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**The University of Sheffield**

**Bringing politics back in: the impact of  
extreme-right parties on immigration policy in  
the UK, France and Italy during the 2000s**

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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Department of Politics

Faculty of Social Sciences

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## Abstract

This comparative study examines the impact of extreme-right parties on immigration policy in the UK, France and Italy between 2001 and 2009. The thesis develops a synthesis of two different strands of work in political science: the extreme-right parties' literature alongside immigration studies. Immigration studies often refer to extreme-right parties as a factor behind restrictive developments on immigration policy whilst ERP literature refers often to immigration but tell us very little about its complexity. Past comparative research throughout the 1990s suggested that members of the extreme-right party family exhibit similar significant levels of impact across different countries. This thesis compares whether the British National Party, the French *Front National* and the Italian *Lega Nord* had a significant impact on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy: inter-party competition; public attitudes; and immigration policy development in the UK, France and Italy. The thesis shows substantial variations in the intensity and contents of extreme-right parties' impact across the selected dimensions in each country and at cross-national level.

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## List of abbreviations

AN – *Alleanza Nazionale*

A8 countries – Member States that joined the European Union in May 2004. These countries include: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

A2 countries – Bulgaria and Romania that joined the European Union in January 2007

BES – British Electoral Survey

BNP – British National Party

CAI – *Contract d'Accueil et Integration*

CCCNPI – *Commission sur le cadre constitutionnel de la nouvelle politique d'immigration*

CCD – *Centro Cristiano Democratico*

CCT – *Carte de Competences et Talents*

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CdL – *Casa della Libertá*

CDU – *Cristiani Democratici Uniti*

CRE – Commission for Racial Equality

DC – *Democrazia Critiana*

EC – European Community

EU – European Union

EP – European Parliament

FI – *Forza Italia*

FN – *Front National*

GBM – Greater Britain Movement

HSMP – Highly Skilled Migration Programme

INED – *Institut National d'Études Démographiques*

IND – Immigration National Directorate

ISTAT – *Istituto Nazionale di Statistica*

ITANES – Italian National Electoral Studies

LN – *Lega Nord*

PD – *Partito Democratico*

PEF – *Panel Elétorale Français*

PdL – *Partito della Libertá*

MIINC – *Ministère d’Immigration, d’ Integration et d’Identité Nationale et Co-Development*

MSI – *Movimento Sociale Italiano*

MNR – *Mouvement National Républicain*

MP – Member of Parliament

MEP – Member of European Parliament

NF – National Front

NP – National Party

ONI – *Office National de l’Immigration*

OPFRA – *Office Français de Protection de Réfugiés et Apatrides*

PEF - Panel Électoral Français

PS – *Parti Socialiste*

PSI – *Partito Socialista Italiano*

PFN – *Parti des Forces Nouvelles*

PR – Proportional representation

RPR – *Rassemblement pour la République*

UDC – *Union di Centro*

UDF – *Union pour la Démocratie Française*

UMP – *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle*

UNCHR – United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UKIP – UK Independence Party

RC – *Rifondazione Comunista*

SGCICI – *Secrétariat général du Comité interministériel de contrôle de l'immigration*



## Chapter 1 – Introduction

“Co-optation of radical-right issues has operated quite successfully in the British case (in the 1970s), somewhat less so in the German case (in the 1980s), and not at all in the French case (in the 1990s) (...). By altering the issue agenda, co-optation also alters the terms of conflict among political parties, and, potentially, the electoral cleavages and divisions. (...) However, the question of why and how co-optation ‘works’ in some cases and not in other remains to be analysed”

Schain, 2006, p. 272

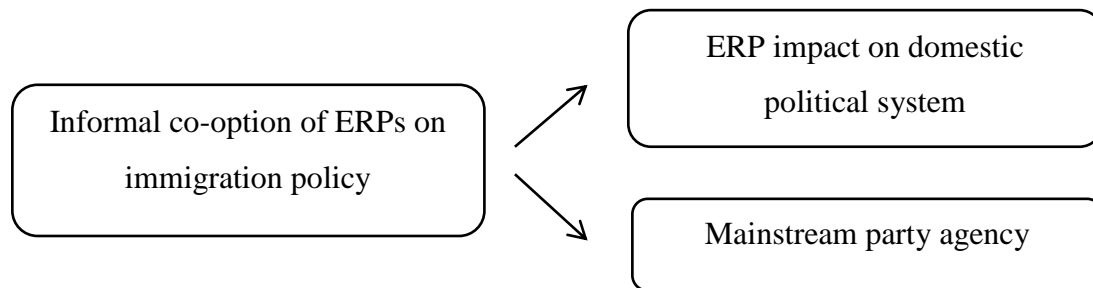
The co-option of extreme-right parties (ERP) by mainstream parties has been intermittently identified in both the past and more recently, but there is still a lack of understanding of this political process as Martin Schain highlights. This political process has also been referred as “clothes stealing” and was first noticed by political scientists in the UK in the late 1970s (Hainsworth, 1992; Schain, 2006). Margaret Thatcher’s remarks in the late 1970s on people’s fears of being ‘swamped’ by alien cultures were interpreted as the co-option of the main British ERP at the time – the National Front’s (NF) discourse on immigration policy (Bale, 2008). In France, the Interior Minister Charles Pasqua stated in an interview to *Le Monde* in 1993 that: “France was a country of immigration, but it no longer wants to be so” adding that his government’s objective was to move towards a “zero-immigration” policy. These statements were perceived either as “a message to French voters who supported the FN” (Hollifield, 2004, p. 199) or as evidence of “some co-optation by the *Union pour la démocratie française* (UDF) - *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) of FN positions on immigration” (Downs, 2002, p. 42).

It is this problematic concept of co-option that inspired the development of this thesis in a period when the spectre of ERPs haunts Western European countries (Mudde, 2007). Co-

option as a political process can be defined as a strategy employed by a social group or an institution to enhance its own position in the political arena by the formal or informal incorporation of the political proposals into the decision-making process that are supported by a challenger group or the group itself (Saward, 1992). Co-option is therefore a purposive oriented action undertaken by political elites to achieve a desired outcome and presupposes a convergence between two political actors. In Schain's (2006) view, it is the process whereby established parties can recapture voters lost to challenger parties by co-opting and re-defining the issues that led to the challenger group's emergence.

From this perspective, co-option of ERPs by mainstream parties is interpreted as a bi-dimensional political process. Co-option is first a reflection of the challenger party's intense level of impact on its domestic political system, because it involves the formal/informal incorporation of its proposals by a challenged party (Figure 1.1). Thus, it can be observed either at the inter-party competition or at the policy development level. Impact is hereby understood as the ability to promote a particular outcome that would not be observed in the absence of the agency of the challenger party (Williams, 2006; Mudde, 2007). Secondly, co-option can be regarded as a strategy employed by mainstream parties to neutralise the former party's challenge (Figure 1.1). Understanding the occurrence of co-option processes presupposes the initial study of the levels of impact by the challenger party on its political system and then a review of the factors enhancing such political processes. The agency of mainstream parties needs to be included amongst such potential factors, considering that formal or informal co-option are amongst their possible strategies towards the challenger party (Downs, 2001; Bale et al., 2010).

**Figure 1.1** – Informal co-option of ERPs on immigration policy as a bi-dimensional political process



This comparative thesis focuses on the political impact of the most prominent ERPs in the British, French and Italian political systems on immigration policy between 2001 and 2009. It is driven by the hypothesis that the British National Party (BNP), the French *Front National* (FN) and the Italian *Lega Nord* (LN) had a significant impact on immigration politics and policy during the 2000s. This research adopts a comparative small-N design with a restricted number of cases to enhance understanding of the ERP impact on immigration policy and politics within their domestic contexts. A synthesis of two strands of political research that have been relatively developed separately is proposed by this research: ERP literature and immigration studies. This thesis employs a mixed research methodology with a strong qualitative emphasis to evaluate ERP impact on immigration policy – the regulations and procedures governing the entry and residence of foreign citizens, including control of their employment or deportation. Integration policy – the conditions provided by host states for immigrants already resident in the host society were therefore excluded from the scope of analysis (Hammar, 1985).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Inclusion of integration policy alongside immigration policy would expand the scope of analysis beyond the limit of this research. Moreover, the research presupposed that the entry status of immigrants has a determinant influence on their integration in the host society.

## **1.1 – Research on the political impact of ERPs**

Systematic analysis of ERP impact within their political systems is considered to be still in its “infancy”, a trend that encourages limited knowledge over the observation of this political process (Mudde, 2007). Two sorts of justifications are found for this fault in the political literature. First, the impact of smaller parties has been neglected by contemporary political science, which concentrates mostly on mainstream parties that hold direct access to office positions and to the policy-making process (Williams, 2006). The conception of ERPs as minor parties was deeply related to their inability to have formal representation in national cabinets. However, even small parties have an important role in mobilising public opinion on particular issues and shape political identities. Minor parties’ electoral strategies are frequently focused on a limited set of political issues and exploit political cleavages ignored by mainstream parties (Copus et al., 2009).

Small parties are important for their formative role in domestic political systems and can hold indirect influence over the development of policies executed by national governments (Schain et al., 2002). Moreover, the extent to which ERPs can still be considered minor parties is controversial after their electoral expansion throughout the 1990s and 2000s and acceptance as coalition partners in Austria, Italy, Switzerland and Denmark (Bale, 2003). Second, research on ERPs has expanded from the 2000s onwards but it has been overwhelmingly focused on the electoral fortunes of its members, particularly on explaining these parties’ variable levels of electoral support and breakthroughs into mainstream politics (Evans, 2005; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; De Lange, 2007; John and Margetts, 2009). The disproportional interest in this area of research reflects the strong fluctuation among the electoral fortunes of ERPs across European countries (Hainsworth, 2008). This thesis addresses the selected ERPs’ electoral performance but as a potential factor to understand their impact on immigration policy.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in examining ERP impact in their political systems, especially when present within the executive (Heinisch, 2003; Fraser, 2010). Unsurprisingly, most of this type of analysis is associated with immigration and concentrates on immigration policy as the dependent variable of the ERPs' impact because intense xenophobia is a distinctive ideological trait of this party family (Betz, 1994; Carter, 2005). Whereas a limited number of authors have developed single-case study analysis of levels of ERPs' impact in countries such as the UK, France, Austria and Italy (Messina, 1989, 2011; Schain, 2006; Bouillaud, 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010); there is a lack of research with a comparative scope (Minkenberg, 2001; Williams, 2006; Mudde, 2007, Hainsworth, 2008). This shortcoming limits the broader understanding of this political process beyond particular domestic contexts.

Michel Minkenberg (2001) published the first comparative study of radical right parties' impact in terms of agenda-setting and policy effects. Germany, France, Italy and Austria were selected as case studies because of ERP representation in Parliament. The author concluded that radical right parties' impact on the two dimensions had been largely irrelevant and confined to the cultural level (Minkenberg, 2001). Mudde (2007) and Hainsworth (2008) devoted single chapters of their books on radical and ERPs to survey this issue, whilst only a single in-depth comparative study on ERPs' overall impact on Western European countries has been developed so far (Williams; 2006). In contrast to Minkenberg's (2001) conclusions, Michelle Williams' comparative research across Western Europe and, on France, Germany and Austria in particular, concluded that radical right parties had a salient impact on three levels: agenda setting, institution-shaping, and policy-making across the 1990s and the early 2000s. Henceforth, the conclusions of comparative studies on ERPs' impact on their political systems have been diametrically opposed involving either the observation of an irrelevant or an overwhelming impact (Schain, 1994; Minkenberg, 2001; Williams, 2006).

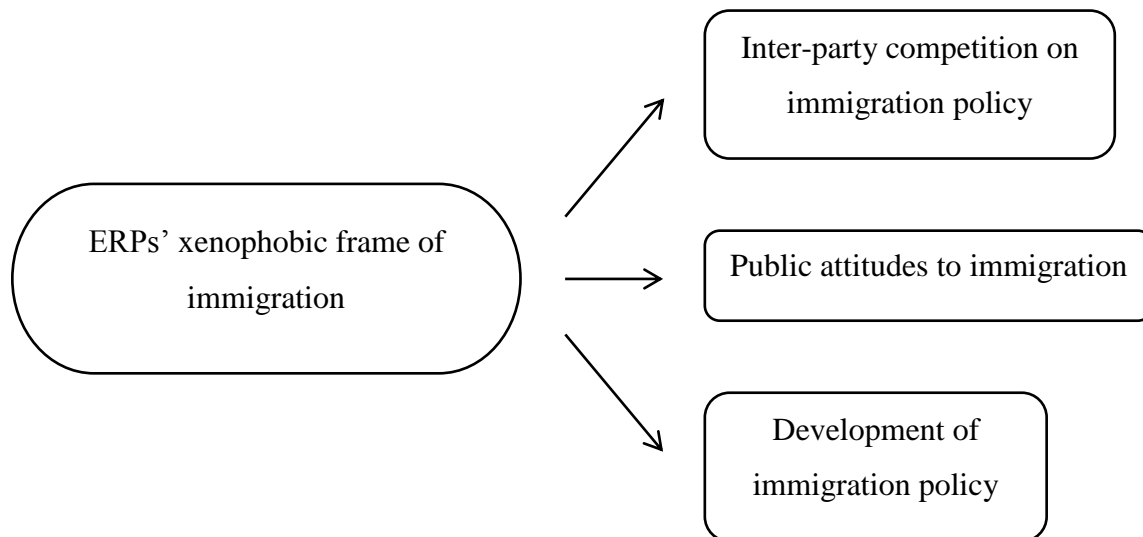
A middle ground between such approaches is explored by this thesis by providing a tripartite classification of levels of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy. Furthermore, this thesis will highlight the presence of important constraints on ERP contagion effects like the liberal character of European political systems, which have been so far neglected in the political science literature (see Chapter 4). There has been a lack of systematic analysis of potential causes behind the variable levels of ERP impact. This research identifies the levels of ERP impact and seeks to understand possible variations by comparing the validity of the proposed hypotheses across the three cases. Cross-national comparison of those hypotheses will enhance the recognition of the most relevant factors. Moreover, the comparison of discrete periods in the first and second half of the 2000s within each case study enables assessment of the role of the proposed hypotheses within domestic contexts and comparatively.

