Ethics, Politics and Migration: Public Debates on the Free Movement of Romanians and Bulgarians in the UK, 2006–2013

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Abstract

Public debates on immigration have become the subject of much concern, particularly in the UK. This article applies an ethical lens to assess changes in public debates over intra-EU migration in six UK national newspapers during 2006 and 2013. It finds an almost complete dominance of communitarian justifications, mainly based on welfare chauvinism, but a notable increase in security-related arguments and a decrease in economic nationalist ideas. Alternative cosmopolitan arguments about immigration go from rare to virtually absent. The discussion links these shifts to a failure of the UK centre-left to overcome historic difficulties in presenting a coherent narrative on immigration policy.

Introduction

For some the public debate in the UK over immigration policy, which gathered momentum in 2013 with the imminent lifting of restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarian workers, increasingly resembles 'a contemporary moral panic' (Moore and Forkert, 2014). Others have spotted similarities between contemporary and historical political crises over the topic (Bloom and Tonkiss, 2013). The broadly negative tone of public debate appears to be a constant, but are all debates the

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same, or is something changing or escalating? Are debates becoming less 'balanced' and in what ways?

These questions are important if public debate and public opinion matter when it comes to immigration policy. Freeman's (1995) seminal interest-based model of immigration policymaking famously downplayed this influence, but since then research has noted that politicization can open up policy to greater influence from 'below' (Lahav 2004). As a broadly 'liberal' welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1999) low public support in the UK for redistribution to outsider groups might be expected (Larsen, 2008; Jaeger, 2009), but Allport's (1954) theory of intergroup contact opens the possibility of majority-minority relations changing over time. Sociological studies have tested competing hypotheses over whether processes of globalisation progressively create or dissipate anti-immigrant prejudice. They conclude that such prejudice is higher in countries that are relatively more open to international trade (Kaya and Karakoç, 2012) but that effects differ across socio-economic groups (Mewes and Mau, 2013). However this kind of research exploring causal linkages between institutional arrangements, socio-economic conditions and societal attitudes towards immigrants, risks overlooking the constructed and mediated nature of both 'independent' and 'dependent' variables. Work on securitization (Buzan, Wæver et al., 1998), and moral panics (Pijpers, 2006; Mawby and Gisby, 2009) have highlighted the crucial role played by mediation in the construction of immigration as a public 'problem'. The former has sought to explain why and how public officials and elites place immigration within the security sphere (Balzaq 2005, Bigo 2002, Huysmans 2006) despite evidence that this can be

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counter-productive (Karyotis and Skleparis 2013). The latter lies within research from the field of communication studies which has shown how immigration can be linked, often with little actual evidence, to organised crime, chaos, disease, terrorism etc. (Cottle, 2000; Buchanan, Grillo et al., 2003; Erjavec, 2003; Poole, Richardson et al., 2006; KhosraviNik, 2010; Rasinger, 2010; McKay, Thomas et al., 2011, Philo et al 2013). The media's coverage of migration is particularly relevant in light of research that has found a significant role in shaping public perceptions (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2009; Schemer 2012; Soderlund 2007; Lahav 2013) and the importance of the way that the issue is framed in understanding this role and the way it affects public opinion (Brewer and Gross 2005; Lecheler and Vreese 2010).

One of the key explanatory variables in studies on anti-immigration attitudes is the level of 'welfare chauvinism' - understood as the extent to which people believe that welfare benefits should be restricted to citizens. Welfare chauvinism is something widely considered a policy driver in European migration policies: used to explain the shift in policing from physical borders to internal barriers to welfare (Bommes and Geddes, 2000). If immigrants are connected with crime and disease or other negative consequences in public debates then one could expect the level of welfare chauvinism to increase. Yet there is also a danger in focusing down on this particular aspect of immigration debates without considering other ideas. Welfare chauvinism is but one of a range of different arguments used to justify migration controls (Bader, 2005) where 'communitarian' ideas can be countered by various cosmopolitan

understandings of rights associated with free movement (Carens, 1987; Cole, 2000).

The communitarian/cosmopolitan continuum has long been used for understanding political cleavages where a simple left/right distinction does not always shed light on underlying value-conflicts (Giddens 1994). Kaldor (2003) suggested that the old divisions should be replaced by 'new-right' and 'centre-left', the former associated with communitarian views and the latter a more globalist/cosmopolitan outlook.

This paper contributes to our understanding of public debates over immigration by examining the evolution of press coverage over intra-EU migration in the UK, focusing on the arguments and ideas underpinning discussions. It draws on previous research (Balabanova and Balch 2010) and assesses the public debate through systematic sampling and analysis of six national newspapers in 2006 and 2013: two years where the topic was high on news and political agendas, and which book-ended the transitional arrangements applied by the UK to Romanian and Bulgarian citizens.

The results confirm the ubiquity of the communitarian 'lens', with welfare chauvinism dominant. However, the analysis also shows which alternative ideas are injected into the debate, and how these change over time. The next sections provide some background before explaining the analytical framework in greater depth. The discussion links the narrowing of the debate between the two time-periods with weaknesses in 'progressive' arguments about immigration in the

UK. The article concludes that these have enabled a domination of narratives that focus on the potentially negative consequences of immigration.

