

**Reputational Shields:
Why Most Anti-Immigrant Parties Failed in Western Europe, 1980-2005.**

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Abstract:

The extraordinary and highly consequential electoral successes of radical right parties in Western Europe in the last couple of decades are well documented. The evidence on how these parties' successes are associated with their anti-immigrant appeals invites the conclusion that such appeals are an easy way to electoral success for minor parties willing to exploit this issue. This paper argues that this is not so, since it is nearly impossible for minor parties to make credible appeals to voters on the immigration issue unless they have reputational shields—a legacy that can be used to fend off accusations of racism and extremism. Not many minor parties deciding to run on the anti-immigrant ticket, it turns out, have such reputational shields. This paper presents newly collected evidence to show that six out of seven anti-immigrant parties failed to achieve sustained electoral success in a period when Europe was in an immigration crisis. It furthermore shows that six out of the seven parties that did succeed had reputational shields, while none of the 34 parties that failed possessed them. It is concluded that this striking evidence consistent with the reputational shields hypothesis suggests an important avenue for future research on the politics of immigration in Western Europe.

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Introduction

The extraordinary and highly consequential electoral successes of several radical right parties in Western Europe in the last couple of decades are well documented (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995; Lubbers 2001; Gibson 2002; Carter 2005; Norris 2005; Givens 2006). These studies and others (see especially Brug, Fennema & Tillie 2000; Brug & Fennema 2002; Ivarsflaten 2005; forthcoming) show that the main appeal of these parties to voters, and the only one that unites them, concerns immigration. A natural question arising from this literature, then, is why did certain parties advancing such appeals experience electoral success while others did not?

This paper advances a new hypothesis to answer this question and shows significant, but not conclusive, evidence in support of it. The hypothesis holds that it is very difficult for minor parties to appeal to voters on the immigration issue unless they have reputational shields—a legacy that can be used to fend off accusations of racism and extremism. As is discussed further in the theory section, this hypothesis is inspired by the literature on race politics in the U.S but also by specific attributes of the European context—such as the multiparty systems, experience with fascism and nazism, and the nature of the contemporary political conflict over immigration.

As a preliminary test of the reputational shields hypothesis, this study presents a newly collected dataset of all parties advancing radically restrictive immigration and asylum policies as an important part of their political program—anti-immigrant parties (AIPs)—and their reputational shields. It also briefly traces two separate implications of the reputational shields hypothesis in three country-cases and finds evidence in support of it.

In what follows, existing attempts at explaining variation in the electoral performance of anti-immigrant parties will be discussed before the reputational shields hypothesis is spelt out in more detail. In the empirical section, the rate of success of AIPs will be established through a discussion and presentation of the data I collected on such parties participating in national-level elections in Western Europe between 1980 and 2005. The subsequent evidence on reputational shields and their consequences for election outcomes and party behaviour is followed by a discussion of the extent to which this hypothesis complements or replaces other explanations of the variation in AIPs performance. The conclusion suggests avenues for future research into immigration politics in Western Europe.

Existing explanations of variation in AIP performance.

Radical right parties have risen from insignificance in the early 1980s to political influence in the 1990s in about half of Western Europe's countries—Austria, Denmark, Flanders, France, Italy, Norway, and Switzerland. They failed to experience sustained success in Britain, Germany, Sweden, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Finland, Wallonia, and the Netherlands. The explanations for this cross-national pattern take on multiple forms, but most importantly they differ by emphasizing one of the following four factors: (1) the nature and distribution of grievances in the population (2) electoral systems (3) the strategic behaviour of major parties; and (4) the policy appeals or organization of the anti-immigrant parties themselves. In this section, these four types of explanations for the variation in AIPs' electoral performance will be discussed. I argue that none of them, alone or in combination, are sufficient for explaining the pattern at hand.

In the literature on radical right parties it has been shown in great detail that the rise of this group of parties is intricately, but not by any measure straightforwardly, associated with what has been called the European immigration crisis. Some scholars have thought of the widespread negative views of immigrants and asylum seekers and the restrictionist measures called for as “radical right potential” (Brug, Fennema & Tillie 2005; Ivarsflaten 2005). They find however a small or absent association between the radical right's potential and the electoral performance of these parties. This lack of association is in agreement with the highly inconsistent findings on how levels and type of immigration affect the radical right's election performance (Jackman & Volpert 1995; Andersen 1996; Golder 2002a; 2002b; Norris 2005). In essence, it has been found that in the country where the public is the most opposed to immigration, Greece, there is no successful populist right party, but that in two of the three Scandinavian countries where the public is the least opposed to immigration, there is such a party. Moreover, as is shown by Coffe (2004), people in the Belgian region without a successful populist right party, Wallonia, are at least as opposed to immigration as people in the Belgian region with such a party, Flanders. The gist of the findings of such studies is that opposition to immigration is widespread in all Western European countries. The question they raise is, why is this opposition not translated into success for anti-immigrant parties everywhere?