This thesis employs a most similar systems research design to develop comparative case analyses that focus on the period between 2001 and 2009. As aforementioned, the BNP, the FN and the LN were selected as the most prominent members of the ERP family in the three countries. The thesis has two main objectives:

- 1) Inspired by Schain (2002, 2006), this research seeks to identify and evaluate ERP impact on immigration politics and policy, which is disaggregated according to the following analytical dimensions: inter-party competition on immigration policy, public attitudes to immigration, and development of immigration policy. ERPs' xenophobic frame of immigration and anti-immigration positions are interpreted as independent variable while their levels of impact on the three selected dimensions are the indicators of the dependent variable (Figure 1.2). The analysis of ERP impact on inter-party competition and on public attitudes is focused on first-order-ballots taking place in the UK, France and Italy between 2001 and 2009. The ERPs' impact on the

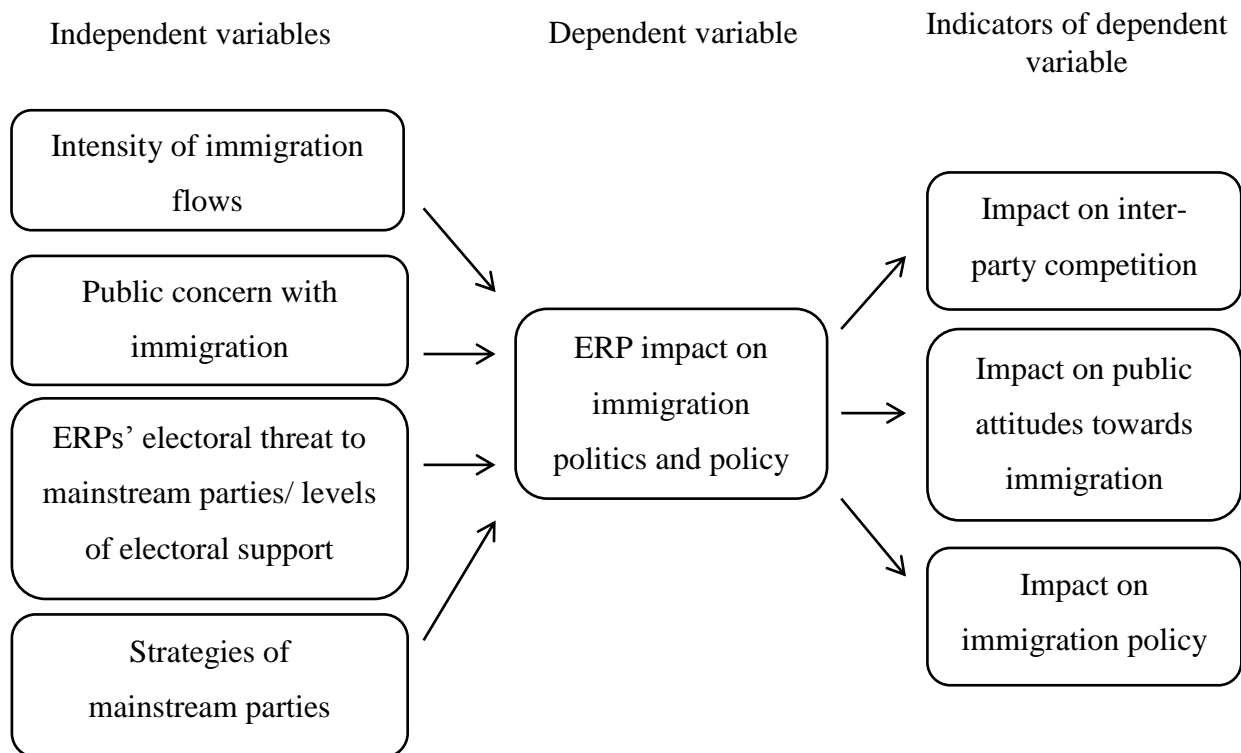
development of immigration policy is examined during the political terms taking place during the same period.

**Figure 1.2** – Independent variable and indicators of dependent variable



- 2) To understand the political processes behind the different levels of ERP impact on the distinct dimensions of immigration politics and policy by comparing the relevance of selected factors in each case and then at a cross-national level (Figure 1.3). This objective is attained through the assessment of the relationships between the explanatory factors and the selected indicators of the dependent variable. These factors refer to the: intensity of immigration flows, public concern with immigration; levels of electoral support for ERPs or the electoral threat to mainstream parties; and the strategies of mainstream parties towards the ERPs. The thesis seeks to identify the most relevant independent variables or factors behind the ERPs' impact on immigration politics and policy. However, it will be unable to predict the occurrence or intensity of this political process because of the contingent nature of the proposed factors and the unpredictability of human agency, as will be shown through the conclusions.

**Figure 1.3** – Relationships between independent variables, dependent variable, and indicators of dependent variable.



## 1.2 – Combining ERPs literature with immigration studies

A synthesis of the ERP and immigration literatures is proposed through this thesis since these two strands of political science have been developed separately despite their overlapping interests (Koopmans and Statham, 2000). The relative separation of the ERP literature and immigration studies hampers the development of a broader understanding of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy. This thesis aims to overcome this shortcoming by providing a novel analytical framework and methodology to develop enhanced understanding of this debate.

### 1.2.1 – Bringing immigration into ERP literature

The ERP literature highlights the role of immigration as a driving factor behind these parties' rising electoral support but tells us very little about the complexity of this social phenomenon



(Golder, 2003; Carter, 2005; Hainsworth, 2008). According to Betz (1994, p. 72), xenophobia and racism re-emerged in the 1980s and early 1990s supported by “changes in the composition of immigrant groups” and by the “increase of political refugees in the 1980s.” Within this perspective, ERP electoral expansion is an outcome of the native backlash against the background of increasing immigration, a thesis named the “ethnic backlash” (Mudde, 2007, p. 211). Consequently, xenophobia is interpreted as a stable and an almost ‘natural process’ produced by immigrants’ idiosyncrasies that inevitably foster a sentiment of threat amongst host citizens. However, immigration studies propose the denaturalisation of xenophobia as a dialectical relationship between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’<sup>2</sup>, premised on a negatively evaluated ‘Other’, and probe this political process by exploring structural and agential factors (Brown and Miles, 2003).<sup>3</sup>

To presuppose that xenophobia is an outcome of immigrants’ “natural differences”, a structural regularity in nature, resembles the plebeians’ belief that the feudal lords’ privileges reflected the natural division of humankind during feudalism in Western Europe (Hegel, 1977). Perceptions of immigration as a threat should be interpreted as being as contingent as the electoral fortunes of any ERP. This research interprets immigration as an “empty symbol” or as a “free floating signifier” deprived of an inherent meaning (Sciortino, 2000; Laclau and Mouffe, 2000). As it will be seen, the politicisation of this social phenomenon is conceived as largely dependent on the agency of political elites rather than being a reflection of structural regularities, such as increased levels of immigration (Perlmutter, 1996). References to immigration must account for the political culture, ideology and party-system dynamics of

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<sup>2</sup> Thereby, representations of the ‘Other’ are influenced by their context, e.g. the social-economic position of those involved in the production or reproduction of meaning of immigration (Brown and Miles, 2003)

<sup>3</sup> For example, the ideological content of racism can vary according to the class position of the agents. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the arrival of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe was deemed as an “eugenic” degeneration of the working class by the Victorian high classes whilst sections of the London working class regarded Jewish immigrants as illegitimate and unfair competitors (Brown and Miles, 2003).

the host society rather than interpreting it as a self-evident category (Veugelers and Chiarini, 2002).

Another of the shortcomings that reflects the lack of interchange between the literature on ERPs and immigration is the misinterpretation of immigration as a uniform social phenomenon. Studies of immigration stress the importance of disaggregating immigration policy according to the types of inflows: labour migration, family reunification processes, asylum and irregular immigration, and policy developments should be analysed under this framework (Castles and Miller, 2003). Immigration policies vary according to types of inflows, as well as mainstream parties' positions towards each of the types of immigration in contrast to the ERPs, which adopt rigid anti-immigration proposals. Therefore, the misinterpretation of immigration as a uniform social phenomenon can lead to erroneous assessments of the ERPs' effects on the distinct dimensions of immigration policy. The next section examines the shortcomings identified among immigration studies.

### **1.2.2 – Bringing parties back into immigration studies**

Immigration studies have increasingly concentrated on the role of a plethora of social and political actors on the development of immigration policies (interest groups, state bureaucracies, central and local government agencies, epistemological communities, etc.) (Freeman, 1995; Zincone, 2006; Balch, 2009). Consequently, the role of political parties within the policy-making process has been increasingly marginalised, a trend associated with the aforementioned gap between political scientists focusing either on immigration policy or on political parties (Bale, 2008). However, research on the UK has demonstrated that political elites continued to dominate the political agenda on immigration policy rather than other political actors (Statham and Geddes, 2006). Hence, this comparative thesis explores how immigration politics, e.g. – inter-party competition, intra-party politics or intra-coalition

dynamics – influence the development of immigration policy. This approach within political analysis has been labelled as “primacy to politics” (Williams, 2006; Schain, 2008a).

Whereas party governments’ monopoly of policy-making in certain areas of public policy has been disputed by supranational organisations such as the European Union (EU), their monopoly in the management of inflows remains largely undisputed. The absence of a comprehensive EU immigration policy has left so far sufficient discretionary powers to national governments to pursue their particular interests due to the slow shift from an intergovernmental to a supranational approach (Geddes, 2003; Messina, 2007). Most immigration studies concentrate on the top-down effects of the EU integration process on member states’ immigration policies. By contrast, this comparative thesis focuses on the immigration politics and policy at domestic level in the UK, France and Italy and addresses the potential spill over effects of domestic pressures to the EU level from a bottom-up perspective.

ERPs are commonly highlighted as a causal factor behind the restrictive developments observed across the immigration policies of different European countries by political scientists without providing enough evidence of such relationship (Mudde, 2007). This research provides a consistent analytical framework to identify levels of ERP impact on immigration policy and politics, to evaluate its effects and proposes a set of factors to understand this political process, as shown in Figure 1.3. Finally, another shortcoming within immigration studies is the lack of consistent comparative research, since most of it consists of a compilation of analyses of single case studies with diminished comparative scope (Geddes, 2003; Cornelius et al., 2004). To overcome this weakness, a direct comparison of developments in British, French and Italian immigration policies according to types of inflows and policy is provided through the comparative chapters at the end of the thesis. A concise plan of the thesis is provided in the next section.

### 1.3 – Plan of the thesis

To accomplish the objectives of this thesis, Chapter 2 specifies the research questions that drive the research and the mixed research methodology with a strong qualitative emphasis employed to measure and understand ERP impact on the different dimensions of immigration politics and policy. Chapter 3 examines the debate about the most appropriate label for the selected extremist parties, as well as typologies to identify and classify members of the ERP family. Chapter 4 provides a justification of case selection and the employment of a most similar systems research design. This chapter also contextualises the institutional constraints on ERP development in each political system, the development of the selected ERPs before 2001, as well as recent histories of immigration and national immigration policy paradigms.

After the establishment of the theoretical and methodological foundations that support this research, the empirical analysis of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy during the 2000s looks first at the British case study. Each individual chapter on the ERPs' impact in the three countries is organised into three main sections: the first explores ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy and public attitudes to immigration at first-order-ballots; the second surveys the selected ERPs' discourse on immigration and their development during the 2000s employing the conceptual framework of the structure of political opportunities<sup>4</sup>. The third and final general section, considers ERP impact on immigration policy.

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of the structure of political opportunities is borrowed from social movement theory, a concept that is widely employed in ERP studies (Kitschelt, 1995; Carter, 2005; Hainsworth, 2008). According to Tarrow (1994, p.72), the structure of political opportunities refers to the "consistent dimensions of political environment that provide incentives for collective action by affecting people's expectations for success or failure". These dimensions include: realignment processes (politicisation of new issues), dealignment processes (declining levels of party identification and political trust), mainstream party behaviour (degree of party convergence), the openness of the political system (electoral system and media access); and institutional factors (availability of mainstream allies) (Goodwin, 2007). The agency of ERPs' leaders is also an important component of the structure of political opportunities.

Therefore, Chapter 5 surveys the BNP's impact on immigration politics at the 2001 general election and on policy developments throughout Labour government's second term . Chapter 6 examines the British ERP's contagion effects at the 2005 general election and during Labour's third term. This research will indicate that the BNP lacked a relevant impact on the three selected dimensions during the 2000s notwithstanding the observation of salient contagion effects on the Labour government's discourse on immigration after 2007. Chapter 7 probes the FN's impact on immigration politics at the 2002 presidential elections and on the latter development of immigration policy during President Jacques Chirac's last term. A similar analysis is developed through Chapter 8 looking at the FN's contagion effects on inter-party competition as well as on public attitudes at the 2007 presidential elections and on policy developments taking place throughout President Nicholas Sarkozy's term up to 2009. Whereas the Chapter 7 suggests that the FN had a significant impact on public attitudes in 2002 and on policy developments, the research in Chapter 8 will show that the French ERP had significant contagion effects on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy in the second half of the 2000s.

The research developed through Chapter 9 addresses the LN's impact on immigration politics at the 2001 general election and on the subsequent policy developments between 2001 and 2006. Chapter 10 focuses on the LN's impact on Italian immigration politics and policy from the 2008 general election up to 2009. The selection of the 2008 general election instead of the 2006 ballot reflects the short tenure in office of Romano Prodi's centre-left government that only lasted 722 days in office. Consequently, developments on immigration policy were very limited, especially after the collapse of a proposed reform of the immigration law (Bigot and Fella, 2008). This research will show that the LN had significant impact on inter-party competition in 2001 but not on public attitudes to immigration. Furthermore, the LN enjoyed moderate contagion effects on policy developments during Berlusconi's second term. At the

2008 general election, the LN's impact on public attitudes increased to a moderate level coupled alongside significant contagion effects on mainstream parties' proposals on immigration policy. The intensity of the LN's contagion effects on policy developments expanded to a significant level between 2008 and 2009.

Chapters 11 and 12 present the comparative syntheses of ERP impact on the distinct dimensions of immigration politics and policy through the first-order-ballots and terms taking place in the first half and second half of the 2000s. Both chapters explore the relationships between the levels of ERP impact on inter-party competition, public attitudes to immigration and policy developments with the proposed factors to understand the development of such political processes. The concluding chapter highlights the variable levels of the selected ERPs' impact on the different dimensions of immigration politics and policy and its contingent character. Important variations were found on the outline of the ERPs' impact on inter-party competition and policy developments in France and Italy, as well as the presence of important constraints on the former political processes. This thesis suggests that ERP impact on these two dimensions of immigration politics and policy is an outcome of the ERPs' broad electoral threats alongside the agency of mainstream parties. It also suggested that the intensity of ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration diminished throughout the 2000s or the occurrence of this political process was overstated in the past.

## Chapter 2 – Methodology

This chapter develops the methodology employed to measure the ERP impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK, France and Italy. It also examines the proposed hypotheses to understand the levels of ERP impact on the selected analytical dimensions. First, an exposition of ontological and epistemological considerations underlying this research is provided throughout the first two sections of the chapter, since this thesis adopts a political analysis perspective close to realism (Hay, 2002; Marsh, 2010). Secondly, the overall research question about the BNP, FN, and LN impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK, France and Italy during the 2000s is specified and disaggregated according to the distinct analytical dimensions: inter-party competition, public attitudes to immigration, policy developments. Thirdly, the chapter also develops the second aim of this thesis that seeks to understand the development of these political processes through the cross-national comparison of the relationships found between the levels of ERPs' impact on the distinct dimensions and a proposed set of factors extracted from ERP literature and immigration studies. The linkage between the selected factors and political literature, as well as they influence each other, is also explored in further depth. Finally, the selected comparative research design and the mixed research methodology employed to attain the thesis' objectives are addressed at the end of this chapter.

### **2.1 – Ontology**

This thesis assumes an ontological position close to realism that presupposes the existence of a dichotomy between reality and appearance (Furlong and Marsh, 2010). Consequently, social phenomena are interpreted as deprived of an inherent meaning in spite of holding an independent existence beyond the limits of our understanding. Like realists, this thesis argues the existence of an irreducible gap between appearance and meaning or between significant

and signifier (Laclau and Mouffe, 2000). This gap was first exposed by Marx's conception of "commodity fetishism", when he highlighted that the market value of a commodity cannot be determined by its appearance or the mere sum of the value of the quantities of labour required for its production (Žižek, 1989). If social phenomena had an objective and inherent undisputed meaning, the overwhelming consensus would render any political debate meaningless. As Edelman (1988, p. 12) stated: "if there are no conflicts over meaning, the issue is not political, by definition".

Due to the gap between appearance and meaning, political struggle evolves over the general acceptance of an association of particular signifiers to particular contested social phenomena (Laclau and Mouffe, 2000). As Bourdieu noted: "political struggle is a cognitive struggle (practical or theoretical) for the power to impose the legitimate vision of the social world" (quoted from Wacquant, 2005, p.3). Politics is thus conceived as a battle to provide significance to contested social phenomenon by attaining a hegemonic position in the political debate (Žižek, 2000). Schattschneider (1960) considered that framing of policy issues was driven by strategic calculations of political actors of the mobilisation of the "audience" or particular sections of the electorate. Therefore, political analysis must de-naturalise the effect of meaning and demonstrate how it results from a series of contingent encounters instead of perceiving it as immutable (Žižek, 1993).