Bulgarians, Romanians and the immigration debate in the UK

There have been numerous calls for a more balanced, less polarised and more informed public debate on migration in the UK, with Nils Muiznieks, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights telling *The Guardian*: 'The UK debate has taken a worrying turn' (cited in Travis and Malik, 2013). Yet the fears expressed over freedom of movement in the EU bear a striking resemblance to those expressed half a century earlier about Commonwealth citizens (Bloom and Tonkiss, 2013), including rampant racism in the tabloid media (Fox, Morosanu et al., 2012). Considering the radically different political environments of the two eras, one could make the observation that 'plus ca change...' when it comes to public debates around immigration. Further, it opens the possibility that politics and policy do not matter: moral panics and fear-mongering continue regardless of political or policy context.

By looking across two distinct policy cycles we aim to test these arguments and explore the deployment of different ideas about immigration. The choice of years is important, as they both featured intensive debate on free movement for Bulgarians and Romanians. The first was only two years after the 'big bang' enlargement of the EU (when the number of EU Member States increased to 25). It was the year when a decision on membership would be made for both countries (they would join in 2007). It was also, incidentally, the 'European year

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of mobility'. The second year was the final one before transitional arrangements were due to end and, as in 2006, a further enlargement was expected (Croatia joined 1 July 2013).

As such the two years provide a valuable natural 'laboratory' for examining the development of public debates on immigration due to the existence of distinct time-periods and political circumstances to analyze debate on a similar issue. A key difference between the two periods was the legal basis for the decision needed: in 2006 the choice was for free movement or the imposition of transitional restrictions. In 2013 there was less room for manoeuvre: the maximum extension of transitional arrangements was reached and any alternative to free movement required treaty change.

2006 was a critical juncture for the government's 'managed migration' agenda, launched a few years earlier (Roche, 2000) and trumpeted as a significant policy change (Somerville, 2007) based on an evidence-based style of policymaking. The approach was eventually institutionalised with the creation of a Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) - a non-departmental public body of experts who advise on migration policy. For the (Labour) government of the time, an economics-centred approach was intended to neutralise a topic that had previously been politically and electorally toxic, to the advantage of centre-right parties in Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (Thranhardt, 1995). Managed migration was also a response to a media 'onslaught' over asylum in the first few years of the 21st century (Spencer, 2007, p.343-345). Fronted by then-Home Secretary David Blunkett, the strategy had a certain Manichean appeal:

emphasise the positive narrative around managed migration but use tough language around 'abuse of the system' when it came to asylum (Flynn, 2004).

The move was not to prove wholly successful and the 'technocratic' turn could not halt a rampant politicization of immigration in the UK in the 21st century where the media and politics combined in repeated 'panic'. Opposition criticised the system as 'chaotic' and 'uncontrolled' (Davis, 2004), but the question of economic impacts became gradually more prominent at least partly due to the historically high and sustained rate of net inward migration from the late 1990s. Some pointed to the 'progressive dilemma' that migration and increased diversity might threaten welfare state integrity and sustainability (e.g. Goodhart, 2004); others saw the more liberal, economically-driven managed migration policy as a conspiracy of the 'metropolitan elite' (Coleman and Rowthorn, 2004) leading the country towards inevitable disaster through overcrowding and social conflict.

For this first time-period there was a clear split between government and opposition, the former more confident about the benefits of migration, the latter eager to pick holes in those arguments while being more responsive to public concerns about social impacts. A series of scandals around immigration eventually pushed the government onto the back-foot, raising the political 'heat' and leading to the IND (Immigration and Nationality Directorate) being declared 'not fit for purpose' by then-Home Secretary John Reid, triggering significant institutional and organisational crisis and change.

The second time-period (2013) had a different political constellation. Post the 2010 election the coalition pushed forward with the (Conservative Party) manifesto pledge to reduce migration in absolute terms, despite misgivings from the junior coalition partner (the Liberal Democrat Party). Linkages of immigration with popular concerns such as social cohesion and terrorism by attacking 'state multiculturalism' (Cameron, 2011) caused grave concerns among pro-migrant activists (Webber, 2012). The relative success of the right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP) in 2013 (when compared with the British National Party) is notable, especially considering the evidence that far-right parties influence mainstream debates on immigration (Carvalho, 2013). UKIP campaigned hard on immigration as part of its anti-EU agenda and was widely considered to influence the government due to its being a natural competitor for the Eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party.

The opposition response was a strategic rethink and an apology for mistakes while in government (Milliband, 2012), meaning a significant narrowing of the previous debate. There had been pressure on Labour's managed migration approach for some time, especially following the 2007/2008 recession and with an election looming. A large increase in unemployment naturally caused problems for those championing the economic benefits of migration – something recognised by (then) Prime Minister Gordon Brown's 'British jobs for British workers' (Brown, 2007). The approach aped the tactic of attacking government competence with the only distinction being an emphasis on 'fairness' and employment rights (Cooper, 2013). Discussions around migration from Bulgaria

and Romania in 2006 and 2013 thus allow examination of the evolution and balance of ideas in the public debate.