Some have concluded that variation in electoral systems is an important part of the explanation to that question (Jackman & Volpert; Golder 2002; Norris 2005). However, the evidence in support of this hypothesis is highly mixed (Brug, Fennema & Tillie 2005; Carter 2005). While the absence of a successful anti-immigrant party in Britain most likely is in part caused by the SMD system, there are no other electoral systems in Europe with similarly steep incentives against voting for minor parties and for such parties to form in the first place. The system that comes the closest is the French, where we do find a successful populist right party. The limits of the electoral systems hypothesis is seen most easily in that it cannot account for the following questions: Why is there a successful populist right party in Austria and not one in Germany? Why has no populist right party sustained success in Sweden and the Netherlands, while they have done so in Norway and Denmark? Why is there one in Flanders, but not one in Wallonia—two regions with separate party systems that hold elections simultaneously using the same rules?

Because of the deficiencies of the grievances and electoral systems accounts, some have turned to investigating the effects of the strategic behaviour of competing political parties. Some evidence has been published to suggest that major parties' strategic behaviour matters (Meguid 2005; Carter 2005; Givens 2005). Principally, the argument put forward holds that where the major parties leave a larger policy gap on the right-wing side of the immigration issue, populist right parties are likely to do well. However, while statistically significant effects are found in the expected direction, evidence on the role of the immigration policy gap is weak in the sense that major parties left a considerable space open for a radical anti-immigrant appeal across Western Europe in the mid 1980s (Lubbers 2001; Norris 2005).

Moreover, two prominent examples of outcomes that contradict this explanation exist. In Austria, the major party of the right (ÖVP) proposed significantly more restrictive immigration policies in the early 1990s, and still voting for the radical right only continued to increase. In Denmark in 2001, the major party of the right, *Venstre*, made an even starker attempt to coopt the radical right's policies, and in spite of this, electoral support for the Danish People's Party increased in the subsequent election. While it therefore seems likely that the strategic behaviour of major parties mattered in the sense that a gap on the radical right-wing of the immigration issue existed across Western Europe in the early 1990s, empirical evidence from Austria and Denmark contradict the hypothesis that major parties can

prevent an established populist right party from succeeding in elections by making its own immigration policies radically restrictive.

Due to the limitations of the explanations discussed above, there has in some recent research been a turn towards arguing that populist right parties are to some extent the masters of their own success (see, e.g. Carter 2005; Norris 2005; Brug, Fennema & Tillie 2005). This argument is not new in the debate on populist right parties, as it also figured prominently in Kitschelt's earlier account where the role of entrepreneurs and the right policy formula was emphasized (1995). However, Kitschelt's contention that successful radical right parties share a policy formula that goes beyond their appeal on the immigration issue has been refuted in subsequent empirical work (Lubbers 2001; Ivarsflaten 2005; forthcoming). Another argument emphasizing the appeal of radical right parties themselves made originally by Ignazi (1992) has by contrast largely received support in subsequent empirical studies (Kitschelt 1995; Golder 2002; Carter 2005). It held that only anti-immigrant parties that were new in the sense that they did not represent a continuation of old fascist parties could succeed electorally in contemporary Europe. As will be discussed in more detail below, this study argues that this account is only partially true and that it fails to pin-point the main reason why parties with fascist legacies do not perform well on an anti-immigrant ticket.

The more recent studies, therefore, have to a considerable extent turned towards party organization as an explanation for the populist right's success. It is argued that better organized parties with stronger leadership were better able to mobilize voters than smaller and weaker parties. The hypothesis proposed below does not contradict this argument, but it puts forward a more precise causal account that makes sense of why it is that some well-organized parties, such as the old fascist parties have not been able to effectively mobilize on the anti-immigrant issue in elections while other old and well-organized parties have so. It also makes sense of why new parties lacking organizational infrastructure are unlikely to achieve and sustain electoral success.

The reputational shields hypothesis.

The term "reputational shield" is introduced here and it is used to signify a way in which a party's history or legacy can be used to fend off—i.e. to act as a shield against—attempts to undermine the credibility of its policy proposals. Reputational

shields need not be specific to the immigration policy domain, but as will be elaborated on further below, work on the politics of race in the U.S. leads us to believe that they are likely to be particularly important in this kind of policy area.

In the following, I argue that because of widespread social norms of racial equality and abidance to democratic institutions, most voters do not want to support parties seen to be racist or extremist. However, when it comes to particular immigration policy proposals the norm may be circumvented. This is most likely to happen, I argue, when restrictive immigration policy proposals are made by a party that has a positive legacy as something other than an extremist or ultra-nationalist party. It is in other words, not the message itself but rather the credibility of the actor who delivers it that makes the crucial difference. This is why the legacy of minor parties' seeking to mobilize on the anti-immigrant issue is so important.

The literature charting a growing and, by now, widespread social norm of racial equality in the U.S. is sizable. However, the very same literature points out that a principle-policy gap exists in that people who do not believe that Blacks are inferior to Whites, will readily oppose policies designed to diminish the disadvantage of Blacks in American society today. While the history of slavery and the Civil War is uniquely American, it is fair to say that a social norm of racial equality exists also in Europe. This norm is seen at work in newspaper letters, on radio and television, and on the street, when members of the public feel compelled to preface their negative comments of a minority group by stating, "I'm not racist, but..."

In the literature on the U.S., Mendelberg in particular has highlighted that although the norm of racial equality is firmly established and widely learnt, prejudice is still alive and well. And the extent to which people respond to political appeals by censoring their prejudice depends in her view on whether or not the learnt norm is activated. While Mendelberg contrasts cues that set off psychological processes that trigger the learnt norm from those that do not, this contrast is not the primary emphasis of the reputational shields hypothesis presented here.