To assess the meaning of a particular social phenomenon we must look for its genesis and consider that its value/meaning is an outcome of intersubjective social relations between political actors or political processes (Žižek, 1989). From the analysis of such processes, we can learn how the shared meaning associated with a particular phenomenon became hegemonic (Laclau and Mouffe, 2000). Political processes are conceived as a contingent outcome of the dialectical relationship between structure and human agency, two incommensurable categories that influence each other (Hay, 2002). Structure refers to the



material context wherein social, political, and economic events develop and acquire meaning (Marsh, 2010). Agency considers the political action or conduct of political actors as free and autonomous but necessarily influenced by their ideologies that fill the inherent gap within the social world. As in this thesis, the role of ideas has been increasingly acknowledged by political analysts who explore how they shape perceptions of social reality and human conduct (Gofas and Hay, 2010). The next section explores the epistemological consequences of the preceding ontological positioning.

## **2.2 – Epistemology**

Consistent with researchers who adopt a qualitative approach to political processes, this thesis presupposes the lack of an objective political science that can establish universal truths or rules that can exist independently of the bias and ideologies of social researchers (Devine, 2010). First, the perception of social reality cannot be disentangled from the actors' ideology. As social reality is characterised by a gap between its appearance and the lack of an inherent meaning, humans must therefore suture such gap through the mediation of ideology (Žižek, 1989).<sup>5</sup> Second, the ability of social sciences to anticipate events by building causal laws based on observed regularities is severely hampered by the unpredictability of human agency and its inherent spontaneity (Žižek, 2006). It has been increasingly recognised by political scientists that the aim of drawing universal laws based on quantification of observed regularities has so far obtained meagre results and that negligence of the relationship between agency and structure has led to flawed accuracy (Sartori, 2004; Tilly and Goodin, 2006).

Therefore, this thesis presupposes that knowledge can only be attained within the limits of human understanding instead of grasping reality as it is in itself, which does not diminish the merit of developing political analysis to understand particular political processes. Within this

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<sup>5</sup> From a dialectic perspective, “*form has precedence over content*: the first signifier is empty, a zero-signifier, pure ‘form’, an empty promise of meaning-to-come; it is only on a second occasion that the frame of this process is gradually filled with meaning” (italics in original; Žižek, 2006, p.282).

context, the objective of this research is to understand ERP impact on immigration politics and policy by identifying potential factors that increase the likelihood of the occurrence of such political processes. The causal relationships explored by this research are distinctive because of their indeterminacy, which removes any scope of predictability without undermining potential generalisations to similar contexts (Falleti and Lynch, 2009). Consequently, it presupposes a hermeneutic approach to politics rather than a deductive logic seeking to produce universal laws (Landman, 2008).

### **2.3 – Research questions**

The primary research question is whether the LN, the BNP and the FN had a significant impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK, France and Italy during the 2000s. Political impact is understood as the ability to promote an outcome that would have not been observed in the absence of the selected political actor (Williams, 2006). Since ERPs are distinctive for their acute cultural xenophobia or racism, these parties' impact on immigration politics and policy must necessarily involve the dissemination of their xenophobic frame of immigration or their anti-immigration proposals. Previous comparative research undertaken on radical right parties' impact over the 1990s in France, Germany and Austria argued that ERPs forced mainstream parties to move closer to their positions, particularly during electoral periods; reinforced xenophobia across the electorate; and were responsible for the decrease of proposals to tackle racism and for increasingly restrictive immigration policies (Williams, 2006). This thesis will assess if the trends identified by comparative research on ERP impact during the 1990s can be confirmed in Italy, France and the UK during the 2000s. Inspired by research developed by Schain (2002, 2006) on France, as well as Williams (2006), ERP impact on immigration politics and policy is analysed along three separate but related dimensions (Figure 1.2):

- 1) Inter-party competition: according to Anthony Downs (1957), political parties are rational actors that frame policy alternatives and position themselves on a horizontal left-right scale to maximize competition for voters' preferences. New parties exploit new issues neglected by mainstream parties to create their own electoral niche. In the face of challenger parties, established parties confront the strategic dilemma of how or whether to compete with the new parties (Bale, 2003). A short-term electoral breakthrough by an ERP can have potential consequences for the party system and can be followed by the established parties' readjustment of their political agendas to neutralise the new challenger (Schain, 2006). ERP impact on inter-party competition is then conceived as the reinforcement of the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy and the salience of this issue in mainstream parties' electoral manifestos. Consequently, this thesis examines if the selected ERPs reinforced the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy at the first-order-ballots taking place in the UK, France and Italy during the 2000s (Table 2.1).
- 2) Public opinion: whereas the media's role has been identified as a potential driver of public attitudes, particularly in the UK, the role played by political parties is often unacknowledged (Statham, 2002).<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, a political party can operate as an "opinion-maker who proposes issues, as the organiser of allegiance and support" across the electorate (Sartori, 2005, p. 23; Bale, 2008). Political parties seek to influence the overall electorate and mobilise the electorate according to particular issues. Moreover, ERPs have been identified as a key factor behind the growth of xenophobia across Western Europe (Betz, 1994; Rydgren, 2003). The ability to intensify concern and hostility to immigration across the electorates is interpreted as

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<sup>6</sup> Research on the prominence of immigration issues in the media and electoral support for ERPs was developed by Art (2003) and Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2007).

an indicator of ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration. This research will therefore assess if the selected ERPs intensified levels of concern and hostility towards immigration across their national electorates at the first-order-ballots in the UK, France and Italy during the 2000s (Table 2.1).

- 3) Development of immigration policy: political parties are responsible for the decision-making process over public policy and the production of legislation (Sartori, 2005; Bale 2008). As challenger parties emerge, governments readjust legislative agendas and can shift policies to accommodate the new competitors' priority issues. Party governments in countries that are EU member states are regarded as increasingly constrained by the Europeanisation process (Mair, 2007). Nevertheless, immigration policy remains relatively unaffected by the latter process due to the absence of a comprehensive supranational EU immigration policy (Geddes, 2003; Messina, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, ERPs have been identified as critical agents behind the expansion of restrictive immigration policy (Schain, 1994; Sales, 2005; Williams, 2006). ERP impact on policy developments involves the adoption of their xenophobic and zero-immigration proposals into the legislative framework. This comparative analysis will evaluate whether the selected ERPs reinforced the restrictive character of immigration policies during the terms taking place throughout the 2000s in the UK, France and Italy (Table 2.1).

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<sup>7</sup> The Lisbon Treaty signed in 2009 pointed to a stronger coordination and harmonisation of immigration and integration policies between member-states, but the Europeanisation process has been largely irrelevant during the period of this study.

**Table 2.1** – Analytical synopsis

| <b>Analytical Dimensions</b>   | <b>Research questions</b>  |
|--|--|
| Inter-party competition on immigration policy                                      | To what extent did the three selected ERPs reinforced the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy at first-order-ballots during the 2000s?  |
| Public attitudes to immigration  | To what extent did the three selected ERPs intensify levels of concern and hostility towards immigration in their national electorates at first-order-ballots in the 2000s?  |
| Development of immigration policy  | To what extent did the three selected ERPs reinforce the restrictive character of immigration policy during the 2000s?   |
| <b>Factors</b>   | <b>Hypotheses</b>  |
| Levels of immigration  | Increased immigration enhances the likelihood of significant ERP impact  |
| Salience of immigration across public opinion                                      | Intense public concern over immigration increases the likelihood of ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy and/or on the development of immigration policy  |
| ERPs' electoral threats to mainstream parties or ERPs' levels of electoral support | A perceived threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots increases the likelihood of ERP impact on inter-party competition and/or on the development of immigration policy. Substantial levels of ERP electoral support increase the likelihood of ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration. |
| Strategies of mainstream parties towards ERPs                                      | Engagement by mainstream parties with ERPs increases the likelihood of ERP impact on inter-party competition, public attitudes to immigration and the content of immigration policy.   |

Despite some difficulties and the potential subjectivity of the assessment, the impact of ERPs on each dimension of immigration policy is evaluated on a three-point scale (irrelevant; moderate; and significant) rather than on a zero-sum scale.<sup>8</sup> The aim is to provide a judgemental estimate rather than a quantitative classification, as measuring indirect impact is a particularly tricky issue (Mudde, 2007). Finally, significant constraints on the scope of ERP impact on inter-party competition and policy developments in the selected cases can be also found, an issue frequently neglected by ERP literature, and are developed in further depth in Chapter 4.

#### **2.4 – Understanding ERP impact on selected dimensions**

Following the identification of ERP impact on each dimension of immigration policy, the second objective of this research is to understand the development of such political processes through assessment of a proposed set of hypotheses. The proposed hypotheses to understand political processes refer to specific behaviour of the following explanatory factors: levels of immigration; salience of immigration amongst the electorate; levels of ERP electoral threat or support; and, the agency of mainstream parties (Table 2.1). However, when analysing the ERPs' impact on public attitudes, the salience of immigration policy amongst the electorate is interpreted as an indicator of the dependent variable, and therefore excluded as a potential explaining factor.

Comparative assessment of relationships found between the levels of ERP impact and the proposed hypotheses in each dimension enables identification of potential analogies between cases. This analysis can therefore highlight the most relevant factors behind the aforementioned political processes through an inductive judgment. The research of two discrete periods in each case also enables comparisons at the domestic level during the first

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<sup>8</sup> A tripartite scale was selected for providing a middle ground between the classificatory categories.

and second half of the 2000s to identify potential variations. The proposed hypotheses to understand the ERPs' potential impact on immigration politics and policy are examined below.

#### **2.4.1 – Inter-party competition on immigration policy**

As noted, four hypotheses are considered to understand the potential ERPs' impact on inter-party competition (Table 2.1):

1 – Increased levels of immigration prior to the first-order-ballots enhance the chances of significant ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy.

2 – High salience of immigration among public opinion improves the prospect of significant ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy.

3 – An ERP electoral threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots increases the chances of significant ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy.

4 – Mainstream parties' engagement (either formal or informal) with ERPs enhances the possibility of significant ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy.

#### **2.4.2 – Public attitudes to immigration**

Unlike the identification of ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration, understanding public behaviour is a highly complex process due to the plethora of factors that can influence it. Despite this overall constraint on the analysis, three hypotheses are proposed to understand the potential ERPs' impact on public opinion (Table 2.1):

1 – Increased levels of immigration before first-order-ballots can lead to significant ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration.

2 – Substantial levels of ERP electoral support enhance chances of significant ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration.

3 – Mainstream parties’ engagement (formal/informal) with ERPs improves chances of significant ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration.

### **2.4.3 – Development of immigration policy**

As with the first dimension, four hypotheses are proposed to interpret ERP impact on policy developments (Table 2.1):

1 – Increased levels of immigration can lead to significant ERP impact on immigration policy.

2 – High salience of immigration in public opinion enhances likelihood of significant ERP impact on immigration policy.

3 – An ERP electoral threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots improves prospects of significant ERP impact on immigration policy.

4 – Mainstream parties’ engagement (formal/informal) with ERP improves chances of significant ERP impact on immigration policy.

### **2.5 – Explanatory factors**

This section explores the linkage between the selected explanatory factors and political literature, as well as how those factors influence each other. The aforementioned factors include:

#### **a) Levels of immigration**

Increased immigration has been frequently cited as a driving factor behind the ERPs’ electoral expansion in the late twentieth century (Schain, 2002). The theory of ‘ethnic backlash’ argues that immigration necessarily increases competition for scarce resources within the host society generating hostility towards this social phenomenon (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2008). Consequently, the intensity of immigration is expected to hold some degree



of influence on public attitudes on immigration and potential effects on the ERPs' electoral fortunes. Whereas some research suggests that ERPs' electoral expansion has been positively correlated to the proportion of immigrants in a country or to the rise of asylum seeking (Golder, 2003; Van der Brug et al., 2005), other studies highlight a negative relationship between the two variables (Hainsworth, 2008). The behaviour of this factor is evaluated through assessment of the annual total number of residence permits granted to immigrants in Italy, the UK and France.<sup>9</sup>

b) Salience of immigration amongst public opinion

High public concern about immigration has also been frequently identified as a driving factor behind ERPs' electoral expansion (Betz, 1994; Lahav and Messina, 2006). Nevertheless, others point to the lack of a clear-cut relationship between levels of anxiety and electoral performance (Kitschelt, 1995). Therefore, the salience of immigration can also have some degree of influence on the levels of ERP electoral support, like the intensity of immigration. This factor is employed to explore whether levels of voters' concern with immigration are positively related to the selected ERPs' levels of impact on two dimensions of immigration politics and policy: inter-party competition and policy developments. The salience of immigration is evaluated through the analysis of opinion polls such as the British Electoral Survey (BES) in the UK, the *Panel Électorale Français* (PEF) in France, and the Italian National Election Studies (ITANES) in Italy.

c) ERPs' threat to mainstream parties/electoral support

The third factor can be regarded as bi-dimensional since it refers either to the ERPs' electoral threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots or to the levels of ERP electoral support.

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, there is no available data for annual total number of residence permits granted to immigrants in Italy from 2000 to 2005 (with the exception of 2002). As an alternative, the research will analyse the levels of immigration by looking at the evolution of the total number of foreign citizens resident in Italy.

Electoral “threat” reflects ERPs’ levels of electoral support and their influence on electoral competition within their domestic institutional environments. In the context of increasing electoral bipolarisation and of salient ERPs, centre-right mainstream parties have opted in some cases for cooperation with ERPs to enhance their chances of winning first-order-ballots like in Italy (Bale, 2003). Therefore, the electoral threat posed by ERPs is also interconnected with the agency of mainstream parties towards the extremist parties as it may pose an incentive for engagement. In short, this third factor considers the relationship between ERPs’ electoral threat to mainstream parties at the aforementioned ballots with their levels of impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy and subsequent policy developments. The behaviour of this factor is evaluated by the analysis of ERP electoral performance within the context of the structure of political opportunities open to them, included in the sections devoted to the analysis of each ERP’s frame of immigration and electoral results.

Regarding ERPs’ impact on public attitudes to immigration, Schain (2002; 2006) suggested that ERPs’ have a greater chance to influence the national electorate in the context of a consolidated party organisation at national level and of electoral expansion. As these parties’ electoral penetration expands, their organisational networks and subsequent ability to mobilise the electorate is expected to increase as well. Research conducted in France during the 1990s concluded that the most striking observation was how the priorities of FN voters appeared to have influenced the behaviour of the broader electorate (Schain, 2006, p. 277). Mudde (2007, p. 291) highlighted that further analysis is required to assess whether electoral success of populist radical right parties has an impact on mass attitudes, what type of impact and whether it is reflected on the salience rather than the content of voters’ attitudes. Hence, ERPs’ electoral support and the ideological traits of its electorate are considered as a possible factor enhancing their impact on public attitudes to immigration, which are evaluated through the analysis of the aforementioned opinion polls.