Ethical framing of immigration controls

We divide arguments over migration controls into a series of communitarian and cosmopolitan 'tropes' or frames, drawing on work which considers immigration as a 'liberal dilemma' (Dauvergne, 1999) related to the problematic re-definition of the state in an era of globalization (Benhabib, 2002: 154). Communitarian defences are summarised by Bader (2005) as being based upon five interlinking strands (in stronger or weaker versions): duty to the national community (special obligations or prioritization of citizens); cultural protectionism (maintaining a national identity); liberal constitutionalism (emphasising membership/citizenship and the democratic process); domestic social justice (welfare chauvinism, economic nationalism); and the need to maintain public order and security (Bader, 2005: 345-352). Thus welfare chauvinism becomes one type of domestic social justice, competing with several other communitarian ideas (see Table 1).

Arguments against this communitarian logic are associated with cosmopolitanism (Cole, 2000). Again there are a range of positions – those based upon a universalist understanding of liberal principles (Carens, 1987), or those based on a more utilitarian/consequentialist logic (immigration as a means to maximize total welfare). However, this latter category is pre-conditioned by underlying economic assumptions about immigration's effects (Higgins, 2008).

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Lower barriers for migration can be seen as beneficial for different reasons (increased welfare for different actors involved or affected by migration at the nation-state, or global society level). Other arguments connect globalization and optimism around diversity to a brighter, more cosmopolitan future through enhanced inter/multi-cultural social cohesion (Tomlinson, 1999) and 'post-national' forms of identity (Soysal, 1994). Although difficult to neatly divide different 'cosmopolitanisms', they all share an appreciation of the 'other', but in distinct ways: the universalist position has been described as 'ecstatic', while the consequentialist logic is more 'instrumental' (Ong, 2009). Finally, the more ambiguous connection between cosmopolitanism and identity-formation has been described as quotidian or 'banal' – an incremental process of change that gradually develops identity – as sometimes discussed in the context of a nascent European identity (Cram, 2009).

Methodology

Our approach is to apply the above-described typology to analysis of press coverage in the form of an ethical 'framing analysis' (see: Balabanova and Balch 2010). Frames are important in a contested policy field (Schoen and Rein, 1994) because they can 'define problems', 'diagnose causes', 'make moral judgements' and 'suggest remedies' (Entman, 1993). They 'organize everyday reality' (Tuchman 1978: 193) and promote 'particular definitions and interpretations of political issues' (Shah, *et al.* 2002). The 'selection, emphasis, exclusion of news frames that furnish a coherent interpretation and evaluation of events' (Goffman 1974: 4) can thus be seen as instrumental in shaping how individuals think

about specific issues and making some values and arguments more accessible at the expense of others (Lahav, 2013, Entman 1993, 2004).

We examined six UK national newspapers (including weekend editions) - *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, *The Mirror* and *The Sun* – from 01/01/06 – 31/12/06 and from 01/01/13 – 31/12/13. These publications were selected to offer a broadly representative sample of the UK press, encompassing variety across both type (quality/tabloid) and ideological stance (liberal/conservative).

Keyword searches were carried out with 'Bulgaria' and 'Romania' as keywords to identify relevant articles using the LexisNexis database. This method has limitations because it can initially identify irrelevant articles; good choice of keyword is also crucial due to the risk that relevant articles will be missed. The keyword approach in this case generated a large number of relevant articles. Those deemed irrelevant (e.g. discussing sport or tourism and not mentioning free movement) were removed before the remaining were entered into a database, resulting in 128 articles for 2006 and 447 articles for 2013. A critical qualitative reading was then carried out to identify the presence/absence of communitarian and cosmopolitan arguments employed. Up to two frames per article were recorded. A pre-coder test was used to check agreement with 30 percent of the articles randomly selected and coded by two researchers. The inter-coder reliability was then calculated using the Holsti formula and equalled .94. Explanation of the identification and categorisation of frames is provided in table 2.

Table 1: identification of ethical frames in discussions of immigration controls		
Frame	Example	Explanation
Welfare chauvinism	'a new wave of immigration is about to take place that will place huge strain on our already stretched schools, hospitals and housing' (*Daily Mail*, 22 November 2013)	Article employs/repeats arguments justifying the imposition of immigration controls on the basis of delivering public 'goods' e.g. national economic performance or the best possible economic, social and welfare conditions for national citizens
Economic nationalism	'The UK needs thousands more migrant farm workers to stop a 15 per cent food-price hike, Government advisers warn' (*The Sun*, 15 May 2013)	
Cultural protectionist	'the white population will decline…' (*Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2006)	Ethno-national arguments for immigration controls in order to maintain a 'national culture'
Public security	'The stats will fuel fears of a crime wave when restrictions on immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria are lifted at the end of the year' (*The Sun,* 28th February 2013)	Justifies controls on the basis that uncontrolled immigration poses a threat to public order and social stability
Liberal constitutionalist	'government must do more to enforce legal standards' (*The Independent*, 1 May 2006)	Demands that immigration policy should take into account how migration is undercutting liberal structures and functioning of the state
Priority for compatriots	'Uncontrolled immigration 'is putting Britons out of work'' (*Daily Telegraph*, 18 August 2006)	Highlights special ties or obligations related to the nation-state, e.g. civic practices or historical (national) conflicts/struggles in order to justify controls
Consequentalist	'not just an expanded opportunity for mutual benefit; it is an important contribution to stabilising these societies and enabling them to catch up' (*Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 2013)	Judges immigration rules in utilitarian terms with regards to global welfare
Universalist	'We live in a multicultural society and our lives are	Putting forward arguments based on universalist

	generally richer for that. We have lived through decades of increasing prosperity and rising standards of living, and we pride ourselves on our human rights standards.' (*The Guardian*, 15 November 2013)	conceptions of human rights to evaluate or judge immigration controls
Multiculturalist	'Polish delis are sprouting up across the country' (*The Independent*, 11 June 2006)	Justification of continued immigration on the basis that it produces positive cultural benefits including post-national forms of identity formation