Instead, the reputational shields hypothesis is seen as powerful because voters are not sure about whether or not the norm of racial equality applies on specific policy proposals and therefore rely on elite debate and additional information about the actors in making the judgement. Reputational shields are therefore thought to be helpful to political parties on three levels—as a valuable resource for the anti-

immigrant party in elite debate, as external justification for voters, and as internal justification for voters.

For example, a party that has a legacy as an agrarian party will be able to use its reputation to fend off criticisms from other elite actors accusing the party of racism and extremism. By contrast, old fascist parties or brand new parties do not have such reputational shields at their disposal when facing such criticism. Second, a voter can more easily justify voting for a party proposing radically restrictive immigration policies to his or her peers and community as not being an act in support of racism or extremism if the party in question is known for promoting other policies, too. Third, voters can more easily justify their choice to themselves as not being motivated by racism when the party in question has a reputational shield.

Empirical evaluation of the reputational shields hypothesis.

A whole host of arguments about voter motivation follow from the reputational shields hypothesis, but as of yet we do not have individual-level data to test these hypotheses. As a sensible first-step before collecting such costly experimental survey data, this paper therefore evaluates some aggregate level implications of the hypothesis. These evaluations are conclusive in the sense that they can tell us if the reputational shields hypothesis is worthy of further examination in future work or not.

The first and most important implication of the reputational shields hypothesis that will be evaluated holds straightforwardly that:

(I1) Minor parties promoting radically restrictive immigration policies as an important part of their agenda were more likely to rise if they had a reputational shield before they took on the immigration issue than if they did not have such a shield at that time.

To evaluate this hypothesis a dataset of all parties promoting radically restrictive immigration policies as an important part of the program and contesting national level elections in Western Europe between 1980 and 2005 was collected and will be presented below. It turns out that 40 such parties existed. After having described and validated the selection of parties made and having pointed out which of them should be considered to be rising parties, data on the reputational shields is presented.

The reputational shields hypothesis will be refuted if it does not predict rate of success significantly better than would the toss of a coin.

The second implication to be evaluated holds that:

(I2) In countries where no AIP rose to political influence, this is likely caused by the absence of reputational shields of the existing AIPs.

This implication will indirectly be evaluated by the dataset on AIPs because it will show whether or not the countries that did not have a rising AIP did have AIPs without reputational shields. As a more direct evaluation of this implication, however, two countries where no populist right party rose to success in the period of interest will be examined, Sweden and Finland. In those countries, I have looked for evidence of minor parties with reputational shields making temporary or soft anti-immigrant appeals. If the absence of rising AIPs is caused by the lack of reputational shields among parties that did seek to mobilize on this issue, we should find that if minor parties with reputational shields make anti-immigrant appeals they should receive increased electoral support in countries such as Sweden and Finland.

The third and final implication to be evaluated holds that:

(I3) If parties with fascist legacies rise, they cannot do so using the anti-immigrant appeal.

To evaluate this implication, I have examined the only case known to me in Western Europe of a party with an undisputed fascist legacy that became electorally successful in this period, *Alleanza Nazionale*. The reputational shields hypothesis would be strongly contradicted if *Alleanza Nazionale*'s rise was driven by a radically restrictive appeal to voters on the anti-immigrant ticket.

Anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe.

Table 1 is an exhaustive list of anti-immigrant parties that participated in national-level elections in Western Europe between 1980 and 2005. Some of the parties listed are very small and some no longer exist, but unless they had fielded candidates for national-level elections in this time period (either to the national or the European

parliament), they were not included in the table. The table shows that Western Europe in this period saw as many as 40 minor parties trying to appeal to the public's grievances over immigration in elections on the national level. Out of these 40 parties only 7 rose to sustained political influence.

Importantly, no Western European country completely lacked political entrepreneurs pushing radically restrictive immigration and asylum policies as an important part of their political program in this period. Even in Ireland, which is often referred to as an exception in the literature, a radically restrictionist organization, *The Immigration Control Platform*, fielded candidates in Irish general elections in the late 1990s and onwards. In Finland, another country which is sometimes mentioned as not having an anti-immigrant party, several small such parties exist(ed), but only one participated in elections on the national level, *Suomen Kansan Sinivalkoiset*, the Finnish People's Blue-Whites.¹ As can be seen in the table, several radically restrictionist parties exist(ed) in most countries.

The inclusion of most parties in table 1 is uncontroversial, but since judging the restrictiveness of immigration policies and the extent of emphasis put on this policy area are in the final instance a matter of qualitative judgment, some questions about why certain parties were included and not others are bound to be raised. The immigration policies of parties were judged to be *radically* restrictionist if a party demanded a ban or very low cap on all forms of immigration, proposed new measures to deter asylum seekers (such as detention, limited rights to citizenship, and/or fewer entitlements while applications are considered), wished to limit rights to family reunification, and called for repatriation in certain circumstances.

