



## "IMMIGRATION AND ITS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN WESTERN EUROPE"

**NICOLA PASINI**

Associate Professor of Political Science  
Department of Social and Political Studies  
University of Milan

The author thanks **Davide Biassoni** and **Elisa Rebessi**  
for their collaboration on this preliminary draft

### **The 2012 Spring Conference**

Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies

### **Florida International University**

**Changing Patterns of Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Immigrant Accommodation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

MARC Pavilion

**Thursday, March 8, 2012**

Immigration is one of the major processes that have been affecting Western Europe with great emphasis, especially since three decades. The topic is rich of implications and can be studied taking into account several facets. In this work, the focus is narrowed to a few aspects and the argument is divided into three sections:

1. the first one briefly describes connections between immigration and nation-states as put forth by some authors.
2. the second one surveys public opinions in Western Europe to inspect whether xenophobic sentiments have effectively taken roots. Moreover, a brief analysis of party competition is brought into account, with three examples of party locations along the dimension of immigration.
3. the third one focuses on the problem of social rights of noncitizens, analysing the demands of health care by irregular immigrants opposed to those claimed by the members of nation-states in Europe.

## **1. IMMIGRATION AND NATION STATES**

In this first section, two issues are examined:

1. the role of migration in nation-building processes and its consequences on the politics of citizenship;
2. how European states, claiming the right to control their borders, are actually rethinking their criteria for naturalization and incorporation in response to migration.

Brubaker (2010) makes a basic distinction between nations constituted by immigrants (United States and Canada) and countries in which occasional immigration has been incidental to nation building (European countries). Thus, on the one hand, in the United States naturalization was central to the theory and practice of citizenship even before American independence; on the other hand, Germany — with a *Volk*-centered and particularistic conception of nationhood — has a membership defined in ethnic or cultural terms, while France — with an assimilationist and state-centred conception of nationhood — presents a universalist and inclusive theory and practice of citizenship. Martinelli (2012) points out that in contemporary Europe the dimension of nationalism involving immigrants is cultural and ethnic, i.e. a cultural cleavage where member states' policies can be located on a continuum within the pole of assimilation and that of multiculturalism.

Many authors (Doomernik 2005; Fekete 2006; Joppke 2004, 2007; Tebble 2006) argue that even before the terrorist attacks in New York, London and Madrid, several European governments considered multiculturalism failed and chose more aggressive instruments for the integration of immigrants. Adamson et al. (2011) identify this issue with the possible use of liberal norms by states for exclusionary purposes: facing a crisis of boundaries, states adopt more assertive, self-confident expressions of national identity norms.

## **2. IMMIGRATION AND POLITICS**

### *2.1 Xenophobia in Western Europe*

This part aims at providing preliminary clues on sentiments and opinions across Western Europe concerning immigration during the first decade of the XXI century. To this purpose, the European Social Surveys<sup>1</sup> represent a powerful resource and data collected in 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008 will be examined. The salience of immigration as a socio-political cleavage dividing European electorates and political parties is taken as a basic assumption. Indeed, data from Eurobarometer 2011 confirms that one interviewed out of five considers immigration as an issue the

---

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

EU should address (Pasini & Plebani, 2011).

**Table 1.**

|  | EU | Our country | You personally |
|--|----|-------------|----------------|
| Economic situation                       | 43 | 33          | 22             |
| Unemployment                             | 23 | 42          | 19             |
| The state of public and private finances | 22 | 14          | 5              |
| Immigration                              | 20 | 12          | 4              |
| Inflation                                | 17 | 27          | 46             |
| Terrorism                                | 13 | 6           | 2              |

Moreover, the importance of immigration appears when European citizens are asked which is the policy area the EU should focus on and in six countries this percentage is higher than that of economic issues (*ibid.*).

**Table 2.**

| Country    | % Value | Variation |
|------------|---------|-----------|
| Austria    | 49      | -3        |
| Belgium    | 41      | -4        |
| Italy      | 41      | 5         |
| Luxembourg | 44      | 13        |
| Malta      | 49      | 13        |
| UK         | 42      | -2        |

Data are analysed considering fourteen West European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The European Social Surveys encompass an extended bulk of issues and each questionnaire is made of approximately 120 items each round. In particular, a specific module, named ‘D’, of 59 issues related to immigration, is part of the 2002 survey. Unfortunately, that module was fully collected only once. Hence, the focus is necessarily shrunk on those items measured all along the time period (from 2002 to 2008).

