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## **Government ideology and international migration**

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# Government ideology and international migration\*

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## Abstract

We provide the first empirical evidence that differences in government ideology play an important role in the choice of cross-border migration destinations. In absence of first-hand experience, immigrants rely on information about the political landscape of the origin and host countries to form expectations about the context of reception in the host society. We use data on bilateral migration and government ideology for 36 OECD countries between 1990 and 2016. Our analysis shows that bilateral migration flows are higher when the government at the destination is more left-wing than the government at the origin, especially when we consider proximate countries.

*JEL classification:* J15; D72; F22.

*Keywords:* international migration; migration choice; government ideology; OECD countries.

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# 1 Introduction

Which countries do migrants move to? Migration patterns have long been a fertile area of research in social science, but the determinants of migration flows have become of particular interest today due to a rapid increase in transnational population movements. By one estimate, the number of international migrants reached 272 million in 2019, a 23% increase since 2010.<sup>1</sup> And about 54% of worldwide migrants reside in the OECD countries.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the availability of comprehensive data on bilateral migration flows has made it possible to shed light on the general patterns of migration flows and to explore systematically the determinants of migration (see e.g., Lewer and Van den Berg, 2008; Mayda, 2010; Caragliu et al., 2013; Bertoli and Moraga, 2013; Beine and Parsons, 2015; Beine et al., 2019).

Numerous factors push potential migrants from their home countries and pull them towards their host countries, in particular differences in income or in the supply of public goods and promise of human capital accumulation (Beine et al., 2011; Verdugo, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2018); environmental shocks including epidemics and natural disasters (Beine and Parsons, 2015); migration costs such as geographic and linguistic distances (Adsera and Pytlikova, 2015); population control and immigration policies (Czaika and Parsons, 2017; Helbling and Leblang, 2019); and the presence of migration networks and other uncertainty-reducing infrastructures (Clark et al., 2007; Beine et al., 2019). While the extant empirical research on migration has incorporated a wide range of economic considerations, political and ideological factors have been largely absent from the debate on where immigrants decide to settle. A notable exception is the recent work of Bracco et al. (2018), who demonstrate that the election of a mayor from the anti-immigration party Lega Nord in Italy led to a reduction in the inflows of immigrants to the same municipality. We contribute to this debate by showing how considerations about the political landscape of the host society vis-a-vis the political context in the home country affects the choice of migration destination across borders.<sup>3</sup>

Recent studies have recognized the role of psychological and emotional factors and expectations, in particular the “context or reception”, in affecting migrants’ destination choice (Menjivar, 1997; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; White and Johnson, 2016). We build on these studies and argue that, in absence of first-hand experience about the context of reception in the country of destination, individuals rely on heuristic or information shortcuts in processing information and making decisions (Lupia, 1994; Just, 2019). Before moving to a new country, immigrants lack a direct exposure to its social and political landscape, and they are thus particularly dependent on these heuristics. To form heuristics about the context of reception, immigrants rely on information about the origin and

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<sup>1</sup>See UN data available here: [bit.ly/Migration2019](https://bit.ly/Migration2019)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/Migration-data-brief-4-EN.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>In a similar vein, Helbling and Leblang (2019) find that migrants are less likely to go to countries where citizens have expressed support for radical right-wing political parties. We do not limit our study to far-right parties, whose rise is arguably a relatively recent phenomenon. In addition, we argue that information about the government in the country of origin also plays an important role.

host country’s political system and government ideology (Just, 2019). Traditionally, government ideology influence policy-making and left-wing and right-wing politicians provide policies consistent with the preferences of their partisans (Potrafke, 2017); whereas left parties are known to support progressive stance on immigrant integration, conservative parties are more likely to form alliances with radical right parties and oppose anti-discrimination policies, the naturalization of immigrants, and other integration policies (Money, 1999; Givens, 2007). As political parties take positions on immigration, the political ideology of the destination government and its distance from the country of origin provide clues about the relative attitudes towards newcomers in the host society. Because of their ideological predisposition, countries with left-wing incumbent governments should be more attractive to immigrants. At the same time, and more crucial for this research, we expect individuals to be more likely to migrate to countries whose government is assessed as more left-wing *compared* to the government in the origin country. This distance, in particular, allows immigrants to form expectations about the immigrants’ role, duties and responsibilities in a new society, as well as the relative degree of discriminatory attitudes and prejudice, compared to their country of origin (Weldon, 2006).

Against this background, we investigate whether the *relative* ideological orientation of the destination country, with respect to the country of origin, shapes bilateral migration flows. We assemble data on governments’ political ideologies and construct measures of ideological distance by converting the incumbent party’s manifesto-based data into country-year cells.<sup>4</sup> We employ information on 36 OECD countries between 1990 and 2016. Focusing on OECD countries has the advantage of examining a set of rather homogeneous countries in a number of socio-economic characteristics, which helps to isolate the role of time-varying distances in political orientations.<sup>5</sup> We rely on augmented gravity equations that include both long-run and short-run determinants and account for multilateral resistance terms (Bertoli and Moraga, 2013; Beine and Parsons, 2015). By including multilateral resistances to migration, we explicitly address endogeneity bias arising from the omission of time-varying characteristics for both sending and receiving states (Beine et al., 2016). We also add pair fixed effects to account for all time-invariant bilateral factors (e.g., any form of connections between countries) affecting migration flows, and year fixed effects to capture common shocks across countries. Issues of reverse causality are mitigated by using migration flows at the bilateral level, which are only a fraction of the total size of the labour and the good markets (see also Beine et al., 2019). Although population movements, in particular refugee flows, can affect voting outcomes (Hangartner et al., 2019; Dustmann et al., 2019; Bellucci et al., 2019), the bilateral nature of our dataset makes it less likely that these effects are driven by immigrants from single

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<sup>4</sup>Using different data, Dreher et al. (2015) convincingly show that differences in political ideology between national governments is an important factor shaping the effectiveness of aid. Yet, there are no studies on how differences in political ideology affect cross-border immigration.

<sup>5</sup>Furthermore, OECD countries are among the top destinations of international migration, hosting more than half of the international migrant population in 2015 (UN DESA, 2016).

OECD countries.<sup>6</sup> Using illustrative examples, we show that bilateral migrant flows do not predate, but rather follow changes in the relative ideology measure.

Our empirical analysis reveals that population movements increase when the government in the host country is more left-leaning, and relatively more left-wing than the government in the country of origin. The estimated effect of the relationship between relative ideology and immigration is not only statistically significant but also economically meaningful. On average, according to our baseline model, the number of immigrants increases by about 7 per cent for a one standard deviation increase in ideological distance. Put differently, dyads/year with the highest value of ideological distance have, all else equal, about 70% higher migration flows than dyads/years with the lowest value of ideological distance. En route, we explore whether and to what extent the estimated effect depends on institutional similarities and identification across borders, as information about political institutions, parties and ideological groups should be more easily available and less difficult to compare between proximate societies. We demonstrate that our results are stronger when the destination and origin countries are geographically close to each other, and when we focus on European Union (EU) dyads, where exposure to the political landscape of member states facilitates the identification of national parties in the heuristic left-right spectrum.

In the following section, we take stock of the existing literature on differences in parties' positions on migration along the ideological left–right axis of national governments. On the basis of current research, we argue that relative ideological distance provides an important signal about the level of tolerance towards foreign-borns, which in turn affects migration flows.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

Anecdotal evidence and empirical studies suggest that the quality of local amenities is a key factor that shapes migration plans. In addition to considerations about wages and employment, the intention to move to a new country is affected by individual assessments of national amenities and subjective considerations about differences in public services, security and the quality of governance and institutions between sending and receiving states (see e.g., Fafchamps and Shilpi, 2013; Dustmann and Okatenko, 2014). Yet, less discernible aspects of the so-called “context of reception”, the range of material and moral resources that are made available by the government and the receiving communities to newcomers (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; White and Johnson, 2016), are also important in the choice of migration destination but remain largely unexplored. In particular, the social and institutional context shapes the salience of ethnic differences and the degree of social tolerance towards foreign-borns (Weldon, 2006). In recent decades, migration flows have increased host countries' pressures to “articulate a coherent national identity in the face of immigrant-related

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<sup>6</sup>Recent research also shows that the impact of immigration on support for far-right candidates is driven by low-educated immigrants from non-Western countries (Edo et al., 2019). Limiting our analysis to OECD countries only should further address this concern.

diversity and to define avenues for inclusion for these now-permanent populations” (Goodman, 2012, p.663). This pressure can generate social tensions, and foreign residents are often confronted with episodes of discrimination and intolerance, and negative public discourse (Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2013; Strijbis, 2014). Particularly in recent decades, discrimination and the rise of anti-immigrant parties have become an important issue, as evidenced, for example, by the approval of the European Union’s Racial Equality Directive (RED) in 2000 (Givens, 2007). Even in advanced democracies, where principles of tolerance towards out-groups and minorities are enshrined in the constitution, newcomers often face prejudice and intolerance from native populations.<sup>7</sup>

Crucially, the politics of the receiving community can shape expectations regarding the type of treatment immigrants will receive (Menjivar, 1997). For example, anti-immigrant political campaigns and appeals for immigration restrictions are likely to deter immigrants. US president Donald Trump’s anti-immigration rhetoric, and the introduction of a travel ban in 2017 which placed restrictions on travel to the US for citizens of seven countries, created an unwelcoming image of the country also for foreign citizens not directly targeted by the ban (Reardon, 2017). This stands in sharp contrast to the rhetoric of his predecessor: since the the beginning of his presidency, Barack Obama argued in favour of a more comprehensive approach to immigration, including a more clear-cut pathway to citizenship. Interestingly, partisan divisions over immigration are widening in the wake of large population movements. For example, in a recent poll, about 78% of Republicans claimed that large numbers of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States represent a “critical threat” to the nation’s vital interests. In comparison, only 19% of Democrats had similar views (Washington Post, 09/09/2019). Yet, the extent to which public sentiments are on balance positive or negative towards immigrants, or the actual position of each government towards newcomers is often difficult to ascertain. As such, immigrants often rely on heuristic or information shortcuts about the political climate in the host society (Lupia, 1994; Just, 2019). Attitudes towards immigration form central themes in political campaigns and national governments, interested in retaining power, differ significantly in their discourse and positions on migration (Joppke, 2003; Howard and Howard, 2009; Janoski, 2010; Helbling, 2014; Abou-Chadi, 2016).