Our confidence in the selection criteria for radical immigration policies is heightened since the selected cases agree with the opinion of the country experts interviewed in Lubbers' expert survey (2001). For all cases where expert survey data exists, the parties selected for this study received a score of 9 or above on the 10-point scale asking about the restrictiveness of immigration policies. Moreover, *Partido Popular* in Portugal that is sometimes associated with restrictionist immigration policies, particularly in the news media, is not included in table 1 because these parties' immigration policies were judged not to be as radically restrictive as the rest

1. The party received 0.2 percent of the vote in the Finnish parliamentary election in 2003 and 0.2 percent of the vote in the European Parliamentary election of 2004. The party's main political stage is in the municipal council of Turku where the party's leader, Olavi Mäenpää, holds a seat.

of the parties included. This decision is also supported by the expert survey data collected by Lubbers, since *Partido Popular* received scores well below the other parties included in table 1. The score received was 6.6 (Lubbers 2001:30-31).

The second criterion for inclusion in table 1 was that the radically restrictive immigration and asylum policies should be emphasized by the party. This criterion was fulfilled if restrictionist immigration policies formed a significant part of the party's program and/or that several news reports about the party mentioned its restrictionist statements and views. In this regard, too, our selection is supported by a second source. Table 1 shows that with one exception, all cases included in the table that were evaluated by Carter in her recent book, were seen as placing a strong emphasis on immigration policies. The exception is *Movimento Sociale—Fiamma Tricolore* (MS-FT) in Italy. Carter agrees that the party promotes radically restrictive immigration policies, but argues that these are not strongly emphasized by the party. By contrast, MS-FT is seen here as a party placing strong emphasis on its radically restrictive immigration policies because of the reported actions of the party. In May 1999, *Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore* joined *Lega Nord* (an anti-immigrant party) in a campaign, which gathered 700,000 signatures, to petition for a referendum to repeal the 1998 Turco-Napolitano immigration law, which regulates immigration and the status of foreigners.² The party further organized demonstrations against Third World immigrants and against drug-trafficking and prostitution among immigrants in the mid 1990s.³ These incidents alongside the emphasis placed on radically restrictionist policies in the party's program contributed to the decision of including MS-FT in table 1. It should be noted, however, that none of the conclusions in this chapter hinge on the MS-FT being seen as a radically restrictionist party.

Table 1 includes more parties than other lists seen in the literature on the populist, radical, or extreme right (Kitschelt 1995; Mudde 2000; Ignazi 2003; and Carter 2005). This is partly because the list in table 1 is updated and includes parties that participated in national-level elections after 2000. Such parties include the Finnish *Suomen Kansan Sinivalkoiset*, the Greek *Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos* (LAOS), and the Swedish *Nationaldemokraterna*.

2. This activity was reported by the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism's annual report on Italy in 1999/2000. <<http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw99-2000/italy.htm>>

3. This activity was reported by the British organization, Antisemitism and Xenophobia Today (AXT), in its 1997 report on Italy. <http://www.axt.org.uk/antidem/archives/archive2/Italy/italy_12.97.htm>

However, table 1 also includes more parties because anti-immigrant parties is a broader category of parties than, for instance, the group of extreme right parties. Therefore, the Irish *Immigration Control Platform* is included in table 1, although it may not be considered an extreme right party. Moreover, parties such as the Norwegian and Danish Progress Parties, the Swiss People's Party, and the Dutch *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* are included in table 1 because they promote radically restrictionist policies as an important part of their program, although they arguably are not extreme right parties (Mudde 2000; Carter 2005).

Yet other parties are included in table 1 but have not received much notice in previous studies because they are very small and therefore do not appear in easily available summaries of election results. Thus, parties such as *Patriotichi Symachia* received only 0.2 percent of the Greek vote in the 2004 European Parliamentary election, and the Portuguese radically restrictionist parties *Frente Nacional* and *Partido Nacional Renovador* both received only 0.1 percent of the vote in the same European election. Some parties, I suspect are not included in previous studies because the scene of radically restrictionist parties is very fragmented and unstable in some countries. This is the case in Spain, where the leading but tiny restrictionist party *Democracia Nacional* has contested the last two Spanish general elections as the head of a coalition named *Plataforma España* and *Frente Español* respectively.

Some parties are not included in table 1, but have been mentioned in other studies of the populist, radical, or extreme right. These include organizations that never made it or never tried to make it onto national-level ballots. Some of these parties chose only to participate on the regional or municipal level. Examples of such parties are Dr. Schill's *Partei Rechtsstaatlicher Offensive* which won 19.4 percent of the vote in a regional election in Hamburg in 2001, and the Danish *Fælleslisten mod Indvandringen*, which contests elections only in the Copenhagen municipality.

Similarly, organizations that tried to make it onto ballots but failed have not been included in table 1. The only 'party' which has sometimes been mentioned in the literature on radical right parties, but which failed to meet the latter criterion is the Finnish *Isänmaallinen Kansallis-Liitto* (IKL). This attempt at creating an extreme right political party with radically restrictionist policies received some attention not only because it poorly concealed its admiration for the old Finnish fascist party from the 1930s, *Isänmaallinen kansanliike*, whose acronym—IKL—it adopted, but also because the party joined some international networks. In particular, this attempted

party was invited to join one of the French *Front National's* May Day events. However, it never received the 5000 signatures required to become a registered political party and be allowed to participate in national level elections in Finland (Pekonen *et al.* 1999).⁴ It was therefore not included in table 1. Examples of other such attempted parties which have received some mention in the news media but have not participated in national level elections (yet) include the *Irish People's Party*, which never became a real party but remained a “one man and his dog”⁵ operation, the *Eire First Fund*, which was a failed attempt by the British Nationalist Party at establishing an extreme right party in Ireland, and the Dutch *Groep Wilders*, which has been recently formed and is described as a possible heir to *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, but is so new that it has not yet had a chance to participate in national-level elections.

