Endless migration flows to Europe: the (changed) views of political parties

Berg, Olaf van den

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Olaf van den Berg

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Abstract

Since 2014, Europe has faced an explosive increase in migrants, leading Europe into a migration crisis. Political parties in European countries have responded differently to this influx of people. This study aims to clarify the relationship between the agenda of these political parties and the European migration crisis. Based on qualitative research, a content analysis was used to study the differences between left-wing, right-wing and centre-parties and how the European migration crisis has impacted these points of view. The analysis shows that political parties with different ideologies about migration react differently to the crisis. The European migration crisis has little to no effect on the agenda of left-wing parties and right-wing parties, but a major effect on the agendas of centre-parties.

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1. Introduction

In 2022, a shocking statistic was thrown into the world. McCarthy (2022) published that if all displaced people formed their own country, that country would be the 14th largest nation in the world. Migration is more prevalent than ever before, and Europe cannot avoid it. Since 2014, that continent has had to deal with a never-ending flow of irregular migrants, mainly from war zones in the Middle East and Africa (Strozza, 2020). Not only will the crisis not be resolved in the short term, but the theme 'migration' is a hot topic in many European countries and is sometimes at the top of the political agenda (Natter, Czaika & Haas, 2020).

Since the beginning of the European migration crisis, the crisis has had major political effects in Europe. In 2016, the majority of Britain voted for Brexit where migration played a central role. The belief was that leaving the European Union allowed the United Kingdom to regain control over its borders (Somai & Biedermann, 2016). Between 2015 and 2017, the Scandinavian countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden imposed stricter migration laws to stop migration from outside Europe (Bech, Borevi & Mouritsen, 2017). In addition, in these years far-right parties with an anti-migration sentiment received a lot of electoral support throughout Europe, such as the Austrian party FPÖ, the German party AFD, and the French party Rassemblement National (Heerden & Van der Brug, 2017). Several right-wing parties won the national elections in Europe recently: the Italian party Fratelli d'Italia in 2022 and the Dutch PVV in 2023.

In this research, the party manifestos of political parties of different European countries throughout the years will be qualitatively compared with each other to investigate how migration has influenced these party manifestos. To conduct the research, the Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain are chosen as cases, and the political parties in these countries are selected based on meeting certain requirements. Because migration has come to play a major role in European politics, the results of the research can be of great value for understanding European problems and forming the basis for solutions for them. This research must be carried out because it shows how social issues such as migration are translated into political agendas.

Although some research on the social consequences of migration for European countries has already been conducted (Carrera, Allsopp & Vosyliute, 2018), no research has yet been done on the precise consequences of the European migration crisis on the party manifestos of

political parties in Europe. Because of the gap in the data, this study contributes to the already existing literature. Following this: the research question is as follows:

"What is the effect of the European migration crisis on the agenda of political parties?"

This thesis will first outline and review previous literature on the subject to understand the relationship between the European migration crisis and the agenda of political parties. From that point on, the research design that serves as the basis for the empirics is discussed. After that, the relationship between the two variables is examined by applying qualitative research to party manifestos of political parties. Finally, the discussion and conclusion reflect on the research conducted, the results and the most important insights.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Motives to move

To comprehend any migration crisis, first migration itself must be understood. Although migration is as old as mankind itself (Castelli, 2018), the term is undefined under international law. However, eminent scholars consider migration as a movement involving a change of residence of substantial duration (Sinha, 2005). Based upon this wide explanation of migration, Demko, Ross and Schnell (1970) provide a more specialised definition: migration is a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence by an individual or a group.

Besides being unable to come to a universal definition of migration, scholars also fail to reach an agreement on the motivations for people to migrate. According to Castelli (2018), people will migrate for a great variety of reasons: climate change, wars, land grabbing, sexual identity or religion. Sriskandarajah (2005) points out economic factors as the main reasons to migrate, such as unevenly distributed opportunities and large inequality of property. However, Cummings, Pacitto, Lauro and Foresti (2015) argue that safety from political persecution in their own country is the biggest cause of people becoming a refugee. Finally, Ritchey (1976) argues that all aforementioned factors are legitimate and frequent reasons why people migrate, but the precise reasons differ per country and sometimes even per region.

When fleeing, migrants tend to move to more prosperous countries more often compared to less prosperous countries. The fastest growth in number of migrants has taken place in developed countries where people arrive from non-OECD countries (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

OECD countries are countries committed to democracy, use the market economy, and compare and coordinate domestic and international policies (Blanchflower, 2000). Since the beginning of 2014, the European Union has entered a new crisis because of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing to Europe to find a better life which resulted in a migration crisis for Europe (Pastore & Henry, 2016). Fleeing political and religious conflicts, economic recessions and war in their home country were the main reasons to migrate for this group (Kotyrlo, 2017). The vast majority of those migrants fled conflict: over 75 per cent were from the countries Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (Sprindler, 2015).

In 2015, there were 1.8 million irregular border crossings in the European Union, which was an increase of 546% compared to 2014 (Frontex, 2016). Criminal networks are responsible for most of the migrants who came to Europe irregularly after 2014, making it difficult to easily determine their status (Achilli, 2016). These criminal networks usually are heterogeneously composed, working according to a clear division of tasks and have created transnational networks to maximize their profits. The price refugees pay for them and the quality these criminal networks provide vary heavily (Frontuto, 2017).

