Article

How party competition shapes ethnic parties' positions on migration and immigration

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Abstract

What positions do ethnic parties adopt on issues related to migration and immigration? We argue that, first, the specific characteristics of the party system – that is, if there are further ethnic parties that compete for votes, in particular among the same ethnic group – matter for the policy profile of ethnic parties on immigration policy. Secondly, we expect that the ideological position of an ethnic party should matter for their immigration policy position: ethnic parties with a more right-wing ideological profile should adopt more negative positions on immigration, in particular, if they face competition from another ethnic party. We use regression analysis and a manually coded sample of ethnic parties based on the Comparative Manifesto Project to test these assumptions. The empirical analysis provides support for our expectations: ethnic parties take more negative immigration positions if they compete with other parties among the same group of ethnic voters and the more the ethnic parties belong to the right wing of the ideological spectrum.

Keywords

Ethnic parties, party competition, immigration, policy positions

Introduction

What shapes ethnic parties' view on migration and immigration? Ethnic parties, which represent themselves as the champions of the interests of autochthonous ethnic groups, are established political players and a prominent feature of political life in most multinational democracies. Existing research indicates that ethnic parties such as Finland's Swedish People's Party or Canada's Parti Québécois, pay attention to immigration as a prevailing 'omnibus issue', just like non-ethnic parties do (Hepburn, 2009; Pirro, 2015, p. 82; Adam and Deschouwer, 2016). In their positioning towards 'new' minorities, however, ethnic parties seem to face a dilemma:

On the one hand, attracting migrants may strengthen 'old' and usually numerically small minority groups, the specific electorate ethnic parties seek to represent. For instance, parties representing French-speakers in Canada have stated a preference for migrants over newcomers from other parts of the country, citing the latter's resistance learning their language (Xhardez and Paquet, 2021). Ethnic parties might utilize a pro-immigration stance to show their ethnic constituency that they are committed to the community's survival and prosperity, which may improve the party's legitimacy (Barker, 2010; Franco-Guillén and Zapata-Barrero, 2014). In contrast, a lack of strong commitments to issues such as liberalism and cultural pluralism may seriously harm an ethnic party's image as being 'radical', 'nationalist', or 'separatist' (Van der Zwet, 2015).

A pro-immigrant stance, on the other hand, may backfire, because too much diversity can put ethnic parties in a weaker position or even threaten their very existence. As ethnic parties can hardly expand their vote share beyond their core constituency, it is a matter of survival for them to maximize their ethnic appeal and respond to the interests of ethnic voters (Gagnon and Iacovino, 2006). Following the

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basic assumptions of intergroup threat theory (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015; Meeusen et al., 2019), ethnic voters may perceive 'new' minorities as outsiders and as a threat to their cultural identity (Jeram et al., 2016; Zapata-Barrero, 2007). This perspective predicts that ethnic electorates would punish ethnic parties for taking an overtly liberal stance on immigration and will reward exclusivist ethnonational mobilization.

Empirically, however, the picture is less clear. We find *both* immigration-friendly ethnic parties, such as the Māori Party in New Zealand, and anti-immigration parties like the New Flemish Alliance in Belgium or the South Tyrolean Freedom Party in Italy. Obviously, the spectrum of ethnic parties' positions on immigration is much broader than this 'friends or foes' debate suggests and not all ethnic parties strive to draw sharp boundaries between 'us' and 'them' (Franco-Guillén, 2016; Jeram and Adam, 2015; Xhardez, 2020). Ethnic parties' responses to immigration are rather diverse and vary across time and space (Hepburn, 2009; Barker, 2010; Jeram, 2013). How can we explain this variance?

Over the last two decades, a rapidly expanding research field has studied how parties in multinational democracies that seek to represent autochthonous ethnic groups deal with the societal challenges of immigration and the increasing cultural heterogeneity in their countries or regions (Banting and Soroka, 2012; Jeram and Adam, 2015). To explain ethnic parties' positioning on the immigration dimension, this literature primarily draws on three sets of explanations (Adam, 2018). Studies put forward ideational and ideological factors such as nation-building strategies, party legitimacy-seeking efforts, or different forms of ethnic and sub-state nationalism which are expected to shape policy profiles (De Casanova, 2014; Adam and Torrekens, 2015; Jeram and Adam, 2015). Jeram, for example, claims that Basque parties took a pro-immigrant stance in order to contrast Basque values of openness and tolerance with the restrictive nature of immigration law reforms in Spain (Jeram, 2013). Other studies highlight institutionalist or structuralist variables such as policy-making powers, the type of electoral system, political crises, or economic downturns (Erk, 2014; Hepburn and Rosie, 2014). Some authors argue that ethnic parties take a more negative stance on migration when the economy in the minority region outperforms the national economy in order to protect their gains (Massetti, 2009; Hepburn, 2014), whereas others conclude that the 'affluent' are not necessarily 'selfish' (Franco-Guillén, 2016).

When explaining ethnic parties' policy positions on migration and immigration, this literature tends to take a rather isolationist perspective. While they are 'special' in the sense that they seek to represent only a specific culturally defined segment of society with specific interests and usually do not act as agents of national integration, ethnic parties are not fringe parties (Ishiyama and Stewart, 2021). Parties such as the Basque Nationalist Party in Spain, or the Democratic Party of Albanians in North Macedonia, are relevant political players which participate in elections, regularly attain parliamentary representation or are even part of coalition governments. Most importantly, they are not different from non-ethnic parties in terms of how they shape their policy profiles and how they react to and shape rival parties' policy positions in electoral competition.