Figure 1: Ethical justifications for migration controls on Bulgarian and Romanian citizens in 2006 and 2013
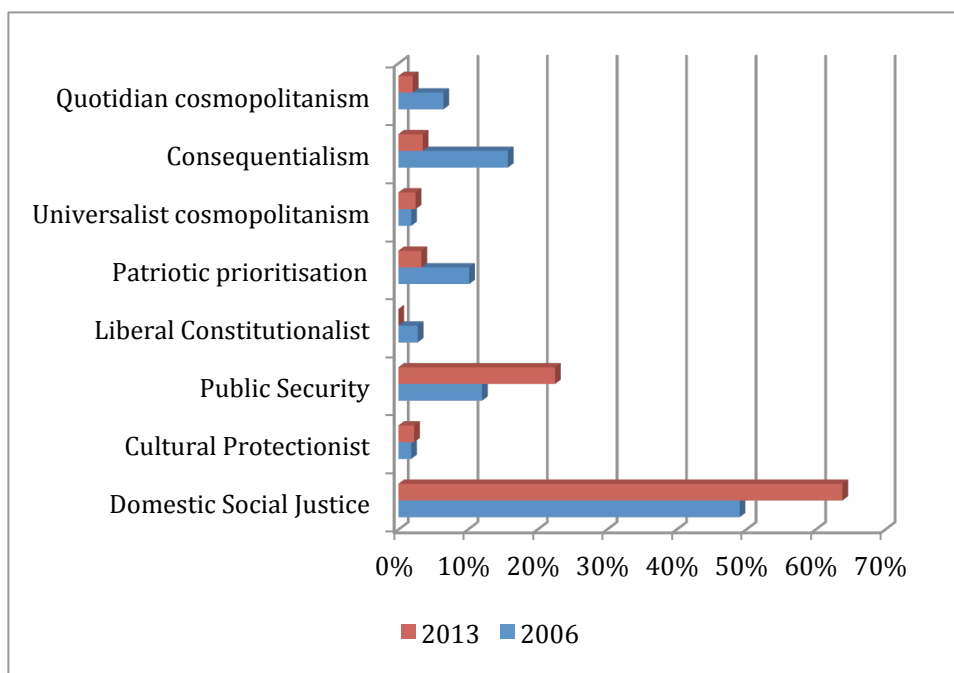

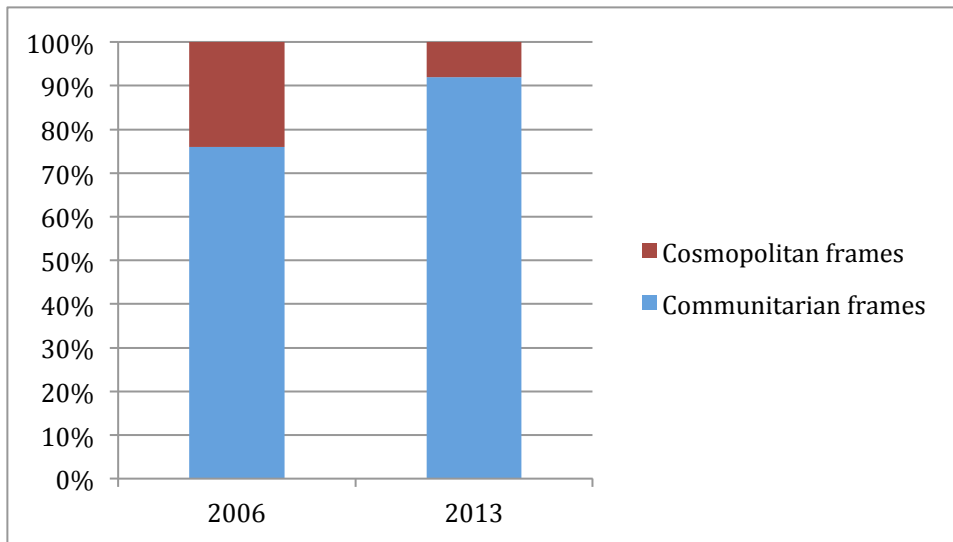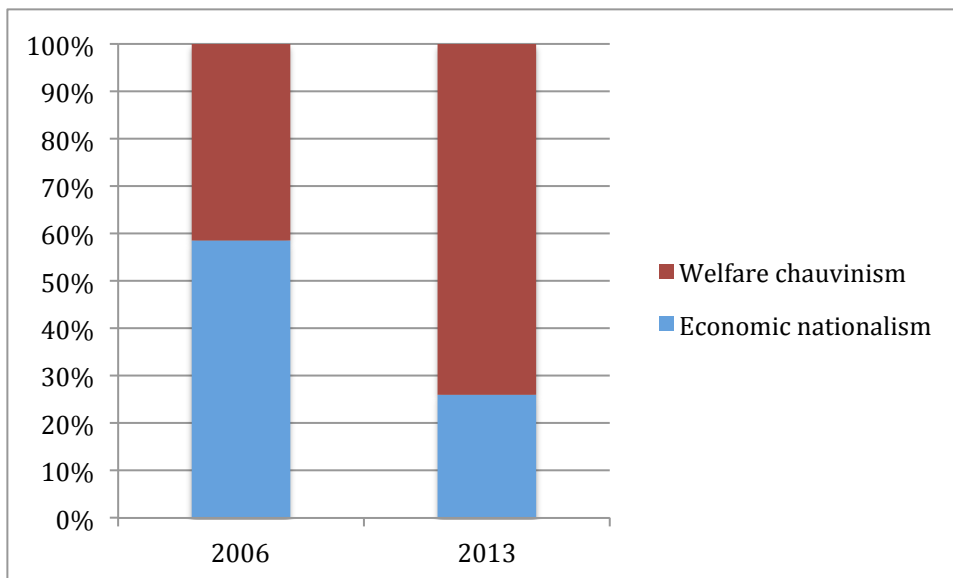**Figure 2: Cosmopolitan and Communitarian frames 2006 and 2013**