There are four main routes migrants use to reach the European Union. Over the years, the first and most used route was the Eastern Mediterranean route. Migrants attempt to reach the European Union via Turkey and Lebanon by applying for asylum in Greece. The second route is the Eastern route where migrants try to reach Poland via Belarus. These two routes are used mainly by migrants from the Middle East and Asian countries (Besenyö, 2016).

The most used route in 2014 was the Central Mediterranean route, where Italy and Malta can be reached by crossing the sea from Libya and Tunisia. The final route is the Western Mediterranean route where migrants try reaching the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla to apply for asylum. These last two routes are used mainly by African migrants (Friebel, Machin, Mendola & Prarolo, 2018).

As migrants continued to flow into Europe from 2014 and on, an increasing amount of protests were organised, from both the political right-wing and the political left-wing (Buonanno, 2017). Although 2014 and 2015 were the years the most non-European migrants arrived in Europe, for Europe the crisis was not over yet. Despite the arrival of fewer migrants since 2015, still almost a million non-European migrants came to Europe in 2022 (Cantat, Pécoud & Thiollet, 2023). The vast majority of the migrants do not stay at the external border

countries of Europe, but move on to more prosperous Western European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany or Great Britain (Torunczyk-Ruiz, 2018).

2.2. European political parties

The earliest political parties in Europe started in the late 19th century. However, left-wing parties in Europe usually started just after the Second World War or in the middle of the Cold War (Marks, Wilson & Ray, 2002). After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, most communist parties in Europe reinvented themselves as social-democratic parties, renouncing their communist label. Other groups became increasingly nationalist-populist parties or re-emerged as parts of new socialist parties. The remaining group maintained their former names and identities but sought to slowly adopt a more socialist view instead of a communist (Tavits & Letki, 2009). According to March (2008), left-wing parties attract three different kinds of voters: ideologically convinced supporters and activists, disaffected centre-left voters and protest voters. In general, left-wing parties adopt positive positions on migration (Carvalho & Ruedin, 2020). They emphasize socioeconomic equality, social egalitarianism and solidarity, and these values are embodied in their approach that embraces migration (Alsonso & Fonseca, 2012).

Centre-parties in Europe greatly vary from country to country in terms of foundation. The first centre-parties already existed in the 19th century, while other centre-parties are still being founded in the 21st century. Furthermore, centre-parties are almost always based on religion (Gagatek & van Hecke, 2014). According to Werner (2020), there are several characteristics that voters of centre-parties have. In general, these voters are male, above the age of fifty, and live in the countryside. Centre-parties often do not have a clear position on migration and can adopt policies from both left-wing parties and right-wing parties (Bale, 2008).

Finally, the rise of extreme-right parties is coinciding with a great rise of arrived migrants around this same time (Mechitishvili, 2020). In most West-European countries the extreme-right parties mostly have risen since the beginning of the 21st century. In Austria, Belgium, Finland, Portugal, the Netherlands and Hungary, political parties based on anti-migration sentiment were founded around that time (Deole & Dawis, 2017). The difference between these parties and the fascist political parties from the 20th century is that these fascist parties were characterized by authoritarianism, forcible suppression of the opposition parties,

militarism and centralized autocracy (Epstein, 1964). The current extreme-right parties, however, are not characterized by those characteristics (Mudde, 2014).

Traditionally, extreme-right parties attracted mostly anti-migration conservative low-educated voters and protest voters (Mols & Jetten, 2020). Spierings, Lubbers and Zaslove (2017) discovered that in the years since the European migration crisis, these extreme-right parties have received more and more votes from voters who previously voted for more moderate right-wing parties. Right-wing parties are in favour of migration restriction and better border controls (Spanje, 2011). These parties stand behind the belief that migrants are dangerous to others and form an economic and cultural threat to the already existing natives (Meyer & Rosenberger, 2015).

Because migrants often travel all the way to Western European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain, these countries have received the most migrants relatively (Ballarino & Panichella, 2015). Jenkins and Bond (2017) argued that migrants have influenced the agenda of political parties in several indirect ways: the founding of several anti-migrant parties throughout Europe with the main goal of reducing non-European migrants In Europe, far-right parties changing their view from anti-communist to anti-migrant, raising the number of mass protests from the left-wing and the right-wing significantly, and the rise of several political parties that mainly focus on protecting the rights of migrants and fighting racism.

2.3. The changed image of the migrant

In the first twenty years after the Second World War, Europe brought in guest workers from low-wage countries, because the native population of European countries became increasingly educated and was no longer willing to take up unhealthy and poorly paying jobs (Boyle, Halfacree & Robinson, 1998). In this period, international migration to Europe was viewed positively because of mutual benefits (Bonifazi, 2008).

However, with the occurrence of the oil crisis in 1973, the need for uneducated work was reduced and the former unbridled economic growth diminished (Boyle et al., 1998). From that moment, the share of the non-European migrant population significantly grew, and the number of asylum applications started to rise in Europe (Hansen, 2003). For example, between the 1970s and the early 2000s' the number of asylum applications increased from

15.000 to 300.000 each year (Hatton, 2004). Approaching the 1990s, more and more countries were implementing migration stops, and migration started to become an important topic in national political and public debates (Bonifazi, 2008).

Since 1990 migration has grown in Western countries in Europe to one of the most salient issues of party politics, and the general increase of party attention to this topic reflects the increasing number of non-European migrants entering Europe and the rise of radical-right-wing parties. Furthermore, the attention has spread and has become an issue that all parties address and have a place on their political agenda (Green-Pedersen & Otjes, 2017).