In particular, three items are here of interest:

1. ‘IMBGECO’: it measures whether immigration is bad or good for country’s economy. Respondents were asked to rank in a 0-10 range (corresponding to “very bad” and “very good”) the impact of immigration on country’s economy.
2. ‘IMUECLT’: it measures whether country’s cultural life is undermined or enriched by immigrants. Respondents were asked to rank in a 0-10 range (corresponding to “undermined” and “enriched”) the impact of immigration on country’s culture.

3. ‘IMWBCNT’: it measures whether immigrants make country worse or better place to live. Respondents were asked to rank in a 0-10 range (corresponding to “worse” and “better”) the impact of immigration on the country.

Secondly, it seems appropriate to compute the cumulative percentage of 0 and 1 scores related to each item and for each of the four years. Although it could appear as restrictive, this choice is motivated by the aim of extracting the more radical fringe of respondents. The three items mentioned above are highly and significantly correlated and linked to different facets of xenophobia.

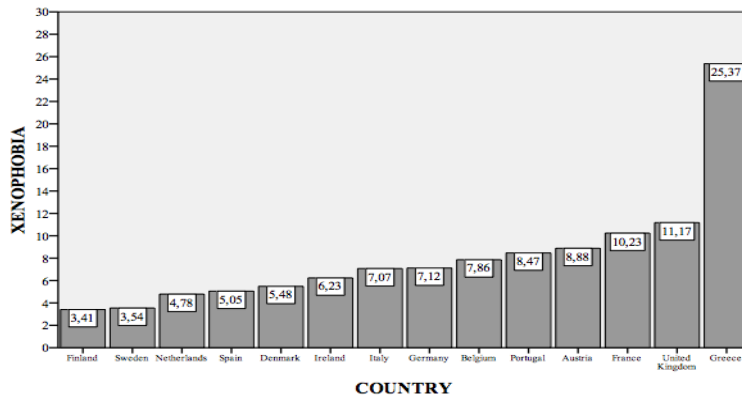
**Table 3.**

|         | IMBGECO | IMUECLT | IMWBCNT |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| IMBGECO | 1       | -       | -       |
| IMUECLT | 0.917** | 1       | -       |
| IMWBCNT | 0.920** | 0,956** | 1       |

\*\* : Statistical significance at the level of 0.01 (2-tails).  
 Source: ESS 2002, 2004, 2006, and 2008.

Following Lijphart’s suggestion the property-space can be conveniently reduced when are present variables relating to the same underlying concept or feature. Hence, the three items are merged by computing the mean score for each country.

**Figure A.**



As showed by the bar chart, Greece is clearly an outlier with a percentage above 25 per cent, i.e. one Greek out of four holds xenophobic views on immigration. Within this ranking, two big countries like the United Kingdom and France overcome 10 per cent. At the bottom, Finland and Sweden hold a very low percentage. By excluding Greece, the mean score is equal to 6.87 per cent. Given the restrictive choice stated above, this values shows that xenophobia has taken root in

Western Europe and there is a ‘fertile’ ground for Exclusionist Right Parties to exploit.

## 2.2 Party competition on immigration

A great amount of researches on right-wing radicalism has been elaborated in the last three decades and the two main theoretical strands, trying to account for their electoral success (or failure), can be conveniently divided into two frameworks: the demand-side and the supply-side, as showed by the two following tables:

**Table 4.**

| Side                | Thesis                | Factors   |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Society<br>(Demand) | Economic protest-vote | unemployment<br>inflation<br>recession  |
|                     | Chauvinist closure    | generous welfare states<br>world-wide competitiveness                           |
|                     | Social disintegration | resentment<br>disenchantment<br>anomia<br>de-alignment of usual voting patterns |
|                     | Cultural clash        | extra-European immigration<br>xenophobia<br>‘alien’ vs. traditional values      |
|                     | Neo-extremism         | polarization of voters<br>Fascist or nazi historical legacies                   |

**Table 5.**

| Side  | Thesis                 | Factors   |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Institutions and<br>political parties<br>(Supply) | Electoral system       | PR-formula<br>generous state funding<br>free media access   |
|   | Party spatial location | strategic entry of ERPs<br>convergence of MRP <sup>2</sup> and MLP <sup>3</sup><br>extent of distance between MRP and ERP |
|   | Local extremism        | powerful local assemblies   |
|   | Mirror sides           | electoral success of GAL <sup>4</sup> parties<br>adversarial position assumed by the MLP                                  |
|   | Pariah parties         | cordon sanitaire against ERPs   |

<sup>2</sup> The acronym stands for: Mainstream Rightist Party.