Figure 3: Domestic social justice frames 2006 and 2013

Discussion

Our research found considerably more articles on the topic in 2013 when compared with 2006 indicating a greater prominence of the issue in the British press in the second time-period. Using the communitarian-cosmopolitan typology most of the articles were found to have at least one ethical frame. Interestingly, however, there were twice as many articles where there was no ethical frame in the second period: 11 per cent of articles in 2013, compared to

5.4 per cent in 2006. As expected, in both years communitarian frames dominated discussions of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants (figure 1), but there were important changes in the composition and relative frequencies of these arguments. The communitarian bias was even more marked in 2013, for example. In this time-period 92 per cent of the frames identified were communitarian, compared to 76 per cent in 2006 (figure 2).

What kind of domestic social justice?

Among the communitarian arguments, 'domestic social justice' was the most common justification in both years (figure 1), followed by public security. Other communitarian arguments, such as patriotic prioritization, became less common (3 per cent in 2013 compared to 10 per cent in 2006). Cultural protectionism remained at the same level (2 per cent for both years) (figure 1).

Within the domestic social justice category there were two significant shifts in emphasis between the two periods. The first was away from economic nationalist arguments in favour of a welfare chauvinist logic (figure 3). Whereas in 2006 the welfare chauvinist arguments were used in 41.5 percent of the domestic social justice articles, this percentage increased to 74 in 2013. The second was within welfare chauvinism itself in terms of the specific kinds of public goods that required protection from immigrant claims. In 2006 this was predominantly the costs of education, medical care and housing. In 2013 the issue of immigrants claiming social benefits (welfare payments), while also present in the earlier period, was much more prominent and combined with the

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concern over pressure on public services. This shows the impacts of the government response to the financial crisis where the Coalition government accelerated welfare reforms already begun under Labour, deepening welfare cuts on claims of a need for 'austerity'. This led to a major public debate on the welfare state which was prominent in early 2013 (Hamnett 2013).

A typical example from 2006 of the use of domestic social justice as an argument is provided by the *Daily Mail* which continually pushed for restrictions on the basis that Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants would mean that '[s]chools, hospitals and GPs ... come under pressure' (2 May 2006). Claims drawing on economic nationalism (more frequent in this period) were present in both tabloids and broadsheets. *The Guardian* (6 September 2006), for example, maintained that 'Britain had won an advantage over France and Germany by welcoming Eastern European workers', whereas *The Sun* (16 May 2006) asserted that 'immigration is helping make Britain the economic powerhouse of Europe... The day to worry is NOT when Romanian and Bulgarians arrive on our shores but when they decide to head for France and Germany instead'.

Similarly in 2013 the question of pressure on public services remained evident. The initial surge in interest during this year followed comments from Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, who claimed that: 'any influx from Romania and Bulgaria is going to cause problems. It's going to cause problems not just in terms of the housing market but also on social housing markets' (*Daily Mail*, 14 January 2013). Typically articles defended the justification of restrictions as practical and reasonable: 'I am not racist, and... I'm

worried that our NHS and education system might be overwhelmed' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 8 June 2013). However, it was the focus on welfare that emerged as a key characteristic of the debate in 2013. It provided both the explanation for migratory pressure, and the key reason to control it: 'Tens of thousands are expected to flock to the UK - in part due to our generous welfare system. Under current rules, they would only have to live here for three months before claiming benefits' (*The Sun*, 25 November 2013).

Economic nationalism was present but less prevalent in 2013, the main examples highlighting the benefits of free movement for the UK economy and flagging the importance to the agricultural sector (20-25,000 Bulgarian and Romanian workers had been recruited annually through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) which was closed at the end of 2013). *The Independent* (30 November 2013) claimed that '[i]t's true that the number of Poles and others who entered the UK was vastly underestimated, but it was unquestionably good for the UK economy to have the increase in skilled and unskilled labour…'. *The Sun* (15 May 2013) reported that in the absence of SAWS 'the UK needs thousands more migrant farm workers to stop a 15 per cent food-price hike, Government advisers warn'.