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Theoretical argument & conceptualization

Migration does not have the same effect on the political agenda of left-wing parties as it has on right-wing parties. Natter, Czaika and Haas (2020) argue that a political party's ideology of migration puts it on the political spectrum. A political party begins with people having a certain ideology for a country. They want to legally push their ideology into the national political system and do this by the foundation of their political party (Bawn et al., 2012).

According to Freeman and Kessler (2008), migration affects different political parties in different ways for two reasons. First, left-wing parties will be less critical about migration compared to right-wing parties. Jensen (2010) defines left-wing parties as parties that support and seek to achieve social equality and egalitarianism. They seek this equality in several dimensions: more equality for economically weaker residents of society, more emphasis on equal rights and equal treatment under the law, and a fairer distribution and treatment of migrants, where the latter is the chosen dimension for the research.

The second reason why migration affects different political parties in different ways is that the subject 'migration' stands higher on the political agenda of right-wing parties than on the political agenda of left-wing parties. Zulianello (2019) defines right-wing parties as parties that support free enterprise and individualism. Right-wing parties seek to find this freedom in several dimensions: freedom in the way of working where entrepreneurship is highly valued and the government should not interfere too much, high punishments for criminals and organised crime, and the absence of a large group of migrants in the country, where the latter is the chosen dimension for the research.

Between the left-wing parties and right-wing parties, the centre-parties are positioned. The centre-parties implement policies that combine left-wing policies and right-wing policies (Chandra, 2005). Centre-parties can be placed between these kinds of parties in several dimensions: healthcare and medical issues, labour, social equality, sustainability and migration. Migration is a difficult subject because different strains in their ideologies will pull them in different directions on the political spectrum. For example, they support security and sovereignty and want to reduce migration. However, they also support free businesses and free markets which can be made possible by cheap or skilled labour which should move freely across borders. The idea of sovereignty and security counters the idea of moving across borders freely because they want to limit migration as much as possible (Abdou, Bale & Geddes, 2022).

Left-wing political parties will be less critical of migration compared to right-wing political parties, and the subject 'migration' stands higher on the political agenda of right-wing parties than left-wing parties for the same reason: to push the country in the direction they want, political parties translate ideology into their party program, which they use to convey their ideology to voters they attract. The more voters they attract with their ideology, the more they can exercise that ideology (Garmines & D'Amico, 2016).

This attraction of voters based on their ideology explains why left-wing parties behave differently than right-wing parties and how it defines the agendas of these political parties. Baumgartner (2015) defines the agenda of political parties as the set of issues that are subject to decision-making and debate within a given political system at any time. Several dimensions could be applied to this concept. The 'agenda of political parties' gets translated the best in the dimension of the external agenda. Klüver and Sagarzazu (2016) argue that the external agenda reflects the preferences and attitudes towards national issues by communicating their values and contributing to public policy.

The agendas of political parties have been influenced sincerely by migrants who entered the European Union since 2014 and started the European migration crisis. Blair (2016) defines the 'European migration crisis' as irregular migration and asylum-seeking flows to Europe from 2011 onwards and the political reactions on that matter. Since the end of the Second World War to the present, the image of migration has changed from rather positive to negative, the dimension 'increased concerns' fits here. Caretta et al. (2023) refer to increased concerns as a heightened level of consideration regarding the phenomenon of migration.

3.2.Hypotheses

In the literature review, various political party families in Europe were mentioned. Because this research examines the impact of the European migration crisis on the agenda of political parties from the left to the right, these political party families will transform into different hypotheses.

Spanje (2010) argues that due to increased migration in Europe over the past decade, centre-parties have shifted slightly to the right on the political dimension because centre-parties are less steadfast in their political point of view and are more likely to be influenced by public opinion than left-wing parties and right-wing parties.

Furthermore, Spanje (2010) argues that left-wing parties were unaffected by the increasing levels of migration and remained on the left side of the political spectrum because left-wing parties focus more on the humanitarian and egalitarian aspects of the migration crisis and the migration crisis is not a reason for them to accept fewer migrants or close the borders.

In addition, Avdeenko and Siendler (2017) concluded that right-wing parties did not slide to the left side of the political spectrum on the subject of migration because right-wing parties only see the European migration crisis as more reason to stop as many migrants as possible because of all the bad consequences the migrants bring with them. From this knowledge, three hypotheses are formed.

H1: The European migration crisis has not shifted the left-wing parties to the right on the political spectrum on migration

H2: The European migration crisis caused centre-parties to have slightly shifted to the right side of the political spectrum on migration

H3: The European migration crisis caused the right-wing political parties to shift even more to the right side of the political spectrum on migration

4. Methodology

4.1. Research design

This research explores certain repercussions of the European migration crisis. The proposed research problem in this research is about the effects of the European migration crisis on the agenda of political parties. Therefore, the research focuses on the relationship between this crisis and the changes in the positions of political parties. This research problem can be categorized as a causal research problem. Kamper (2020) defines causal research as whether one or more variables cause or affect one or more outcome variables. Although various qualitative sources can be used to conduct this research, the choice was made to analyse the manifestos of political parties.

Two studies that are most related to this research are those of Carvalho and Ruedin (2020) and Harmon (2018). Carvalho and Ruedin (2020) researched the positions of mainstream left-wing political parties on migration, using a content analysis to analyse these parties in seven European countries between 1995 and 2009. While focusing on several left-wing parties in their cross-country comparative research, they left out research on centre-parties and right-wing parties. This limitation will be compensated by also including several centre-parties and right-wing parties in this research.