In absence of first-hand experience of the receiving context, immigrants project the party identification related to the party system in the home country on the party system in the country of destination and compare them in terms of “party families” (Strijbis, 2014). On the one side of the political spectrum, conservative parties have more pronounced anti-immigrant positions while their agenda often favors common cultural heritages and values (Joppke, 2003; Helbling, 2014). Conservative parties are also the only parties that have gone into coalitions with radical right parties; the latter have at times demanded profound changes in immigration policy and new measures imped-

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<sup>7</sup>Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that the Union is founded on the “respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail” (EU, 2010, p.17)

ing naturalization of immigrants and sometimes their deportation (Givens, 2007). On the other side of the political spectrum, left-wing politicians take into account their constituencies' preferences by committing to protect and promote minority interests, such as combating discrimination and xenophobia (Just, 2019). Overall, left-wing parties usually display more liberal ideology, use more universal frames when addressing issues of immigration and are often associated with measures to open access to citizenship to new immigrants and allow membership apart from ethnic elements (Joppke, 2003; Helbling, 2014; Abou-Chadi, 2016). Evidently, left-wing politicians also see immigration as a field to promote their own political platforms and serve a less nationalistically minded voter clientele. In fact, the politics of integration has mainly been the domain of left parties interested in attracting immigrant voters (Givens, 2007). Not surprising, a left-leaning bias in immigrants' voting behaviors does exist and immigrants in Western Europe have been shown to vote over-proportionally for candidates on the Left, independent of their socio-economic, cultural and demographic characteristics (Bergh and Bjørklund, 2011; Sanders et al., 2014; Strijbis, 2014). Hence, our main argument has it that the ideology of the incumbent in the destination country, and the relative ideological distances in political orientation between host and home governments, provide an important signal about the level of tolerance towards out-groups and whether the host society has more a welcoming civic culture and tolerance of foreign-borns than the home society.

En route, we also explore whether geographic proximity enhances the effect of ideological distance on population movements. Similarities in societal norms, customs, and institutions are more likely to be observed between geographically proximate societies, and these commonalities increase citizens' information about the political environment of neighbouring societies (Gokmen, 2017; Böhmelt et al., 2019). A sufficient exposure to the political system of the potential destination is particularly important as moving to another country means that the party identifications socialized in the country of origin are not always applicable to the party system in the country of destination, and immigrants need to associate parties from different countries into ideological families (Strijbis, 2014). We thus expect geographic distance to mitigate and reduce the impact of partisanship on migration flows. Furthermore, and related to this argument, as the widening of European integration has shaped national identities so that people identify themselves also as part of a supra-national community (see e.g., Curtis, 2014), we look at the effect of political ideology within the European Union. We expect the exposure to the political landscape of member states to be enhanced not only by the physical proximity, but also by the existence of a supranational entity with its own institutions. Immigrants often think in terms of "party families", which are arguably easier to relate and compare for proximate countries. As such, the existence of European elections and the presence of political groups within the European Parliament should further facilitate the identification of national parties in the heuristic left-right spectrum commonly used in the political discourse.

There are two important considerations that distinguish our work from previous studies on



how domestic political factors drive migration flows. First, we do not make the assumption that government actors' ideological preferences are always transferred into immigration regulations or translated into other policy outputs. A number of studies have already explored whether and how political orientation shapes the restrictiveness of immigration policies, although they do not detect a direct translation of incumbents' preferences into policy outputs (Lahav, 1997; De Haas and Haberkorn, 2015; Abou-Chadi, 2016).<sup>8</sup> Our argument is about the perceived public and political sentiments towards newcomers and their expected well-being in the host society, after explicitly controlling for host countries' immigration policies. As such, we also depart from previous studies on whether immigration policies, *per se*, deter migration flows (e.g. Ortega and Peri, 2013; Helbling and Leblang, 2019). At the same time, our study differs from recent studies on the influence of the electoral schedule on the time pattern of migration (Burmans et al., 2017; Mourão et al., 2018; Revelli, 2019). According to these studies, electoral events can effect migration flows because of political business cycles that generate favorable economic conditions and generous spending and transfer policies before the elections. People may also wait for the elections' result and decide to leave if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. In addition to immigration flows, elections in the destination countries also affect the number of first-time asylum applications, which declines under right-wing cabinet (Burmans et al., 2017). We argue that the relative (post-electoral) distance in government ideology between sending and receiving states in the dyad matters. In addition, and as a matter of fact, our empirical strategy will flexibly account for, and absorb, all time-varying country-specific unobservables and explicitly take into account the dynamics of migration flows around changes in the government's political colour.

### 3 Empirical Design

#### 3.1 Sample and Main Variables

We obtain data on annual bilateral migration flows (by nationality) from the OECD's International Migration Database.<sup>9</sup> Our sample covers 35 destination and 36 origin OECD countries over the period 1990-2016.<sup>10</sup> We exploit information on intra-OECD flows for three main reasons. First, the OECD countries are among the top destinations of international migration. Second, the variables required for our analysis are mostly available for these countries. Third, there is a certain degree of homogeneity between these nations as senders and hosts, allowing us to focus on the ideology-induced migration effects. The resulting dataset contains 14,260 observations, which is, however,

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<sup>8</sup>The degree of liberalization of immigration policies often depends on the existence of veto points coupled with the competitiveness of elections (Abou-Chadi, 2016). For example, a left-of-centre government may not be able to liberalise policies when faced with a chamber with a right-of-centre majority and the power to block legislation.

<sup>9</sup>Downloadable from <https://tinyurl.com/OECD-Migration>.

<sup>10</sup>Figure A.1 in the Online Appendix shows the top origin country for each destination country in our sample using a Sankey diagram.

unbalanced across country dyads and years.<sup>11</sup>

The key explanatory variable in our analysis is the relative ideological distance between migrants' host and home countries, calculated by subtracting the value of government ideology at the origin from the value of government ideology at the destination. To capture ideology we employ a continuous measure of left-right ideological leaning that is derived from the incumbent party's manifesto at the time of election (Volkens et al., 2019). Specifically, this measure is constructed using the frequency of positive and negative mentions of different issues, as captured by 26 content analytical variables. For instance, more positive mentions of welfare state expansion, labour groups and protectionism make a government more left-wing, whereas, more positive mentions of political authority, traditional morality and economic orthodoxy make a government more right-wing. Following Seki and Williams (2014), we convert the manifesto-based data into country-year cells. This process accounts for all the parties that participate in the government and the portion of the year that a party is the incumbent. As an alternative measure of ideology, we employ a binary indicator from DPI (2017), which takes value 1 for left governments (e.g., those defined as socialist, social democratic, or left-wing) and 0 for right governments (e.g., those defined as conservative, Christian democratic, or right-wing).<sup>12</sup> While this indicator does not account for parties' manifesto positions (which may vary across governments with the same political colour), it comes with the advantage that it is less subject to endogeneity bias.

In Figure 1, we present the time evolution of migration flows and our manifesto-based ideological distance measure for four sample dyads: Australia to the UK, Portugal to Spain, Germany to Austria and Norway to Sweden. We choose four cases of neighbouring countries or dyads with low linguistic distance (Australia/UK) to focus on origins-destinations with comparable economic and social conditions. These dyads are also characterized by pre-existing high levels of annual cross-border migration and by the presence of historical "enclaves" where other people from the same country of origin already live. As such, the only major variation is given by changing levels of ideological distance.<sup>13</sup> A visual inspection of this figure provides some first evidence that the two variables are highly correlated: an increase in the ideological distance (for example, the destination country becoming more left-wing compared to the country of origin) is associated with an increase in migration flows towards the destination country. Although this evidence is best described as descriptive, it is very suggestive and reveals an interesting relation. We now turn to a more systematic analysis of the causal relationship.

[Figure 1 about here]

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<sup>11</sup>The proportion of missing values reflects differences in the size and quality of data collection across countries (see also Beine et al., 2019).

<sup>12</sup>To create this binary measure, we include the (small number of) centrist governments in the left-wing category. The correlation coefficient between our manifesto- and DPI-based measures of ideological distance is 0.49.

<sup>13</sup>Note that we use data on migration flows by nationality. As such, the data also capture foreign-born individuals from a variety of ethnic groups who have become nationals of e.g., Australia and then moved to the UK. We would expect the context of reception in the destination country to play an even larger role for this segment of the population.

