greens and the

Left Party in 2006. In contrast, the Liberals and Christian Democrats move towards a 'New' right position (+1 for both parties). The Social Democrats, on the other hand, regularly shift positions but come to occupy the centre ground in 2006⁸.

Party positions on immigration

What positions do parties hold when it comes to immigration (see Figure. 3a and 3b)? In Britain, the Liberal Democrats consistently occupy the 'liberal' policy space (-2 in 1992 and 1997 to -3 in 2001 and 2005) while the Conservatives hold overall restrictive positions (+2 in 1992, +1 in 1997 and 2005, 0 in 2001). Labour also hold restrictive positions (+1 in 1992 and 1997), but perform a drastic turn in a liberal direction in 2001 (-4) only to return to a restrictive position in 2005 (+1). This in effect gives us two outcomes. On the one hand, 'positioning'-alternatives between the 'restrictive' Labour and Conservative Party and the 'liberal' Liberal Democrats (1992, 1997 and 2005) and then between by the 'liberal' Labour and the Liberal Democrats and the 'restrictive' Conservatives in 2001. On the other, 'ownership'-alternatives between the 'restrictive' Labour and Conservatives (1992, 1997 and 2005) and then between the 'liberal' Labour and the Liberal Democrats (2001).

In Sweden, the situation is the reverse and parties cluster around the centre-ground or a liberal policy position (-1 to -3). There is also a remarkable degree of uniform behaviour and an average of four parties occupy the same position across the studied time-periods. The absence of a clear 'restrictive' policy alternative further suggests that competition on 'the immigration issue' in Sweden is more about competence and less about positioning.

Parties' strategic advantages on 'Old' and 'New' conflict dimensions

Although issue ownership explains priorities that parties make and why they choose to emphasize and campaign on immigration, it does not fully explain *why* e.g. a liberal

position is adopted as opposed to a more restrictive one. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the interplay between conflict dimensional advantages, ideological positions and positions on immigration. The strategic advantage that parties enjoy on particular conflict dimensions are particularly important since issue competence ratings tend to work in tandem (Jennings and Green, 2009). That is, when parties gain, or lose, on one dimensional issue, it usually reflects a similar change on other issues within the same sphere. The assumption is that the strategic advantage/spatial location combination is used by parties to justify their position on immigration. E.g. when a centre-left party is perceived to be more competent on the 'Old' conflict dimension, they are more likely to frame their stance on immigration in a way that is compatible with their position on that dimension.

As Table. 1 shows, the Social Democrats dominate the 'Old' politics dimension on all occasions, bar 2006, with the Moderates in second place. Whereas the Social Democrats' and the Moderates' scores are fairly stable over time, the five smaller parties show more volatility. In particular, the Left Party, the Liberals and the Greens' scores vary quite drastically and include a high number of 'Gamble'-positions. The Christian Democrats are, overall, the 'third' choice whereas the Centre Party is almost exclusively seen as the least competent party on the 'Old' Left-Right dimension.

Conversely, competence scores on the 'New' politics dimension are very different. The Green Party 'owns' this dimension on four occasions with the Moderates, once again, in second place but with the Centre Party as the 'third option'. The Social Democrats 'drop' to fourth place, performing slightly better than the Christian Democrats. The Liberals and the Left Party fall into a separate category by having three and four occasions respectively where they are severely disadvantaged vis-à-vis the other parties (i.e. 'No ownership'). Again, the number of 'Gamble' positions is high.

The British data shows that competition on both dimensions has primarily been between Labour and the Conservatives with the former taking over ownership of the 'Old' politics dimension in 1997. The Liberal Democrats, on the other hand, have a consistent disadvantage vis-à-vis the other parties. However, in 2005 the distance to the Conservatives almost halves (from -30 in 2001 to -17 in 2005).

On the 'New' politics dimension, the differences are less clear cut. Although the Conservatives own this dimension on two occasions (1992 and 2005), their

advantage is not as significant as Labour's scores on the 'Old' politics dimension and in 2001, for example, there was no difference between the two. While still being in a disadvantaged position, Liberal Democrats, perform comparatively better on the 'New' politics dimension (on average, -17 points difference compared to -62).

The article's main claim is now tested and to reiterate the hypothesis goes as follows:

H1. Parties will frame their position on immigration (liberal/restrictive) so it corresponds to the ideological position (centre-left/centre-right) on the conflict dimension ('Old'/'New' politics) where they have a strategic advantage.