Research has shown that political parties change their ideological positions in general and their profile on immigration in particular in reaction to voter markets and public opinion, past election results and electoral consequences – but also in response to rival parties' strategies (Adams et al., 2004; Tavits, 2007; Westlake, 2018; Kortmann and Stecker, 2019). In other words, party competition shapes parties' policy positions (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Somer-Topcu and Williams, 2014). This, we believe, also applies to ethnic parties and their positions on immigration and the arrival of "new" minorities (Zuber, 2012). We argue that the specific characteristics of the party system – that is, if there are further ethnic parties that compete for votes, in particular among the same ethnic group – matter for the policy profile of ethnic parties on migration and immigration policy. In addition, we develop the expectation that the ideological position of an ethnic party should be of relevance for their immigration policy position: ethnic parties with a more right-wing ideological profile adopt more negative positions on immigration, in particular, if they face competition from another ethnic party.

Our study contributes to ongoing debates on ethnic parties' migration and immigration positions by re-introducing party competition as a long-established factor in the literature on policy positions and strategies. By bridging the literature on ethnic parties and theories of party competition and policy positioning, we provide an explanation of ethnic parties' positions on migration and immigration, which addresses the shortcomings of existing approaches. The empirical analysis provides support for our expectations. We find that ethnic parties are more skeptical on migration and immigration issues if they compete with other ethnic parties. This is even more the case if they belong to the right-wing of the ideological spectrum. In the next section, we present our theoretical argument in more detail. We explain our empirical strategy for testing our hypotheses before presenting our findings in section four. The final section concludes, discusses the drawbacks of the present study, and provides incentives for future research.

Theoretical argument

Our theoretical argument builds on the literature on ideological party competition and the determinants of party

policy shifts on the one side and on the specific constraints under which ethnic parties operate on the other. We argue that, first, the specific characteristics of the party system – that is, if there are further ethnic parties that compete for votes – matter for the policy profile of ethnic parties on immigration policy. Secondly, we argue that an ethnic party's ideological position affects its immigration policy position: ethnic parties with a more right-wing ideological profile take more negative positions on immigration, especially if they face competition from another ethnic party.

As discussed above, ethnic parties compete in the political arena as other parties do. However, electoral competition is different for ethnic parties because it has two dimensions – an ideological and an 'ethnic' one. In most multinational democracies, ethnic parties compete not only with non-ethnic mainstream parties but also with *other* ethnic parties. Party competition comes in two different constellations: In some cases, ethnic competitors represent various ethnic categories. For instance, in the United Kingdom general elections, the Scottish National Party represents the Scots, and The Party of Wales the Welsh. In other cases, several ethnic parties compete for votes of the *same* ethnic group. For instance, in Northern Ireland, two parties, the Democratic Unionist Party and the Ulster Unionists compete for the votes of the Protestant Unionists. Competition is even fiercer in Belgium, where the New Flemish Alliance, the Open Flemish Alliance as well as Flemish Interest competed for support of the Flemish people in the 2019 federal election. In such cases, the degree of competition is determined by both the ideological positions of the parties *and* their ethnic character.

In general, ethnic parties have two strategic options for shaping their policy profile (Zuber, 2013). They can either shift their policy position on an ideological dimension, or they can choose to modify their appeal, which is a unique option for ethnicity-based parties. Ethnic parties can either emphasize the ethnic cleavage and portray themselves as the true representative of the ethnic group, or they can choose a more open and non-exclusive appeal. The South Schleswig Voters' Association in Germany and the South Tyrolean People's Party in Italy, for example, see themselves as representing the interests of an ethnic minority group (the Danish or German minority, respectively), but aim to attract votes from other national minorities (Frisians and Ladins) as well as the non-ethnic electorate. In contrast, the Serbian List for Sandzak or the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina limit their appeal and seek only to mobilize the votes of their own groups (Gadjanova, 2015).

When other ethnic competitors are absent, we expect ethnic parties to take moderate or even positive positions on migration and immigration issues. In such settings, ethnic parties can shift their position primarily on the appeal dimension and emphasize their ethnic character. There is, thus, no need for costly policy shifts and risk of backlash for

putting heavy emphasis on the immigration issue. Parties operating in such settings, such as the Swedish People's Party in Finland, or the Māori Party in New Zealand all have relatively narrow appeals and aim to attract additional voters outside the group. At the same time, they adopt rather pro-immigration policy positions. The appeal-dimension is constrained in settings of intense inter-ethnic competition. In such cases, multiple competitors emphasize ethnic cleavages and compete for ethnic votes from different groups, or multiple ethnic parties compete for votes from the same ethnic group. Because ethnic parties have limited opportunities for expanding their electorate beyond the ethnic groups they seek to represent, the only remaining option for electoral success in such settings is a significant policy shift.