### 3.2 Estimation Strategy

To examine the impact of ideological distance on migration flows, we embed our key independent variable into a micro-founded gravity model of international migration. The theoretical underpinning of this model is derived from the income maximization framework (Borjas, 1987; Grogger and Hanson, 2011; Beine et al., 2011, 2019). One of the key strengths of this framework is that it allows us to generate predictions about the main determinants of international migration that are in line with the recent macroeconomic literature and can be readily estimated (Anderson, 2011). In particular, following the recent work of Beine et al. (2019), we control for relative business cycles and relative employment rates to account for the fact that economic agents form expectations of future employment based on information provided by the current state of the economy.<sup>14</sup> The main difference in our approach is the expectation that (in addition to macroeconomic factors) governments’ political ideology will also play a significant role for immigrants’ destination choices, as it can signal the level of tolerance towards out-groups and the expected well-being of newcomers. More formally, our model specification takes the following form:

$$\text{‘Migration flows’}_{ij,t} = \alpha \text{‘Ideological distance’}_{ij,t} + \beta_1 \mathbf{X}_t^i + \beta_2 \mathbf{X}_t^j + \beta_3 \mathbf{Y}_{ij,t} + \gamma_t + \gamma_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij,t} \quad (1)$$

where ‘Migration flows’ $_{ij,t}$  represents the directional flows of migrants between two countries (directed dyads), measured by the number of migrants flowing from a country of origin  $i$  to a destination country  $j$  at time  $t$  (in logarithm),<sup>15</sup> ‘Ideological distance’ $_{ij,t}$  is the distance in government ideology between the two countries, as defined in Section 3.1;  $\mathbf{X}_t^i$  and  $\mathbf{X}_t^j$  are vectors containing time-varying variables in the origin and destination countries;  $\mathbf{Y}_{ij,t}$  is a vector of pair-specific variables that vary over time;  $\gamma_t$  and  $\gamma_{ij}$  represent year and dyad fixed effects, respectively; and,  $\varepsilon_{ij,t}$  is an error term clustered at the directed dyad level. Our parameter of interest,  $\alpha$ , measures the effect of ideological distance on bilateral migration flows, with a positive value providing support for the argument that population movements increase when the government at the destination is more left-wing than the government at the origin.

$\mathbf{X}_t^i$  and  $\mathbf{X}_t^j$  include variables measuring expectations regarding future incomes in the two countries. These are captured by the expected income conditional on being employed (the average wage level) and the expected probability of being employed in a given country, which depends on the current level of employment in the economy (employment rate) and its current cyclical state (real GDP growth).<sup>16</sup>  $\mathbf{Y}_{ij,t}$  includes three variables capturing factors that may favour mobility of people

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<sup>14</sup>By accounting for expectations about future employment probabilities, Beine et al. (2019) depart from the traditional random utility maximization approach (McFadden, 1984), where economic agents do not face uncertainty about future employment and only care about wage differentials and the level of migration costs.

<sup>15</sup>We add a value of 1 before taking the logarithm to avoid taking the logarithm of 0.

<sup>16</sup>As argued by Beine et al. (2019), the current level of the employment rate integrates the impact of past business cycles and some structural effects from the labour market, whereas the current business cycle provides information that is more forward-looking in terms of future employment rates.

between the two countries: a dummy variable for a joint membership to the Schengen Agreement at time  $t$ ; a dummy variable for a joint membership to the EU at time  $t$ ; and the size of the existing diaspora, as captured by the bilateral stock of migrants (in logarithm).<sup>17</sup> The inclusion of year fixed effects in our specification controls for shocks in migration flows that are common to all countries, whereas the inclusion of dyad fixed effects captures pull and push factors, as well as and the part of migration costs, that are pair-specific and time-invariant, including transport costs of moving, the psychic costs of separation from home, and the costs of information about remote locations (Lucas, 2001). Due to the low frequency of zeros in ‘Migration flows’ (i.e., less than 3.5% of the non-missing observations), Eq. (1) is estimated using traditional panel data techniques rather than methods that are designed to deal with the existence of a large proportion of zeros in the dependent variable. Nevertheless, our results persist when we employ such methods (see Section 4.4).

To explore whether our results are largely driven by geographically proximate and politically integrated societies (as discussed in Section 2), we interact our primary explanatory variable, ‘Ideological distance’, with a variable capturing the physical distance between host and home countries, and restrict the sample to include country-pairs that are both members of the EU at time  $t$  (EU dyads). Evidence for the conditionality of the reported effects upon these factors can be inferred from the coefficients on ‘Ideological distance’ and the interaction term having the opposite signs, and the coefficients for EU dyads having a larger magnitude than those for the full sample of dyads.

Table A.1 in the Online Appendix provides a full description of all variables used in the analysis, together with the corresponding data sources. Descriptive statistics for these variables are given in Table A.2.

## 4 Empirical Findings

### 4.1 Main Results

Table 1 reports the results obtained from estimating Eq. (1). To examine the sensitivity of the estimate on ‘Ideological distance’ to the inclusion of control variables, we adopt an ‘incremental strategy’. In particular, we start from a simple specification that includes our key explanatory variable and dyad fixed effects, and we then add year fixed effects and the control variables in a progressive manner. Columns (1) and (2) report the estimates for the ‘unrestricted sample’ (i.e., the sample size is not restricted by the availability of control variables), whereas columns (3)-(9) report the estimates for the ‘baseline sample’ (i.e., the sample size is determined by the availability of the full set of control variables). At a first point, we can see that both long-run and short-run economic factors exert an influence on bilateral migration flows: an increase in the average wage at

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<sup>17</sup>The bilateral stock of migrants captures the existing stock of migrants from country  $i$  living in country  $j$ . The data are taken from the updated version of Özden et al. (2011) and are available for the years 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. Thus, our measure reflects the value in the beginning year to which a flow corresponds (e.g., for the years 2000-2004, we use the value in 2000).

destination and a decrease in the current employment rate at the origin lead to a significant increase in the number of migrants moving from the origin to the destination country. In line with Beine et al. (2019), we can also see that the EU and the Schengen Agreement play a significant role for the international mobility of workers between the members states. Turning now to our key explanatory variable, we find strong evidence that bilateral migration flows increase when the government in the destination country is more left-wing than the government in the origin country: the coefficient on ‘Ideological distance’ is positive and statistically significant at the 1% confidence level. Specifically, the estimate in column (9) suggests that dyads/years with the highest value of ideological distance, will have, on average, about 70% higher migration flows compared to dyads/years with the lowest value of ideological distance.<sup>18</sup> In terms of substantive average effect, the same estimate implies that a one standard deviation increase in ideological difference will lead to a 6.8 percent increase in migration inflow. This is a quite large effect if one considers the total number of immigrants within the OECD.

To explore whether the results in Table 1 can be attributed to changes in the political landscape at both the host and home countries, we replace ‘Ideological distance’ in Eq. (1) with its two components: ideology at the destination and ideology at the origin. Columns (1) and (2) in Table 2 show the corresponding results before and after introducing the control variables. The estimated coefficients on the two variables have the expected sign and both appear to be statistically significant at conventional levels. However, the ideology at the origin seems to exert a weaker and statistically less robust effect on bilateral migration flows once the control variables are added. This suggests that, while pre-migration experiences and information about the ideology of the home country’s government can play some role for migration decision-making (Just, 2019), the political landscape of the possible host countries, and in particular the relative distance with that of the country of origin, is what matters the most. To further assess the sensitivity of our results, we replace the vector of origin-specific time-varying variables,  $\mathbf{X}_t^i$ , with origin-year fixed effects. In this way, we are able to capture all (observed and unobserved) factors at the origin that may confound the relationship between migration flows and ideology at the destination, and account for the multilateral resistance to migration.<sup>19</sup> As shown in columns (3) and (4) of Table 2, the inclusion of origin-year fixed effects leaves the estimate on ideology at the destination unchanged. Similarly, replacing the vector of destination-specific time-varying variables,  $\mathbf{X}_t^j$ , with destination-year fixed effects, has little effect on the estimate on ideology at the origin (see columns (5) and (6)).

[Table 1 and Table 2 about here]

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<sup>18</sup>Given that the outcome is in logged values, the percentage change effect is calculated by  $e^\lambda - 1$ , with  $\lambda$  being the estimated coefficient on ideological distance ( $\alpha$ ) multiplied by the difference between the maximum and the minimum value of ideological distance.

<sup>19</sup>Multilateral resistance to migration capture the fact that any change in bilateral migration flows will also affect the other relationships between the two countries (Anderson, 2011; Beine et al., 2019).

## 4.2 Endogeneity Issues

Potential endogeneity concerns may arise with the estimation of Eq. (1). If governments' ideological orientation is influenced by unobserved factors that are also relevant for migration flows, omitted variable bias would prevent the identification of a causal effect. Similarly, if parties' left-right positions (or the electoral outcomes) are partly determined by past migration flows, reverse causality may drive the relationship between the two variables.

**Omitted variable bias.** Two important factors are often omitted when estimating gravity models of international migration, which may lead to biased estimates (Beine et al., 2016, 2019). These factors are migrant networks (i.e., diasporas at the destination which can drive further migration inward due to lower migration costs) and unilateral immigration policies (i.e., immigration policies that are implemented with respect to all partner countries, and can be correlated with the political colour of the government). In Eq. (1), we account for the effect of migrant networks by controlling for the size of the bilateral migration stock at the start of a migration period (based on 5-year migration periods). In the Online Appendix, we also show that our results persist when we consider (lagged) bilateral migration stocks with annual frequency (available for a subset of observations) and when we estimate a dynamic panel data model. Similarly, in the Online Appendix, we show that the inferences on our ideological distance measure do not change when we control for unilateral immigration policies, based on a newly-released dataset by Helbling et al. (2017). More importantly, the results presented in the previous section are quite reassuring as regards to biases arising from the potential omission of unobserved characteristics. First, our ideological distance estimates in Table 1 do not seem to be sensitive to the inclusion of control variables, suggesting that the impact of unobservables must be relatively large, compared to observables, to invalidate our findings.<sup>20</sup> Second, as illustrated in Table 2, our results are robust to controlling for multilateral resistance to migration through the inclusion of origin-year or destination-year fixed effects, which can arguably capture a big part of omitted factors (Beine and Parsons, 2015; Beine et al., 2019).