The second study which is related the closest to this research, is the research of Harmon (2018). He studied the impact of migration and ethnic diversity on political outcomes in a migration-receiving country, using the outcomes of the national elections of Denmark in 1981 and 2001. Although Harmon demonstrates a clear cause-and-effect relationship by using enough control variables, his research only focuses on one country for his study. This limitation in his research will be fixed in this research by focusing on three Western European countries.

The research design that fits in this research is a comparative case study research design because the relationship between migration and the agenda of political parties will be investigated. Kaarbo and Beasley (2002) define a comparative case study as the systematic comparison of two or more cases obtained through the use of the case study method. In this comparative case study research, a Most Similar Systems Design will be used. Anckar (2006) defines the Most Similar Systems Designs as a comparative analysis of two or more systems that share a high degree of similarity in their purpose, which differ only in the independent variable. The investigated political parties differ in political ideology but share many

similarities. These similarities are a set of principles, goals, and policy positions, campaigning and election participation, engagement of the political process, an internally organized structure, and public communication (Song & Park, 2017).

4.2.Case selection

The chosen cases are political parties in various European countries. To be chosen as a case, political parties must meet several conditions. First, to make a comparison before the European migration crisis and after, the elected party must have existed before the European migration crisis that started in 2014. Second, the political parties must still exist now and must not have merged with another party in the meantime. Third, there must be available party manifestos from this party mentioning migration. Finally, the political party must be represented on the national level.

For this comparative research, several political parties of three different countries will be used. These countries are the Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany. They are chosen for two reasons. First, these countries are all located in the same geographical area called Western Europe, which makes a comparison between the countries meaningful. Second, the European migration crisis has heavily affected these countries (Tudor, 2018). The Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany all have admitted many migrants as a result of this crisis, which makes these countries relevant to this research.

To get an answer to the hypotheses and the research question, all the parties of the three selected countries that fit the set criteria have been chosen as cases. The political parties will be classified as a 'left-wing party', a 'centre-party', or a 'right-wing party' based on their point of view of migration. They will be classified only based on migration because that is the subject of the research, and otherwise the position of some parties will change on the political spectrum.

The left-wing parties of the Netherlands are the Socialistische partij (SP), the ChristenUnie (CU), and the Partij voor de dieren (PvdD). The centre-parties are Democraten 66 (D66), and the Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA). The right-wing paries are the partij van de Partij Voor de Vrijheid (PVV), the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD) and the Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP).

The left-wing parties of Great Britain are the Green Party of England and Wales (Green Party), and the Labour Party. The centre-parties are the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party (SNP). The right-wing party is the Conservative and Unionist party (conservatives).

Finally, the left-wing party of Germany Bündnis 90/Die Grünen. The centre-party is the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD). The right-wing party is Alternative für Deutschland (AFD). Due to the lack of an online party manifesto, the major German parties FDP and CDU/CSU cannot be included in the analysis. All these parties share many similarities as political parties but differ in ideology. Therefore, they fit in the Most Similar Systems Design very well.

To conduct this research, only qualitative data will be used. To research how the European migration crisis has influenced the agenda of political parties and find evidence for my hypothesis, the party manifestos of the chosen political parties will be investigated thoroughly. These party manifestos will be analysed before and during the migration crisis to find out whether there has been a shift in the political spectrum on migration. The choice to analyse manifestos over other qualitative sources is because manifestos give a statement of valid party positions (Eder, Jenny & Müller, 2016) and provide a sufficient amount of context and explanation for their positions (Harmel, 2018). In terms of the party manifestos, only the qualitative aspects will be considered and the quantitative components of these manifestos will not. Furthermore, the researched qualitative data has not been previously examined by other scholars. As a result, this study relies solely on primary data and excludes any secondary data.

4.3. Methods of data collection and data analysis

For the chosen political parties, two party manifestos are analysed: one from before the European migration crisis and one from during the European migration crisis, to provide a meaningful result of how the crisis has influenced the agenda of political parties. About the party manifesto before the European migration crisis, the manifesto closest to the beginning of the crisis is chosen to provide the most accurate possible result of the position on migration of the political parties. Regarding the party manifesto during the crisis, the manifesto as recent as possible is chosen to maximize the relevance of this research.

The 'migration chapter' is not the only party of a party manifesto that contains relevant data for this research. Migration also influences the housing market, the welfare state, and the security of a country (Potepan,1994). However, not all chapters of the party manifestos will be analysed for several reasons: not all political parties have chapters included where migration plays a role, and analysing the party manifestos completely provides too much irrelevant data for the time allocated for this research.

Researching various chapters of party manifestos will provide a lot of textual data. To analyse this large amount of data, a content analysis will be used. Moore (2006) defines a content analysis as a 'research tool to inspect the presence of certain words, concepts or themes within some given qualitative data', and is often used to analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of certain themes, concepts and words.

According to Stemler (2001), a content analysis can provide empirical data for monitoring changes in opinion shifts. For example, data collected from 2011 can be compared easily to data collected at a later point in time to determine if events have affected public opinion. Also, Stemler, emphasizes that word count is an essential part of a content analysis because the changing frequency of selected words mentioned reflects the greatest concerns and can therefore give explanations of how is thought about a certain problem in terms of importance.

Weber (1990) points out two aspects of the meaning of words in the content analysis. First, it is important to consider that synonyms may be used and lead the researcher to underestimate the importance of a concept. Vice versa, the researcher must pay attention to synonyms of words that mean the same, so that the importance of a concept is not too overestimated. Dandoy and Acurio (2023) argue that the frequency and meaning are essential in a content analysis, but the length of the chapter as well, because a lot of data can be extracted from the change of length in a party manifesto.