While this may result in moderate positions towards immigration, we expect moves toward more negative immigration positions to be more frequent in such cases. Fierce interethnic competition in such constellations give rise to a radicalization process commonly known as 'ethnic outbidding' (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972; Horowitz, 1985). Due to their limited strategic options, ethnic parties try to portray themselves as the one and only representatives of a group's interests in order to differentiate themselves from other ethnic rivals and to win a clear policy profile (Touquet, 2011; Székely, 2018; Stewart and McGauvran, 2020). In such circumstances, ethnic parties that are not diligent in asserting ethnic demands risk losing voters to rival parties that take a stronger stance on issues important to ethnic voters. Such claims by an organization to be the true representative of an ethnic group are typically accompanied by an inherently exclusive and illiberal form of sub-national nationalism and a strong boundary-making against ethnic others, i.e. other minorities or immigrants (DeVotta, 2005; Suhas and Banerjee, 2021). For instance, the radicalization and anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Vlaams Belang in Belgium can be directly attributed to the competition between various Flemish parties and their struggle for the 'true' agents of the Flemish national movement (Adam and Deschouwer, 2016). On the basis of these considerations, we expect that *ethnic parties adopt less immigration-friendly positions if they compete for votes with other ethnic parties, in particular if these competing parties aim at representing the same ethnic group (H1).*

As has been argued, ethnic parties compete for votes not only with other ethnic parties, but also with mainstream parties that do not represent the interests of one or more specific ethnic groups. In settings of weak inter-ethnic competition, mainstream parties become the defining competitors, with competition running along the parties' ideological positions. We argue that ethnic parties are no different from non-ethnic parties in their efforts to differentiate themselves as clearly as possible from other competitors. As a result, they embrace migration and

immigration policy stances that are consistent with their underlying ideological orientation, ensuring that their overall policy profile is clear to their voters. This helps to maximize vote shares (Müller and Strøm, 1999). Research shows that the more clearly parties state their positions, the more easily voters can use this information to infer party positions (Merolla et al., 2008; Brader and Tucker, 2009; Slothuus and De Vreese, 2010). Since parties from the (far) right tend to view immigration as a threat for the traditional culture and society (Green-Pedersen and Odmalm, 2008; König et al., 2017; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012), we expect *ethnic parties with a more right-wing ideological profile to adopt more negative positions on immigration (H2).*

Combining this ideology-argument with our competition-argument, we expect that *ethnic parties with a more right-wing ideological profile adopt more negative positions on immigration, in particular if these ethnic parties compete with other parties over voters from the same ethnic group (H3).* In order to win a distinct profile in competitive constellations where several ethnic parties with a right-wing ideological profile compete for votes, ethnic parties need an even more defined policy profile so that voters can discern the ethnic parties' programmatic viewpoints. We suggest that this results in ethnic parties with a right-wing ideological background adopting increasingly critical positions on migration and immigration, in particular if these ethnic parties face competition from other ethnic parties. In other words, outbidding among right-wing ethnic parties leaves little leeway for pro-immigration positions.

Data and methods

Given our interest in identifying empirical patterns in the programmatic behaviour of ethnic parties, we focus on all parties that represent the interests of ethnic communities in EU member states and have competed in national elections in the period from 1961 to 2020.[1] This allows for a large-N research design and the application of quantitative methods to evaluate our hypotheses.

There is considerable debate on what constitutes an ethnic party (Chandra, 2011; Ishiyama and Breuning, 2011). While some authors define ethnic parties as those that derive their support overwhelmingly from an ethnic group (Horowitz, 2001; Cheeseman and Ford, 2007) or have an ethnic leadership (Van Cott, 2003), we adhere to the dominant viewpoint that an ethnic party is one that openly represents itself as the champion of the interests of an ethnic group (Gunther and Diamond, 2003; Flesken, 2018; Ishiyama and Stewart, 2021).

The starting point for our analysis is the Comparative Manifesto Dataset MARPOR (Volkens et al., 2021). While this dataset provides the most comprehensive information on the parties' policy profile, it does not contain sufficient information about ethnic electorates. To meet the key criterion of our ethnic party concept, we code manually whether the key electorate of a given party is a specific ethnic group. Only if a party explicitly seeks to represent a specific, culturally defined electorate, we consider a party as being 'ethnic'. By 'culturally defined', we refer to all collective identities of social groups which have uniqueness in society due to overlapping or superimposed differences of identity markers including religion, language, customs, historicity, or descent. Our concept of 'ethnic party' includes, also in light of empirical relevance, parties of autochthonous groups, i.e. national minorities whose members are citizens of the state (e.g. the Swedish minority in Finland) or are 'constituent peoples', such as Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[2]

Based on party programmes and official websites, we carefully determine in a first step whether a party has an ethnic electorate, and which ethnic group the party seeks to represent. In a second step, we use the Ethnonationalism in Party Competition (EPAC) dataset, which contains information for a subset of the parties in our sample, to evaluate the robustness of our codings (Zuber and Szöcsik, 2019). This operationalization is superior to relying on overly broad categories such as the 'ethnic and regional' party family in the MARPOR dataset or an automated name-based identification (Ishiyama and Breuning, 2011). These approaches are prone to errors since they include non-ethnic yet regional parties and do not fully reflect ethnic parties' primary characteristic – their culturally-defined electoral base.

We use this collected data to code our explanatory variables which come in three variations: The variable *ethnic competitor* provides information whether there is any other ethnic party in a given country-year or not, no matter which ethnic groups these parties represent. To assess whether an ethnic party has one or more direct rivals which seek to represent the *same* ethnic group, we created the variable *direct competitor*. This dichotomous variable gives information whether an ethnic party has an ethnic rival which competes for votes of the same ethnic group. Finally, the ordinal variable *number of direct competitors* gives information on how many direct ethnic competitors there exist in a given country during an election year.