Securitization: logic by association

The increasing dominance of communitarian frames from 2006 to 2013 is striking, but so is the change in how different justifications for migration controls are linked together. This is most obvious when it comes to the association of

migration with security threats. Our analysis suggests little impact from intergroup contact. Although contact with these populations has increased since 1989 and accelerated after 2004 we found that security fears over Eastern European migration grew between 2006 and 2013. Apart from the relatively short time-period, the absence of any amelioration of security fears might be due to the lack of support from institutional authorities, something Allport (1954) identified as a key condition for positive effects. Overall we found public security a more common justification for migration controls in 2013 (22 per cent of frames compared to 12 per cent in 2006). For the right-wing press there was a higher tendency to introduce security threats and then to associate these with welfare chauvinist arguments. A typical example from 2006 was that '[t]he NHS, already on its knees, will be swamped. Housing will run out. A flood of new workers will force wages down – and some immigrants who can't get jobs will survive on the streets by begging and stealing' (*The Sun*, 31 July 2006).

While such arguments were common to both periods, there was a subtle contrast in terms of the ways in which these security fears were expressed. In 2006 the justification for migration controls on the basis of public security were often presented via a link between the breakdown of public services and public disorder. There were also separate stories about criminality linked to political strategies, particularly a leaked government report predicting a rise in crime due to Bulgarian and Romanian migration. However, in 2013 these arguments were more frequently used together, e.g. the idea that a welfare magnet would also bring dangerous criminal practices. Unsurprisingly considering its reputation for anti-immigrant rhetoric the *Daily Mail* repeated this combination most

frequently, reporting how '[c]itizens of these two desperately poor countries - sadly rife with corruption and organised criminality... talk of the generous benefits system in Britain - and of a rush to bring over their entire families before someone decides to padlock the door' (*Daily Mail*, 16th February 2013)

The findings thus suggest an intensification of securitization in debates over migration controls. While many articles in this category highlighted an increase in the risk of crime, normally associated with migrants labelled as 'Roma', other threats were used to justify extending restrictions. The spread of disease was mentioned, for example, examining the possibility that migrants from Romania would be spreading TB (*The Sun*, 27 March 2013), while some commentators used particularly colourful language to connect with fears over the newcomers: 'They repay our hospitality by raping, robbing or murdering their adoptive fellow citizens' (*The Sun*, 18 February 2013). A tendency for newspapers to report on criminal acts allegedly involving nationals from either Romania and Bulgaria was noted during this research, however, where these did not mention immigration or free movement they were not included.

Overall, for the right-wing press, the strategy is a linkage of the communitarian frames of domestic social justice and public security: 'Bear in mind, too, that Romanians and Bulgarians may not integrate as well as most Poles have done. In particular, there is the problem of crime...' (*Daily Mail*, 17 January 2013). Other arguments drew on racist fears as *The Daily Telegraph* (19 January 2013) explained: 'What lies behind some of the fears expressed in Britain about an influx of Romanians after December is the often unspoken assumption that for

Romanians read Roma. And the Roma travellers, who camped out around Marble Arch in central London during the Olympics last summer, gave such migrants a very bad name indeed. Police reported a marked upturn in street crime as a result of their presence'.

Those who sought to challenge or counter these arguments and associations with security fears were generally to be found on the pages of the left-wing press. In 2006 the main response to arguments about migrants-as-threat were to highlight economic benefits as a balancing strategy. In ethical terms this is a false opposition because economic arguments do not counter the de-humanising narrative of securitisation. It concedes that free movement can only be justified on the basis of economics instead of asserting universal principles or values to defend the rights and humanity of migrants. This is a key weakness in the rebuttal from the left which inevitably leads to a narrowing of the debate when economic arguments are subsequently impacted by contextual factors. The country experienced a long recession in 2011-2012 and the result was a withdrawal from the debate by the left in 2013, leaving the topic as one predominantly discussed by the right-wing press. The counter to securitization in 2013 was rather to attempt to move onto rational ground by countering 'myths' with 'facts': 'contrary to popular scare stories, immigration is, on balance, good for the British economy' (*The Independent*, 18 January 2013), or to attack the political tactics of UKIP, which promised to make the issue central to its local election campaign (*The Independent*, 15 January 2013).

'I'm not racist, but...'

Racism was not a frame in our typology, but as previously noted articles did indulge heavily in racist stereotyping. A related category was cultural protectionism but this was not found to be a significant justification for controls in either of the two years examined here. Considering the characteristics of the immigration in question – with greater similarities between populations in terms of culture, education, religion, etc. – this is probably to be expected. Still, in 2006 concerns about 'white' Britain were expressed by both quality and tabloid press (e.g. *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 January 2006; *The Sun*, 27 January 2006). This trend continued in 2013 – e.g. 'The latest research from the think tank Demos bears out this fear. It shows a continuing pattern of "white flight" from areas where indigenous Britons find themselves surrounded by new minority communities' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 17 May 2013) and 'People with whom we have a damn sight more shared history are booted out to make the figures look better… Admit Bulgarians and turn away Aussies? It stinks, mate. It really stinks' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 14 November 2013). Still, considering that these arguments were identified in only 2 per cent of communitarian frames, their significance should not be overplayed.