Based on the literature about content analysis, the party manifestos of the selected cases will be analysed based on four components. The four components are the choice of words used, the frequency of these words, the length of the migration chapter, and the place where this migration chapter is put.

The choice of words refers to which words are used before and after the European migration crisis. The analysis is based on the more intense the words become, the greater the effect of the crisis. The frequency of these words refers to how often these words occur before and after the European migration crisis. The analysis is based on the more these words are used,

the greater the effect of the crisis. The length of the migration chapter refers to the number of words the chapter contains. The analysis is based on the longer the chapter is, the greater the effect of the crisis. Finally, the place of the migration chapter refers to the location where it originates in the party manifesto. The earlier the theme appears the greater the effect of the crisis.

Based on the changes of these four components in the manifestos, a general conclusion will be drawn about the effects of the European migration crisis on the agenda of left-wing parties, centre-parties, and right-wing parties.

5. Empirics

5.1. Cross-national differences

In the analysis, empiric research has been conducted by comparing party manifestos of several political parties, and they differ. Not only do party manifestos differ in ideology greatly, but they are also structured differently in various countries. The party manifestos of the Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany differ in four different ways. First, the vast majority of migration chapters of Dutch and German political parties are described way more extensively compared to the party manifestos of the British political parties. The average length of the Dutch migration chapter is 1026 words, the German migration chapter contains 852 words on average and the British migration chapter only contains 295 words on average. The reason for this is that Dutch and German political parties explain both their plans and their method of implementation for these plans, whereas the British parties only explain the implementation limited or even neglect it.

The second difference is the accessibility of the party manifestos. In the Netherlands, all the party manifestos of each election of every selected political party are easily accessible on their website. In Germany and Great Britain, this varies greatly per party, but the majority of party manifestos are not even published on their website, but can only be found in a database.

The third difference is the different ways of addressing the topics in the party manifestos between the countries. Almost all the parties in Germany address the topic of migration in their table of contents as the topic, while almost all political parties in Great Britain and the Netherlands use a sentence for the topic. For example, the majority of the Dutch and British political parties address their migration chapter as 'just hospitality in the Netherlands' (CU,

2023), 'Safe Europe in a turbulent word' (D66, 2023), or 'We will focus on your priorities' (Conservatives, 2019). In Germany on the other hand, the parties refer to their migration chapter as 'migration' (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, 2021).

The fourth and final main difference is the use of pictures in their party manifestos. The political parties in the Netherlands and Germany do not use these, but the majority of the selected political parties in Great Britain use this electoral tactic. This applies both as a picture between the chapters where Dutch and German political parties only have text and as pictures in the middle of chapters of voters of the party with a story. Examples of parties that use this are the Scottish National Party (SNP, 2019) and the Green Party (Green Party, 2019).

5.2. The change of left-wing parties

Before the European migration crisis, the majority of the European left-wing parties were tolerant of migration and warmly welcomed refugees. However, in their party manifesto of 2012 and 2013, the ChristenUnie and the Labour Party opposed letting in more migrants. The CU migrants were treated as first-class citizens, but they wanted to make it more difficult to apply for asylum in the Netherlands (CU, 2012). The Labour Party initially wanted to limit the influx of regular migration and only accept highly skilled and labour migrants (Labour Party, 2010). These two parties, however, have changed this view and stated in their party manifestos of 2019 and 2023 to let in all real refugees applying for asylum (CU, 2023; Labour Party, 2019).

In their party manifesto for the European migration crisis, various left-wing parties have mainly emphasized the good reception of migrants and after the start of the crisis the impression was more on the good integration of these migrants. These parties are the SP, the PvdD and the Bündnis90/die Grünen. In their party manifesto of 2012 (SP, 2012), the SP emphasized on good reception of migrants for a temporary stay in the country. They shifted their point of view about temporary stay in 2023, focusing more on a good system of integration in the country (SP, 2023). the PvdD advocated only for shelter and care for stateless people in 2012 (PvdD, 2012), but is now a strong supporter of 'quick decisions about residence' and 'protecting the rights of everyone seeking asylum' (PvdD, 2023). Finally, the Bündnis90/Die Grünen also believed in 2012 that there should be good reception for refugees who arrived (Bündnis90/Die Grünen, 2012), but they have switched to a good integration of migrants by promoting a 'diverse migration society' (Bündnis90/Die Grünen, 2021).

In their most recent party manifestos, all the left-wing parties are positive about giving shelter to refugees. However, there is one left-wing party that is actively lobbying for the arrival of more migrants and that is the Green Party of England and Wales. This party is the only one in favour of 'bringing families over must become the norm', 'opening up ways for illegal immigrants to become legal' and 'controls for migration must be lowered' (Green Party, 2019). Almost all the left-wing parties have paid more attention to the topic of migration after the start of the European migration crisis, except the Labour Party, because this party is the exception to the rule that the left-wing parties have used more words in their migration chapter. A complete overview of changes in word count can be found in Appendix C.

5.3. The change of centre-parties

Centre-parties are known to use both left-wing and right-wing policies in their policies. The British party Scottish National Party (SNP) and the German SPD have both been very welcoming to migrants during the European migration crisis. The SNP did not focus on one aspect, but wanted both a 'less restrictive approach' and 'safer legal routes' as they 'relied heavily on migration' (SNP, 2019). The SPD has also had a compassionate attitude towards migrants since the start of the crisis and advocated 'natural acceptance of migrants regardless of migration roots' to 'build a migration society' (SPD, 2021).