Not including parties that have tried to make it onto ballots but have failed could introduce selection bias into the study of new parties (Hug 2001), and this bias could lead us to underestimate the importance of the cost of entry into the electoral arena, such as a signature requirement. However, table 1 shows that these barriers were low enough in all countries studied that at least one anti-immigrant party participated in national-level elections in the period considered. Costs of entry could only have been a powerful explanation for why radically restrictionist parties did not rise if they had prevented the AIPs from entering the national electoral arena in at least one country.

Cross-country variation in the rise of populist right parties.

In previous studies of the populist right, seven such parties are widely considered to have risen from insignificance to a position of political influence. I would argue that these seven parties are commonly perceived as ‘rising’ for two reasons. First, they went from receiving a negligible part of the vote (usually less than 5 percent) in national parliamentary elections in the early 1980s to receiving well above 5 percent of the national vote in the 1990s. Second, their degree of influence in politics increased substantially between the early 1980s and the 1990s. As will be discussed below, this influence manifested itself sometimes as government participation, sometimes as being a prominent, and even pivotal, party in parliament, and, in France,

4. More recent information from the Finnish Ministry of Justice.

5. Anti-Fascist Action Ireland (AFA) <<http://www.geocities.com/irishafa/election.html>>

as threatening the major parties in presidential elections. However, many Western European countries did not have a rising populist right party, *i.e.* a political party which is recognized as the populist or radical right in most scholarly literature, performed significantly better in several elections in the 1990s than they had done in the early 1980s, and increased their political influence during that same period.

Figure 1 shows the electoral performance of the seven rising populist right parties in national parliamentary elections in the 20-year period between 1984 and 2004. As should be expected from political parties in single cases, their performance varied quite a bit over time. However, consistent with our notion of rising parties, they all on average performed significantly better in elections in the 1990s and onwards than they had done in the early 1980s.

The Austrian Freedom Party went from receiving 5.0 percent of the national vote in the parliamentary election of 1983 to receiving 21.9 and 26.9 percent of the national vote in 1995 and 1999. In 2000, the party coined its increased political influence by becoming a major partner in the governing coalition, where it held the vice chancellor's office and 5 ministerial posts. However, in the most recent election, in 2002, the party was more moderately successful, receiving only 10 percent of the vote. The Austrian case thus serves to underline an important point, namely, that populist right parties do not need to receive an increasing amount of votes and political influence in every election to be called rising parties. The term 'rising' refers to a general trend, not to performance in single elections.

In France, *Front National* received less than 1 percent of the vote in the first round of parliamentary elections before 1986. In 1997, by contrast, the party received 15.1 percent of that vote. Because of the French electoral system, *Front National* has not generally had a significant presence in parliament. However in the 1986-88 period, the party had 35 members in parliament, because the 1986 parliamentary election used a proportional electoral system. Moreover in the 2002 presidential election, Le Pen beat the main candidate of the left in the first round and thus became a second round contender for the presidency.

The Danish People's Party, which should be considered a continuation of the Danish Progress Party, went from receiving 3.6 percent of the vote in 1984 to receiving 12 percent of the national vote in the parliamentary election of 2001. The party has been pivotal in parliament during the last two parliamentary periods and

hence has had a significant amount of influence over the policies pursued by the minority government.

The Norwegian Progress Party was also a crucial parliamentary actor in the 1990s. It was a pivotal party able to influence the policies of the center-right minority government coalition in the government that was voted out of office in the September 2005 election. In that election, the Norwegian Progress Party, which received only 4.5 and 3.7 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections of 1981 and 1985, became the largest party of the right in Norwegian politics with 22.1 percent of the vote.

In Flanders, *Vlaams Belang*, which is the new name of *Vlaams Blok*, went from gaining less than 1 percent of the vote in the Flemish part of Belgium in all parliamentary elections in the 1980s to gaining 10.0 and 11.6 percent of this vote in 1999 and 2003 respectively. The party has not had any government seats, but has influenced politics greatly by causing all the other political parties to form a grand coalition to keep it out of office.

In Italy, *Lega Nord* similarly received less than 1 percent of the national vote in the 1980s. In 1992 and 1996, however, the party received 8.7 and 10.0 percent of the national vote. The party had much political influence in the 1990s as it was a part of the governing coalition led by Berlusconi and *Forza Italia*. *Lega Nord*, however, performed poorly in the most recent Italian election.

The Swiss People's Party experienced a spectacular rise. While not performing as poorly as the other parties in the early 1980s, the SVP received around 11 percent of the vote share in 1979 and 1983. At the turn of the millennium, by contrast, the party received 22.5 (1999) and 26.7 (2003) percent of the national vote. The party thus managed to upset the country's *konkordanz* system, which since 1959 had ensured a stable composition of the executive branch, the Federal Council. For more than 30 years, two seats had been allocated to each of the three major parties and one seat to the SVP. After the 2003 election, however, the major party of the right, the CVP, lost one of its seats in the Federal Council to the SVP.