**Reverse causality.** Another concern is whether there is a reverse causal relationship from international migration to the ideological positions of parties (and thus of elected governments), especially when it comes to the destination countries. An important reason why this concern is less acute in our context is that we rely on bilateral migration flows. As stressed by Beine et al. (2019), the bilateral nature of this type of analysis makes concerns about reverse causality much less serious than in a unilateral analysis of migration, since migration flows at the bilateral level are quite modest relative to the total size of migration flows at the destination. However, to ensure that reverse causality is not a major problem in our analysis, we adopt two complementary

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<sup>20</sup>To assess the extent to which unobservables may drive our results, we follow Altonji et al. (2005) in calculating how strong selection on unobservables would have to be in order to explain the observed relationship between migration flows and ideological distance. By comparing the estimates in columns (3) and (9) of Table 1, we find that the impact of unobserved factors would have to be at least 4.6 times stronger, as compared to observed factors, in order to explain away the effect of ideological distance. This makes it unlikely that unobservable factors will play a major role in our results.

approaches. First, we consider an alternative measure of ideological distance, which is constructed using information from the DPI (2017). As opposed to our continuous manifesto-based measure of political orientation, the DPI measure is dichotomous (parties are classified into right-wing and left-wing) and thus it is less prone to endogeneity; e.g., when parties adjust their positions in response to changing patterns of migration or public opinion trends. Second, we look at the dynamics of migration flows around the period of a left-wing government at the destination; that is, two years before the start and two years after the end of a left administration. Significant pre-left and post-left effects would potentially cast doubt on our interpretation that bilateral migration flows increase only when a left party is in office. Columns (1)-(4) of Table 3 present the results when ideological distance and ideology at the destination are based on the DPI measure. The evidence obtained is in line with our previous findings.<sup>21</sup> Column (5) reports the results when we augment the specification of column (4) with the pre-left and post-left variables. The pre-left variable enters the specification with a negative sign and fails to reach statistical significance, suggesting that our findings cannot be explained by patterns of migration in the years preceding a left administration. Even though the estimate on the post-left variable turns out to be statistically significant, its magnitude is much smaller than that on ideology, which may well reflect slowly changing migration patterns in the first years of a right administration.

To shed further light on the timing of the effects, we replace our ideology (at the destination) variable with six time indicators capturing years 1 and 2, years 3 and 4, and years 4+ before and after the change to a left government. Figure 2 depicts the estimates on these indicators. Taking the year of government change (at the destination) as the baseline, the figure shows that bilateral migration flows increase only after the government change and persist throughout the term of a left administration. This is consistent with Burmann et al. (2017), who show that only after an election, the inflow of refugees differs between right-wing and left-wing cabinets. In addition, the absence of significant effects in all the years of a right-wing administration indicates, once again, that the change in the political colour of the government is not associated with pre-electoral fluctuations in migration flows.

[Table 3 and Figure 2 about here]

### 4.3 Geographic Distance and EU Membership

The results displayed in Table 1 are not necessarily uniform across the country dyads covered in our analysis. As discussed in Section 2, the ideology-induced migration effects may be more prevalent for countries that are geographically close to one another, and those that are members of the EU. To investigate the empirical validity of this argument, we first add to the specification with the manifesto-based ideological distance its interaction with geographic distance and then restrict the

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<sup>21</sup> While the manifesto-based measure is available for the period 1990-2014, the DPI measure covers the years 2015 and 2016 too. Running regressions based on the common sample does not change our results.

sample to include the EU dyads only.<sup>22</sup> Table 4 presents the results before and after the inclusion of the full set of control variables. Two regularities stand out. First, the extent to which ideological distance affects bilateral migration flows is highly conditional upon the physical proximity between migrants’ host and home countries. Specifically, at low values of geographic distance, the ideological differences between the governments of the two countries play a significant role for migration flows, whereas, at high values of geographic distance, these effects are dampened or vanish – as inferred from the positive and significantly estimated coefficients of ideological distance, together with the negative and significantly estimated coefficients of the interaction terms with geographic distance (see columns (1) and (2)). Second, when we look at the EU dyads, the corroborating evidence is economically much stronger, suggesting that both physical distance and EU membership can serve as channels through which prospective migrants receive information about the political environment of other countries (see columns (3) and (4)).

To explore more thoroughly the conditionality of the ideology effects upon physical proximity, we calculate the marginal effects of ideological distance (based on estimates from the regressions in columns (2) and (4) of Table 4) and plot them over the respective values of geographic distance. As shown in panel (a) of Figure 3, the observed relationship for the full sample of dyads is partially driven by countries that are geographically close to one another. Furthermore, as shown in panel (b) of Figure 3, when we focus on the EU dyads, the effect of ideological distance becomes far more pronounced, and the result is still conditional upon geographic distance. All in all, our analysis in this section confirms that exposure to the political landscape of other countries facilitates the identification of national parties in the heuristic left-right spectrum, and, as such, can determine the extent to which ideological differences matter for migration decisions.

[Table 4 and Figure 3 about here]

#### 4.4 Robustness Tests and Further Insights

The key finding that emerges from our analysis is that bilateral migration flows are higher when the government at the destination is more left-wing than the government at the origin. To provide further support for this finding, we perform a series of robustness tests, which are reported in the Online Appendix.

In Table A.3, we check the sensitivity of our results to augmenting the baseline specification with a number of regressors, which can serve as additional (potential) determinants of bilateral migration flows. Specifically, we add the following variables at both the destination and the origin: the

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<sup>22</sup>Geographic distance does not only capture the presence of geographical barriers and transportation costs, but it also plays a major role in explaining genetic distance (Giuliano et al., 2014), which has long been used as a proxy for the array of cultural traits transmitted intergenerationally within populations over the long run (Bove and Gokmen, 2018). As such, it also allows us to account for some of the differences in social norms, customs and habits. Moreover, compared to time-varying measures of cultural distance, such as those derived from the World Value Survey, it has the advantage of predating bilateral migration flows and is available for all dyads.



restrictiveness of unilateral immigration policies (Helbling et al., 2017),<sup>23</sup> the size of the country (as captured by the logarithm of the country’s total population), the expectations about the evolution of economic conditions (as captured by the yields on 10-year government bonds), the number of researchers (as a proxy for high-skilled labour), the quality of political institutions (as measured by the Polity score), the degree of economic integration with the rest of the world (as captured by the KOF index of economic globalization; Gygli et al. (2019)), and the number of terrorist attacks against refugees (as a proxy for political violence).<sup>24</sup> The effect of ideological distance remains positive, statistically significant, and stable in size across these specifications.<sup>25</sup>

In Table A.4, we carry out additional checks to make sure that the migrant network effect does not distort our results. First, we replace the bilateral migration stock variable from Özden et al. (2011) (measured based on 5-year migration periods) with the corresponding variable from the OECD Immigration Database (with annual frequency but available for a subset of our observations). Second, we estimate a dynamic panel data model that includes the lagged dependent variable among the controls, which allows us to capture persistence in migration flows and also potentially mean-reverting dynamics. Third, we exclude the pairs of countries for which there is a relatively large network. More precisely, we follow Beine et al. (2019) and drop from our sample the country pairs with the 1% and 5% highest values of migrant networks in the last available migration period, and those with the 1% and 5% highest growth in migrant networks over the full investigated period (using the Özden et al. (2011)’s bilateral stock data). The results obtained from these tests are very similar to those presented in Table 1.<sup>26</sup>

In Table A.5, we assess how the presence of zero values in the dependent variable affects our results. To do so, we estimate our baseline model using ‘unscaled’ OLS, where the dependent variable is measured by the logarithm of bilateral migration flows before adding the value 1. As a further approach, we employ the Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood (PPML) estimator developed by Silva and Tenreyro (2006). The latter allows us to include the zero values for the dependent variable, and rule out potential selection bias arising from country pairs with zero flows having a different population distribution compared to those with positive flows (Beine and Parsons, 2015). The PPML has also been shown to perform better in the presence of heteroscedasticity as compared to OLS and Tobit and is resilient to measurement errors (Silva and Tenreyro, 2006). The results of these alternative estimations do not change the inferences drawn from earlier findings. Once again,

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<sup>23</sup>Helbling et al. (2017) define immigration policy as the government’s statements of what it intends to do or not do (including laws, regulations, decisions or orders) in regards to the selection, admission, settlement and deportation of foreign citizens residing in the country.

<sup>24</sup>To account for the fact that social benefits tend to be higher during left-wing administrations (Bove et al., 2017), we also experiment by controlling for the total value of social expenditure (as a % of GDP) at both the destination and origin. Our results, once again, do not change.

<sup>25</sup>While the estimate on ideological distance in the specification with immigration policies appears to be economically less significant, this is exclusively driven by the smaller sample size: excluding the variable for immigration policies but keeping the same sample size returns the same estimate.

<sup>26</sup>Our results are also robust to dropping each country in our sample (as destination or origin) one by one. These tests are not reported but are available upon request.

we can observe a positive impact of ideological distance on bilateral migration flows.

We also check robustness to two alternative model specifications. To further address endogeneity concerns, we replace the (manifesto-based) ideological distance variable with its one-year and two-year lags. As shown in Table A.6, the lagged variable returns statistically significant estimates, which (as expected) are relatively smaller than that on the contemporaneous measure. On the other hand, to further address the possibility of measurement errors in the way we capture government ideology, we employ a third ideological distance variable based on information from the updated version of Potrafke (2009).<sup>27</sup> Using this variable and running the same regression set-up as before does not change our results (see Table A.7).

Finally, to gain additional insights into the relationship between ideological distance and migration flows, we explore one of the main underlying mechanisms: social tolerance; i.e., “the right to express cultural difference and the acceptance of this by the native population” (Weldon, 2006, p.335). In particular, since citizens’ tolerance for ethnic minorities or appreciation for foreign cultures is strongly related to the degree to which the dominant ethnic tradition is institutionalized (Weldon, 2006), our results can partly be driven by governments’ positions on traditional or religious moral values. To this end, we replace our ideological distance measure with one of its ‘right-wing’ components; namely, the difference in the frequency of positive mentions of ‘traditional morality’ between destination and origin countries.<sup>28</sup> The results, presented in Table A.8, provide evidence in favour of the above argument: bilateral migration flows decrease when the government at the destination is associated with higher values of traditional morality, compared to the government at the origin.