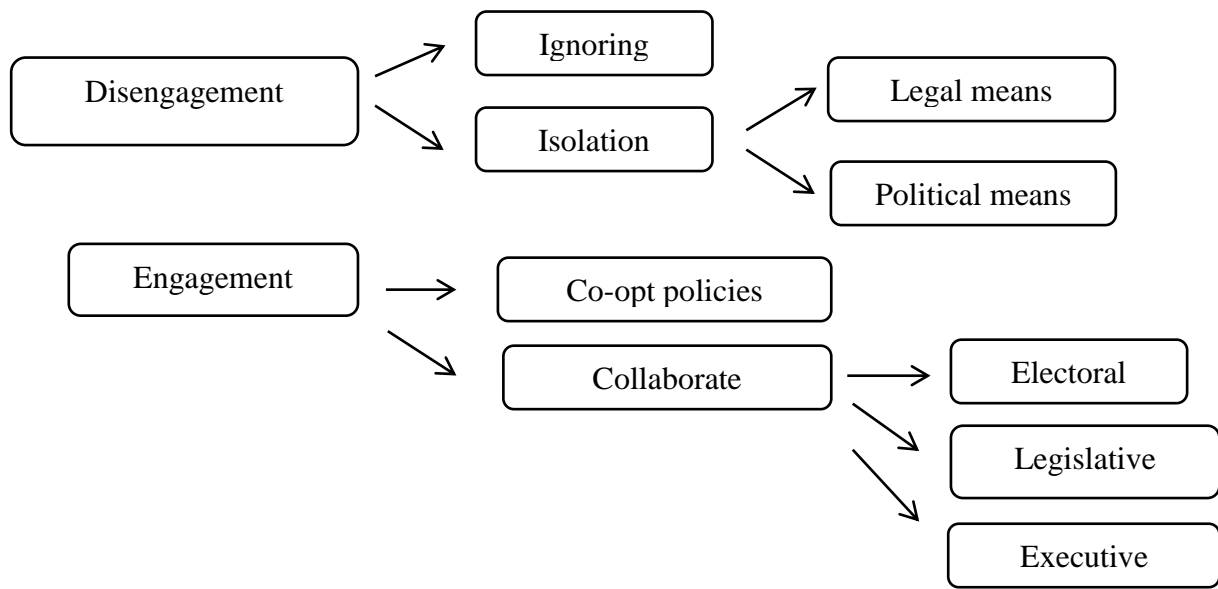
#### d) Strategies of mainstream parties' towards ERPs

According to ERP literature, there is an interactive dynamic relationship between the mainstream right and ERPs that affects their political trajectories (Messina, 2007, Bale, 2008). To classify the plethora of strategies adopted by mainstream parties' towards ERPs, Downs (2001) proposed a typology divided into two main tactics: engagement or disengagement (Figure 2.1). Disengagement is a broad strategy that involves mainstream parties' ignoring or isolating the ERP. By ignoring the ERP, mainstream parties' seek to deprive the pariah party of political legitimacy, media's coverage and publicity (Hainsworth, 2008). Isolation of ERPs is another viable option within the disengagement main strategy that can be either attained by legal or political means (Downs, 2001). Political isolation can involve the formation of a *cordon sanitaire* to build a democratic bloc between mainstream parties to ostracise the ERP (Mudde, 2007).

Engagement strategies by mainstream parties towards ERPs encompass two main options: informal co-option of their policies or formal cooperation with the extremists (Downs, 2001). Informal co-option or "clothes stealing" (Hainsworth, 2008) involves the accommodation of ERP political agenda within mainstream parties' programmes, without being overtly acknowledged to minimize risk of losing public legitimacy (see Introduction; Saward, 1992). Mainstream parties' formal collaboration with the ERPs can develop at three levels: electoral, legislative or executive (Downs, 2001). At electoral level, it concerns the performance of formal electoral agreements before the ballots between mainstream parties and ERPs, which presupposes a formal co-option process. Cooperation at legislative level refers to infrequent agreements between mainstream and ERPs within the legislative bodies for approval of particular pieces of legislation (Downs, 2001). Engagement at executive level encompasses the formal co-option of the ERPs into coalition governments and direct access to the policy-making process (Saward, 1992). The strategies of mainstream parties towards ERPs are

examined mostly throughout the sections devoted to the analysis of the ERPs' development. After the examination of the explanatory factors articulated in the hypotheses, the proposed methodology to attain the thesis' objectives is developed below.

**Figure 2.1** – Strategies of mainstream parties towards ERPs



Source: Downs, 2001, p. 26

## 2.6 – Comparative research design

This thesis employs a comparative research design to evaluate ERP impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK, France and Italy, as well as to understand the occurrence of this political process. Mainstream comparative politics continues to be dominated by a positivist approach that downgrades the role of ideas and human agency in favour of the assessment of predictable and deterministic objective relationships between variables (Hopkin, 2010). However, the observation of analogies between the behaviour of the proposed factors across the three case studies and the levels of ERP impact on each of the proposed analytical dimensions might enhance some level of generalisation without seeking to construct

probabilistic and determinist causal laws between dependent and explanatory variables (Peters, 1998).

The proposed qualitative comparison employs a most similar systems research design that includes the aforementioned three cases. This research design is inspired by the comparative method proposed by John Stuart Mill described as the method of difference, which consists of “comparing instances in which a phenomenon occur with instances in other respects similar in which it does not” (Lipjhart, 1971, p. 687). The selected cases share important similarities, such as: the presence of ERPs; all are immigration countries; while are also liberal democracies; EU member states and their electoral systems encourage bipolar interparty competition, as it is developed in further depth through Chapter 4.

## **2.7 – Mixed research methodology**

The mixed research methodology developed by this thesis involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including discourse analysis, content analysis, analysis of opinion polls and systematic analysis of immigration policy, notwithstanding the thesis’ strong qualitative character. This approach has been criticised by some authors because of the methods supposed incompatibility because they arise from antagonist research paradigms (Teddie and Tashakkori, 2003). Nevertheless, the presupposed incommensurability between qualitative and quantitative methods is becoming increasingly discredited (Landman, 2008). The greatest divergence between the two strands of political research persists in the expected ability to understand events and provide meaningful explanations. This thesis adopts a pragmatic approach as the research methods were selected according the research questions on each of the analytical dimensions (Table 2.1). The objective is to respond to the expansion of the breadth and range of investigation presupposed by the disaggregation of the general research question according to the distinct dimensions of immigration politics and policy (Greene et al., 1989).

### **2.7.1 – Critical Discourse Analysis**

The measurement of ERP impact on inter-party competition is developed through the combined employment of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and content analysis. The combination of these methods seeks to increase the reliability of this research because discourse analysis has been frequently criticised for the absence of a commonly recognised paradigm (Devine, 2010). Whereas Williams (2006) evaluated ERP impact on inter-party competition by analysing data from the Comparative Manifestos Project, this thesis grants primacy to discourse analysis reflecting the acknowledgement that is more important to analyse what political elites actually say than documents that may have a more narrow resonance at public level (Bale, 2010).<sup>10</sup> In the content of the analysis that follows, discourse is understood as a “communicative event in general, and a written or oral form of interaction or language use, in particular” (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 104). CDA is a type of analytical research that concentrates on discourse and addresses how relations of power, power abuse, and inequality are enacted and reproduced by text and talk in the social and political context (Wodak and Weiss, 2003; Van Dijk, 2008).

Consequently, CDA is a method of discourse analysis which has an explicit concern for the relationship between language to other elements of social processes and power. Through the assessment of the ERP impact on mainstream parties’ discourse on immigration, this thesis will look for potential relationships between political elites’ discourses on immigration and the conditions set by the host states on entry and settlement of foreign citizens in their territories, i.e. immigration policy. The objective is to demonstrate the role and relevance of political discourse in generating or legitimising hostility to immigration or to be more precise to particular types of immigration flows. The thesis is particularly interested in forms or types

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<sup>10</sup> The significance of political elites’ framing of immigration and of symbolic politics has also been increasingly recognised by immigration studies (Sciortino, 2000; Statham, 2002; Lakkof and Ferguson, 2006; Schain, 2008).

of communicative acts that potentially involve the imposition of highly restrictive or repressive immigration policy. The objective is not to reduce social life to discourse or interpret it as radically contingent, but to acknowledge the complex dialectic relationship between discourse and social structure (Fairclough and Chouliaraki, 1999).

The proposed CDA concentrates on ‘interdiscursivity’ and on how particular types of discourses on immigration are linked to each other in different ways because a discursive construction of immigration can also draw from and articulate components of other frames or discourses (Wodak and Chilton, 2005). In terms of the analysis that follows, interdiscursivity can help to capture the ways in which the ideas about immigration advanced by ERPs can be adopted or used by mainstream parties. In this context, frames refer to cognitive representations defined as:

“the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves to legitimate and motivate collective action”  
(McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996; quoted from Devine, 2010, p. 125).

This thesis explores how frames employed in immigration politics and selected by political elites can mobilise particular sectors of the “audience” or can legitimate certain policy developments of a restrictive or repressive kind. This discourse analytical approach was selected in preference to other forms of semiotic analysis that concentrate on the internal construction of the text ignoring the socio-historical conditions of the production and reception of discourses (Bourdieu, 1991).

It is clearly important, therefore, to define the framing of immigration by ERPs in order to then develop the analysis of potential cases of interdiscursivity between ERPs and mainstream parties. It is widely recognised that xenophobic or racist discourse can assume a plethora of forms and the discursive representation of immigration by ERP can occur in many

different ways as a vehicle to exploit grievances (Williams, 2006). Nonetheless, a common lowest denominator identified by Žižek (1993) across the different forms of ERPs' discourse on immigration is the articulation of immigration as a driver of ethnic tensions. As Žižek (1993, p. 101) noted:

“what is at stake in ethnic tensions is always the possession of the national Thing: the ‘other’ wants to steal our enjoyment (by ruining our ‘way of life’) and/ or it has access to some secrete, perverse enjoyment.”

Therefore, ERPs' articulation of immigration as a threat to the natives' “enjoyment” allows its subsequent association to a plethora of grievances ranging from natives' access to the labour or housing market, social services or other limited resources, and to identity issues.<sup>11</sup> The research identifies the form that ERP discourse on immigration can take in each domestic contexts (in Chapter 4 then in subsequent sections that analyse ERP development) and then looks for interdiscursivity between ERPs and mainstream parties on immigration.

A further, additional contribution of this thesis is that it follows the potential effects of these political processes at the discursive level to non-discursive events such as public attitudes and the management of immigration policy. In parallel with the examination of ERP impact at discourse level, a general categorisation of mainstream parties' and national governmental discourses on immigration according to other immigration frames including: security (associating immigration with national security); the labour market (linking immigration to labour market issues) and the foreign worker (using workers' solidarity approaches) (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003; Husymans, 2006; Lakkof and Ferguson, 2006; Noiriel, 2008).

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<sup>11</sup> Other potential available frame to characterise ERPs' racist discourse on immigration are the discursive strategy of emphasising “the positive characteristics of Our own group and its members, and the (purported) negative characteristics of Others, the Outgroup (Van Dijk, 2008, p.5). Nevertheless, the articulation of immigration as a threat to the natives' enjoyment seemed a more objective lowest common denominator to interpret the different forms of ERPs' xenophobic or racist discourse on immigration.



Finally, it needs to be clarified that the units of analysis are texts (in written or oral forms) selected on the basis of their reference to immigration policy including: political speeches, parliamentary sessions or hearings, statements to the media, published articles or written texts in official party or government's documents. These discourses were produced at the public level by political actors endowed with high levels of political capital<sup>12</sup> denominated by positions within parties or governments. These texts fit within a single genre (fixed use of language associated to a particular activity) of discourse: political discourse (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Comparative discourse analysis can be developed if the idiosyncrasies of each case and the research questions are clearly outlined (Glynos and Howarth, 2008). Finally, a technical note is necessary. The texts were analysed in their original languages and the quotes included in this thesis were translated into English by the author.

#### ***2.7.1.1 – Content analysis***

Content analysis with a quantitative character is developed to measure the salience of immigration in electoral manifestos presented by the selected ERPs and mainstream parties at first-order-ballots in the UK, France and Italy.<sup>13</sup> Since ERPs are distinctive for the acute salience granted to immigration policy within their electoral strategies, a significant ERP impact on inter-party competition is expected to involve increased salience of immigration policy in the established parties' election manifestos. Thus, the ERPs and mainstream parties' electoral manifestos at first-order-ballots constitute the unit of analysis of this research method providing a more systematised selection of texts (Devine, 2010). The contingent character of these documents provides a consistent indicator of the variable salience of

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<sup>12</sup> Political capital is a “form of symbolic capital, credit or the innumerable operations of credit by which agents conform to a person the very powers they recognise on him” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.192).

<sup>13</sup> Analysis of party manifestos have been widely regarded as an instrument to survey parties' positions on different topics and across different countries, as the Comparative Manifestos Project illustrates (Budge et al, 1987; Laver et al; 2003).

immigration in the different parties' electoral strategies, since the manifestos are drafted according to the specific context of each election (Mudde and Mair, 1998).

The use of N-vivo supported the content analysis. This evaluates the frequency of selected categories of analysis (nodes) in relation to the overall text (Bazeley, 2008). The definition of analytical categories is of utmost importance to this method, since analytical categories must be mutually exclusive and complete (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). The selected category to develop the content analysis is immigration policy and the analysis evaluates the frequency of references to this category in relation to the entire text of the electoral manifestos of ERPs and mainstream parties presented at the selected first-order-ballots. Graphics are produced with the support of N-Vivo to display research outputs and compare results.

### **2.7.2 – Analysis of opinion polls**

Examination of the ERPs' impact on public attitudes to immigration is conducted through analysis of opinion polls. The research will be conducted from data collected by BES at the British 2001 and 2005 general elections, the PEF at the French 2002 and 2007 presidential ballots, and the Itanes at the Italian 2001 and 2008 general elections. This method provides a snapshot of public attitudes to immigration and of ERPs' contagion effects on the electorate rather than a long-term survey of trends amongst the British, French and Italian voters.<sup>14</sup> The objective is to assess concern and hostility towards immigration across these electorates as an indicator of ERP contagion effects on public attitudes. SPSS and Microsoft Excel are used to present the findings with the support of graphics.

Levels of concern with immigration are evaluated by the ranking of immigration amongst the voters' priority issues at first-order-ballots, whilst the analysis of the best party to deal with the issue amongst the voters most concerned with immigration indicates the ERP impact on

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<sup>14</sup> This type of analysis is also beyond the limits of the thesis.

this trend.<sup>15</sup> ERP impact on patterns of hostility towards immigration is examined through the analysis of questions on public attitudes to immigration included in the public polls and their disaggregation between the general electorate and the ERPs' core voters. Variations in the questions posed by the different public polls at the first-order-ballots inhibit the scope of direct comparisons between the three case studies. Nevertheless, a trade-off between the range of this comparative thesis and the reliability of the data was necessary to attain the proposed objectives.

### **2.7.3 – Analysis of immigration policy**

The development of immigration policies and ERP impact is analysed according to research tools employed by immigration studies. In a seminal study, Thomas Hammar (1985) proposed that these policies can be classified as “strict” or “liberal” depending on: the conditions demanded by the host state for the admission and residence of foreign citizens and; legal guarantees presupposed by authorisation of residence against the vulnerability of arbitrary expulsion (Hammar, 1985). Consequently, the ERPs' proposals on immigration policy are expected to have an absolute “strict” or restrictive character according to their xenophobic ideologies, which make them distinctive of mainstream parties (Carter, 2005). ERP impact is expected to lead to highly restrictive policy inputs and outcomes that would have not been observed if it was not for the agency of ERPs. Instead of being interpreted as a uniform policy, immigration policy must be analysed according to the different conditions for entry and settlement imposed on distinct types of immigration flows. The four broad types of immigration flows are: 1) primary or labour inflows; 2) secondary or family reunification inflows; 3) asylum inflows; and 4) irregular inflows (Messina, 2007).

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<sup>15</sup> The ITANES polls in Italy do not include a question on the best party to deal with the voters' most important issue. Henceforth, a proxy indicator is used that involves analysis of the ranking of different party leaders' amongst the voters most concerned with immigration. This indicator does not presuppose a direct causal relationship to the party ranked as best to deal with immigration. Yet, it provides a snapshot on the attitudes of Italian voters most concerned with immigration towards the different party leaders.

Henceforth, ERPs impact on policy developments involves the transposition of their xenophobic and anti-immigration positions to the policy towards a singly type of immigration flow rather than on the four distinct categories. Where ERP impact on policy developments is identified at moderate or significant levels, this political process can be further classified either as: i) significant/non-significant at absolute level, depending on whether the impact is reflected on the national policy towards one or more types of immigration flows; and ii) proportional/disproportional at relative level, according to the ERP strong/weak position within the party system (Minkenberg, 2001). ERP impact on policy developments can be also characterised as a direct or indirect, since “participation in and influence over policy-making is most direct when the party controls or is a coalition partner in the national government” (Schain, 2006, p. 273). Throughout the assessment of ERP impact on policy developments, the thesis also assesses the relevance of other key theses of immigration studies that are developed below.