The MARPOR data covers information on the saliency of policy issues that allow for measuring the preferences of parties on migration and immigration policy, that is, our dependent variable. Because the categories 'multiculturalism: positive' and 'multiculturalism: negative' cover issues related to cultural diversity, communalism, cultural plurality, or the preservation of autonomy of religious, linguistic heritages within a country, we refer to both domains as a proxy for parties' positions on migration and immigration and measure their position on this policy area on the basis of these two variables. In so doing, we follow the logic

of the MARPOR data and calculate a simple index by subtracting the share of quasi-sentences in an election manifesto that mention positive views on multiculturalism from the share of negative statements on multiculturalism a party made in its electoral programme (Budge et al., 2001). Higher (positive) scores than 0 on the resulting index indicate that positive views on migration and immigration dominate over negative ones in the respective election manifesto, while negative scores (that is, scores below 0) imply that a party is more sceptical on migration and immigration.

We make use of the MARPOR 'rile' index to measure the left-right placement of parties. The advantage of this measure in the context of this contribution is that it allows for covering shifts in the ideological position of parties over a wide time span, so that we can start our observation period in the early 1960s. Moreover, the two MARPOR categories we selected for measuring the migration and immigration policy position of ethnic parties are not used for estimating the left-right position of parties and the 'rile' index (Budge et al., 2001), so that the dependent variable and the left-right position of parties are not correlated due to coding and measurement strategies of the MARPOR research group.[3] Furthermore, because the left-right orientation is only one indicator capturing the ideological profile of parties, we control for the party family to which a party that represents the interests of ethnic groups belongs to. This coding is also based on the MARPOR dataset and allows for analysing if – beyond the left-right position of a party – Christian democratic or conservative parties which represent the interests of an ethnic group are less permissive on migration and immigration policy than, for instance, liberal or social democratic parties.[4]

We estimate several multivariate OLS regression models with the immigration and migration policy position of a party representing the interests of at least one ethnic group as the dependent variable. Besides our main explanatory variables, the presence of other competing ethnic parties and the ideological orientation of the respective ethnic party, we control for a series of further variables that potentially affect the immigration policy position of a party. First, we include a variable that identifies those ethnic parties that represent a cultural identity group which is either a national minority group and/or a numerically small group compared to other groups within a given county. Parties of numerically small minorities and parties of large and dominant ethnic groups may differ in their position towards new minorities. The former are expected to be more sensitive to demographic changes and have a limited electoral pool, which makes overly exclusive appeals a less promising electoral strategy. Aside from a party's ideological party family, we consider a country's economic situation, as measured by GDP per capita, as well as its degree of ethnic fractionalization. We use World Bank data and the Historical Index of Ethnic Fractionalization Dataset for this coding (Drazanova, 2019;

World Bank, 2021).[5] Furthermore, we control for the institutional structure and political culture in the respective country during the observation period by including the V-DEM liberal democracy index (Coppedge et al., 2021) into the estimation, as we do with a time trend control variable.

Descriptive findings

Figure 1 shows the positions of all parties we identified as ethnic parties on the migration and immigration policy dimension extracted from the MARPOR dataset. With few exceptions, ethnic parties are mostly in favour of a more permissive migration and immigration policies, although there is clear variation between slightly positive and very positive positions on these policy issues. Some ethnic parties take more negative positions on migration and immigration, in particular the more they adopt an ideological position to the right in their election manifestos according to the MARPOR's 'rile' index. This exemplifies the previously mentioned variance in policy positions, which is more complex than ethnic parties being either 'friends' or 'foes' of migrants (Jeram and Adam, 2015). The figure also implies that the positioning on immigration is not significantly different from that of non-ethnic parties with party ideology being a pivotal factor.

Since our classification and manually coded sample of ethnic parties go beyond the coding of the party family variable in the MARPOR dataset, we are able to differentiate between the migration and immigration policy positions of ethnic parties and their basic ideological background. Figure 2 shows, first, that the parties we identified as representatives of the interests of ethnic groups belong to several ideological families and are not only covered by the group of ethnic and regionalist parties as identified by the MARPOR project. Furthermore, the boxplots indicate that – with few exceptions – parties that stem from the ethnic and regionalist party family tend to be (strongly) in favour of positive, that is, permissive positions on migration and immigration. Nationalist parties are, unsurprisingly, critical on such permissive policies, whereas (former) communist parties, social democratic parties and special interest parties favour permissive policies on migration and immigration. Christian democratic, conservative, and liberal parties that represent the interests of an ethnic group are mixed in their position on migration and immigration. The bivariate analysis provides some descriptive evidence for our second and third hypotheses. We now turn to multivariate analyses that include the other theoretically relevant variables to test whether the observations from the bivariate relationship remain stable.
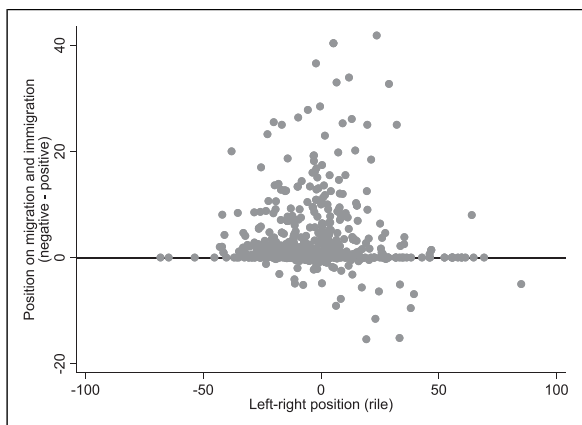
Figure 1. Migration policy positions of parties representing ethnic communities, sorted by the left-right position of parties. Data source: MARPOR project (Volkens et al., 2021).
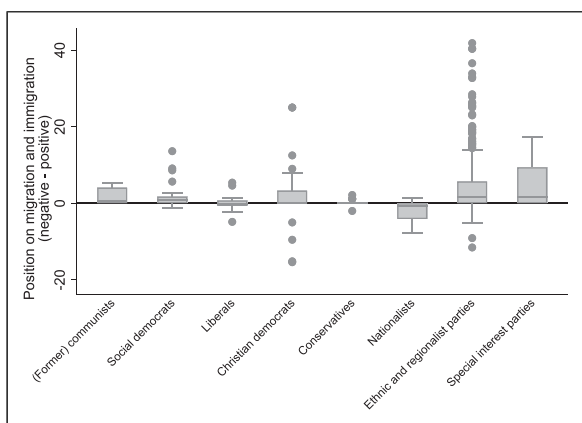
Figure 2. Migration and immigration policy position of ethnic parties, by party family. Data source: MARPOR project (Volkens et al., 2021).