As pointed out above and in figure 1 patriotic prioritisation significantly decreased. In 2006 a small number of articles expressed this via the notion of the EU as a threat to national sovereignty, 'putting Britons out of work' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 18 August 2006). Most however settled on the idea of 'lazy Britain' – criticising those parts of the population dependent on social benefits. In 2013 there was also anxiety that European 'interlopers' were 'stealing the jobs and the

bread out of the mouths of our own young' (*Daily Mail*, 5 December 2013). However, in the latter period the connection between sovereignty, the EU, and immigration gained greater prominence. This reflected attempts by political actors such as UKIP to connect the issues, most commonly expressed through the prism of 'benefit tourism' – i.e. welfare chauvinism.

Finally, in terms of communitarian ideas, liberal constitutionalist arguments, while rare, were present in 2006. They were associated with the 'liberal press' and primarily with the need to enforce UK labour standards, such as the calls by *The Guardian* (11 August 2006) for 'a proper [labour] inspectorate [that] would make exploitation of migrants much more difficult' or *The Independent* (1 May 2006) highlighting that the '[u]nions need to step up their recruitment and government must do more to enforce legal standards'. In 2013 the liberal constitutionalist logic was virtually absent from the UK press coverage despite the approach of the Labour Party in attempting to connect the issue with core principles around fairness and employment rights.

Another Way? Cosmopolitanism and Immigration

The ecstatic, universalist vision of immigration was vanishingly rare in both time periods. Within the cosmopolitan category there was a similarly low incidence of universalist arguments in both years (2 per cent). There was, however, a contrast between the other kinds of cosmopolitan arguments across the two years. In the deployment of utilitarian/consequentialist arguments there was a drop from 16 per cent to 4 per cent. For quotidian/multiculturalist ideas there

was a reduction from 6 per cent to 2 per cent (figure 1). For both years all three types of cosmopolitan frames were most likely to appear on the pages of liberal broadsheets: *The Independent* and to a lesser extent *The Guardian*.

In 2006 some went as far as describing immigration as 'a reason for wholehearted celebration' (*The Independent*, 23 August 2006) that 'changes attitudes, broadens outlooks and boosts global economy' (*The Independent*, 4 August 2006). Such sentiments were almost entirely absent in 2013, but universalist arguments were related to human rights and exploitation of migrants in the UK labour market: 'The new movement of labour rights which are now exciting such hostility on the right are part of the solemn promise of an embrace that we made back then' (*The Guardian*, 30 November 2013).

There were more examples of consequentialist arguments in 2006 containing both positive and negative claims, including some empathy with the 'poor, wretched' of Europe. On the whole, the liberal press in 2006 was more willing to counter communitarian arguments with consequentialism, albeit often difficult to separate from the more narrowly economic nationalist statements or the naked neo-liberal logic. For example, *The Independent* (25 October 2006) claimed that 'government capitulates to public pressure, but the free market, for all its failings, is the only realistic way to decide how much labour our economy needs'.

In 2013 consequentlist arguments were European rather than global in scale: 'The accession of south-eastern European countries to the European Union is not

just an expanded opportunity for mutual benefit; it is an important contribution to stabilising these societies and enabling them to catch up' (*The Daily Telegraph*, 28 November 2013). While many articles criticised the discriminatory language being used in the debate, relatively few developed these arguments further, for example casting them within a narrative of universal human rights (e.g. *The Guardian*, 30 March 2013). In this latter period, the most likely source of cosmopolitan views was readers' or special contributors' letters (included in the analysis) which often put forward a more positive, multicultural, picture of immigration. However, these were far outnumbered by those who wrote in with welfare chauvinist/public security arguments.

Finally, quotidian cosmopolitan ideas were present, for example in discussions of new music, culture and 'the crop of Polish delis that are sprouting up across the country' (*The Independent*, 11 June 2006). By comparison, in 2013 there were very few examples of a celebration of diversity. Among them was when *The Observer* (13 January 2013) chose to cover a think-tank ('British Future') report which celebrated integration of migrants, and reported the counter-intuitive finding that while public opinion was against further immigration, 'two-thirds of people believe the welfare state should be open to those born abroad who have contributed and play by the rules'.

Political tactics and the migration debate

Comparison of the two periods is instructive in terms of revealing the different tactics used by government to try and 'get control' of the story and the way this

involved manipulation of the ethical arguments. In 2006 there was much higher level of engagement with the government and research into migration statistics. This rationalist illusion was eventually shattered when a series of scandals led the then-Home Secretary John Reid in May 2006 to concede that the Immigration and Nationality Directorate was 'not fit for purpose'. A left-right political battle on the pages of the press was mirrored by a selective usage of IPPR (a think-tank heavily linked to the Labour party) and MigrationWatch (either a right-wing think-tank or a 'campaigning group' depending on one's political leaning) by each side in a partisan 'war of numbers'. This effectively kept the debate on the preferred economic nationalist ground espoused by the Labour government's managed migration agenda. Once in opposition the Labour Party abandoned this line leaving the IPPR no clear steer and allowing MigrationWatch to dominate. Two key reports by the organisation in January and February - on the potential numbers of migrants likely to arrive from Bulgaria and Romania (30,000 – 70,000 per year) and the wage differentials between the UK and those two countries – were constantly referred to throughout the year (MigrationWatch 2013a; MigrationWatch 2013b)

Compared to 2006 politicians in 2013 were more wary of being drawn into predictions, and government information strategy was markedly different. In 2006 there was a pattern of leaked reports including statistics over migration and crime that appeared designed to shift the agenda. In 2013 the non-leaking of a report (Eric Pickles refusal to use government research), and non-engagement with predictions over future Romanian and Bulgarian migration was notable.