## 5 Conclusions

Whereas existing studies have introduced a wide range of factors that drive migration flows, they mostly focus on economic considerations, and we still lack a systematic analysis of whether and how the political landscape of the host society vis-a-vis that of the home country affect the flow of transnational population movements. We complement these studies by introducing a broader perspective that captures the sensitivity of immigrants to the ideological distance between the governments of the two countries. As national states seek to develop adequate policies to address the challenges and opportunities of immigration, political parties and governments differ widely in their approach towards ethnic diversity and their tolerance of foreign-borns. Government institutions

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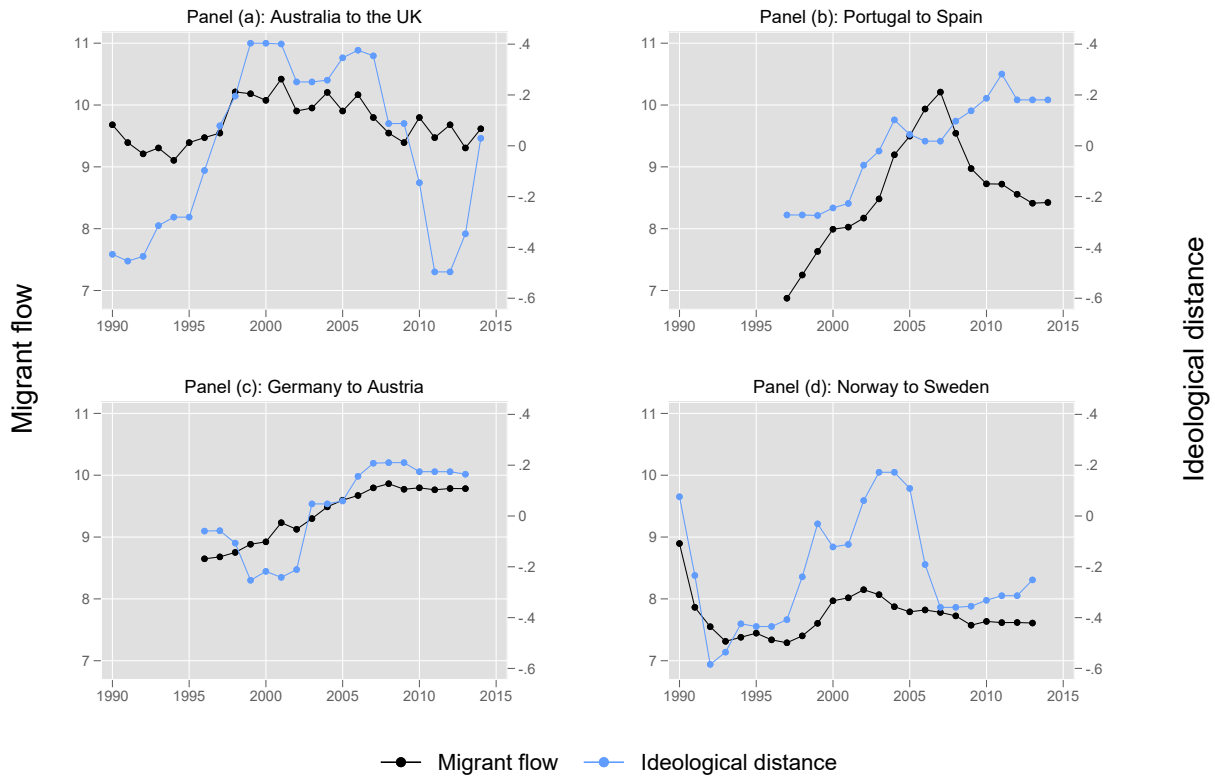
<sup>27</sup>The Potrafke index takes the following values: 1 if the share of governing right-wing parties is larger than 2/3; 2 if it is between 1/3 and 2/3; and, 3 if the share of centrist parties is 50% or if the left-wing and right-wing parties form a coalition government that is not dominated by one side or the other. The index is symmetric and takes the values 4 and 5 if left-wing parties dominate. Data for this index are not available for the ‘new’ members of the EU, and thus we can only perform this test for a subset of our observations.

<sup>28</sup>Positive mentions of traditional morality include support for the role of religious institutions in state and society, and maintenance and stability of the traditional family as a value.

and political orientations can shape the degree of social tolerance and judgments towards foreign-borns. As such, differences in government partisanship can be an important signal regarding a receiving society's attitude towards immigrants beyond the actual immigration laws in place. In absence of a first-hand experience of the social and political context in the receiving states, we argue that immigrants use the difference in political orientation between host and home countries to infer the relative level of tolerance towards out-groups and whether host societies have a welcoming civic culture towards non-native populations.

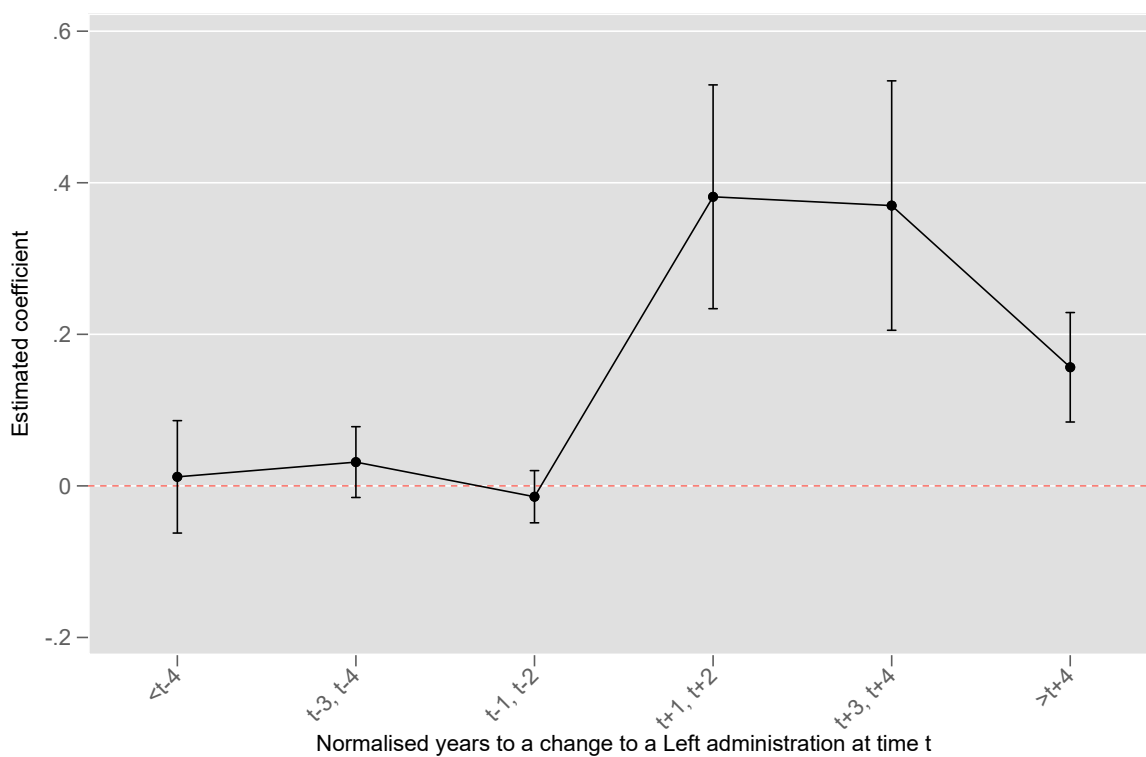
Using data on 36 OECD countries between 1990 and 2016, and augmented gravity equations, we show that migration patterns are sensitive to the political distance between sending and destination countries, once we control for several important economic and demographic considerations. In particular, our results reveal that bilateral migration flows are higher when the government at the destination is more left-wing than the government at the origin. As geographic proximity and the membership to a supranational institution should facilitate immigrants' exposure to important information about the political landscape of destination countries, we also show that the ideology-induced effect is larger when the two countries are geographically close to each other, and when they are both members of the EU. Taken together, our findings shed new light on the determinants of migration flows and highlight how governments' manifesto and their rhetoric around issues of tolerance and preferences for immigration can contribute to shaping the composition of contemporary societies, even in absence of actual changes in states' immigration policies.

Figure 1: Case Study Evidence



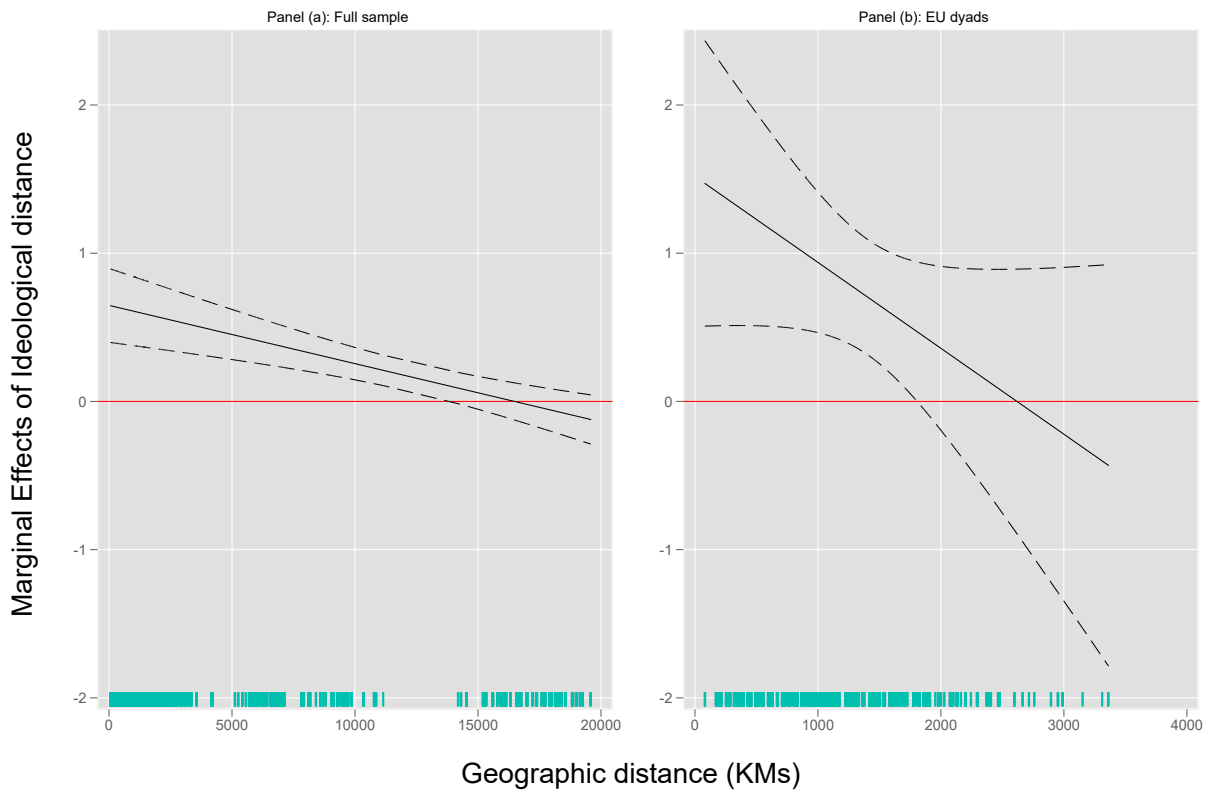
Notes: This graph shows the time evolution of bilateral migration flows and ideological distance for four sample dyads.