The reputational shields of AIPs.

As indicated in table two, six out of seven rising AIPs had a primary identity as something other than ultra-nationalists. The Progress Parties of Scandinavia had been

established as tax-cutting movements in the 1970s, the FPÖ in Austria had similarly become a neo-liberal tax-cutting party which uncontroversially held government seats in the early 1980s. *Lega Nord* and *Vlaams Blok* were established as regionalist parties before they took on the restrictionist agenda. And, finally, the Swiss People's Party was originally an agrarian interest party.

As seen in table three, several, but not all, of the failed RRP had long-standing legacies as ultranationalists. This group includes the British Nationalist Party and the National Front, *Nederlandse Volkspartij*, the Italian MS-FT, the Swedish *Sverigedemokraterna*, the German *NPD*, and the Greek *Golden Dawn*. According to the reputational shields hypothesis, these parties cannot fight off accusations that they are extremist and racist, because their history provides no evidence to support such a contention. Additionally, voters have no alternative rationale to justify voting for such parties.

According to the reputational shields hypothesis, however, new parties that were formed for the purpose of appealing to people's grievances over immigration also had problems shielding themselves from accusations of racism. Parties such as the Belgian *Front National*, the Spanish *Democracia Nacional*, the Finnish *Suomen Kansan Sinivalloiset*, the Greek *Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos*, and the Swiss *Freiheitspartei der Schweiz* fall into this category. In spite of being brand new parties formed in the 1980s or 1990s, they failed electorally. The hypothesis presented in this study suggests that these parties failed, not because they were associated with fascism, but because they lacked a positive alternative legacy—a reputational shield.

Reputational shields at work: Finland and Sweden.

Signs that credibility deficits is what prevents an AIP from rising in many Western European countries are additionally seen in that when parties with reputational shields propose restrictionist policies in such countries, they usually gain votes. Thus, in Finland the agrarian party the True Finns, *Perussomalaiset*, has on several occasions experienced an electoral boost when the party or a leading figure has spoken critically of Finland's immigration policies or immigrants. This was the case between 1989 and 1993 (Pekonen *et al.* 1999), and currently the party's front figure in Helsinki—the celebrity boxer and wrestler, Tony “The Viking” Halme—uses restrictionist stances to gain both attention and votes.

Similarly, in Sweden, the centrist *Folkpartiet Liberalerna* (The Liberal People's Party) called for a language test for immigrants who wished to become Swedish citizens late in its campaign before the 2002 parliamentary election. After the party leader, Leijonborg, made the proposal, the party gained media attention, its rating in opinion polls went up and the party ended up becoming the third largest party in Sweden with 13.3 percent of the vote. This result was more than twice as high as the party's result in the previous parliamentary election, in 1998.

Reputational shields at work: Alleanza Nazionale.

The only old fascist party that rose to prominence in the period under consideration—the Italian *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN)—did so not as a radically restrictionist party, but by de-emphasizing the immigration issue and even proposing liberal immigration policies. *Alleanza Nazionale* rose to prominence after the change in electoral system and the disintegration of the old party system in Italy in the wake of the corruption scandals of the early 1990s. The party is a direct descendant of Mussolini's MSI (Ignazi 2003), but its current leader, Gianfranco Fini, has rather than promoting a radically restrictionist agenda, de-emphasized and de-radicalized the AN's immigration policies. In 2003, Fini even went so far as to propose giving illegal immigrants the right to vote in Italy.

In addition, Fini has made strong symbolic gestures to distance *Alleanza Nazionale* from its fascist past more generally. He went on highly symbolic trips to Auschwitz in 1999 and to Israel to meet the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, in 2003. In Israel, Fini used the opportunity to clearly differentiate the current *Alleanza Nazionale* from the old *Movimento Sociale Italiano* by saying that Mussolini's rule had been “a shameful chapter in the history of our people” and that fascism represented an “absolute evil.”⁶ Thus, the only European party which is both a direct descendant of a fascist party and has experienced electoral success in the 1990s has done so not on a radically restrictionist program, but instead by distancing itself from such appeals. If we take into account reputational shields and the fact that *Alleanza Nazionale* along with other old ultranationalist parties in Western Europe lacked such shields, can we explain why this is so.

⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/1751457.stm>

Conclusion.

This study proposed a new hypothesis to explain why the widespread concern over immigration is translated into electoral success for anti-immigrant parties in only about half of the Western European countries. This hypothesis held that only parties with a positive legacy as something other than ultranationalists or anti-immigrant parties were likely to be able to successfully mobilize the anti-immigrant vote. Evidence testing aggregate level implications of this hypothesis analyzed in this study shows overwhelming support for the proposed hypothesis. None of the parties that failed to rise had reputational shields, while all but one party that succeeded in doing so had such shields. Moreover, as additional corroborating evidence, it was shown that in two of the countries without rising AIPs, parties that did have reputational shields were able to mobilize the anti-immigrant vote in their brief and inconsistent attempts at doing so. These short case studies add significant weight and plausibility to the reputational shields hypothesis. So does the fact discussed above that the only party with a clear fascist legacy that rose to success in this period did not do so by mobilizing the anti-immigrant vote.