Also innovative was a government marketing campaign which used a twisted ethical justification to stop migration based on a spurious concern for the welfare of migrants who were warned to avoid a cold, wet and miserable Britain where life was not so good. There was broad (if rather humorous) support from the tabloid press for the campaign, also reflected in the right-wing broadsheets. Critics were quick to pounce, however, pointing out inconsistencies with other 'come to Britain' campaigns that the government usually sponsors, clashing with the promotion of the Olympics and other more positive guides to 'Britishness' for foreigners (*The Guardian*, 28 January 2013). Still, as with the narrative around migration and domestic social justice, the critique did not question the underlying logic that Bulgarian and Romanian migration should be restricted to keep Britain better off.

Reluctance on the part of politicians to get involved in a 'numbers game' over migration changed little, it simply provided a gap which others willingly filled (see Balch and Balabanova (2011) re: use of knowledge in media coverage of immigration). Common to both periods are the links made frequently to the inaccuracy of statistical modelling carried out before the 2004 enlargement where predictions of 'only a few thousand Poles' were confounded by 'hundreds of thousands of new arrivals [that] put huge pressure on housing and public services' (*Daily Mail*, 15 January 2013).

In fact the numbers game continued in similar vein during both periods but ethical framing links to selective interpretations of research findings. This is well illustrated by the Foreign Office-sponsored report by the NIESR (National

Institute for Economic and Social Research), which specifically avoided an estimate. The *Daily Mail* (5 April 2013) said the report warned 'families arriving with children could potentially increase pressure on primary school places, and are likely to claim child benefit and other in-work benefits such as tax credits. It pointed to high levels of measles, mumps and rubella among Romanian nationals and high rates of tuberculosis. And it said there could be added pressure on housing'. *The Guardian*'s (5 April 2013) reading of the findings were to counter the standard communitarian analysis, reporting that migrants come: 'to improve their job prospects and living standards and not as benefit or health "tourists". They are likely to be young and without families, at least initially, and so their impact on public services is likely to be modest'.

Conclusions

The twin processes of mediatisation of politics and politicisation of immigration have helped to make the topic a key battleground across many parts of the world, but there are particular concerns about the quality of the debate in the UK. The research here points to a clear and marked reduction in the range of arguments, particularly those that challenge a dominant narrative about migration as a threat to domestic social justice and public security. This can be linked to political strategies and the unwillingness or inability for those in government to adopt a position on immigration policy that incorporates cosmopolitan ideas.

In 2006 a greater balance between two opposing viewpoints allowed some deployment of cosmopolitan ideas in defence of diversity and immigration as

beneficial to society. However, even here such arguments were radical compared to the official/government line which championed immigration as a boon to the economic well-being of the UK. Economic nationalism was selected as the weapon of choice to challenge those preferring to exploit fears around immigrants (a tactic which has generally yielded electoral gains). However, the shared communitarian underpinnings of the arguments used by both 'sides' effectively conceded too much ground to those adopting a negative message on immigration. The supposedly 'positive' narrative of managed migration in 2006 proved extremely fragile in 2013, because it was so vulnerable to the economic turn to recession. We argue that this contextual factor would have been less influential in the framing of migration if a more convincing case had been made that all Europeans deserve a right to free movement and equal treatment.

If public opinion 'matters' in immigration policymaking, and the media's framing of topics is influential in the formation of public opinion then the findings here have implications beyond the immediate news cycle. The political tactics of 2006 and then 2013 can be linked to a more negative and lop-sided debate in the latter period. This increased the noise and reach of those pursuing a negative campaign against immigration, and turned down the volume of more positive counter-argument. The left-leaning broadsheets (*The Independent* and *The Guardian*) did little more than meekly submit to the new political reality, demonstrated by the reduction in coverage from these titles. Overall, the critical voices in 2013 were far more muted than in 2006, albeit with some notable exceptions that explored the notion that 'foreigners' were being used by politicians to avoid other, more difficult, questions.

Our research does show that welfare chauvinist ideas became more prevalent in the public debate when times were harder economically. However, our approach demonstrates that the way in which immigration is discussed, and immigration controls are justified, touches on a much wider range of political questions, particularly around security and human rights. Considering the concerns over immigration debates the level of ideational pluralism that exists in public discussion is worthy of attention. A public sphere which features a broader range of arguments based upon a wider spectrum of values, not simply a cost/benefit understanding of immigration, has the potential to mitigate the monopolisation of a particular perspective or narrative. The evolution of press coverage over Romanian and Bulgarian migration should warn us of the political difficulties for tomorrow when the more difficult arguments are overlooked today.

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