Figure 2: The Timing of Effects for Destination Countries



*Notes:* This graph shows the fluctuations in bilateral migration flows before and after the change to a left administration in the destination country. Dots represent point estimates taking the year of government change  $t$  as the baseline, while lines denote 95% confidence intervals.

Figure 3: Conditional Effects



*Notes:* This graph shows the conditional effects of ideological distance at different values of geographic distance based on the full sample of dyads (panel (a)) and the sub-sample of EU dyads (panel (b)). The conditional effects are calculated based on the specifications of columns (2) and (4) in Table 4. All other covariates are held constant at their means. Dashed lines signify 90% confidence intervals. Rug plot at horizontal axis illustrates the distribution of geographic distance in KMs. Red horizontal line marks marginal effect of 0.

Table 1: Migration Flows and Ideological Distance: Main Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Ideological distance	0.362*** (0.000)	0.293*** (0.000)	0.390*** (0.000)	0.380*** (0.000)	0.348*** (0.000)	0.347*** (0.000)	0.338*** (0.000)	0.332*** (0.000)	0.320*** (0.000)
Real GDP growth [dest.]				-0.003 (0.528)	-0.004 (0.424)	-0.003 (0.541)	-0.002 (0.669)	0.001 (0.778)	0.002 (0.695)
Real GDP growth [origin]				-0.011** (0.011)	-0.007* (0.095)	-0.008* (0.057)	-0.007 (0.101)	-0.004 (0.378)	-0.004 (0.295)
Employment rate [dest.]					0.005 (0.442)	-0.000 (0.984)	-0.003 (0.653)	-0.006 (0.419)	-0.006 (0.366)
Employment rate [origin]					-0.021*** (0.009)	-0.019** (0.020)	-0.021** (0.011)	-0.024*** (0.004)	-0.023*** (0.005)
Average wage [dest.]						1.230*** (0.000)	1.203*** (0.000)	1.167*** (0.000)	1.217*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]						-0.243 (0.361)	-0.417 (0.116)	-0.459* (0.081)	-0.544** (0.035)
EU members							0.361*** (0.000)	0.307*** (0.002)	0.266*** (0.008)
Schengen members								0.134** (0.025)	0.110* (0.070)
Dyadic stock									0.166*** (0.003)
Year FEs		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.895	0.908	0.911	0.911	0.912	0.912	0.913	0.913	0.913
No. of dyads	925	925	821	821	821	821	821	821	821
Observations	14,260	14,260	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262

Notes: Columns report  $p$ -values. Columns (1) and (2) show the results for the ‘unrestricted sample’ (i.e., the sample size is not restricted by the availability of control variables). Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table 2: Migration Flows and Ideology at Destination and Origin

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ideology [dest.]	0.486*** (0.000)	0.473*** (0.000)	0.488*** (0.000)	0.477*** (0.000)		
Ideology [orig.]	-0.295*** (0.003)	-0.163* (0.074)			-0.298*** (0.000)	-0.160** (0.036)
Real GDP growth [dest.]		0.002 (0.756)		0.000 (0.928)		
Real GDP growth [origin]		-0.005 (0.275)				-0.004 (0.145)
Employment rate [dest.]		-0.007 (0.318)		-0.004 (0.537)		
Employment rate [origin]		-0.025*** (0.003)				-0.025*** (0.000)
Average wage [dest.]		1.217*** (0.000)		1.139*** (0.000)		
Average wage [origin]		-0.553** (0.033)				-0.618*** (0.003)
EU members		0.272*** (0.007)		-0.011 (0.915)		0.397*** (0.000)
Schengen members		0.114* (0.059)		0.107 (0.171)		0.104* (0.064)
Dyadic stock		0.165*** (0.004)		0.136** (0.014)		0.186*** (0.001)
Origin x Year FEs			✓	✓		
Dest. x Year FEs					✓	✓
Year FEs	✓	✓				
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.911	0.913	0.918	0.919	0.954	0.956
No. of dyads	821	821	821	821	821	821
Observations	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262	9,262

Notes: Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.



Table 3: Migration Flows and Ideological Distance: Binary Ideology Measure

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Ideological distance (DPI)	0.154*** (0.000)	0.152*** (0.000)			
Ideology (DPI) [dest.]			0.243*** (0.000)	0.253*** (0.000)	0.280*** (0.000)
Pre-left (2 years) [dest.]					-0.023 (0.259)
Post-left (2 years) [dest.]					0.121*** (0.000)
Real GDP growth [dest.]		0.010** (0.044)		0.009* (0.082)	0.011** (0.027)
Real GDP growth [origin]		0.002 (0.757)		0.003 (0.658)	0.003 (0.662)
Employment rate [dest.]		-0.002 (0.801)		-0.002 (0.754)	-0.001 (0.941)
Employment rate [origin]		-0.029*** (0.000)		-0.030*** (0.000)	-0.030*** (0.000)
Average wage [dest.]		0.271 (0.303)		0.257 (0.323)	0.163 (0.522)
Average wage [origin]		-0.930*** (0.002)		-0.919*** (0.002)	-0.912*** (0.002)
EU members		0.282*** (0.009)		0.302*** (0.005)	0.300*** (0.005)
Schengen members		0.241*** (0.002)		0.263*** (0.001)	0.269*** (0.000)
Dyadic stock		0.122** (0.026)		0.127** (0.017)	0.119** (0.026)
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.904	0.906	0.904	0.907	0.907
No. of dyads	832	832	832	832	832
Observations	9,809	9,809	9,809	9,809	9,809

*Notes:* Pre-left captures the two years before the start of a left administration, whereas post-left captured the two years after the end of a left administration. Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table 4: Migration Flows and Ideological Distance:  
Interactions with Geographic Distance and EU Membership

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance	0.320*** (0.000)	0.648*** (0.000)	0.793*** (0.001)	1.518** (0.014)
Ideological distance x Geographic distance		-0.039*** (0.000)		-0.580 (0.151)
Real GDP growth [dest.]	0.002 (0.695)	0.002 (0.756)	-0.014* (0.092)	-0.014* (0.091)
Real GDP growth [origin]	-0.004 (0.295)	-0.004 (0.308)	-0.007 (0.283)	-0.007 (0.277)
Employment rate [dest.]	-0.006 (0.366)	-0.005 (0.466)	-0.008 (0.500)	-0.007 (0.558)
Employment rate [origin]	-0.023*** (0.005)	-0.022*** (0.006)	-0.025** (0.047)	-0.029** (0.020)
Average wage [dest.]	1.217*** (0.000)	1.199*** (0.000)	1.075* (0.088)	1.050* (0.093)
Average wage [origin]	-0.544** (0.035)	-0.503* (0.051)	-1.141** (0.010)	-1.176*** (0.008)
EU members	0.266*** (0.008)	0.257** (0.011)		
Schengen members	0.110* (0.070)	0.100 (0.101)	-0.016 (0.857)	-0.013 (0.887)
Dyadic stock	0.166*** (0.003)	0.159*** (0.005)	-0.103 (0.123)	-0.101 (0.121)
Sample	Full	Full	EU dyads	EU dyads
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.913	0.914	0.888	0.889
No. of dyads	821	821	383	383
Observations	9,262	9,262	4,005	4,005