Analysis

Table 1 presents the results of six OLS regression models. Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3 do not include interaction terms for the three competitors-variables (ethnic competitor, direct ethnic competitor, number of direct ethnic competitors) and the ideological left-right position of ethnic parties. Model 4, Model 5, and Model 6 incorporate interaction terms, which allows for testing our third hypothesis. Model 1 and Model 3 consider if an ethnic party faced competition from at least one other ethnic party, whereas Models 2 and Model 4 measure if an ethnic party competes for votes of the same ethnic group with at least one other ethnic party. Finally, Model 3 and Model 6 refine the latter variable by covering information on the exact number of parties competing among voters from the same ethnic group. We expect that with an increasing level of competition, i.e. a higher number of direct ethnic competitors, ethnic parties tend to be less permissive and positive on migration and immigration policies. Such policy shifts should be amplified if ethnic parties operating in such environments adopt right-wing ideological positions in their election manifestos.

The results of the analyses provide evidence for our expectations. The degree of competition between ethnic parties matters for how permissive these parties are on migration and immigration issues. By and large, the effects of all three measures for the existence and degree of electoral competition from another ethnic party have the expected negative effect: parties representing the interests of an ethnic group are less positive on immigration policies if another party with the aim of representing the interests of an ethnic group competes for votes in the election. Yet, the effect of the variable that identifies if there are directly competing ethnic parties is not statistically different from zero in Model 2. By contrast, the migration and immigration policy positions of ethnic parties are also less permissive if these parties face competition from an increasing number of parties that compete for votes of the same ethnic group (see Model 3).

These findings support our first hypothesis and indicate that ethnic parties are less supportive of permissive migration policies if they face competition from other ethnic rivals – possibly because increasing competition among parties for voters of one social group results in outbidding strategies and exclusive boundary-making instead of adopting more risky pro-immigration policy proposals. We find mixed results for our hypotheses two and three. The coefficients of the interaction terms in Model 4, Model 5, and Model 6 do not reach standard levels of statistical significance. Since the interpretation of the coefficients of interaction terms can be misleading (Brambor, Clark and Golder, 2006), we additionally consider the estimated substantive effects of these variables (see Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5). When interacting the left-right position of parties representing the interests of an ethnic group with information on the existence of another ethnic party that competes for votes, we find that the competition between at least two ethnic parties results in a significantly less immigration-positive position if these parties adopted ideologically more right-wing positions in their election manifestos (see Figure 3). There is no such effect in cases of absent competition, i.e. constellations in which no other ethnic party competes for votes in an election. These results remain stable when controlling for several other important variables – like the ideological background of the ethnic parties as coded from their party family background – in the regression models (see Table 1) and are consistent when focussing on all OECD member states (see Table A1 in the Appendix).

We observe an even clearer pattern when interacting the ideological position of an ethnic party with the variable covering information on the existence of a *direct competitor* in an election. Figure 4 illustrates that in such highly

Table 1. Determinants of the position of ethnic parties on migration and immigration in EC/EU member states.

|	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Focal explanatory variables						
Competing ethnic party in election	−6.741** (1.855)			−6.812** (2.501)		
Directly competing ethnic party in election		−0.657 (0.472)			−1.500[+] (0.855)	
Number of directly competing ethnic parties in election			−0.397** (0.124)			−0.467[+] (0.239)
Competing ethnic party in election X left-right position				−0.007 (0.122)		
Directly competing ethnic party in election X left-right position					−0.073 (0.059)	
Number of directly competing ethnic parties in election X left-right position						−0.006 (0.018)
Right-left position (rile)	−0.037 (0.023)	−0.027 (0.027)	−0.029 (0.027)	−0.031 (0.119)	0.017 (0.058)	−0.021 (0.047)
Controls						
Party represents a minority	3.640** (1.120)	2.824* (1.189)	2.567* (1.186)	3.641** (1.127)	2.711* (1.167)	2.525* (1.172)
Time trend	−0.104** (0.036)	−0.062 (0.038)	−0.056 (0.037)	−0.104** (0.039)	−0.064[+] (0.038)	−0.056 (0.037)
Communist and left-socialist parties	−5.474** (1.282)	0.425 (2.034)	0.392 (1.978)	−5.330* (2.579)	−1.508 (1.360)	−2.50[+] (1.284)
Social democratic parties	−0.688 (0.679)	2.579 (1.798)	2.675 (1.785)	−0.710 (0.640)	−0.730 (0.610)	−0.458 (0.600)
Liberal parties	−0.624 (0.775)	2.428 (1.609)	2.670 (1.635)	−0.613 (0.765)	−0.241 (0.739)	−0.345 (0.759)
Christian democratic parties	−7.169** (2.110)	−1.378 (1.368)	−1.156 (1.285)	−7.146** (1.983)	−4.058* (1.945)	−4.170* (1.984)
Conservative parties	−2.634* (1.061)			−2.634* (1.062)	−2.667[+] (1.427)	−3.093* (1.467)
Nationalist parties	−2.297* (0.993)	0.869 (1.807)	1.279 (1.812)	−2.289* (0.981)	−1.854[+] (0.944)	−1.742[+] (0.950)
Special interest parties		2.953* (1.469)	3.075* (1.450)			
Ethnic fractionalization	6.938** (2.147)	−0.676 (2.470)	−1.000 (2.500)	6.964** (2.205)	−0.126 (2.359)	−0.907 (2.453)
GDP per capita	0.000** (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Liberal democracy index	−25.939[+] (13.669)	−27.116[+] (13.895)	−26.549[+] (13.800)	−25.989[+] (13.566)	−27.518[+] (13.911)	−26.591[+] (13.819)
Constant	226.475** (68.722)	142.739[+] (71.973)	129.306[+] (70.669)	227.341** (74.940)	150.005* (73.794)	132.654[+] (72.326)
N	201	201	201	201	201	201
AIC	1055.211	1087.133	1085.757	1057.194	1086.474	1087.632
R^2	0.384	0.278	0.283	0.384	0.288	0.284