<sup>3</sup> The acronym stands for: Mainstream Leftist Party.

<sup>4</sup> This is the acronym for Green, Alternative, Libertarian (parties).

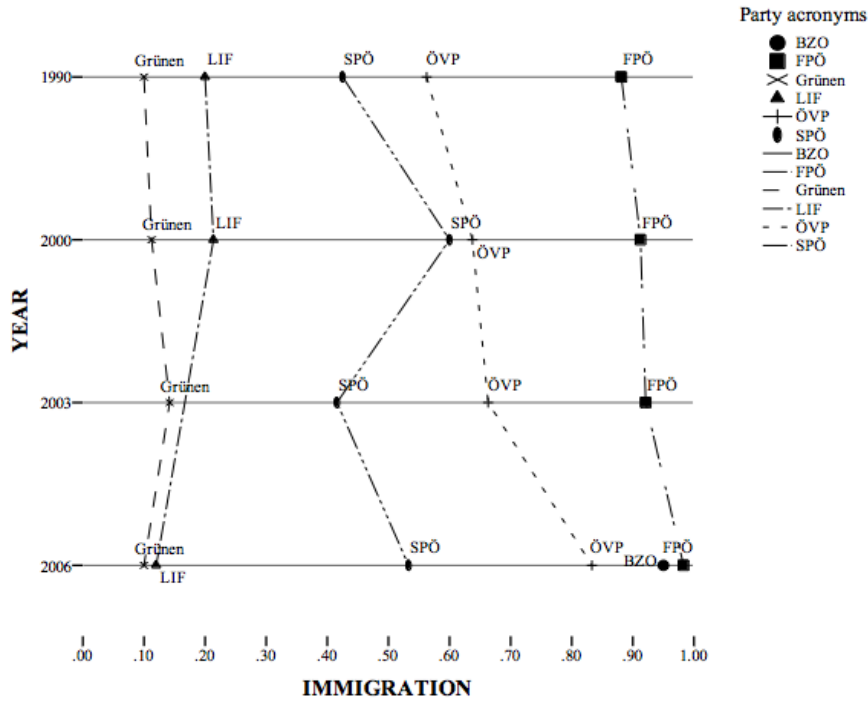
|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Leadership      | charismatic leadership<br>close-knit internal organization  |
| Policy platform | Euro-skepticism<br>law&order<br>cultural and economic protectionism<br>centrist economic position |

The rise of new challengers on the right-wing side of the political spectrum has affected the structure of party systems. Just to mention a few examples, the three following graphs describe the party system structure in three countries — Austria, France, and Italy — in a mono-dimensional space. Using data from expert surveys, political parties are located along a dimension labelled as ‘immigration’. Along this, parties are located considering the following logic:

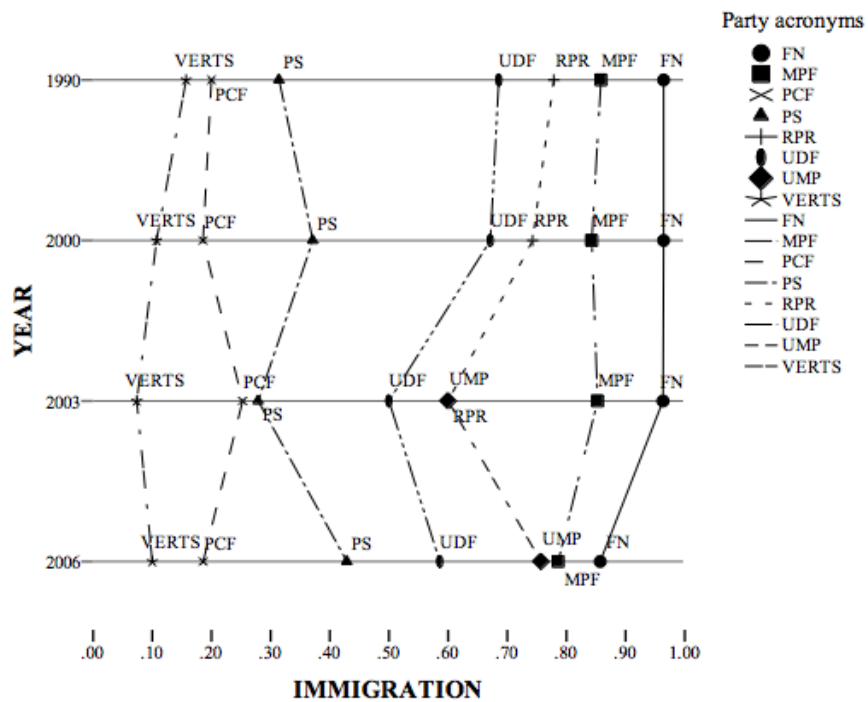
- a. the more a party is on the left-wing side, the more is ‘inclusive’ and permissive on immigration, favouring multiculturalism and opposing repatriation;
- b. the more a party is on the right-wing side, the more is ‘exclusionist’ and restrictive on immigration, opposing multiculturalism and favouring repatriation;