Notes: Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

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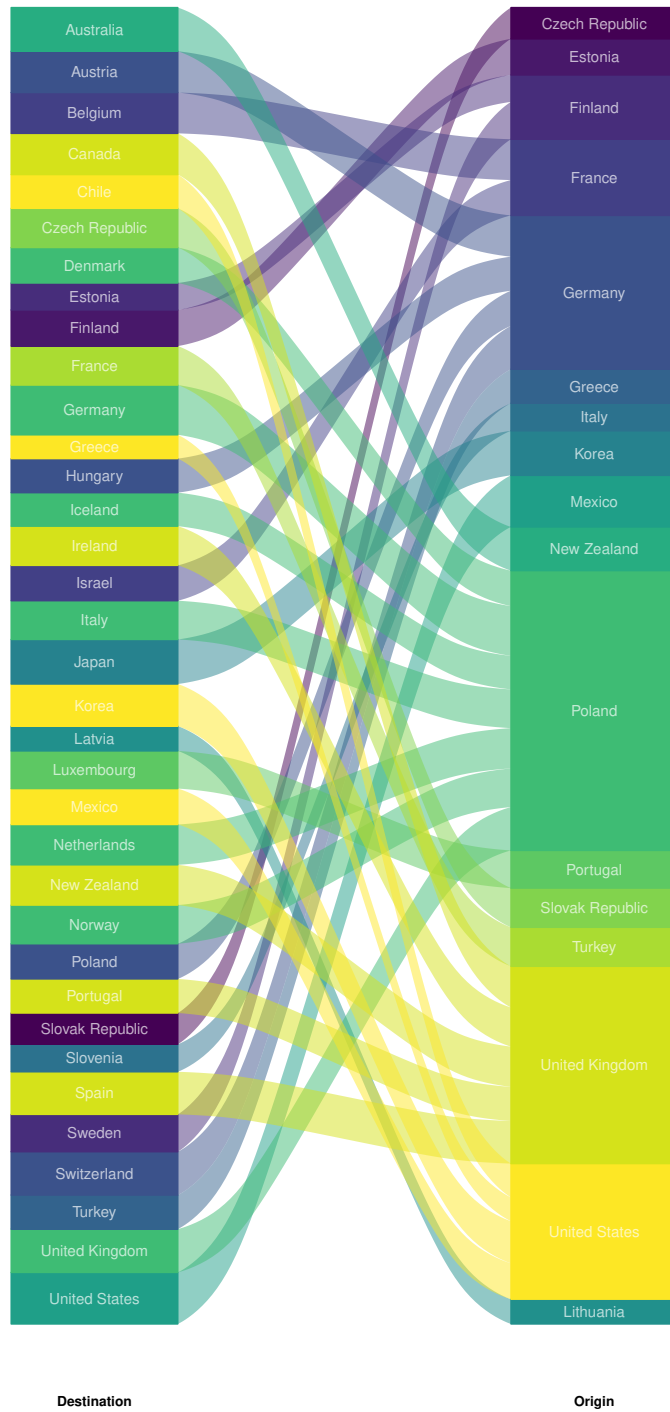
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## APPENDIX

### For Online Publication

- Figure A.1 is a Sankey diagram that depicts the top origin country for each of the 35 destination countries.
- Table A.1 sets out detailed definitions and sources for each variable used in the analysis.
- Table A.2 provides summary statistics for each variable used in the analysis.
- Table A.3 shows robustness to controlling for additional (potential) determinants of bilateral migration flows. We include the following measures at both the origin and destination: immigration policies; total population; long-term interest rates; the number of researchers per 1,000 people; the polity score; the degree of economic globalisation; and the number of terrorist attacks perpetrated against refugees.
- Table A.4 shows robustness to accounting for the impact of migrant networks. First, we use the OECD annual data on dyadic migration stock, lagged by 1 year. Second, we estimate a dynamic panel data model that includes the lagged dependent variable. Third, we exclude dyads based on: (i) the growth of the diaspora in the destination country, and (ii) the size of the diaspora in the destination country.
- Table A.5 shows robustness to estimating our baseline model using two alternative methods: ‘unscaled’ OLS and PPML.
- Table A.6 shows persistence in our estimated effects when we employ the 1-year and 2-year lagged value of ideological distance.
- Table A.7 shows robustness to using a third measure of government ideology (Potrafke, 2009) to construct our relative ideological distance variable.
- Table A.8 illustrates that our results can partly be explained by differences in the frequency of positive mentions of ‘traditional morality’ between destination and origin countries. Specifically, we show that bilateral migration flows decrease when the government at the destination is associated with higher values of traditional morality, compared to the government at the origin.

Figure A.1: Bilateral Migration Flows



Notes: This graph shows the top origin country for each destination country in our sample using a Sankey diagram.



Table A.1: Variable Definitions and Data Sources

Variable Name	Definition	Source
<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
Migration flows	1 plus the natural logarithm of the flow of migrants from the origin country to the destination country.	OECD Immigration Database
<i>Ideology-Related Variables</i>		
Ideology [dest./origin]	A continuous measure of left-right ideological leaning that is derived from the incumbent party's manifesto at the time of election. It is constructed using the frequency of positive and negative mentions of different issues, as captured by 26 content analytical variables.	Volkens et al. (2019) & Seki and Williams (2014)
Ideological distance	Ideology [dest.] minus Ideology [origin].	Authors' calculation from Volkens et al. (2019) & Seki and Williams (2014)
Ideological distance (DPI) [dest./origin]	A binary indicator of ideological orientation, taking value 1 for left or centrist governments and 0 for right governments.	DPI
Ideological distance (DPI)	Ideology (DPI) [dest.] minus Ideology (DPI) [origin].	Authors' calculation from the DPI
Ideological distance (Potrafke)	The Potrafke index [dest.] minus the Potrafke index [origin]. This index places the government on a left-right scale with values between 1 and 5. The Potrafke index takes value 1 if the share of governing right-wing parties is larger than 2/3; 2 if it is between 1/3 and 2/3; and, 3 if the share of centrist parties is 50% or if the left-wing and right-wing parties form a coalition government that is not dominated by one side or the other. The index is symmetric and takes the values 4 and 5 if left-wing parties dominate.	Potrafke (2009)
Traditional morality distance	Traditional morality [dest.] minus traditional morality [origin]. Traditional morality captures the frequency of favourable mentions of traditional and/or religious moral values.	Authors' calculation from Volkens et al. (2019) & Seki and Williams (2014)
<i>Other Variables</i>		
Real GDP Growth [dest./origin]	Annual growth rate of real GDP.	OECD
Employment rate [dest./origin]	The ratio of the employed to the working age population.	OECD
Average wage [dest./origin]	The natural logarithm of the average wage. This is obtained by dividing the national-accounts-based total wage bill by the average number of employees in the total economy, which is then multiplied by the ratio of the average usual weekly hours per full-time employee to the average usual weekly hours for all employees.	OECD
EU members	=1 if both destination and origin countries are members of the EU, 0 otherwise.	Authors' calculation
Schengen member	=1 if both destination and origin countries are members of the EU Schengen area, 0 otherwise.	Authors' calculation
Dyadic stock	1 plus the natural logarithm of the existing stock of migrants from the origin country that reside in the destination country, measured at the start of a migration period (based on 5-year migration periods).	Özden et al. (2011)
Lagged dyadic stock (OECD)	The lagged value of the natural logarithm of the existing stock of migrants from the origin country that reside in the destination country (annual frequency).	OECD Immigration Database
Geographic distance	Kilometer distance (in thousands) between destination and origin countries' most populated cities.	CEPII
Immigration policies [dest./origin]	The arithmetic mean of five policy field scores that govern immigration. Higher values indicate more restrictive immigration policies.	Helbling et al. (2017)
Total population [dest./origin]	The natural logarithm of the country's total population (in thousands).	OECD
Long-term interest rates [dest./origin]	The yields on 10-year government bonds.	OECD
Researchers [dest./origin]	Professionals engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems, as well as in the management of the projects concerned, per 1,000 people employed.	OECD
Policy score [dest./origin]	The country's level of democracy, taking values between -10 and 10. Higher values indicate a higher quality of political institutions.	Polity IV
Economic globalisation [dest./origin]	The degree of economic integration with the rest of the world, capturing both trade flows and financial flows. It takes values between 1 and 100, with higher values indicating a higher degree of economic globalization.	Gygli et al. (2019)
Terrorist attacks against refugees [dest./origin]	The number of terrorist attacks where at least one of the targets/victims is a refugee.	Gineste and Savun (2019)

*Notes:* [dest./origin] indicates that the variable is available for both the destination country and the origin country. OECD = OECD Statistics. DPI = The World Bank's Database of Political Institutions. CEPII = Centre d'Etudes Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales.

Table A.2: Descriptive Statistics for Model Variables

	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.	Obs.
Migration flows	5.489	2.209	0	12.166	9,262
Ideological distance	-0.002	0.213	-0.839	0.839	9,262
Ideology [dest.]	0.010	0.154	-0.485	0.464	9,262
Ideology [origin]	0.012	0.147	-0.485	0.464	9,262
Real GDP growth [dest.]	1.945	2.982	-14.724	11.889	9,262
Real GDP growth [origin]	1.931	3.388	-14.814	11.889	9,262
Employment rate [dest.]	67.936	7.122	51.200	85.150	9,262
Employment rate [origin]	67.051	6.900	48.800	85.150	9,262
Average wage [dest.]	10.574	0.343	9.609	11.071	9,262
Average wage [origin]	10.514	0.370	9.306	11.071	9,262
EU members	0.432	0.495	0	1	9,262
Schengen members	0.441	0.497	0	1	9,262
Dyadic stock	8.233	2.316	0	14.261	9,262
Ideological distance (DPI)	0.011	0.714	-1	1	9,809
Ideology (DPI) [dest.]	0.506	0.500	0	1	9,809
Ideological distance (Potrafke)	-0.016	1.212	-2	3	6,432
Traditional morality distance	0.000	1	-8.393	8.289	9,262
Geographic distance (KMs, thousands)	4.399	5.355	0.060	19.586	9,262
Lagged dyadic stock (OECD)	7.804	2.326	0.000	13.477	6,358
Immigration policies [dest.]	0.398	0.055	0.290	0.704	5,759
Immigration policies [origin]	0.411	0.072	0.294	0.704	5,759
Total population [dest.]	9.406	1.559	5.667	12.673	8,713
Total population [origin]	9.450	1.523	5.667	12.673	8,713
Long-term interest rates [dest.]	4.261	1.821	0.520	12.358	8,502
Long-term interest rates [origin]	4.391	2.205	0.520	22.498	8,502
Researchers [dest.]	7.907	3.019	2.509	17.275	7,151
Researchers [origin]	7.703	2.867	2.762	17.275	7,151
Polity score [dest.]	9.796	0.560	6	10	8,692
Polity score [origin]	9.784	0.588	6	10	8,692
Economic globalisation [dest.]	75.594	8.518	43.606	93.589	9,262
Economic globalisation [origin]	75.122	8.649	43.606	93.589	9,262
Terrorist attacks against refugees [dest.]	0.006	0.075	0	1	9,238
Terrorist attacks against refugees [origin]	0.008	0.087	0	1	9,238