In addition to appearing to be a powerful explanation for the cross-country variation in populist right parties' rise, the reputational shields hypothesis can also help explain an often noticed but previously unaccounted for feature of the group of successful anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe—their extraordinary heterogeneity. According to the reputational shields hypothesis, it does not much matter what the positive legacy of a minor party wishing to mobilize the anti-immigrant vote is, as long as it exists and is not ultranationalist. Therefore, it is only to be expected that the parties that will succeed electorally as anti-immigrant parties across a number of countries have diverse pasts as regionalist, agrarians, and anti-tax parties. The ability of the reputational shields hypothesis to account for this previously not well understood aspect of the rising AIPs adds to its value.

Furthermore, the reputational shields hypothesis opposes previous explanations that high-lighted the value of being new to anti-immigrant parties (e.g., Ignazi 1992). By contrast, it was argued and shown here that only one party that was formed for the purpose of opposing immigration succeeded in mobilizing the anti-immigrant vote—the French Front National. And having been established in the early 1970s not even this party was particularly new in organizational terms when the

immigration issue rose to prominence in the 1980s. The six other AIPs that rose were old. All parties formed late in the period for the purpose of mobilizing the anti-immigrant vote failed to rise. Unlike previous studies, the hypothesis presented here can account for why some old parties succeeded in mobilizing the anti-immigrant vote while some old parties failed to do so. Moreover, it can simultaneously account for why nearly all new parties failed. This means that the reputational shields hypothesis has potentially valuable predictive power. According to this hypothesis, it is much less likely that a minor party without a reputational shield will succeed if seeking to mobilize the anti-immigrant vote than if a party with such a shield does so.

While valuable for many reasons, the reputational shields hypothesis is however not without limitations. Most importantly it cannot account for the rise of the French *Front National*. Why this party managed to rise despite lacking a reputational shield is a fascinating question that requires further research. The finding that *Front National* is an outlier in this respect is however potentially valuable in and of itself. Many previous studies have treated the French *Front National* as the paradigmatic case of a successful anti-immigrant party. By contrast, this study suggests that rather than being the best lens to use for understanding the rise of AIPs in Western Europe, *Front National* should be thought of as the odd party out that managed to do something that no other minor party in Western Europe has done—mobilize the anti-immigrant vote without a clear and positive prior legacy as something other than an ultranationalist party.

Asking future studies to reconsider the prevalent view that the French case is paradigmatic is however not the most important contribution of this study to future research on immigration policy in Western Europe. The most important contribution, I would argue, lies in proposing and finding initial empirical support for the reputational shields hypothesis. As already discussed, future research should seek additional tests of this hypothesis and its implications. One direct and counterintuitive implication that warrants further consideration holds that divergences in the immigration politics of various Western European countries are more likely caused by choices of well-established non-ultranationalist minor parties than by those of new parties, minor ultranationalists, or major parties.

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Table 1. Anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe 1980-2005.

Country	Party Name	Rise	Immigration Policy Score	Immigration Central
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	X	9.1	X
	Ausländer-Halt-Bewegung			
Wallonia	Agir			X
	Front National		9.8	X
	Front Nouveau de Belgique			X
	Parti des Forces Nouvelles			X
Flanders	Vlaams Belang	X	9.8	X
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti/Fremskridtspartiet	X	9.7	X
	Fremskridtspartiet after split		9.2	X
Finland	Suomen Kansan Sinivalkoiset			
France	Front National	X	9.6	X
	Mouvement National Republicain			X
Germany	Deutsche Volksunion		9.8	X
	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands			X
	Die Republikaner		9.4	X
Greece	Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos (LAOS)			
	Chrysi Avghi/Patriotichi Symachia			
	Elliniki Metopo (Greek Front)		9.6	
Ireland	The Immigration Control Platform			
Italy	Lega Nord	X	9	X
	Movimeno Sociale Italiano—Fiamma Tricolore		9.1	--
Netherlands	Centrumpartij'86/Nationale Volkspartij			X
	Nederlandse Volksunie			X
	Lijst Pim Fortuyn			
	Centrumdemokraten		9.7	X
Norway	Fedrelandspartiet			X
	Fremskrittspartiet	X	9.2	X
Portugal	Frente Nacional			
	Partido Nacional Renovador			
Spain	Democracia Nacional		9.6	
	Allianza por la Unidad Nacional			
Sweden	Ny Demokrati		9.3	X
	Sverigedemokraterna		9.7	X
	Det Nya Partiet			X
	Nasjondemokraterna			
Switzerland	Freiheitspartei der Schweiz		9.5	X
	Schweizer Demokraten/Democrates suisses		9.7	X
	Schweizerische Volkspartei	X	9.1	
UK	British National Party		9.9	X
	National Front			X

Sources: Lubbers (2001); Carter (2005); own collection of data from electoral lists, party programs, and newspapers.

Table 2. The association between anti-immigrant parties' rise and reputational shields.