The spatial representation of politics helps focusing on policy locations and party competition.

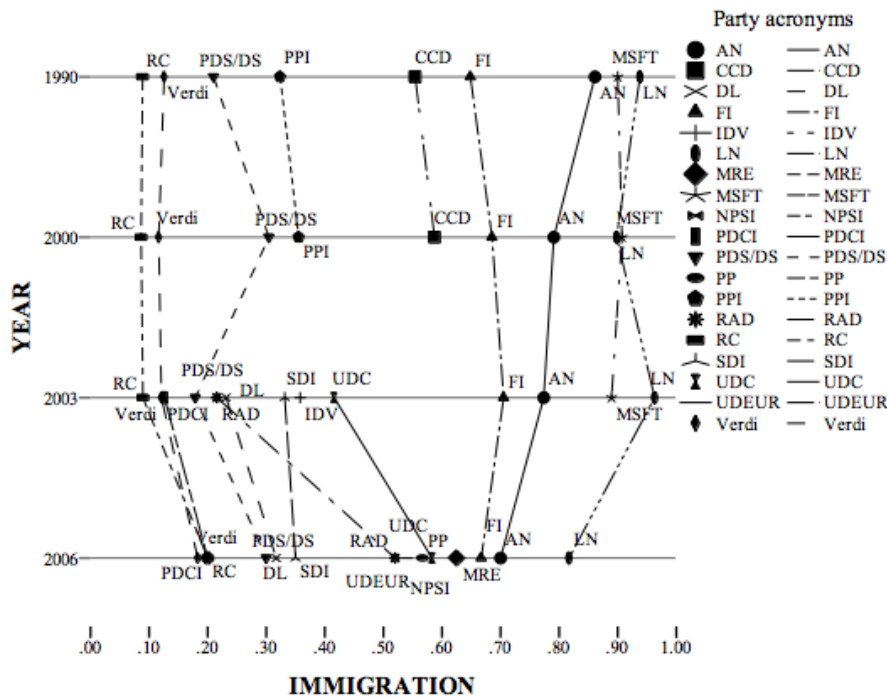
**Figure B. Austria: immigration scale.**



**Figure C. France: immigration scale.**



**Figure D. Italy: immigration scale.**



### 3. IMMIGRATION AND ACCESS TO WELFARE SERVICES

The question of co-existence between nationals and migrant communities involves welfare systems. If, in principle, welfare states are closed systems characterized by “boundaries that distinguish those who are members of a community from those who are not” (Freeman, 1986), in practice the access to many social and health services is largely independent from citizenship status. There is an open and growing debate on the possible impact of ethnic minorities and racial diversity on the welfare: can a more generous welfare state cohabit with a heterogeneous society from a cultural and ethnic point of view? Does exist an empirical evidence between a stronger immigration and a weaker welfare state performance (Pasini, 2011)?

The issue of demands of health care by irregular immigrants vs. demands of health care by polity members (Nation-state), on which I'm going to concentrate, challenges the traditional social citizenship and deals with problem of consent and legitimacy. European states have to deal with a growing number of irregular immigrants, who are not citizens and not even “denizen” (Hammar, 1990). A first relevant question is if the principle of solidarity is able to extend to them universal rights like health care. In human-rights based approaches individual and universal human rights are



opposed to the particularity of membership in nation state and are inalienable and independent from any government. For this reason, irregular immigrants, “protected” by universal human rights, should enjoy some basic rights, as healthcare. Vice versa, negative externalities-based approaches (Romero-Ortuño, 2004) and state-centred citizenship are characterized by the curtailment or denial of social security rights such as access to publicly funded health care. Krause (2008) suggests a further interesting perspective, based on the work of Hannah Arendt, in which the irregular migrant is an emblematic philosophical figure exposed to the contradiction between the two previous approaches and a political actor as well, whose public appearance and collective action can be potentially explosive.