Table A.3: Robustness Tests: Additional Control Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Ideological distance	0.320*** (0.000)	0.154** (0.028)	0.282*** (0.000)	0.310*** (0.000)	0.360*** (0.001)	0.334*** (0.000)	0.316*** (0.000)	0.324*** (0.000)
Real GDP growth [dest.]	0.002 (0.695)	-0.004 (0.450)	-0.001 (0.901)	0.014** (0.011)	0.002 (0.726)	0.002 (0.734)	0.002 (0.728)	0.002 (0.642)
Real GDP growth [origin]	-0.004 (0.295)	0.002 (0.695)	-0.005 (0.218)	0.000 (0.977)	-0.005 (0.370)	-0.005 (0.235)	-0.008* (0.065)	-0.004 (0.359)
Employment rate [dest.]	-0.006 (0.366)	0.007 (0.422)	-0.004 (0.557)	0.001 (0.908)	-0.002 (0.792)	-0.006 (0.398)	-0.005 (0.466)	-0.008 (0.281)
Employment rate [origin]	-0.023*** (0.005)	-0.012 (0.188)	-0.026*** (0.002)	-0.020** (0.024)	-0.029*** (0.003)	-0.022*** (0.009)	-0.024*** (0.004)	-0.024*** (0.003)
Average wage [dest.]	1.217*** (0.000)	1.201*** (0.001)	1.241*** (0.000)	1.004*** (0.001)	1.164*** (0.000)	1.205*** (0.001)	1.243*** (0.000)	1.207*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]	-0.544** (0.035)	-0.379 (0.208)	-0.523** (0.047)	-0.727** (0.013)	-0.602** (0.041)	-0.646** (0.024)	-0.643** (0.015)	-0.541** (0.037)
EU members	0.266*** (0.008)	0.072 (0.511)	0.226** (0.025)	0.154 (0.157)	0.278** (0.015)	0.308*** (0.002)	0.253*** (0.009)	0.266*** (0.008)
Schengen members	0.110* (0.070)	0.060 (0.394)	0.098 (0.113)	0.143** (0.020)	0.125* (0.096)	0.094 (0.130)	0.087 (0.145)	0.118* (0.056)
Dyadic stock	0.166*** (0.003)	0.341*** (0.005)	0.164*** (0.004)	0.139** (0.013)	0.144** (0.014)	0.148*** (0.010)	0.151*** (0.005)	0.166*** (0.004)
Immigration policies [dest.]		-0.769 (0.144)						
Immigration policies [origin]		-1.323*** (0.004)						
Total population [dest.]			0.188 (0.784)					
Total population [origin]			-1.244* (0.061)					
Long-term interest rates [dest.]				0.018 (0.108)				
Long-term interest rates [origin]				0.017** (0.031)				
Researchers [dest.]					0.089*** (0.000)			
Researchers [origin]					0.011 (0.632)			
Polity score [dest.]						-0.034 (0.448)		
Polity score [origin]						0.075 (0.302)		
Economic globalisation [dest.]							-0.006 (0.278)	
Economic globalisation [origin]							0.017*** (0.003)	
Terrorist attacks against refugees [dest.]								0.073 (0.157)
Terrorist attacks against refugees [origin]								0.069 (0.595)
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.913	0.957	0.919	0.910	0.907	0.909	0.913	0.913
No. of dyads	821	695	796	767	758	768	821	821
Observations	9,262	5,759	8,713	8,502	7,151	8,692	9,262	9,238

Notes: Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table A.4: Robustness Tests: Accounting for the Impact of Networks

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Ideological distance	0.403*** (0.001)	0.212*** (0.000)	0.325*** (0.000)	0.316*** (0.000)	0.320*** (0.000)	0.325*** (0.000)
Real GDP growth [dest.]	0.006 (0.424)	0.010*** (0.003)	0.001 (0.900)	-0.001 (0.834)	0.002 (0.726)	0.004 (0.506)
Real GDP growth [origin]	-0.001 (0.818)	-0.009*** (0.001)	-0.004 (0.332)	-0.007 (0.134)	-0.004 (0.363)	-0.004 (0.372)
Employment rate [dest.]	0.012* (0.095)	-0.001 (0.780)	-0.004 (0.592)	-0.001 (0.937)	-0.006 (0.383)	-0.013* (0.071)
Employment rate [origin]	-0.027*** (0.004)	-0.014*** (0.009)	-0.023*** (0.006)	-0.024*** (0.005)	-0.022*** (0.006)	-0.024*** (0.005)
Average wage [dest.]	1.401*** (0.000)	0.753*** (0.000)	1.090*** (0.000)	0.905*** (0.003)	1.139*** (0.000)	1.097*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]	-0.518* (0.070)	-0.319** (0.019)	-0.565** (0.035)	-0.734*** (0.008)	-0.455* (0.084)	-0.450 (0.100)
EU members	0.371*** (0.002)	0.079 (0.132)	0.335*** (0.001)	0.376*** (0.000)	0.304*** (0.003)	0.269*** (0.006)
Schengen members	0.197*** (0.001)	0.029 (0.420)	0.116* (0.055)	0.075 (0.206)	0.138** (0.022)	0.150** (0.013)
Lagged Dyadic stock (OECD)	0.180*** (0.000)					
Lagged inflow		0.601*** (0.000)				
Excluded dyads			>= 99 pctl. growth	>= 95 pctl. growth	>= 99 pctl. level	>= 95 pctl. level
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.914	0.940	0.914	0.914	0.913	0.911
No. of dyads	674	818	814	789	814	793
Observations	6,358	9,068	9,165	8,810	9,160	8,809

*Notes:* Columns (3) and (4) exclude the country pairs with the 1% and 5% highest growth in migrant networks over the full investigated period. Columns (5) and (6) exclude the country pairs with the 1% and 5% highest values of migrant networks in the last available migration period. Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table A.5: Robustness Tests: Alternative Estimation Methods

	'Unscaled' OLS		PPML	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance	0.218*** (0.000)	0.139*** (0.004)	0.071*** (0.000)	0.057*** (0.000)
Real GDP growth [dest.]		0.012** (0.017)		-0.000 (0.704)
Real GDP growth [origin]		-0.005 (0.160)		-0.001 (0.124)
Employment rate [dest.]		-0.003 (0.691)		-0.001 (0.647)
Employment rate [origin]		-0.024*** (0.000)		-0.004*** (0.002)
Average wage [dest.]		0.733** (0.013)		0.296*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]		-0.523** (0.018)		-0.093* (0.060)
EU members		0.234*** (0.008)		0.061*** (0.002)
Schengen members		0.215*** (0.000)		0.025** (0.025)
Dyadic stock		0.169*** (0.002)		0.032*** (0.002)
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.945	0.948		
No. of dyads	817	817	808	808
Observations	8,950	8,950	9,224	9,224

*Notes:* Dependent variable in columns (1) and (2):  $\log(\text{Migration Flows})$ . Dependent variable in columns (3) and (4):  $\log(1 + \text{Migration Flows})$ . PPML = Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood. Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table A.6: Robustness Tests: Lagged Ideological Distance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Ideological distance [1 year lag]	0.364*** (0.000)	0.293*** (0.000)		
Ideological distance [2 year lag]			0.188*** (0.002)	0.132** (0.026)
Real GDP growth [dest.]		0.003 (0.618)		0.002 (0.770)
Real GDP growth [origin]		-0.005 (0.211)		-0.005 (0.213)
Employment rate [dest.]		-0.007 (0.357)		-0.007 (0.335)
Employment rate [origin]		-0.024*** (0.004)		-0.026*** (0.002)
Average wage [dest.]		1.071*** (0.001)		1.192*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]		-0.527** (0.043)		-0.571** (0.030)
EU members		0.274*** (0.007)		0.260** (0.011)
Schengen members		0.110* (0.069)		0.120** (0.048)
Dyadic stock		0.174*** (0.002)		0.179*** (0.002)
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
R-squared	0.912	0.914	0.911	0.914
No. of dyads	821	821	821	821
Observations	9,177	9,177	9,130	9,130

*Notes:* Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level.  
 \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table A.7: Robustness Tests:  
Using the Potrafke Index

	(1)	(2)
Ideological distance [Potrafke]	0.069*** (0.002)	0.079*** (0.000)
Real GDP growth [dest.]		-0.011 (0.122)
Real GDP growth [origin]		0.002 (0.784)
Employment rate [dest.]		0.024*** (0.001)
Employment rate [origin]		-0.039*** (0.001)
Average wage [dest.]		1.852*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]		-1.955*** (0.000)
Schengen members		-0.095* (0.098)
Dyadic stock		-0.113 (0.363)
Year FEs	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓
R-squared	0.898	0.903
No. of dyads	438	438
Observations	6,432	6,432

*Notes:* Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.

Table A.8: Further Insights:  
Migration Flows and Traditional Morality

	(1)	(2)
Traditional morality distance	-0.054*** (0.000)	-0.047*** (0.001)
Real GDP growth [dest.]		0.003 (0.516)
Real GDP growth [origin]		-0.005 (0.228)
Employment rate [dest.]		-0.004 (0.532)
Employment rate [origin]		-0.028*** (0.001)
Average wage [dest.]		1.159*** (0.000)
Average wage [origin]		-0.513** (0.048)
EU members		0.271*** (0.008)
Schengen members		0.115* (0.057)
Dyadic stock		0.170*** (0.003)
Year FEs	✓	✓
Dyad FEs	✓	✓
R-squared	0.911	0.913
No. of dyads	821	821
Observations	9,262	9,262

*Notes:* Columns report  $p$ -values. Standard errors are clustered at the dyad level. \*\*\*, \*\*, \* Statistically significant at the 1%, 5% and 10% confidence level respectively.