Comparative research developed by Cornelius et al. (2004) during the 1990s identified a convergence process between industrialised liberal democracies informed by growing similarities between their immigration policies. Potential explanations for the convergence hypothesis encompass: parallel path development, policy emulation, regional integration, global events and geopolitics, and public behaviour (Cornelius et al., 2004). In parallel, the authors also reported the observation of gaps between policy objectives set by the national governments and subsequent outcomes on immigration policy that reflected unexpected events or resulted from inadequate policy implementation. The motives provided to understand the governments’ inability to close the gap between aims and outcomes include: flawed policies, macro-structural explanations, domestic and international political constraints, and ambiguous policy intentions (Cornelius et al., 2004). Policy gaps can refer either to a state’s failure to restrict an undesired inflow or to jumpstart a welcomed inflow

(Jopke, 2004). Therefore, this thesis assesses whether it was possible to identify a convergence between the three cases' immigration policies and the observation of policy gaps on immigration policy.

A recent analytical framework proposed to understand immigration policy involves the disaggregation of immigration policy according to categories of migration policy (not types of immigration). This proposal is based on the assumption that particular types of policy are associated with specific patterns of politics or that "policy determines politics" (Freeman, 2006, p. 229). Consequently, each type of immigration policy presupposes a distinct distribution of benefits and costs across the host societies that are expected to be equivalent across countries with similar immigration experiences and economic structures (Freeman, 2006). The thesis examines the relevance of three types of policy:

- 1) Concentrated distributive policy: associated with quota systems for permanent residence. This policy grants goods with scarce availability such as authorisations for long-term settlement and produces concentrated benefits (to visa recipients and employers) and diffuse costs (spread across society). The limited number of groups that benefit from immigration favours their organisation to defend their interests and hold stronger influence over the policy-making process than groups who bear the costs of government's policy (Freeman, 1995). These structural regularities lead to a client politics model where the benefited groups capture the management of inflows, which helps to explain continuous expansion of numbers of visas granted in countries as Australia, the USA and Canada (Table 2.2). Distributive policies are also expected to be below the radar of "contentious politics". This type of policy is associated with the recruitment of highly skilled immigration (HSI), which has been sold as a cost-free policy that produces substantial benefit for societies, whilst the free-movement

regime within the EU is considered similar to a quota system for permanent settlement.

- 2) Redistributive policy: associated with temporary work schemes and the granting of short-term residence authorisations, which produce both concentrated benefits (employers and temporary visa recipients) and concentrated costs (native workers in the targeted labour market areas who consequently face greater competition). The temporary character of the residence authorisation makes them more consensual than permanent visa programmes and leads to interest group politics (Table 2.2). This type of migration policy is associated with guest-worker systems adopted to manage the recruitment of foreign labour, particularly to tap unskilled occupations.
- 3) Regulatory policy: linked to asylum claims that spark intense politicisation and produce diffuse benefits (spread across society) and concentrated costs (on the welfare system while asylum claims are processed) leading to entrepreneurial politics (Table 2.2). Asylum policy prompts client groups but humanitarian organisations operate in a highly contentious environment alongside opposition groups, which diminishes their influence. The regulatory aspect of asylum claims is illustrated by the increasing regulations on recognition of refugee status and high refusal rates of asylum seekers by host states. In terms of this framework, family migration is also supposed to fit more closely into the regulatory category whilst European states hold stronger incentives and less ability to control asylum than irregular migration.

The research explores the validity of this framework across the three cases and assesses whether the politicisation of particular immigration flows was related to the types of migration policy and the subsequent distribution of costs and benefits. Using this structural perspective, a convergence is expected as a result of the cases' similar immigration

experiences, especially between the UK and France. The comparative syntheses will assess the extent to which this convergence was evident during the 2000s.

**Table 2.2** – Three types of policy and politics

| Policy type   | Migration type/policy     | Mode of politics |
|---|---------------------------|------------------|
| Concentrated distributive (concentrated benefits/diffuse costs) | Permanent residence visas | Client           |
| Redistributive (concentrated benefits/concentrated costs)       | Temporary visas for work  | Interest group   |
| Regulatory (diffuse benefits/concentrated costs)                | Asylum claims             | Entrepreneurial  |

Source: Freeman, 2006, p. 230

## Chapter 3 – The search for consensus: the extreme–right party family

After a long period of political marginalisation, ERPs re-emerged on the political landscape of European states from the 1970s onwards. This trend has captured the interest of political scientists although disagreements persist about the most appropriate label to define these parties and their characteristics that distinguish ERPs as a distinct party family. The plethora of labels and typologies of rightist parties available in ERP literature reflect the divergences among political scientists. This chapter argues that ERPs is the best label for this distinctive party family for its continuity with the past, as these parties continue to present a radical challenge to the principle of human equality (Downs, 2001).

Following the justification for the choice of ERP as the best label, this chapter explores whether it is possible to aggregate ERPs as a distinct party family. Two methods employed to draw the boundaries of the ERP family proposed by Mudde (2007) and Ignazi (2006) are explored in further depth. Like Ignazi (2006), this thesis identifies ERPs according to an ideological criterion based on the presence of anti-system ideological properties. Yet, the acute variation observed among the members of such a broad ERP family demands an additional and more developed typology. The last section of the chapter examines two possible typologies of rightist parties developed by Messina (2007) and Carter (2005). This thesis employs the latter typology that not only fulfils the required conditions of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusiveness (see also Kitschelt, 2007), but it is also the most suitable for the purposes of this research.

### **3.1 – Debate about the best label for rightist parties**

Debate about the most appropriate terminology for defining these parties remains intense. This section examines the different labels available in the political science literature (Carter, 2005). Certain authors prefer to label these parties simply as racist parties or as “anti-



immigrant groups” (Husbands, 1981; Messina, 2007), but such designations portray these parties as single-issue parties in a reductionist and inaccurate form (Kitschelt, 1995). Others refer to “new right” parties, a concept initially introduced to describe cultural movements such as *Nouvelle Droite* in France during the 1980s (Taguieff and Tribalat, 1998). This label is excluded due to its ambiguity. A very common term for rightist parties is “radical right” (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Minkenberg, 2002; Schain et al., 2002). This designation was introduced by Bell in the early 1960s to classify the rise of neo-conservatives in the USA and the UK (Eatwell, 2000). Employment of this label is also ambiguous because it was initially applied to American conservative social movements such as McCarthyism rather than to political parties only (Hainsworth, 2008).

Another alternative label frequently used is “populist” parties (Betz, 1994, 2002; Heinisch, 2003). Betz (1994, p. 4) argues that these parties are:

“populist in their unscrupulous use and instrumentalization of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense”.

Recently, Mudde (2007, p. 23) adopted the term “radical populist right”, arguing that populism refers to an ideology based on the simple dichotomy of “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”. However, populism is associated with a particular political style that encompasses charismatic leadership and anti-establishment rhetoric rather than a distinct political ideology (Eatwell, 2000). This particular political style can be found in mainstream parties such as Berlusconi’s *Forza Italia* or in other political figures such as the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, instead of being an exclusive property of rightist parties (Tarchi, 2003; Žižek, 2006). Populism is not an ideological property exclusive of ERPs, whilst the most appropriate label should point to a common core ideology rather than to the parties’ style, organisation or electoral tactics (Eatwell, 2000; Husbands, 2002)

Following this brief overview of possible labels for rightist parties, the term extreme-right contains several advantages and is widely used by political authors (see for example, Ignazi; 2002; Carter, 2005; Hainsworth, 2008; Perrineau, 2009). It presupposes continuity with these parties' past challenge to the fundamental principle of human equality rather than radical discontinuity with the past (Downs, 2001). Nevertheless, the aim is not to reduce new ERPs to mere unreconstructed fascist forces of the inter-war period, which would be drastically reductionist (Hainsworth, 2008). Reference to an extreme pole among the rightist parties is not defined by the socioeconomic cleavage – market driven versus state regulations – but based on the equality-inequality dimension (Mudde, 2007). As Bobbio (1996) suggested, extreme left-wing parties seek to overcome natural inequality in favour of radical political and economic equality through political agency whilst right-wing parties support inequality among humans as natural and desirable.

Extremeness is premised on the parties' location in the political spectrum and to rightist parties' opposition to democratic and pluralist values. ERPs can be broadly traced by their position on the political left-right political spectrum as being simultaneously located to the right of moderate parties and the closest to the right edge (Ignazi, 2002; 2006). Furthermore, reference to extremeness reflects the "*anti-system*" properties contained in the ideologies of these parties (Carter, 2005). According to Sartori (1976), parties that challenge the foundational principles of liberal democracy should be characterised as anti-system. Therefore, ERP label is more appropriate than other proposals because it points to the spatial location of these parties in the left-right spectrum and to their anti-system ideological properties.

### **3.2 – Party families and ERPs**

Before framing ERPs as a distinct party family, the conception of party family must be analysed since this concept is recurrently used as a "self-evident category", when its

definition is not straightforward (Mair and Mudde, 1998). Three major obstacles were found on classifying parties according to their family identity: selecting the criteria employed to construct the typology, drawing parsimonious categories, and the agency of political actors and subsequent variations within a single party family (Eatwell, 1998). Therefore, typologies of party families must also be flexible enough to allow parties to shift between the proposed categories rather than simply being static compartmentalisations (Mudde, 2007). Drawing largely from Mair and Mudde's (1998) proposal on party families, this chapter suggests the adoption of an ideological approach to delineate the ERP family.

According to the former proposal (Mair and Mudde, 1998), political scientists must set a clear ideological criterion to formulate the boundaries of party families and classify party identities rather than analyse their political actions. Therefore, primacy is granted to parties' ideology and their origins over other contingent factors. Nonetheless, ideology is interpreted under a competitive rather than institutional approach that interprets political parties as flexible organisations that can adapt their ideologies according to contingent shifts in the political market rather than being over determined by their history as institutions (Downs, 1957). This method authorises the reclassification of parties that change their ideological background, as observed with New Labour in the UK or the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) in Italy (Mudde, 2007). After reviewing the broad methods employed to construct party families, the method to draw an ERP family as a distinct category is now examined.

### **3.2.1 – ERPs as a party family**

The on-going debate over the appropriate label to define ERPs is underlined by competition over the identification of distinctive characteristics of this party family. The plurality of approaches to the construction of the ERP family reflect two common problems: i) the varieties of extremism despite the agreement over a common core doctrine; ii) variation in terms of levels of extremism among the selected parties besides the aforementioned difficulty

in drawing a clear line between mainstream parties and ERPs (Eatwell, 2000). Mudde (2007) proposed a minimum common ideological denominator for his label of “*populist radical right parties*” by highlighting that “nativist nationalism” is the cornerstone of these parties’ ideologies. Regarded as a combination of nationalism and xenophobia, “nativist nationalism” is conceived as:

“an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state” (Mudde, 2007, p. 19).

This narrow definition of “nativist nationalism” has the merit of travelling from the Western European context to the Eastern European context but it tries to conflate “racists and non-racist arguments (including and excluding on the basis of culture and religion)” failing to distinguish between biological racism and cultural xenophobia.

A broader definition of populist radical parties was then proposed by referring to three distinct principles: “populism, nativist nationalism and authoritarianism” (Mudde, 2007, p.23). Authoritarianism is regarded as the belief in a strictly ordered society and submission to authority (Mudde, 2007). Despite agreement on the primacy of xenophobia and racism or nativism to classify ERPs, populism and authoritarianism are ambiguous ideological criteria to construct the ERP family. As Kitschelt (2007) notes, some ERPs accept a degree of pluralism of rules whilst others challenge the unity of the host state as the Italian LN proposed in the past. The distinction between the narrow and broad definition of a rightist party family is considered less valuable than a single broader and inclusive definition of the members of the ERP family.

A different proposal to define the ERP family was suggested by Ignazi (1992; 2006) who employed a spatial and ideological criterion. The first parameter is based on the validity of

the left-right spectrum that emerged after the French Revolution and employed in most West European party systems (Ignazi, 2002, 2006).<sup>16</sup> ERPs must be subsequently located to the right of the mainstream and moderate conservative parties, indicating the ideological distance between them (Capoccia, 2002). ERPs are not necessarily located at an equal position in the political spectrum of different party systems because this process is defined by their interaction with the other political competitors (Carter, 2005). Since this spatial criterion only provides a broad selection of ERPs, it must be complemented with in-depth analysis of parties' identities according to an ideological criterion (Kitschelt, 2007).

A basic method for examining ERP ideologies is to look for overt references to a Fascist legacy and subsequent overt opposition to democratic values. The decreasing number of parties that overtly challenge the legitimacy of democracy and make overt associations with Fascism would have reduced the ERP family to mere neo-Fascist parties (Hainsworth, 1992; Betz, 1994). Additional ideological principles must be therefore deployed to identify the members of the ERP party family, since at least there is a widespread agreement that ERPs are ideologically distinct from other parties (Kitschelt, 1995; Husbands, 2002). A survey of the literature ascertained that there were five ideological features widely mentioned: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and an authoritarian state (Mudde, 2000). Anti-democracy is a broader conception than the other four ideological traits but it is still regarded as a necessary property of ERPs (Eatwell, 2004). Thus, an additional dimension for scrutinizing the extreme-right label demands the assessment of the parties' anti-system properties (Ignazi, 2002, 2006; Carter, 2005).

The narrow definition of "anti-system" parties was initially devised by Sartori (1976) and identifies only those who display an "opposition of principle" or a radical opposition to the

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<sup>16</sup> This political spectrum orders political parties in a one-dimensional horizontal space and evaluates the ideological distance between parties in a singular party system (Downs, 1957; Sartori, 1976).

foundations of the democratic regime, besides aiming to radically transform the system of government (Sartori, 1976, p.118). The narrow conception of anti-system party implies that:

“the hard-core of the concept is singled out by noting that an anti–system opposition abides by a belief system that does not share the values of the political order within which it operates. According to the strict definition, then anti–system parties represent an extraneous ideology whose existence in a singular party system indicates a polity confronted with maximal ideological distance” (Sartori, 1976, p. 118).

This definition encompasses both the ideological distance between parties and refers to the delegitimizing effect of party activities within their different political contexts. Anti-system parties do not need to oppose all the foundational principles of the democratic system to be regarded as anti-system, as opposition to only one of them is considered sufficient (Capoccia, 2002, p. 20).

Anti-system properties can be also found in ERP ideologies, but the extreme-left and right party families can be distinguished according to their accordance to the principle of human equality (Bobbio, 1996). As mentioned previously, extreme-left parties are based on radical egalitarian principles while ERPs are deeply anti-egalitarian and advocate the necessity of institutionalised social and political inequality. Therefore, ERPs’ denial of the principle of human equality must be regarded as an anti-system property insofar as this principle is considered a foundation principle of liberal democracy (Joppke, 1998; Capoccia, 2002). Thus, as Carter (2005, p. 17) suggests, anti-constitutional elements of right wing extremism refer “to a rejection of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional state” and are intrinsically related to the “rejection of the principle of fundamental human equality”.

Summarising, ERPs can be broadly identified by their location on the political spectrum and objectively classified based on the ideological criterion by evaluating the anti-system properties of these parties' ideologies (Ignazi, 2002; 2003). These anti-system properties can be either an overt attachment to a Fascist legacy or the profession of anti-constitutional or anti-democratic values, such as the denial of the principle of human equality (Kitschelt, 2007). Thus, the boundaries of the ERP family can be accurately drawn by the ideological criterion, insofar as mainstream right parties do not integrate "anti-system" properties within their ideologies. Distinction between extreme-left parties and ERPs families can also be made based on the egalitarian cleavage. The next section examines different typologies of ERPs.

### **3.3 – Typology of ERPs**

The combination of spatial and ideological approaches authorises a clear definition of the boundaries of the ERP family. However, this definition does not exhaust the diversity of parties found within this category (Eatwell, 2004). The question now is whether different types of ERPs can be classified using a single typology. There are an increasing number of studies that explore the diversity of ERPs and different typologies have been developed. However, certain proposals fail to fulfil conditions of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusiveness required for the formulation of objective typologies (Carter, 2005).