Note: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors clustered by country and election. Significance levels: [+] $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

competitive constellations the respective ethnic parties adopt significantly more immigration-sceptical positions and do even more so if they are leaning to the right of the ideological spectrum. This is in line with our theoretical expectations that limited space to manoeuvre results in outbidding strategies and rather illiberal policy shifts.

Replacing the simple dummy variable with information on the number of parties that compete for votes from the same ethnic group confirms this finding: The presence of competing rival parties that target voters from the *same* ethnic group results in less permissive positions on migration and immigration as the respective
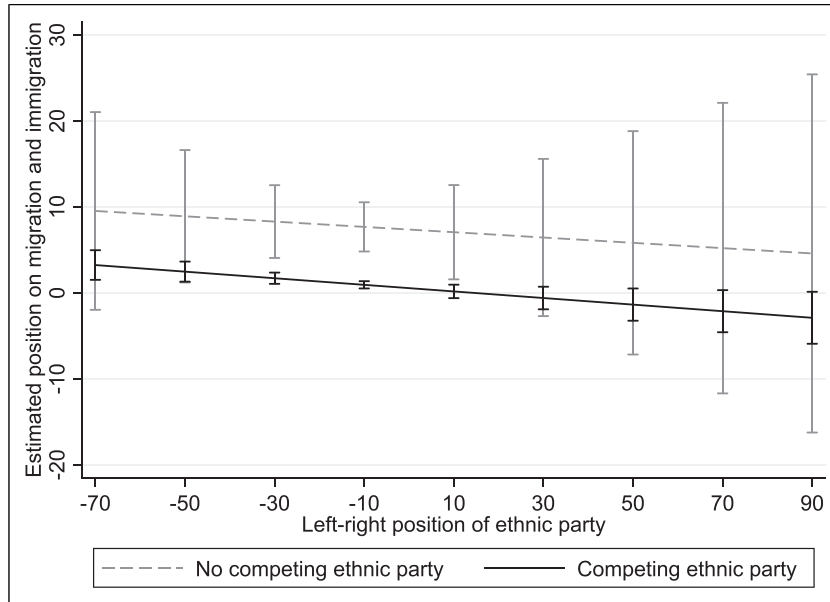
Figure 3. The effect of the ideological placement of parties representing the interests of an ethnic group on their migration and immigration policy position, depending on the existence of another ethnic party competing for votes.
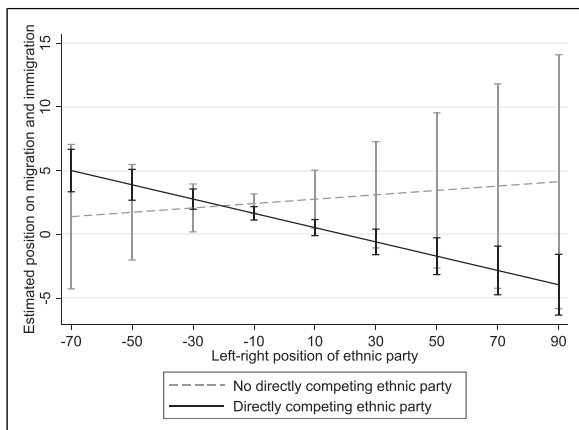
Figure 4. The effect of the ideological placement of parties representing the interests of an ethnic group on their migration and immigration policy position, depending on the existence of another ethnic party that targets the same ethnic group in the election.
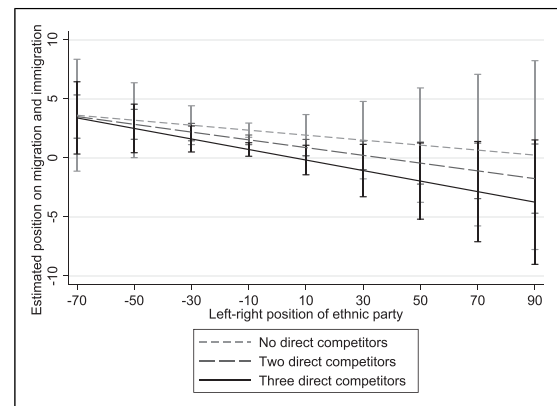
Figure 5. The effect of the ideological placement of parties representing the interests of an ethnic group on their migration and immigration policy position, depending on the number of ethnic parties competing for votes and targeting the same ethnic group in the election.

parties move further to the right of the ideological spectrum.