The British parties perform as expected during three out of the four elections studied. In 1992, the Conservative Party is assumed to frame their policy as a matter of 'New', centre-right politics but use both 'Old', centre-right and 'New', centre-right language. On asylum the manifesto states that it needs to be "faster and more effective" indicating an 'Old', centre-right right approach but it also mentions "fingerprinting//...//to prevent multiple applications and benefit fraud" which points to a very strong 'New', centre-right emphasis. It is also assumed that competition will be ownership oriented between the Conservatives and Labour but the Conservative manifesto rather indicates a positioning alternative when writing "we must//...//reintroduce the Asylum Bill, opposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats". This doubtfulness is underscored by Labour's position, "[a] new Act will guarantee sanctuary to genuine refugees but prevent bogus applications for asylum" which suggests that Labour is not opposed to the Bill as such. The quote also points to a 'New', centre-right approach rather than the expected 'Old', centre-left. On the other hand, The Liberals Democrats behaved as expected and provided a 'New', centre-left justification for their liberal policy stance, "[w]e will introduce improved welfare and legal rights for genuine asylum seekers and establish substantive rights of appeal".

In 1997, the Conservatives are again assumed to frame their immigration policy in a 'New', centre-right discourse, which their policy stance - "while genuine asylum seekers are treated sympathetically, people do not abuse these provisions to avoid normal immigration controls" – clearly points to. The Labour manifesto does as well frame their policy in the expected strategic advantage discourse – "We

will//...//ensure swift and fair decisions on whether someone can stay or go” which, again, should be “dealt with speedily” since the – *Conservative* - system is “expensive and slow”. The Liberal Democrats, once again, provide the positioning alternative when professing that they would “restore benefit rights to asylum seekers”.

In 2001, ownership competition is assumed to shift towards being between Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Both parties offer very similar policies, all of which push for a liberalisation of immigration regulations but with very different focal points. On the one hand, for economic benefits (“help ensure that those who come and work here continue to make a major contribution to our economic and social life” (Labour) and, on the other, for human rights concerns (“fair benefits for asylum seekers to replace the demeaning voucher system” (Liberal Democrats). Again, these justifications correspond to where Labour and the Liberal Democrats are located spatially on the dimension which they are more competent on (or ‘not as bad’ in the case of the Liberal Democrats), ‘Old’, centre-right in the former and ‘New’, centre-left in the latter. The Conservatives, on the other hand, provide the alternative position and, despite making a move in a liberal direction, very clearly emphasise the party as being *the* choice for voters wanting stricter immigration controls.

By 2005, the Conservatives had not owned the ‘Old’ politics dimension since 1992 but regain control over the ‘New’ politics dimension. They also move towards more restrictive immigration policies (0 in 2001; +1 in 2005) as well as towards the ‘New’ centre-right (-1 in 2001, 0 in 2005). The manifesto thus focuses on safeguarding the population from disease (“health checks for immigrants”) and maintaining sovereignty (“take back powers from Brussels//...// withdraw from the 1951 Geneva Convention”). Immigration clearly becomes a matter of ownership competition during the 2005 election campaign (Jennings and Green, 2009) as exemplified by several ownership phrases, e.g. “bring immigration back under control” and “[r]efusing to set a limit on new migrants is irresponsible politics. Only the Conservatives take this issue seriously”.

Labour also moves in a restrictive direction but emphasise a managed migration system rather than restricting entry as such (“establish a points system for those seeking to migrate here.”) and their effectiveness in dealing with asylum applications (“[t]he backlog of claims has been cut”) thus corresponding to their location (centre-right) and strategic advantage (‘Old’ politics). The Liberal Democrats did, again, provide a positioning choice when emphasising that they “support a

liberal...approach to migration". However, the Liberal Democrats go against expected behaviour with their use of an 'Old', centre-right discourse. Thus, one finds favourable descriptions of allowing for more business influence in deciding on the appropriate levels of work permits.

The Swedish parties perform as expected in just over a third of the cases but show significant inter-party differences. The Greens and the Moderates perform significantly above average (sixty and eighty per cent respectively) while the Liberals and the Centre Party perform slightly above average (forty per cent). The Social Democrats only act as predicted on one occasion while the Christian Democrats and the Left Party consistently go against expected behaviour. Of interest is that the Swedish parties rarely frame their policies as 'being better' than any of their opponents. Instead they offer normative alternatives which criticise *state* rather than *party* policy, e.g. "Sweden's refugee policy...is today a failure from a humanitarian point of view (Left Party, 1998) and "Sweden does at present not live up to a decent and humanitarian treatment of refugees" (Greens, 2002).