Both requirements are fulfilled by the proposal formulated by Ignazi (2002, 2006), who suggest that ERP family should be composed of two main types: traditional and post-industrial ERPs. The first type of parties consists of those that display an overt attachment to Fascist or Nazi legacies, like the British BNP during the 1990s or the former Italian MSI through the 1980s (Ignazi, 2002; 2003, p. 33; see Chapter 4). Post-industrial ERPs are considered a by-product of the conflicts inherent to post-industrial society and advocate a "mixture, often dazzling and fallacious, of free enterprise and social protection (limited to the native), of modernizing inputs and traditional reminiscences", like the French FN (Ignazi,

2006, p. 34). Unlike traditional ERPs that have almost disappeared from European party systems, post-industrial ERPs enjoyed far greater electoral success (Ignazi, 2002; 2006). However, these two categories still encompass strong variations whilst the recent shortage of traditional ERPs in European party systems makes its employment unattractive. Additional typologies must therefore be examined by this thesis.

One recent typology of anti-immigration parties found in immigration studies was developed by Messina (2007) aggregating political parties and social groups. According to this author, all anti-immigration groups created since the mid-1970s share three characteristics: overt hostility to immigrants; opposition to new immigration; and a great part if not all of their political success derives from the exploitation of social tensions produced by immigration (Messina, 2007, p. 64). Largely inspired by Kitschelt's research (1995), Messina identifies five types of anti-immigration groups (Messina, 2007, p. 64-73):

1. Pure anti-immigrant groups that lack formal organisation and are singly organised on the basis of their antagonism to immigration;
2. Neo-fascist/neo-Nazi parties that are inspired by Fascist ideology and possess a well-organised party structure;
3. Opportunistic right parties whose anti-immigration posture depends on the electoral strategy adopted. Opposition to immigration varies according to the parties' structure of opportunities instead of being driven by xenophobia. Their positioning in the political spectrum oscillates between the extreme and mainstream right;
4. New radical right parties that are considered unique for the way they combine a "neo-liberal commitment and individual economic freedom with an illiberal hostility towards immigrants, immigration, materialism and contemporary democracy";



5. Ethnonational right parties whose attitudes to immigration depend on the political context. Ethnonational parties are opportunistic, single-issue formed based on a territorial/ethnic cleavage.

However, this typology does not fulfil the condition of mutual exclusiveness, as there is a clear overlap between the categories of opportunistic right and ethnonational parties. Another shortcoming is the evaluation of party agency instead of exploring party ideologies and identities (Mair and Mudde, 1998; Ignazi, 2006). The concentration on the issue of immigration suggests that this typology is policy-oriented, rendering the characterisation of ERPs heavily contingent, and it implies that ERPs are single-issue parties (Kitschelt, 1995). For these reasons, Messina's typology is considered too inconsistent for this research purposes.

Another alternative and more objective typology of ERPs is provided by Carter (2005, p. 28), based on the evaluation of three criteria: "i) importance attached by parties to the issue of immigration; ii) nature of the party racist attitudes; iii) party attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism". The first criterion refers to the importance of xenophobia and the party's concern for "internal homogenization" by classifying ERPs according to the level of salience attributed to immigration. Henceforth, ERPs can be divided between "radically xenophobic" parties and those that do not devote any importance to this issue (Carter, 2005, p. 29). The second principle proposed by Carter (2005, p. 35) distinguishes ERPs depending on their adoption of traditional racism, cultural racism or absence of any racist ideology at all. Traditional racist parties embrace biological and eugenic conceptions of race that are characteristic of Nazism whilst cultural racists adopt the "ethnopluralist" version of the French *Nouvelle Droite* in the 1970s (Taguieff and Tribalat, 1998).

The major ideological innovation was to dismiss biological racism in favour of a conception of "ethnopluralism", which emphasises the necessity of preserving the uniqueness and purity

of the cultural identities of different ethnic groups. It presupposes the existence of irreconcilable cultural differences that could be dissolved through the mixing of different ethnic groups (Rydgren, 2003). “Ethnopluralism” underlined the thesis of “Clash of Civilizations” that framed modern conflicts as an outcome of the incommensurable cultural differences between nations of irreconcilable civilisations, especially between “Western” and “Islamic” civilization (Huntington, 1996). A strand of xenophobia relatively unaddressed by Carter (2005) refers to welfare xenophobia, which presents the welfare state as offering protection only for those who belong to the national community independently of their ethnic background. Foreigners are portrayed as illegitimate spongers of national resources and a threat to national citizens (Kitschelt, 1995, p. 23).

Finally, ERPs can be identified by their attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism (Carter, 2005). These criteria assess whether ERPs reject democracy or at least call for its institutional reform by expanding or restricting liberties. A first group of ERPs opposes the core values that underlie liberal democratic systems and support their replacement. A second group displays anti-systemic properties but seeks particular reforms to push for less democracy, a relegation of parliamentary powers and less pluralism. A third group also proposes considerable reforms to political systems in favour of radical expansion of individual freedom and rights (Carter, 2005, p. 41). Doubts persist over the integration of this last group into the ERP family (Kitschelt, 2007), though it is a useful criterion to distinguish far-right anarchist movements inspired by the work of the American Robert Nozick (1975).

Through the articulation of the three criteria, Carter (2005) identified five main types of ERPs:

1. Neo-Nazi parties – regarded as radically xenophobic, marked by the embrace of traditional racism and opposition to liberal democratic systems;

2. Neo-fascist parties – opposing liberal democratic systems without embracing xenophobic ideology or racism;
3. Authoritarian xenophobic parties – embracing cultural racism and radical xenophobia but advocating significant constitutional reforms in favour of a more authoritarian state;
4. Neo-liberal xenophobic parties – racially xenophobic and embracing cultural racism, but proposing significant reform to the state according to neo-liberalism by defending less state intervention;
5. Neo-liberal populist parties – which do not display xenophobic and racist attitudes at all, but their demands for reform of the existing regime into a minimal version of the state does contain anti-democratic properties (Carter, 2005, p. 51)

This ERP typology offers many advantages since it provides a single and flexible definition of ERPs, fulfils the conditions of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusion, and draws accurate categories for this party family (Kitschelt, 2007). This proposal is also focused on party identities rather than on their actions or electoral strategies in light of three qualitative criteria (salience of xenophobia, nature of racist beliefs, and attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism). This proposal is also flexible enough either to permit variations in the location of ERPs within the proposed categories or to dismiss a certain party from this party family due to a shift of their ideological background. Henceforth, ERPs in the UK, France and Italy will be classified according to Carter's (2005) typology.

### **3.4 – Conclusions**

The term 'extreme-right' is considered the most appropriate label for ERPs because it refers only to political parties, indicates the ideological criteria selected to construct the boundaries of this party family and a salient degree of continuity with the past. ERPs continue to present a challenge to the foundations of liberal democracy today as they did in the past without

being a mere reflection of past Fascist relics. The chapter then analysed possible methods for constructing party families and found that the ideological criteria as proposed by Mair and Mudde (1998) to be the most consistent approach. The chapter's second part provided a discussion of two possible ideological criteria to draw the ERP family. It was shown that Mudde (2007) proposed a narrow and a broad conception for his populist radical right party family, wherein the conception of "nativist nationalism" was considered the core ideological property.

Despite the merits of this proposal, there are grounds to doubt his narrow conception of racism and the framing of populism and authoritarianism as an ideology rather than a political style exclusive of ERPs. Ignazi's (2006) proposal identified ERPs according to their location in the left–right political spectrum and especially for the integration of anti-system properties in their ideologies. These anti-system properties can either be an overt attachment to Fascism or the denial of a foundational principle of liberal democracies, such as human equality.

The disaggregation of the ERP party family into traditional and post-industrial parties was sufficiently robust from a theoretical perspective but it is undermined by the disappearance of the first category from European party systems and the excessive variation within the two categories. The typology of anti-immigration parties developed by Messina (2007) and applied to immigration studies contained theoretical shortcomings that undermined its overall consistency. Finally, Carter's (2005) typology was regarded as the most consistent typology of ERPs by examining three ideological criteria: salience of xenophobia; nature of racist beliefs; and attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism. From the articulation of these three principles, five major subcategories of ERPs emerged: neo-Nazi parties; neo-fascist parties; authoritarian radical xenophobic parties; neo-liberal xenophobic parties; and neo-liberal populist parties.

## Chapter 4 – Selection and contextualisation of case studies

This chapter has two main objectives: i) to present a justification for both the selection of the UK, France and Italy as most appropriate case studies and the employment of a most similar systems design; ii) to explore and contextualise the most relevant divergences across key variables in the three cases, such as electoral systems, ERPs' past development, and immigration experiences. The chapter considers possible case selection bias and then presents a justification for the employment of a most similar systems research design based on common liberal political systems, EU membership and the bipolar inter-party competition encouraged by the electoral systems in the three cases. As this chapter demonstrates, these last three characteristics present similar constraints on the impact of ERPs on immigration policy. Still, there are important variations found between the selected cases that must be contextualised before proceeding into the analysis of ERP impact on immigration policy. These variations are the electoral systems in the three cases, the development of the selected ERPs before 2000, and their divergent immigration experiences and paradigms. These three aspects of each case are explored in further depth throughout the remaining chapter.

### **4.1 – Justification of case selection and choice for a most similar systems research design**

Justification of case selection is an issue frequently mistreated by political scientists undertaking comparative research using a small number of case studies (Peters, 1998). The UK, France and Italy were initially selected as the best countries to conduct this comparative research due to the presence of ERPs and the intensity of immigration, two indispensable characteristics necessary to conduct the analysis of ERP impact on immigration policy. Furthermore, the three cases present similar constraints on the potential development of the dependent variable: the liberal character of their states, EU membership, and bipolar patterns of inter-party competition encouraged by their electoral systems. Therefore, the objective of

the case selection was to understand ERP impact on immigration policy in political contexts with similar constraints on the development of this political process (Schain, 2006).

A frequent mistake behind case selection is choosing countries according to observation of the dependent variable, e.g. where an ERP has had a significant impact on immigration policy (Peters, 1998). Consequently, the inclusion of Italy raises questions of selection bias as the LN was part of the coalition governments in 1994, 2001 and 2008. However, the political impact of the ERPs cannot be simply measured in terms of direct participation in government or be considered an automatic outcome of their access to the policy-making process. Moreover, previous research on the radical right in public office in Germany, France, Italy and Austria suggested that ERP impact was stronger at a cultural level than on a policy level (Minkenberg, 2001). Hence, the inclusion of Italy does not present problems of selection bias because only the research developed by this thesis can help to establish whether or not the LN actually had a significant impact on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy.

#### **4.1.1 – Justification of choice for a most similar systems design**

A most similar systems design presupposes the presence of common and static similarities between the selected cases, which can then be excluded as having a potential influence on the dependent variable (Hopkin, 2010). In this research, these key variables are the liberal character of the political systems, EU membership and the bipolar inter-party competition encouraged by their different electoral systems. Liberal states may experience ‘unwanted’ immigration because, for example, judicial intervention may open ‘social and political spaces’ for migrants (Hollifield, 1992). By contrast, illiberal states can more easily disrespect the human rights of foreign citizens to attain their objectives (Schain, 2008b).

Therefore, the capacity of liberal states to impose strict border controls can be severely limited by domestic factors, such as the constitutional rights extended to citizens and immigrants that are protected by independent judicial powers. This trend inhibits the adoption

of “zero-immigration policies” proposed by the ERPs and constrains their potential impact on policy developments. The existence of legislation that prohibits incitement of racial hatred also constrains overt racist rhetoric, limiting the scope of ERP impact at the discourse level. In addition, liberal states also have moral obligations towards particular groups of immigrants due to their historical ties or experiences, such as colonisation (Joppke, 1998). Effectively, the research will demonstrate that the liberal character of French and Italian states has posed important constraints on the impact of ERPs on immigration policy during the analysed period, especially on policy developments.

Another important similarity between the UK, France and Italy is their EU membership, which also poses salient constraints on the potential impact of ERPs, particularly on policy developments. Membership of the EU presupposes recognition of the supranational free-movement rights for EU citizens established in the Treaty of Rome (1957) and guaranteed by EU laws. Moreover, the EU is based on the fundamental principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are overtly acknowledged in the Amsterdam Treaty (1999) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000). A proposal such as the withdrawal from the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees is prevented by EU membership. Hence, ERP impact on immigration policy cannot contravene EU legislation without subsequent actions from bodies such as the European Commission, the European Parliament (EP), or European Court of Justice. Incompatibility with the fundamental requirements of membership could mean that a country withdraws from the EU.

The creation of the EU single market also presupposes strong cooperation on migration and asylum. This can be seen from the Schengen Agreement (1985), which abolished internal border controls, ‘compensated’ by a stronger commitment to secure external borders controls. While France and Italy are full Schengen members, the UK has not joined Schengen. Similar variation can be found on the impact of the Europeanisation process, as the UK opted out of

Title IV of the Amsterdam Treaty covering free movement, migration and asylum (Geddes, 2003). Nevertheless, the national immigration policies and the impact of ERPs in the three cases are still constrained by EU developments, such as the EU enlargement process in 2004 and 2008. The UK government has opted in to a wide range of EU measures on issues such as asylum and irregular immigration (Geddes, 2005). The latter two characteristics restrict the present case selection to EU countries with salient levels of immigration and with a significant ERP within their domestic party systems, such as the UK, France, Italy, Austria, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark or Norway.

The third and final similarity that helps to justify the present case selection is the bipolar patterns of inter-party or inter-coalition competition encouraged by the electoral systems employed by the three cases at the first-order-ballots. The British first-past-the-post electoral system incentivises intense bipolar competition between two dominant main parties, even if the UK is no longer a classic two-party system, especially after the 2010 general election (Farrell, 2001). In France, the two-round majoritarian formula employed in French presidential and legislative elections after 1958 promoted a more stable pattern of ‘bipolar pluralism’ within a multi-party system (Elgie, 2005). Despite several imperfections, the last four Italian general elections (1996, 2001, 2006, and 2008) have been characterized by bipolar competition in a party system characterised by centrifugal dynamics, making it a case of “fragmented bipolarism” (D’Alimonte, 2005; Pasquino, 2010). These electoral systems favour competition between two ideological blocs with significant ideological polarisation in the left-right political spectrum.

Based on these factors, the selected cases allow the evaluation of ERP impact in similar political contexts characterised by intense bipolar competition and the existence of common pressures on mainstream parties to prevent the waste of votes to ERPs. According to Bale (2003), centre-right parties prevented the transference of votes to extremist parties by



cooperating with ERPs as a support party or as a coalition partner at the expense of conceding respectability to the anti-immigration and welfare-chauvinist agenda of ERPs (as observed in Italy and Austria). Thus, the intense bipolarism observed in the UK, France and Italy can have a salient influence on the development of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy providing a third justification for the selection of these countries as the most appropriate cases to employ a most similar systems comparative research design. Now, the following sections provide an overview of the British, French and Italian electoral systems, the development of the selected ERPs before 2000, and the immigration experiences of the three countries.

#### **4.2 – Electoral systems**

Electoral systems are the structure by which votes are cast at election for a representative assembly and the means by which such votes are converted into seats in parliament (Mitchell, 2005). Electoral systems shape the party system and the nature of government (single-party or coalition), as plurality systems act as a disincentive to the rise of new parties while PR encourages fragmentation of party systems (Farrell, 2001). The argument here is that distinct electoral systems provide different structures of opportunities for ERPs and may influence their impact on immigration politics and policy. Effectively, electoral systems explain the difficulties ERPs face when they are seeking an electoral breakthrough but fail to explain variations of electoral support for such parties between different periods or across different countries (Carter, 2005; Mudde, 2007). Alternatively, ERPs may concentrate on second-order elections like EP or local elections, wherein institutional constraints are weaker (Kitschelt, 1995), but these are not the focus of this study.