The political parties D66 and the Liberal Democrats have two party points that correspond exactly with each other. Firstly, before the crisis, both parties argued for a well-functioning European asylum system, based on fairness and proportional distribution (D66, 2012; Liberal Democrats, 2011). The second agreement is that after the crisis has started, both parties want good protection for migrants. D66 mainly advocates the improvement of conditions for unaccompanied minor foreigners and stateless migrants (D66, 2023), and the Liberal Democrats focus on protecting migrants on the route to the country, where migrants are sometimes used as slaves (Liberal Democrats, 2019).

The four centre-parties discussed have in common that after the start of the European migration crisis, they have become more relaxed in their attitude towards migrants. The centre-party that has become tougher in its attitude is the CDA which functions as the outlier party. The party wants to reduce migration on four points that the other centre-parties do not have: more control over migration by changing the status of all the permits to 'temporary', by only allowing core family to travel after, the introduction of a two-status system and the

immediate deportation of safe landers (CDA, 2023). The theme 'migration' is also very important in the centre-parties. Almost all the parties have paid more attention to the topic, except the SPD.

5.4. The change of right-wing parties

The right-wing parties were already against letting in more migrants before the European migration crisis and those parties still have that point of view in their most recent party manifesto. Furthermore, the four right-wing parties have several similarities about migration. First, they are in favour of a sharp decline in low-skilled migrants by implementing stricter national rules. Secondly, not only do they want a lower number of these migrants, but they also want a maximum number of migrants allowed per year. Thirdly, asylum seekers must be accommodated in the region they come from as much as possible. Following this is the fourth agreement that the parties want to strengthen Europe's external borders through stricter controls. Finally, all the right-wing parties want a ban on procedural stacking.

The Dutch anti-migration party PVV has a similarity with every other right-wing party. The PVV and the SGP both want a ban on holding dual nationality. The SGP advocates the ban because dual nationality would disrupt national identity (SGP, 2023). Furthermore, the PVV advocates a ban on this because, according to the PVV, 'people cannot speak freely if they also have another nationality'. In addition, the PVV also wants to take away the voting rights of people with dual nationality (PVV, 2023).

The policy similarity the PVV shares with the VVD is that they both want to stop issuing permanent residence permits. Both the VVD (VVD, 2023) and the PVV (PVV, 2023) agree that with this measure taken, there is more room for people who are allowed to stay in the Netherlands. Then these two parties are no more flexible than the countries surrounding the Netherlands.

Finally, the PVV and the German AFD share the belief that there must be an accelerated process for deporting and returning migrants who have no chance of staying here. There must be a new law to immediately deport radicalized migrants, although they have a chance to stay (PVV, 2023; AFD, 2023). The VVD is against an accelerated process for deporting migrants but does believe that migrants should leave the country when the chance that they will be

allowed to stay is very small (VVD, 2023). Finally, the SGP is completely against deportation (SGP, 2023).

Almost all the right-wing parties have paid more attention to the topic of 'migration' after the start of the European migration crisis, except the SGP. The VVD and the AFD both had spectacular raises. The VVD had a raise of 849 words and the AFD had an increase of 1975 words.

6. Discussion

This research has investigated the effects of the European migration crisis on the agenda of several political parties in West-European countries. The qualitative research conducted has indicated three main findings. First, left-wing parties have not moved to the right of the political spectrum, despite the European migration crisis. Second, the centre parties have not moved unitedly to the left or right of the political spectrum, but have individually moved more to the left or more to the right due to the European migration crisis. Finally, the European migration crisis has pushed the right-wing parties even more to the right of the political spectrum.

The qualitative analysis confirms the extent to which the hypotheses are correct. First, left-wing parties in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany have not moved to the right on the political spectrum due to the European migration crisis. In general, most left-wing parties were already in favour of quickly taking in migrants before the crisis, they have upgraded their position from good reception to good integration, and the parties have spent more words on the migration chapter in their political manifesto. Therefore, the hypothesis: 'the European migration crisis has not shifted the left-wing parties to the right on the political spectrum on migration', turned out to be true

Second, centre-parties in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany have moved to both the left and right of the political spectrum, with most centre parties slightly to the left side. Therefore, the hypothesis: 'the European migration crisis caused centre-parties to have slightly shifted to the right side of the political spectrum on migration' turned out to be false.

Third, right-wing parties in the Netherlands, Great Britain and Germany have only moved further to the right side of the political spectrum due to the European migration crisis. These parties view migration as an even bigger problem than before the crisis and almost all have

expanded the length and content of their party manifesto to combat the increasing amount of migrants. Therefore, the hypothesis: 'the European migration crisis caused the right-wing political parties to shift even further to the right side of the political spectrum on migration', turned out to be true

The conclusion of the paper of the two most related research from Carvalho and Ruedin (2020) and Harmon (2018), stated that left-wing parties downplayed migration and focused on other issues. They also stated that mainstream left-wing parties made relatively fewer political claims on the theme 'migration', and that migration-driven increases in ethnic diversity have systematic effects on political outcomes. The findings in this thesis agree with both of these statements.

First, this analysis proved that right-wing parties are much more concerned with the theme of 'migration'. In their most recent party manifesto, the left-wing parties used an average of 541 words on the theme 'migration' and the right-wing parties an average of 1238. Secondly, long after the start of the European migration crisis, the political outcomes are a lot different in the Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain, which proves that the increase of migration-driven diversity has certainly had its effect on political outcomes.