However, the number of competing parties does not matter (see Figure 5). Regardless of the number of direct competitors, if another ethnic party represents the interests of citizens from the same ethnic group, an ethnic party's migration and immigration policies become more restricted, particularly the more right-wing positions it adopts in its manifesto. There is, therefore, some evidence for the argument of clarity in the parties' policy profile: parties that represent the interests of an

ethnic group tend not only to be more critical on migration and immigration if another ethnic party exists and competes for the same group of voters, but there is also support for the reasoning that these ethnic parties are even more critical on immigration if their basic ideological positioning is more right-wing orientated. The latter fits better with a sceptical position on migration and immigration, allows for formulating a more clear and consistent election manifesto and thus might increase the chances of an ethnic party to maximize its vote share in an election.

These results remain stable when controlling for a number of further, theoretically relevant variables. Of

particular interest is the effect of the variable that informs about whether an ethnic party represents a minority group within a political system. If this is the case, then ethnic parties are significantly more in favour of permissive migration and immigration policies, while parties that represent ethnic groups that form a majority in a political system favour a more restrictive migration policy. While there is no coherent effect of ethnic fractionalization, the more democratically developed countries are, the more the ethnic parties in these political systems are in favour of permissive migration and immigration policies.

Conclusion

Immigration is frequently discussed as a matter between a (imagined) homogenous population and culturally diverse newcomers. In many countries, however, the host population is itself deeply divided, thus "fragmenting the 'we' that newcomers are expected to join" (Banting and Soroka, 2012, p. 157). Ethnic parties respond to this prevailing challenge in different ways. Previous approaches to explaining this variation have highlighted ideational factors such as illiberal forms of ethnic nationalism or structural and institutional characteristics on (sub-) national level. Our contribution brings a more banal factor back into the discussion on ethnic parties' policy profiles. We argued that the nature and degree of party competition is a key factor which shapes ethnic parties' position on immigration. While the rich literature on party competition tends to overlook ethnic parties and their peculiarities, it has shown that parties adjust their policy positions in response to their rivals' positions. Drawing on these assumptions, our findings provide empirical evidence that this is also true for ethnic parties.

The analyses reveal three main findings: First, the degree of competition between ethnic parties matters for how permissive these parties are on migration and immigration issues. Second, ethnic parties show less immigration-friendly positions if they have direct ethnic rivals which compete for votes of the same ethnic group. Third, competition between ethnic parties tend to result in less immigration-positive positions if ethnic parties adopt an ideologically more right-wing position in their election manifesto. We explain this finding by arguing that in multinational democracies, party competition comes in two different constellations: Ethnic parties compete not only with other mainstream parties, but also with other ethnic parties and even with some ethnic parties rivalling for the votes of the same ethnic group. To change their profile, ethnic parties can shift their position on the ideological policy dimension or decide to modify their ethnic appeal. While the latter option is a promising strategy in situations of low intra-ethnic competition, the appeal dimension gets constrained by other direct ethnic competitors. As fierce ethnic competition is likely to trigger an 'auction-like' outbidding process (Stewart and McGauvran, 2020) revolving around the question which party is the true

representative of an ethnic group, we find stronger boundary-making and more negative immigration positions in such settings. These policy shifts are amplified if an ethnic party has a right-wing ideological profile and thus a high predisposition to take a critical position on immigration.

While our approach demonstrates that these rather 'normal' characteristics of electoral competition are better suited to explaining variation in policy positions of ethnic parties than existing approaches, our study does not come without any shortcomings. First, our research design does not allow us to test the underlying causal mechanism between party competition and the adoption of policy positions on an immigration policy dimension. While we believe the proposed mechanism is reasonable, we are unable to test it directly and cannot rule out alternative explanations for our empirical findings. Second, our analysis is based on the measurement of party positions via party manifestos. These are, however, not without coding issues and pitfalls (Ecker et al., 2022). For instance, promises in manifestos may differ from implemented policies and hide true party preferences, as parties carefully consider what image they want to evoke. Furthermore, gathering positions of parties on migration and immigration on the basis of two MARPOR categories – 'multiculturalism: positive' and 'multiculturalism: negative' which also cover other policy issues – can only result in rough estimates of the parties' positions on the policy area of interest here. Third, due to the lack of comprehensive data, we cannot draw any conclusions about party politics at the regional or local level, which is highly relevant for both ethnic parties and party competition as well as immigration issues (Paquet and Xhardez, 2020; Zuber, 2022). Fourth, we have limited our analysis to rich and stable democracies, which does not allow us to derive any conclusions whether our results travel to other cases. While we leave these points for future research, we believe our findings make an important contribution to understanding politics in an era of increasing demographic heterogeneity.

Data Availability Statement

The full analysis code and replication material can be found at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/GJ0GAI

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Notes

1. Switching the empirical perspective to all OECD countries does not change the results substantively (see the Appendix).
2. We provide a full list of the ethnic parties in our sample in the Appendix.
3. Measuring the migration and immigration policy position by means of the MARPOR categories 'per601/602: National Way of Life: Positive/Negative' would be an alternative coding strategy. However, both variables are used for creating the 'rile' index, which we use to test hypotheses 2 and 3, resulting in severe theoretical and methodological problems when measuring the migration and immigration policy positions on the basis of MARPOR categories per601 and per602.
4. Replacing the general left-right profile of parties with a variable covering information on the emphasis of market-liberal economic policies, based on the 'markeco' variable in the MARPOR data, does not change the results substantively.
5. See Table A2 in the appendix for details on coding decisions and data sources.