From an empirical point of view, in the countries of EU 27, access to irregular immigrants to healthcare is not always granted. If there is a group of countries (especially Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, U.K.) which offers a relatively generous access to healthcare services and to the social determinants of health (as compulsory education for children, work and social assistance) (data from *Health Care in Nowhereland project* 2010), another group of countries, especially from North-Europe (Sweden, Finland and Denmark) has a drastically limited access or denies access at all to irregular immigrants. It is interesting to note that the last group of countries, which offers a generous welfare to citizens, has also the lowest percentage of irregular immigrants estimated on the total of foreign population in EU. The first group of countries, especially U.K. and Portugal, has the highest one in EU, after the Eastern European countries (Rebessi, 2011).

## References:

- Adamson, F. B., Triadafilopoulos, T., & Zolberg, A.R. (2011). The Limits of the Liberal State: Migration, Identity and Belonging in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(6), 843-859.
- Benoit, K., & Laver, M. (2006). *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*. London: Routledge.
- Biassoni, D. (2012 forthcoming). *Exclusionist Right Parties in Western European Party Systems*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Brubaker, W.R. (2010). *Introduction to immigration and the politics of citizenship in Europe and North America*. In Martiniello, M., Rath, J. (eds). *Selected Studies in International Migration and Immigrant Incorporation*. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 215-237.
- Doomernik, J.M.J. (2005). The state of multiculturalism in the Netherlands. *Diversité Canadienne/Canadian Diversity*, 4(1), 32-5.
- Fekete, L. (2006). Enlightened fundamentalism? Immigration, feminism and the Right. *Race and Class*, 48(2), 1-22.
- Freeman, G. (1986). Migration and the Political Economy of the Welfare State. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 485.
- Hammar, T. (1990). *Democracy and the Nation State*, Aldershot, Avebury.

- Hooghe, L., Bakker, R., Brigevich, A., De Vries, C., Edwards, E., Marks, G., Rovny, J., et al. (2010). Reliability and Validity of Measuring Party Positions: The Chapel Hill Expert Surveys of 2002 and 2006. *European Journal of Political Research*.
- Joppke, C. (2004). The retreat of multiculturalism in the liberal state: theory and policy. *British Journal of Sociology*, 55(2), 237-57.
- Joppke, C. (2007). Beyond national models: civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe. *Western European Politics*, 30(1), 1-22.
- Krause, M. (2008). Undocumented Migrants: An Arendtian Perspective. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 7(3), 331-348.
- Lijphart, A. (1971). Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method. *American Political Science Review*, 65(3), 682-693.
- Lubbers, M. (2000). *Expert Judgment Survey of Western-European Political Parties 2000*. Nijmegen, the Netherlands.
- Martinelli A. (2012). *Nationalism in the XXI Century: a European and United States Comparison (first draft)*. Keynote Address and Reception in "The 2012 Spring Conference Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies Florida International University Changing Patterns of Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Immigrant Accommodation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century MARC Pavilion, Thursday, March 8, 2012, 1-23.
- Pasini, N., & Plebani, F. (2011). Immigrazione, opinione pubblica e sistema politico italiano. In Fondazione Ismu, Franco Angeli, Milano, 223-239
- Pasini, N. (2011). *Salute, diritti, territori: uno sguardo di insieme*. In Pasini, N. (ed). *Confini irregolari. Cittadinanza sanitaria in prospettiva comparata e multilivello*. Franco Angeli, Milano.
- Rebessi, E. (2011). *L'accesso ai servizi sanitari per gli immigrati irregolari in Europa fra diritti umani, diritti di cittadinanza e politiche di integrazione*. In Pasini, N. (ed). *Confini irregolari. Cittadinanza sanitaria in prospettiva comparata e multilivello*. Franco Angeli, Milano, 97-122.
- Romero-Ortuño, R. (2004). Access to health care for illegal immigrants in the EU: should we be concerned? *European Journal of Health Law*, 11, 245-272.
- Tebble, A. (2006). Exclusion for democracy. *Political Theory*, 34(4), 463-87.