Although this study is in line with the research of Carvalho and Ruedin (2020) and Harmon (2018), it did not itself evolve or build upon these studies. The contribution of this research was to analyse the effects of how the European migration crisis has affected left, centre and right political parties in three different Western European countries and provides us with new insights on this matter.

Although the qualitative research conducted in this thesis provides valuable insights into changing attitudes towards migration across Western Europe, it is important to acknowledge a few limitations. First, party manifestos or political parties are the only sources examined for this research. Although this was deliberately chosen because of the set time frame for this project, it limits the amount of information that can be obtained. If interviews with party leaders or analysis of parliamentary debates had also been used, this could have given this research more depth.

Secondly, this research used qualitative data to analyse the party manifestos. Although this method is certainly not unusable, it provides less clarity about the accuracy of the results. The words, themes and connections analysed in this study have only been interpreted once by the

researcher, from which the conclusion for this study follows. The use of qualitative data would have been more appropriate to investigate the research question posed.

Finally, the conclusions of this research are drawn from the connection between the agenda of political parties and the European migration crisis. However, the European migration crisis is not the only factor that influenced the political agenda. By omitting the control variables, the credibility of the study decreases. In addition, no research had yet been conducted into the precise effects that the migration crisis had on the agenda of these parties, so it contributes new knowledge to the academic debate.

Exploring the connection between Europe's migration crisis and how it affects political parties in different countries is not entirely new. However, so far there is no database where the effect of the crisis on every political party across Europe has been analysed. Future studies could delve deeper into this topic and conduct more comparative research, examining more political parties from different countries on both sides of the political spectrum to provide more clarity on how the European migration crisis affects several political parties.

7. Conclusion

This research has aimed to clarify the relation between the European migration crisis and the agendas of political parties. Based on qualitative analysis, it can be concluded that the migration crisis had little to no effect on the agenda of left-wing and right-wing parties, but a major effect on the agendas of centre-parties on migration. The left-wing and right-wing parties remained on their own side of the left-right political spectrum, but centre-parties did not remain in the centre: they shifted to either the left or the right side.

To come to this conclusion, a qualitative content analysis was used to find evidence for the stated hypotheses. The expectations before conducting this analysis were that the right-wing parties and the centre-parties would, in their point of view about migration, shift more to the right side of the political spectrum, and the left-wing parties remained in their position. After the analysis, the evidence showed that statement not to be true.

Exploring the connection between Europe's migration crisis and how it affects political parties in different countries is not entirely new. However, so far there is no database where the effect of the crisis on every political party across Europe has been analysed. Future studies could delve deeper into this topic and conduct more comparative research, examining more political

parties from different countries on both sides of the political spectrum to provide more clarity on how the European migration crisis affects several political parties. In addition, the findings of this thesis that the European migration crisis only affected the agendas of centre-parties can be used by policymakers to adapt their policy to maximize their objectives.

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9. *Appendix*

9.1. Appendix A: Used keywords.

Name of the political party	Used keywords used in the 1st manifesto	Used keywords used in the 2nd manifesto
D66	Just and humane, Asylum seekers learn and work, Rooting law, Limit asylum detention, European asylum system, Simplify family reunification.	Protection of vulnerable people, Limitless challenges, Mandatory Quota for municipalities, Lack of European responsibility, No more pushback's, fair share, proactively conduct search and rescue operations, more reception facilities, improve conditions for Unaccompanied Minor Foreigners, Stateless people deserve more protection, against the criminalization of illegality.
SP	intensifying help to border states, Respect for the rights of refugees, Right to humane shelter, permanent residence status, relaxation of family reunification procedures, psychological care for asylum seekers is improved.	Successful integration, Specific policy, contribution from the Member States, Reduced Migration.
CDA	Open to real refugees, more effort into integration, Sharpening of language requirements, balanced	Decreasing influx of migrants, more control over migration, demanding integration policy, saying

	distribution of migration, common European asylum policy, combating migration.	goodbye to cultural relativism, Asylum migrants arrive upon invitation, two status system, asylum permits become temporary, travel is only possible for the core family, deporting of safe landers.
PVV	mass immigration is intensely harmful, stop immigration, Deporting criminals with a non-Dutch nationality, Sovereignty of immigration, end of procedure stacking, no more dual nationalities, citizenship courses in the country of origin, no more than a thousand asylum seekers per year, no voting right with dual nationality, ban on multicultural subsidies	degraded by mass immigration, irresponsible unlimited asylum influx, fortune seekers, threat to way of life, benefiting from benefits and other facilities, priceless asylum flow, asylum stop, maximum asylum stop reached, cared for in own region, outflow of migrants precisely be enlarged, failing immigration policy, reintroduction of national border control, restrictive immigration policy, terminate the UN Refugee Convention, pushback for asylum seekers, Criminalizing illegality, no coercive law, prevention of stacking procedure, prohibition of dual nationality.