The Moderates, with a consistent centre-right position and strong competence scores on the 'Old' politics dimension, thus justify their liberal position with reference to less state interference (e.g. "We want to increase the possibilities for those who wish to immigrate for work purposes." (1991). The Greens, on the other hand, with a clear centre-left profile, and consistent ownership over the 'New' politics dimension, emphasise that immigration policy "needs to be more humane" (2006).

The Social Democrats, the Left Party and the Christian Democrats stand out by going against expected behaviour. The three parties, by and large, only mention that immigration, and in particular asylum, policy needs to be "based on solidarity" (Left Party, 1991) or "characterised by solidarity" (Social Democrats, 2002). This is surprising, not only for the Social Democrats given their almost uniform ownership of the 'Old' politics dimension, but also for the Left Party with their high number of 'Gamble' scores on the 'New' politics dimension. Similarly, the Christian Democrats are expected to utilise an 'Old', centre-right discourse but the findings suggest a 'New', centre-left approach, e.g. "show solidarity...through a humane and generous asylum policy" (2002). Finally, the Liberals with, high a number of 'Gamble' scores, pursue a more cautious approach and only gamble when there is a clear advantage to do so (e.g. in 2002 and 2006). The Centre Party play down

immigration in their manifestos and only begin to emphasise the issue in 2006 when their competence scores on the 'Old' politics dimension increase.

Conclusion

This article examines the determinants behind party positions on immigration. The "immigration issue" has been difficult for parties to assimilate into existing conflict dimensions, especially so if competition is assumed to take place along two distinct cleavage lines. Previous studies find no clear relationship between changing ideological positions and changing positions on immigration. The latter might, however, be better explained by looking at a) parties' degree of ownership over a conflict dimension and b) their spatial location on this dimension. This twin-track approach, the article argues, allows for a better understanding of why parties adopt particular policy positions on immigration. The subsequent analysis of British and Swedish parties show some degree of support for the hypothesis and parties in the former behave as expected more often than in the latter. However, the presence, albeit modest, of strategic advantage/spatial location justifications in Swedish politics points to how institutional settings and migration specific contexts may not always constrain and/or influence party action. The unexpected instances of this type of competition in a proportional system is thus indicative of the direction that party competition is heading.

However, the analysis also gives rise to additional questions that need to be addressed in future studies. First, do parties consider one dimension as more important than the other? It was assumed that parties emphasise the dimension on which they have a strategic advantage but party systems tend to vary in terms of *issue diversity* (Hobolt *et al*, 2008; Walgrave and Nuytemans, 2009). A closer examination of dimensional priorities in the light of agenda setting competition (Schattschneider, 1960) and agenda 'friction' (Jones and Baumgartner, 2005) is therefore necessary to explain these unexpected outcomes.

Second, when classifying parties into the various categories of ownership, the analysis encountered a few grey cases. This is especially problematic in the Swedish

case when some parties have a significant advantage over one or two parties but a reasonably big disadvantage vis-à-vis the remaining parties. This gives rise to an interpretation and classification problem where e.g. a “Relative advantage” position is less flexible than a “Gamble” which means that the expected party behaviour changes.

Third, the article’s one-dimensional categorisation of immigration policy (liberal vs. restrictive) does not take into account that parties adopt different positions depending on the *type* of migration. This article uses the aggregate position that parties hold and studies whether this position is framed, and fits, with their conflict dimensional advantage and spatial location therein. A further sub-classification relating to *economic* (labour; student) and *cultural* aspects of migration (asylum, family reunification, unaccompanied minors as well as illegal/undocumented migration) is therefore necessary. It is reasonable to assume that depending on parties’ strategic advantage/spatial location, they will favour different types of approaches to these sub-categories as well. Indeed, the manifesto findings suggest that parties are selective with respect to the types of migration they choose to highlight.