#### **4.2.1 – British first-past-the-post electoral system**

The weakness of British ERPs has been frequently associated with the institutional constraints imposed by the first-past-the-post electoral system (Hainsworth, 2008). The House of Commons is the dominant chamber in the political system and its members are elected by a plurality of the vote in the constituency in which they are candidates (Farrell, 2001). Consequently, only the candidate receiving the most votes obtains representation in the House of Commons (Lijphart, 1994). This first-past-the-post electoral system possesses a mechanical effect that favours the establishment of a two-party system, through high levels of disproportionality (Mitchell, 2005). Simultaneously, it also introduces a psychological effect that discourages voters from ‘wasting’ their vote on minor parties (Hainsworth, 1992). Nevertheless, the Westminster model is becoming a misrepresentation, as the British party system is no longer a two-party system, as there is a significant third party in parliament – the Liberal Democrats and other minor parties.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, this plurality electoral system favours single-party parliamentary majorities and is seen as leading to ‘strong’ single-party governments (Farrell, 2001). The Westminster model hinders the development of smaller parties such as the BNP that has never obtained parliamentary representation (Mudde, 2002). Nonetheless, the recent introduction of proportional representation (PR) to the European Parliament (EP) and to London Mayoral and London Assembly elections expanded the BNP’s structure of political opportunities (Hainsworth, 2008).

#### **4.2.2 – French dual-ballot system**

Executive powers in the French Fifth Republic are shared between a directly elected President and a Prime Minister appointed by the President and confirmed by the National

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<sup>17</sup> This party obtained 22.1 per cent of the vote in the 2005 general election and acquired 62 seats (Kavanagh and Butler, 2005).

Assembly. Elections to the presidency and parliament are contested on the basis of single member constituencies and according to a “two-ballot-majority-plurality” electoral system (Elgie, 2005). In presidential elections, when one of the candidates fails to obtain a majority in the first ballot, a second ballot will take place and is restricted to the two most successful candidates from the former round. In parliamentary elections, when a candidate fails to obtain a majority on the first ballot in a disputed constituency, a second ballot will occur that is restricted to parties that obtained at least 12.5 per cent of the registered electorate (Hossay, 2002). Despite the electoral thresholds to access the second ballot, this dual-ballot system enhances multiparty competition due to the incentives for electoral coalitions, particularly at the second round (Farrell, 2001).

The French electoral system enhances bipolar patterns of inter-party competition because of the incentives to the formation of alliances within the left and right blocs at the second round, which tend to produce coalition governments (Elgie, 2005). The dual ballot system discourages French voters from “wasting” their vote on minor parties (Marcus, 1995). Finally, this electoral system also fosters higher levels of disproportionality than in the UK, which favours established parties and encourages party cohesion (Ivaldi, 2005). Due to these institutional constraints, the French party system is commonly regarded as a “moderate pluralist polity” (Sartori, 1974; Andersen and Evans, 2003).

Within this context, the FN has obtained zero or minimal parliamentary representation despite its strong electoral performances at the first-order-ballots, because of its exclusion from national coalitions (Kestel and Godmer, 2004). In response, it has retained candidates at decisive second-round ballots forcing triangular competition (left, right and extreme-right) that splits the right-wing vote (Ivaldi, 2005). Unsurprisingly, the FN’s electoral breakthrough at national level occurred in 1986 when parliamentary elections employed a PR system after President Mitterrand’s decision, motivated by his desire to split the right-wing vote

(Perrineau, 1998). The introduction of PR systems in second-order elections (Municipal, Regional and EP) also expanded the FN's political opportunities (Marcus, 1995).

#### **4.2.3 – Italian “scorporo”**

Since the Constitutional compromise of 1947, Italian legislative power is shared by two parliamentary branches – the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate (Cotta and Verzichelli, 2007). The President of the Council of Ministers is equally responsible to both chambers while the Cabinet is appointed by the President, who holds exclusive powers to dissolve the legislature, force early elections, and to dismiss appointed ministers (Bull and Pasquino, 2007). The President of the Italian Republic is appointed by a joint session of both legislative bodies for a seven-year mandate. Until 1993, parliamentary elections used a proportional system with a low legal threshold that fostered high levels of party system fragmentation making it a classic case of “polarised pluralism” (Sartori, 1975; Hossay, 2002). It was considered non-competitive due to the continuous permanent representation of *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) in government, while the second biggest party – the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) was excluded from power because of the Cold War context. Due to lack of alternation in power and high levels of corruption, the party oligarchy became known as “*partitocrazia*” (rule by party; Cotta and Verzichelli, 2007).

The Italian party system collapsed after the end of the Cold War and the PCI subsequently disintegrated into a centre-left and an extreme-left party. The eruption of the “*Tangentopoli*” scandal between 1992 and 1993 exposed deep levels of corruption within the DC and the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI) leading to a massive electoral realignment and the final collapse of the party system. Italian voters' association between the electoral system with the political crisis led to mass support for electoral reform. Consequently, a new mixed electoral law (75 per cent majoritarian, 25 per cent proportional, named as “*scorporo*”) was established after a national referendum in April 1993 (Hossay, 2002).

Elections to the Chamber of Deputies and to the Senate were contested under mixed electoral laws with substantial distinctions. Members of the Chamber were elected through a dual-ballot vote, wherein one vote appointed deputies according to single-member districts. The second vote elected the remaining one quarter of the deputies through a proportional method of nationwide dimension (Pasquino, 2007). The *scorporo* possessed a mechanical effect that penalised a party's share of the proportional vote for each victory it obtained under the plurality tier. An electoral threshold of 4 per cent was imposed on access to the Chamber of Deputies through the proportional tier (Hossay, 2002). Members of the Senate were elected through a single vote because the plurality and proportional tiers are fused together, while the proportional method was used at a regional rather than at nationwide level (D'Alimonte, 2005).

The 1993 electoral law promoted bipolarity by making pre-electoral coalitions central to the victory of single-member seats and the party system became structured by two "catch-all" coalitions based on left-right blocs (Diamanti, 2007). Thus, government formation assumed the form of coalition governments similar to the past (D'Alimonte, 2005). Party system fragmentation increased as small parties that stood little chance of getting representation under the proportional tier could be compensated by running their own candidates in constituencies under the plurality tier where their coalition was likely to win. The level of compensation obtained by minor parties depended on their "blackmail" power within the coalition. The geographical electoral concentration of LN support in northern regions enabled it to obtain an oversized proportion of secure seats (Cotta and Verzichelli, 2007). Despite institutional incentives to centripetal competition, centrifugal dynamics persisted at the intra-coalition level in both government and parliament, and this had a negative impact on Cabinet stability (Bardi, 2007).

More recently, in 2005 the centre-right coalition government promoted a new institutional reform driven by partisan interests, which introduced a proportional law with a majority bonus to the winning coalition (Bull and Pasquino, 2007). Since electoral laws for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate are distinct, the impact of the new reform is variable. The majority bonus preserved bipolar competition and provided a comfortable majority in the Chamber of Deputies to the winning coalition in 2006 elections, but only a tiny majority in the Senate (Pasquino, 2007). This factor underlined the Senate's vote of no confidence to the centre-left coalition government led by Romano Prodi in 2007 and its subsequent resignation (Paolucci and Newell, 2008).

### **4.3 – ERPs development until 2001**

This section analyses the development of the most prominent members of the ERP family in the UK, France and Italy since the 1970s. The analysis focuses on ERP development within their institutional contexts and explores their ideological classification according to the typology proposed by Carter (2005, see Chapter 3). The research on ERP development in the UK, France and Italy is framed within the context of their structure of political opportunities and will stop in 2001. The following country chapters will continue the research from that point forward, including the examination of the ERP impact on immigration politics and policy.

#### **4.3.1 – The extreme-right in Britain from the 1970s**

##### ***4.3.1.1 – The rise and fall of the National Front***

The National Front (NF) was formed in 1967 after the fusion of minor ERPs – such as the British National Party, the League of Empire Loyalists, members of the Racial Preservation Society and the Greater Britain Movement (GBM). The NF was led by A. K. Chesterton until 1970, who was a former member of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (Eatwell,

1992). The NF received indirect support from Enoch Powell, a Conservative MP, who in a public speech in Birmingham in April 1968 prophesied “rivers of blood” as a consequence of Commonwealth immigration and that “the black man will have the whip hand over the white man” (Smithies and Fiddick, 1969, pp. 35-43). Powell supported the voluntary repatriation of immigrants and the repeal of the 1965 Race Relations Act. In response, the Conservative leader Edward Heath dismissed him from the shadow cabinet and refused to support Powell’s approach to immigration (Harris, 1994).

Powell rejected joining the NF but his speech and subsequent popular mobilisations improved the NF’s structure of political opportunities by: i) breaking the inter-party consensus on immigration; ii) bringing this social phenomenon into the centre of the political agenda; and iii) opening divisions within the Conservative elites (Saggar, 1992; Durham, 1996). The subsequent divisions within the British centre-right created a political space for the British ERP, as opposition to “coloured” immigration and support for the forced repatriation of immigrants were NF platforms (Kitschelt, 1995; Thurlow, 2000). Nevertheless, the NF was unable to capitalise on Powell’s speech in electoral terms mostly because of intense intraparty conflicts (Sykes, 2004). Chesterton was removed from the leadership after the NF’s poor electoral results at the 1970 general election (Table 4.1). Two years later, John Tyndall assumed the NF’s leadership with the support of Martin Webster. Both were ex-members of the GBM (Thurlow, 1998).

#### ***4.3.1.2 – Tyndall as NF chairman***

Under John Tyndall’s leadership, the NF’s ideology evolved at two levels: the party sent a Fascist message impregnated by national-socialist ideas, such as anti-Semitism and biological racism, to the inner core, while it emphasised racial populism and a nationalist economic programme at the public level (Edgar, 1977). Tyndall’s electoral tactics were dominated by street politics and provocative marches and two periods of electoral growth were observed

**Table 4.1** – Votes for the NF at British general elections between 1970 and 1987

| Year     | No. of candidates | Number of votes | Average of the vote in contested constituencies |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1970     | 10                | 6,000           | 3.6%  |
| 1974 (F) | 54                | 76,865          | 3.1%  |
| 1974 (O) | 90                | 113,843         | 3.1%  |
| 1979     | 303               | 191,706         | 1.3%  |
| 1983     | 60                | 27,065          | 1.1%  |
| 1987     | 2                 | 553             | -   |

Source: Messina, 2007, p. 55

under his leadership (Layton-Henry, 1984). The first was between 1972 and 1974 after the Conservative government’s admission of Ugandan Asian refugees, which led some Conservative members to join the NF (Table 4.1; Harris, 1994). However, the NF’s poor results at both the 1974 general elections produced a new cleavage between Tyndall and ex-Conservatives, such as Roy Painter and Kingsley Read, who criticised the party’s leadership for being damaging (Durham, 1996). Tyndall maintained his grip on the NF’s leadership whilst the “populists” formed another rightist party – the National Party (NP). This split deprived the NF of an electoral breakthrough at local level, as the NP won two seats on Blackburn council at the 1976 local elections (Husbands, 1994).

The second peak in the NF’s electoral support developed between 1976 and 1977 after another immigration crisis following Afro-Asian arrivals. This event allowed the NF to regain its key issue and raised prospects of an imminent electoral breakthrough (Sykes, 2004). However, NF electoral support plummeted at the 1979 general elections and led to the emergence of internal conflict once more (Table 4.1). Consequently, Tyndall was removed from the party leadership in 1980 and another faction – the Strasserites – ascended within the NF. This group dropped links with national-socialism in favour of the Fascist movement led by Gregor Strasser, turning the NF into a neo-fascist ERP type (Sykes, 2004). However, the



NF collapsed into warring factions and chronic instability throughout the 1980s and disappeared into obscurity (Eatwell, 1998; Thurlow, 1998).

Many explanations for the failure of the NF have been proposed in ERP literature: the British electoral system; the British civic culture; actions of anti-fascist groups, such as the Anti-Nazi League or Rock Against Racism; intra-party disputes; and the role of the mainstream parties, especially the Conservatives under Margaret Thatcher's leadership (Messina, 1989; Husbands, 1994; Eatwell, 1998; Thurlow, 2000; Mudde, 2002). Famously, Thatcher stated in an interview on the World in Action programme on ITV in April 1978 that: "people are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture" (Hainsworth, 1992, p. 20). This event has been recurrently identified as an example of informal co-option of ERP discourse on immigration policy (Hainsworth, 1992; Husbands, 1994). The window of opportunity for the NF opened by Powell was closed by Thatcher's shift onto extremist grounds as she re-claimed the issue of opposition to immigration for the Conservatives alongside their neo-liberal economic programme (Durham, 1996; Mudde, 2002).<sup>18</sup>

#### ***4.3.1.3 – The rise of the BNP***

After abandoning the NF, Tyndall formed the New National Front in 1980, which was renamed BNP three years later. The BNP's ideology under Tyndall's leadership was classified as a neo-Nazi ERP on the basis of three components: i) a strong hostility towards liberalism and what were described as a corrupt and decadent parliamentary plutocracy; ii) adoption of biological racism and covert anti-Semitism, which was evident in the proposal of forced repatriation of "non-whites" and the denial of the Holocaust; iii) opposition to "international monopoly capitalism" in favour of a nationalist economic programme (Copsey,

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<sup>18</sup> Kitschelt (1995, p. 254, italic in the original) argued that: "in some ways, *the British Conservatives became the model according to which emerging new radical right parties elsewhere in Europe could learn to fashion their appeals*".

1994; Gable, 1995). Furthermore, the BNP electoral strategy resembled the tactics employed by the NF during the 1970s (Sykes, 2004). During the 1980s and early 1990s, the BNP continued to be isolated on the margins of British politics (Table 4.2; Thurlow, 1998). Thatcher's leadership and her tough stances on immigration and the victory in the Falklands war in 1982 continued to squeeze the British ERP's political space (Eatwell, 2004).

**Table 4.2** – Votes for the BNP at British general election, EP and London Assembly ballots developed between 1983 and 2000

| Year | Elections type  | No. of Constituencies Contested | Number of Votes | Average of the vote in Contested Constituencies |
|------|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1983 | general         | 54                              | 14,621          | 0,5%  |
| 1987 | general         | 2                               | 553             | 0,6%  |
| 1992 | general         | 13                              | 7,005           | 1,2%  |
| 1997 | general         | 56                              | 35,832          | 1,4%  |
| 1999 | EP <sup>1</sup> | –                               | 102,644         | 0,9% <sup>1</sup>                               |
| 2000 | London Assembly | –                               | 47,670          | 2.9%  |

Source: Ignazi, 2006; London Elects, 2008.

<sup>1</sup> Average of the vote across Britain

<sup>2</sup> Votes for London-wide Assembly Members – London totals

Political marginalisation appeared close to an end in September 1993 following a BNP victory in a council by-election in Millwall (East London) by a margin of seven votes (Gable, 1995). A BNP campaign entitled: “Rights for Whites” was developed from 1989 onwards to downgrade the party’s Nazi image and seek to attract “oppressed white” workers through intense local canvassing (Sykes, 2004). The extension of this campaign to Tower Hamlets in the early 1990s coupled with the exploitation of local grievances provided legitimacy to the BNP’s victorious candidate – Derek Beackon (Copsey, 2004). Millwall was a relatively deprived area in the East End of London where the local branch of the Liberal Democrats had employed a platform of racial populism in previous elections. Therefore, the development of the BNP campaign “Rights for Whites” took ownership of opposition to immigration from this mainstream party (Husbands, 1994). The BNP was also helped by Labour’s portrayal of the local ballot as a close contest between these two parties (Eatwell, 1998).