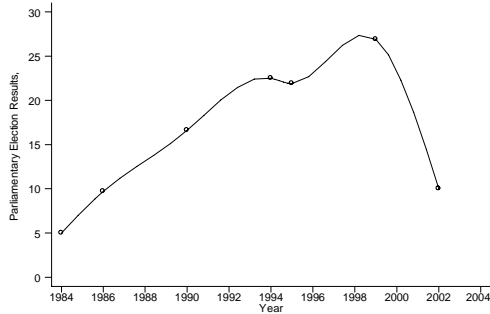
Party Name	Rise	Reputational Shield
Dansk Folkeparti/Fremskridtspartiet	X	X
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	X	X
Fremskrittspartiet	X	X
Front National	X	
Lega Nord	X	X
Schweizerische Volkspartei	X	X
Vlaams Belang	X	X
Agir		
Allianza por la Unidad Nacional		
Ausländer-Halt-Bewegung		
British National Party		
Centrumdemokraten		
Centrumpartij		
Centrumpartij'86/Nationale Volkspartij		
Democracia Nacional		
Det Nya Partiet		
Deutsche Volksunion		
Die Republikaner		
Elliniki Metopo (Greek Front)		
Fedrelandspartiet		
Freiheitspartei der Schweiz		
Fremskridtspartiet after split		
Frente Nacional		
Front National (Wallonia)		
Front Nouveau de Belgique		
Golden Dawn/Patriotichi Symachia		
Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos (LAOS)		
Lijst Pim Fortuyn		
Mouvement National Republicain		
Movimento Sociale Italiano—Fiamma		
Tricolore		
Nasjonaldemokraterna		
National Front		
Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands		
Nederlandse Volksunie		
Ny Demokrati		
Parti des Forces Nouvelles		
Partido Nacional Renovador		
Schweizer Demokraten/Democrates suisses		
Suomen Kansan Sinivalkoiset		
Sverigedemokraterna		
The Immigration Control Platform		

Table 3. The reputational shields of rising anti-immigrant parties.

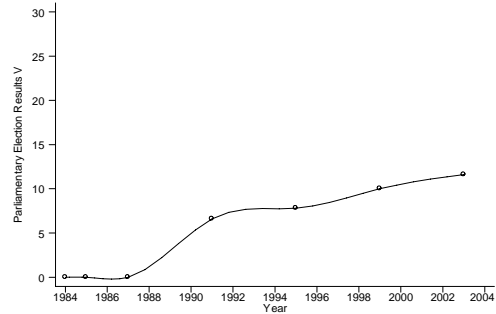
Party Name	Reputational Shield
Dansk	Anti-tax
Folkeparti/Fremskridtspartiet	
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Anti-tax
Fremskrittspartiet	Anti-tax
Front National	
Lega Nord	Regionalist
Schweizerische Volkspartei	Agrarian
Vlaams Belang	Regionalist

Figure1. The seven rising populist right parties' performance in national parliamentary elections between 1984 and 2004.

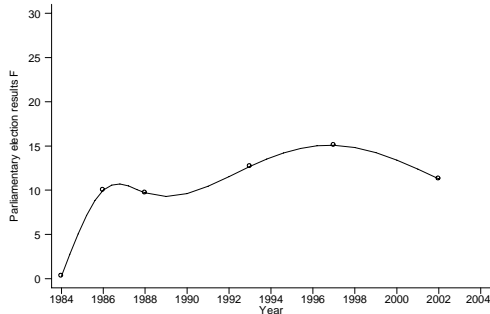
Austria. *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Freedom Party of Austria): FPÖ.



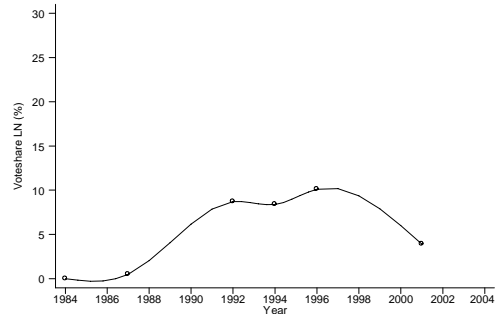
Flanders. *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest): VB.



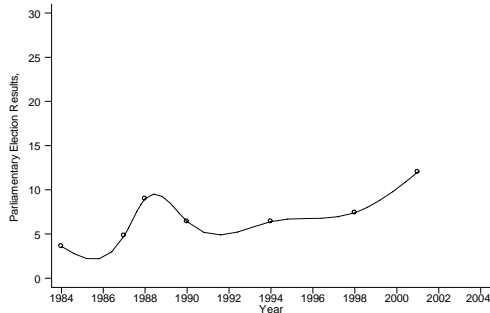
France. *Front National* (National Front): FN.



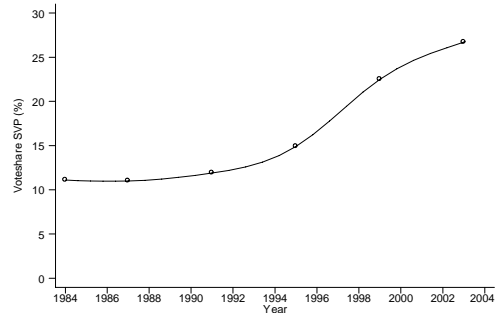
Italy. *Lega Nord* (The Northern League): LN.



Denmark. *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People's Party): DF.



Switzerland. *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party): SVP.



Norway. *Fremskrittspartiet* (Progress Party): FRP.