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Appendix

Table A1. Determinants of the position of ethnic parties on migration and immigration in OECD member states.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Focal explanatory variables						
Competing ethnic party in election	−4.766** (1.751)			−3.776[+] (2.052)		
Directly competing ethnic party in election		−0.775 (0.740)			−0.937 (1.070)	
Number of directly competing ethnic parties in election			−0.538** (0.201) −0.538**			−0.427 (0.302) −0.427
Competing ethnic party in election X left-right position				0.118 (0.105)		
Directly competing ethnic party in election X left-right position					−0.014 (0.068)	
Number of directly competing ethnic parties in election X left-right position						0.010 (0.022)
Right-left position (rile)	−0.055 (0.034)	−0.052 (0.035)	−0.053 (0.034)	−0.138 (0.105)	−0.045 (0.068)	−0.063 (0.055)
Controls						
Party represents a minority	2.387[+] (1.370)	1.818 (1.146)	1.523 (1.158)	2.659* (1.206)	1.786 (1.098)	1.586 (1.099)
Time trend	−0.041 (0.049)	−0.044 (0.049)	−0.037 (0.048)	−0.042 (0.047)	−0.044 (0.049)	−0.036 (0.048)
Communist and left-socialist parties	−0.185 (2.488)	1.402 (2.639)	1.168 (2.632)	−7.266** (2.195)	−3.145[+] (1.694)	−3.464* (1.632)
Social democratic parties	5.784[+] (3.080)	3.517 (2.697)	3.450 (2.631)	0.160 (0.774)	−1.157[+] (0.643)	−0.998 (0.612)
Liberal parties	6.271* (2.719)	4.052[+] (2.394)	4.174[+] (2.349)	−0.201 (0.848)	−0.473 (0.780)	−0.517 (0.717)

(continued)

Table A1. (continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Christian democratic parties				−6.279*	−4.597*	−4.558*
				(2.617)	(2.219)	(2.236)
Conservative parties	5.565**	2.904[+]	2.649[+]	−0.928	−1.619	−1.896
	(2.069)	(1.729)	(1.564)	(0.966)	(1.183)	(1.380)
Nationalist parties	4.577	2.363	2.716	−1.860[+]	−2.169*	−1.968*
	(2.879)	(2.559)	(2.512)	(1.070)	(0.954)	(0.935)
Special interest parties	6.073*	4.615*	4.532*			
	(2.469)	(2.255)	(2.231)			
Ethnic fractionalization	1.685	−2.869	−3.173	2.074	−2.838	−3.221
	(2.919)	(2.940)	(2.925)	(2.853)	(2.914)	(2.915)
GDP per capita	−0.000	0.000	0.000	−0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Liberal democracy index	0.254	0.884	0.866	−0.163	0.863	0.937
	(3.547)	(4.001)	(3.907)	(3.370)	(4.014)	(3.952)
Constant	79.717	85.631	71.228	86.076	90.284	75.041
	(93.296)	(93.498)	(91.194)	(90.507)	(95.667)	(92.811)
N	237	237	237	237	237	237
AIC	1418.500	1438.994	1437.489	1416.068	1440.918	1439.280
R^2	0.214	0.143	0.148	0.228	0.143	0.149

Note: Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors clustered by country and election. Significance levels: [+] $p < 0.1$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Table A2. Data sources and description of key variables.

Variable	Comment
countryname	Party manifesto data
marpor_country_id	Party manifesto data country id variable
iso2c	ISO 2 code for country
V_demccode	V-DEM country code
coemember	Member state of council of europe
year	Based on party manifesto edate variable
ethnic_party	Based on MARPOR variable parfam = 90 + flemish bloc, flemish socialist party, francophone socialist party, flemish liberals and democrats, liberal reformation party - francophone democratic front, liberal reformation party - francophone democratic front - citizens' movement for change, open flemish liberals and democrats, flemish interest, Croatian democratic assembly of slavonia and baranja, communist party of bohemia and moravia, party of yugoslavs in Macedonia, unionist party, ulster unionist party bridge, Sri Lanka freedom party, nationalist party (northern Ireland)
	1 = ethnic party
	0 = national party
group_repr	Cultural identity groups represented by ethnic party (some based on EPAC dataset), categorical variable
numeric_minority	Whether a cultural identity group is a national minority group and/or numerically small group compared to other groups within a given county
number_ethnparties	Number of ethnic parties in country-year (total)
ethnic_competitor	Other ethnic party in country_year (no matter which ethnic group represented); 1, if true, 0 otherwise
number_direct_competitors	Number of direct ethnic competitors: How many ethnic parties seek to represent the **same** group in country_year (only coded for ethnic parties)
Ethnic_fract	Ethnic fractionalization, based on herfindahl index ($EF_c = 1 - \sum_{i}^{n} si^2$ with si being the proportion of the population in unit c belonging to group i. Data partly taken from the EFIndex dataset (Drazanova 2019)
LibDemocr	Liberal democracy, based on v2x_libdem (V-DEM 11.1)
GDPpc	GDP per capita (constant 2015 $)
GDP_pc_ppp	GDP per capita PPP (current international $)

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