Fourth, party manifestos are in themselves limiting as several authors note (see e.g. Benoit *et al*, 2008; Bakker *et al*, 2006). Although providing the unified party view, they only focus on issues that are salient during elections times. Consequently, if immigration does not feature on the party radar during that particular election, it will not be covered in the manifesto and thus not receive a measurement score. A broader scope is necessary in order accurately capture parties’ positions on immigration. A related issue is whether manifestos in fact indicate party position as opposed to party direction (Pelizzo, 2003). Finally, the article does not discuss the influence of far-right parties, or that of certain contextual factors, on party positions (such as the unfeasibly large backlog of asylum applications in Britain; the ‘bogus-asylum seeker’ debate or the re-evaluation of ‘economic migrants’ in the early 2000s). These are obviously important features for understanding policy choice and party competition but are also covered extensively elsewhere (see e.g. Freeman, 1997; Golder, 2003; Rydgren, 2005; Somerville, 2007; Spencer, 2007 and Jennings, 2009). However, by combining parties’ strategic advantage and spatial location, the article addresses the need for a systematic analysis for how parties handle and engage with “the immigration issue”.

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² Spatial theory contains a number of "ifs" and if one or more of these assumptions are violated, the expected convergence results tend to disappear (Grofman, 2004).

³ Other, equally important, measurement techniques include "mass surveys of party voters, elite surveys of party politicians, dimensional analysis of the roll call voters of party legislators". (Benoit and Laver, 2007: 90). It should also be noted that determining party position from manifestos is notoriously difficult (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Dinas and Gemenis, 2009; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2007;). Furthermore, the article's main aim is to analyse the determinants behind adopted positions on immigration since these prove to be problematic for previous studies that link ideological position to that of immigration. Although the use of, especially, the CMP data is 'comforting but insufficient' (King, 1990:1), the inclusion highlights the often overlooked complexities of reading party position on immigration from parties' ideological position.

⁴ The article's approach differs from that of the CMP and the ESG (Benoit and Laver 2007; see also Laver and Hunt, 1992). While the CMP data directly reflects the stated party position and generates a rich time-series set (Budge and Pennings, 2007), it also contains significant methodological 'noise' since it conflates economic and social policy positions into one, unified left-right dimension, thus exaggerating the ideological move that parties make (Benoit and Laver, 2007). The ESG data tries to avoid the 'mathematically constrained nature of the saliency-based CMP left-right measure' (ibid, p.103) by asking country experts to classify parties on four substantive dimensions - economic, social, loci of decision-making and environmental policy - plus a 'direct measure of party positions on a general left-right scale' (ibid., p.91). Although the ESG allows for more flexibility in its measurements, the survey is limited by its current lack of comparative time points. Furthermore, the survey's key finding suggest that 'the substantive meaning of left-right is not constant' (ibid, p.103) and appears to be highly context dependent. This raises further questions as to what type of comparative conclusions can actually be drawn about parties left-right position if the concept is not able to 'travel' between cases.

⁵ Note: for the question on national identity, the Swedish manifestos tend to frame it as a cultural understanding of the issue, that is, is it seen as important to preserve national identity (+1) or not (-1) whereas the British manifestos relate to devolution (-1) vs. national unity (+1).

⁶ 1) Immigration (in general) + 2) Labour immigration + 3) Asylum seekers and refugees + 4) Family reunification + 5) Unaccompanied minors + 6) Student migration + 7) Retirement migration.

⁷ Although 'Law and order' does not form part of the 7-point scale used for the 'New' politics dimension it nevertheless fits with the scale's libertarian/authoritarian element.

⁸ The calculations show a general directional fit with the CMP and ESG data. That is, the British and Swedish parties are placed in the same ideological space as the two comparative benchmarks. Furthermore, none of the parties fall into the "CMP says 'Right', ESG says 'Left'- category. However, this article does, by and large, allocate parties a higher score. When party positions are compared, this article's ranking corresponds to the ESG with one exception; the Liberals are here placed further to right of the Christian Democrats. The ranking of the British parties is, however, identical to both data sets. This would indicate that the calculations done here give a reasonably accurate view of the location of the Swedish and British parties. One reason for the differing figures is that this article defines the 'Old' Left-Right in strictly economic terms. For the CMP, it is "a general scale dealing with social-economic policy positions" (Benoit and Laver, 2007: 100) and since party position is the sum of right-wing categories minus left-wing categories, then, if the proportion of both categories goes down, a party will tend to move towards the middle. An additional issue with the CMP data is that it conflates what this article calls 'Old' and 'New' politics dimensions. Consequently, if a party devotes a significant proportion of its' manifesto to positive mentions of 'Free enterprise' but spends a lesser proportion on 'Environmental protection', it skews party position even though the latter may be just as important as the presence of the former. This means that what the CMP is telling us is how salient certain issues are for parties rather than their policy positions as such.