PvdD	actively committed to protection and safety of refugees, quick decision about residence, shelter and care for stateless people.	Quick decision making, fair migration policy, ECRT starting point for migration policy, improving of living conditions, dignified existence, Replacing Frontex with humanitarian missions, protect the rights of everyone seeking asylum, countering xenophobia.
CU	does not benefit from large-scale immigration, be part of society, Newcomers are full-fledged and empowered citizens, The protection of migrants, offer of safe shelter, alternatives for immigration detention, effective return policy, A ban on wearing face-covering clothing.	Place for real refugees, failing migration policy, fair and hospitable migration policy, putting human rights first, transparent and fair system of invitations, transparent and fair system of invitations, No quota for refugees, fair border procedures, European solidarity, No illegal pushbacks, Always allow emergency assistance, Better care in the region, no limit on family reunification, no reintroduction of the two state system, greater approach to burdensome migrants.
SGP	limited options to help migrants, Imposing stricter requirements for migrants, preventing for submitting	Current inhumane asylum system, boundaries to accommodate newcomers.

	repeated applications, increase of opportunities for receiving refugees in the region, limited opportunity of dual nationality.	necessary inflow restriction, upper limit to migration.
VVD	significant integration problems, different culture, ban on face-covering clothing, integration extremely important, self-reliance, limited social security, no right to social assistance for the first ten years, fraud, language deficiencies, restrictive immigration policy, no underprivileged and poorly educated migrants, demonstrably unsafe country, restriction on economic migrants, none repeated application, effective deportation policy, reception in own region, tightening of deportation procedures, illegal migrants.	uncontrolled migration flows, foreign aggression, clampdown on migration, limit inflow, take measures, dual-status system, no permanent permit, cut back on reception of underprivileged people, shorten migration procedure, more balanced distribution, flow of asylum seekers downwards, return without hindrance, realistic acceptance percentages, combat procedural stacking, strengthen faster return , tackling evasion of rules, tackling nuisance migrants, strengthening external borders, reception in the region, tackling illegal migration routes, reforming European asylum policy, expanding the options for returning migrants, tackling human smugglers, tightening border procedures, resettling specific groups

Green Party	proud to stand up for migrants' rights, high value of migration, humane immigration and asylum system, end of indefinite detention of all refugees.	Promoting asylum inflows, It is wrong to scapegoat immigrants problems, some controls on migration must be put in the foreseeable future, national obligations to accept refugees, respect for the integrity of families, no immigrant is held in detention, open up ways for illegal immigrants to become legal, destitution plays no role in the asylum process.
Liberal Democrats	Making the asylum system fair, managing migration, secure Britain's borders, migrants work only when needed, prioritise deportation of criminals, end detention of children.	Fair effective immigration system, tackling smuggling and modern slavery, provide safe and legal routes to sanctuary for refugees, lift the asylum seekers work ban.
Conservatives	Immigration is too high, migration back to the levels of the 90´, Setting an annual limit of migrants, limited access.	Contribute before receiving benefits, ending freedom of movement, overall numbers down, fewer low-skilled migrants, overhaul current migration system.
Labour Party	Regulated migration, no unskilled migration.	Prioritize real migrants, Humane migration system, welcome them and their families.

SNP	Taking responsibility for migration, attracting high-skilled migration.	Greater tolerance, Stop for natural and managed migration, stand firm against demonisation of migrants, against hostile migration environment, we rely on migration, Less restrictive approach to family migration, fair asylum system, creation of safe and legal routes.
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Responsibility for migration, migration is necessary, mandatory shelter	Multicultural society, Diverse migration society, New entry routes for education migration.
AFD	Posed threat, negative effects of migration, uncontrolled migration flows, irregular migration, shelter in region, stricter policy, radicalized migration, failed multiculturism.	No irregular migration, mass migration, shelter in safe regions, establishing strict control, preventing uncontrolled influx of migrants, widespread malpractices, asylum quota, preventing further migration, reducing pressure on migration, immigration lobby, uncontrollable massive migration, direct stop of migration in social systems, failed multi-cultural society, obligation to integrate, enormous cost of migration, reorganisation of funding of migration.

SPD	Save place, multicultural country, necessary migration	Acceptation and tolerance, Regardless of migration roots, natural acceptance.

9.2. Appendix B. Frequency of keywords

Name of the political party	Frequency of used keywords in 1st manifesto	Frequency of used keywords in 2nd manifesto
D66	7	17
SP	7	4
CDA	6	9
PVV	23	31
PvdD	3	8
CU	9	14
SGP	6	4
VVD	13	19
Green Party	4	7
Liberal Democrats	6	4
Conservatives	4	6
Labour Party	3	2
SNP	2	8
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	3	2
AFD	8	23
SPD	3	4

9.3. Appendix C. Length of the migration chapter in words

Name of the political party	Length of migration chapter 1st manifesto	Length of migration chapter 2nd manifesto
D66	589	2788
SP	376	435
CDA	331	898
PVV	761	842
PvdD	127	1180
CU	1727	2950
SGP	772	593
VVD	1404	2253
Green Party	98	132
Liberal Democrats	198	313
Conservatives	205	469
Labour Party	470	164
SNP	57	847
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	394	1340
AFD	169	2244
SPD	517	448

9.4. Appendix D: Place of migration chapter.

Name of the political party	Place of the migration chapter in the 1st manifesto	Place of the migration chapter in the 2nd manifesto
D66	Placed 7/9	Placed 6/7
SP	Placed 3/15	Placed 9/10
CDA	Placed 1/8	Placed 10/12
PVV	Placed 6/10	Placed 1/13
PvdD	Placed 6/8	Placed 9/9
CU	Placed 1/7	Placed 4/5
SGP	Placed 4/9	Placed 9/10
VVD	Placed 4/5	Placed 1/9
Green Party	Placed 13/14	Placed 6/10
Liberal Democrats	Placed 7/8	Placed 17/21
Conservatives	Placed 5/26	Placed 2/5
Labour Party	Placed 5/10	Placed 14/22
SNP	Placed 4/5	Placed 8/9
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Placed 8/8	Placed 5/6
AFD	Placed 4/6	Placed 3/14
SDP	Placed 6/11	Placed 3/4