Consequently, the BNP enjoyed a more favourable opportunities structure in this constituency than at the national level. In the aftermath of this victory, Tyndall expected further electoral breakthroughs at the 1994 local elections but these failed to materialise and the BNP lost its single seat (Husbands, 1994). A direct challenge to Tyndall’s leadership by a neo-Nazi group named Combat-18 (which was later purged from the party ranks) followed the electoral setback (Gable, 1995). In 1995, Nick Griffin, a former chairman of the NF in the 1980s, joined the BNP and became strongly involved in the denial of the Holocaust (Copsey, 2004). Four years later, he successfully removed Tyndall from the BNP’s leadership.

#### *4.3.1.3.1 – Griffin’s “modernisation” process*

During the second half of the 1990s, a cleavage opened between Tyndall and Griffin over the BNP’s electoral strategy rather than its ideology (Sykes, 2004). Against Tyndall’s extremism, Griffin proposed a ‘modernisation’ process inspired by the French FN. Tyndall was now

perceived as an obstacle to further party development (Eatwell, 2004). After the victory in the party leadership poll in September 1999, Griffin sought to develop his modernisation plan based on two principles:

- (i) “responsibility”, through the adoption of non-aggressive rhetoric and proposals, signalled by the drop of compulsory repatriation programmes in favour of voluntary schemes;
- (ii) “professionalism”, which required the adoption of modern campaign methods such as the use of the internet and family festivals in contrast to Tyndall’s street mobilisations (Copsey, 2007).

Ideological reform was postponed by the new leadership because of the imminent 1999 EP elections that demonstrated the BNP’s electoral irrelevance (Table 4.2; John et al., 2006). At the London Assembly elections in 2000, the BNP presented Michael Newland as its mayoral candidate, and secured 2.87 per cent of the vote in the party list section of the PR ballot (Table 4.2). Whereas by the late 1990s, Thurlow (1998) deemed that the British ERP had failed to revive or grow since the mid-1980s, the British far-right’s past of endemic failure was to some extent overturned by the BNP in the following decade, albeit at second-order ballots. In contrast to the British ERPs’ weakness, the next section assesses the development of one of the most successful ERP in Western Europe.

### **4.3.2 – The French extreme-right from the 1970s**

#### ***4.3.2.1 – The FN formation and electoral desert***

The French FN was founded in October 1972 by members of *Ordre Nouveau* (ON) and gathered together diverse far-right groups including supporters of the Vichy regime, *Algérie française* and monarchists (Shields, 2007). Jean Marie Le Pen, an ex-Poujadiste who lacked connections with neo-fascist groups, was appointed as party’s chairman. The FN electoral

results were very bleak throughout the 1970s (Table 4.3) and this led to internal disarray. Nonetheless, Le Pen asserted his authority, and with the support of a prominent figure of French neo-fascists movement – François Duprat,<sup>19</sup> who became Le Pen’s lieutenant – he forced the members of the ON to exit the party (Camus, 1997). The splinter groups formed the *Parti des Forces Nouvelles* (PFN), which competed with the FN until the mid-1980s.

Following Duprat’s death, Le Pen shaped the FN’s discourse on the basis of a neo-liberal and anti-statist economic programme, while at the social level the emphasis was placed on his opposition to immigration and to low French birth rates (Kitschelt, 1995). Under the influence of the French *Nouvelle Droite* (see Chapter 3), the FN adopted a version of “cultural” racism and a racist “right to difference”. The FN’s acute xenophobia was translated into its proposal for the repatriation of all immigrants and the annulment of all naturalisations conceded after 1974 (Camus, 1997). From 1985 onwards, the FN’s stance towards immigration was enshrined in the proposed “national preference” programme, which prioritized French citizens’ access to social provisions (Marcus, 1995). This ideological package furnished the FN with a suitable discourse to tackle future electoral contests, within a context of critical changes in the French party system that expanded its structure of political opportunities.

The Socialist party won the 1981 presidential and legislative elections and formed a government coalition with the PCF but was unable to tackle unemployment and ended up alienating its traditional electorate. Cracks also opened in the centre-right coalition of UDF-RPR, mostly due to personal rivalries between the party leaders Valéry Giscard D’Estaing and Jacques Chirac respectively (Kitschelt, 1995). Once in opposition, these centre-right parties also shifted their positions further to the right under the influence of Thatcherism in the UK and Reaganism in the USA (Ignazi, 2006). The FN’s structure of political

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<sup>19</sup> Duprat was later killed by a car bomb attack in 1978 (Camus, 1997).

opportunities also benefited from the national campaign against immigration led by the PCF in 1981, which criticised the existence of too many immigrants in the PCF areas (Marcus, 1995). This realignment of extreme-left discourse alongside the restrictive immigration policies deployed by President Giscard D’Estaing after 1974 brought immigration to the fore of the public agenda and benefited the FN, whose opposition to immigration was already part of its platform.

**Table 4.3** – Votes for the FN at presidential, parliament, regional and EP elections between 1974 and 1999

| Year | Elections     | Number of votes | Proportion of the total |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1974 | presidential  | 190,921         | 0.75%                   |
| 1979 | EP            | –               | –                       |
| 1981 | presidential  | –               | –                       |
| 1981 | parliamentary | 90,422          | 0.18%                   |
| 1984 | EP            | 2,129,668       | 10.95%                  |
| 1986 | parliamentary | 2,760,880       | 9.80%                   |
| 1986 | regional      | 2,658,500       | 9.5%                    |
| 1988 | presidential  | 4,351,379       | 14.61%                  |
| 1988 | parliamentary | 2,391,973       | 9.73%                   |
| 1989 | EP            | 2,129,668       | 11.73%                  |
| 1992 | regional      | 3,375,079       | 13.60%                  |
| 1993 | parliamentary | 3,153,088       | 12.68%                  |
| 1994 | EP            | 2,050,086       | 10.52%                  |
| 1995 | presidential  | 4,548,270       | 15.27%                  |
| 1997 | parliamentary | 3,774,266       | 15.23%                  |
| 1998 | regional      | 3,273,549       | 15.0%                   |
| 1999 | EP            | 1,005,225       | 5.74%                   |

Source: *Ministère de l’Intérieur*, 2011

#### ***4.3.2.2 – Electoral breakthrough***

The first FN electoral breakthrough occurred in 1983 local elections in Dreux, in the department of Eure-et-Loire (Centre region), where the FN secretary – Jean Pierre Stirbois obtained 16.7 per cent of the vote at the local ballot first round. This result led local RPR and UDF politicians to form an electoral coalition with the FN in the second ballot to defeat the left. The right-wing coalition was victorious with 55 per cent of vote leading to the appointment of Stirbois to the city council and to the FN electoral breakthrough at the local level (Camus, 1997). The electoral agreement enhanced the FN's respectability and raised divisions amongst centre-right parties over future coalitions with the extreme-right. The FN success in Dreux reflected Stirbois' intense local campaigning based on anti-immigration appeals in an inner-city area affected by increasing unemployment, which was also his home constituency (Marcus, 1995). The FN breakthrough into national politics occurred at the 1984 EP elections for which PR was used (Table 4.3; Harris, 1994).

#### ***4.3.2.3 – Electoral consolidation***

Following its electoral breakthrough at national level, the FN benefited from President François Mitterrand's introduction of PR at the 1986 legislative elections (Perrineau, 1998). To enhance the FN's respectability in this highly favourable context, Le Pen recruited members from different backgrounds including Bruno Mégret, a prominent member of the RPR and other former members of centre-right parties (Adler, 2001). Despite the comfortable victory of the UDF-RPR coalition under Chirac's leadership, the FN obtained 9.8 per cent of the vote and formed a parliamentary group of 35 members (Table 4.3; Birenbaum, 1992). Co-habitation between President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Jacques Chirac between 1986 and 1988 led to a certain level of political convergence between centre-left and centre-right French parties. To dissolve the FN's parliamentary representation, Chirac reintroduced the two-ballot electoral system for the 1988 legislative elections (Harris, 1994).

Le Pen responded with the radicalisation of his critique of French party system, henceforth labelled as the “gang of four” (Ignazi, 2006). The electoral results at the 1988 presidential elections indicated the consolidation of the FN support at national level, as Le Pen won 14.6 per cent of the vote (Table 4.3). The French centre-right parties could no longer ignore the FN’s electoral rise and an electoral agreement was struck between UDF-RPR and FN in eight constituencies at the 1988 legislative elections (Mayer and Perrineau, 1996). Despite the respectability conferred by this agreement, FN parliamentary representation fell to a single member.<sup>20</sup> The FN setbacks mounted after the death of Stirbois in 1988 (Birenbaum, 1992). Following the consolidation of the FN electoral support at the 1989 EP (Table 4.3), Le Pen reasserted his authority within the party by radicalising his discourse with anti-Semitic remarks that led to further internal splits (Adler, 2001).

#### ***4.3.2.4 – The conquest of power***

A new electoral strategy to “conquer power” was launched at the 1990 party congress when Le Pen presented the FN as the legitimate alternative to the corrupted party system and to the cohabitation between Mitterrand and Chirac (Ignazi, 2006). This coexistence provoked further erosion of levels of party loyalty across the electorate and the decline of overall confidence in the party system to the FN’s benefit. In 1991, the FN released its “50 propositions” to govern France that maintained the “national preference” programme whilst the proposal for the annulment of all naturalisations granted after 1974 was abandoned to water down the FN’s pariah status (Camus, 1997). Opposition to immigration was now supported by supposed “scientific” research published in 1990 by an economist named Pierre Milloz (Taguieff and Tribalat, 1998). This new strategy of relative moderation was largely

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<sup>20</sup> The FN deputy was Yann Piat, elected in the Var constituency, who was expelled from the party a year later. The FN parliamentary representation was later re-acquired following the election of Stirbois’s widow - Marie-France Stirbois, at a 1989 legislative by-election in Dreux (Marcus, 1995).



indebted to Mégret and his group of followers, mostly former members of the *Nouvelle Droite*, who sought to dilute the FN extremist image (Ivaldi, 2005).

On the eve of the 1993 legislative elections, the FN released “300 measures for the renaissance of France” that indicated some ideological reform. To consolidate its support among working class voters, especially among disaffected socialists, the FN developed what was named as “*gaucho-lepénism*” (left-lepénism; Perrineau, 2000). In contrast to the old neo-liberal approach, this new programme balanced nationalist, xenophobic and authoritarian references with measures to tackle unemployment, workers’ problems and the crisis of the welfare state (Taguieff and Tribalat, 1998). The FN was now presented as the defender of France against international finance, proposed a nationalist economic programme, and reaffirmed its opposition to supposedly corrupt and unreliable political parties (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001). This ideological shift justifies the FN reclassification from a neo-liberal xenophobic ERP to an authoritarian xenophobic ERP according to the selected typology of this party family.

Electoral results in the early 1990s proved the relative success of the FN’s new strategy in the context of deep isolation reflecting French mainstream parties’ option for non-engagement with the Le Pen’s party (Table 4.3; Marcus, 1995). Despite its strong performance at the 1993 legislative elections, the FN lost its parliamentary representation because of its incapability either to hold Stirbois’ seat in Dreux or to win a second ballot elsewhere (Camus, 1997). At the launch of his 1995 presidential campaign, Le Pen put forward a new slogan: “neither left nor right” and observed another peak in electoral support with more than 15 per cent of the vote in the first round (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001; Table 4.3).

#### ***4.3.2.5 – Le Pen - Mégret split***

The FN contributed to the defeat of the centre-right parties by a left wing coalition at the 1997 general election by maintaining 133 candidates on the second ballot and splitting the right-wing electorate, though it only elected one deputy (Schain, 2002).<sup>21</sup> This defeat opened a new debate within the centre-right over the FN's inclusion in future electoral agreements. Eduard Balladur who competed with Chirac for the RPR's leadership proposed a national commission on the FN "national preference" programme, whilst Chirac preferred to vilify the FN without rejecting its voters (Hainsworth, 2000). These divisions within centre-right elites expanded the FN structure of political opportunities and Le Pen's party elected more regional councillors at the 1998 regional elections than the UDF and only a few less than the RPR (Table 4.3).<sup>22</sup> Consequently, extreme-right cooperation was indispensable for the election of centre-right regional Presidents and five of those governors signed agreements with Le Pen's party (Shields, 2007).

Serious internal splits erupted within both the mainstream and the extreme-right after the signing of these agreements. The UDF's and RPR's national leaderships broke the alliances with the FN but three governors maintained their agreements and were later dismissed from their parties (Kestel and Godmer, 2004). Meanwhile, a rift between Le Pen and Mégret erupted over the party's electoral strategy (Ivaldi, 2005). Whereas Mégret favoured agreements with centre-right candidates through the dilution of the FN's programme in favour of an office-seeking strategy, Le Pen refused any dissolution of FN core ideology and despised accommodation with the French party system (Hainsworth and Mitchell, 2000). In the face of a threat to his authority, Le Pen purged Mégret's faction from the party ranks.

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<sup>21</sup> The FN deputy was Jean Marie Le Chevalier, elected in the Var constituency, who resigned in February 1998 because of financial irregularities

<sup>22</sup> The FN elected 275 regional councillors and the UDF only 264, whilst the RPR secured 285 (Schain, 2002, p.239).

Mégret went on to create a new ERP in 1999 – the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR) (Adler, 2001). While the FN’s main electoral strength between 1988 and 1998 had been its high levels of party loyalty, this asset was deeply disturbed by the internal split and support dropped at the 1999 EP elections (Table 4.3). This event raised doubts about the FN’s short-term future, later dismissed following Le Pen’s success at the 2002 presidential election.

### **4.3.3 – The extreme-right in Italy from the 1970s**

#### ***4.3.3.1 – From MSI to AN***

In the Italian post-war context, only the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) recognised itself as right wing because this label carried a deep pariah status associated with the Fascist regime of Benito Mussolini (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). The MSI was founded in 1946 by survivors of Mussolini’s regime who sought to preserve their political tradition (Newell, 2000). The party’s ideology encompassed strong hostility to liberal democracy and democratic institutions, while its economic corporatism favoured the establishment of a strong state (Kitschelt, 1995). Racism lacked prominence in the party ideology and the MSI’s overt attachment to the Fascist legacy made it a perfect example of a neo-fascist ERP type (Carter, 2005). From the 1950s to the 1960s, the MSI sought to be accepted as a legitimate political party, but this “insertionist” strategy failed at the electoral level due to the weight of anti-Fascism in post-war Italian politics (Table 4.4; Newell, 2000).

During the 1970s, the MSI leader Giorgio Almirante attempted to undermine the DC hegemony in the party system and committed the MSI to street activism to oppose left mobilisations (Chiarini, 1995). This strategy led to the MSI’s peak in electoral support at the 1972 general election (Table 4.4). The MSI vote was mainly in southern regions (Ignazi, 1992). However, the increasing political violence of the 1970s and the MSI’s association with it led to its isolation within the party system (Ignazi, 1992). Electoral decline evident at 1976

**Table 4.4** – Votes for the MSI/ AN in Italian general and EP elections from 1948 to 1999

| Year | Elections | Proportion of the total |
|------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1948 | general   | 2.0%                    |
| 1953 | general   | 5.8%                    |
| 1958 | general   | 4.8%                    |
| 1963 | general   | 5.1%                    |
| 1968 | general   | 4.5%                    |
| 1972 | general   | 8.7%                    |
| 1976 | general   | 6.1%                    |
| 1979 | general   | 5.3%                    |
| 1979 | EP        | 5.4%                    |
| 1983 | general   | 6.8%                    |
| 1984 | EP        | 6.5%                    |
| 1987 | general   | 5.9%                    |
| 1989 | EP        | 5.5%                    |
| 1992 | general   | 5.4%                    |
| 1994 | EP        | 13.5%                   |
| 1994 | general   | 12.5%                   |
| 1996 | general   | 15.7%                   |
| 1999 | EP        | 10.3%                   |

Source: *Ministero Dell'Interno*, 2010.

general elections (Table 4.4) led to Almirante's moderation of his political strategy through detachment from political violence and the acceptance of the MSI's pariah status without revising its core ideology (Morini, 2007). Stronger criticism of Italian "*partitocrazia*" was another reflection of Almirante's new strategy and the MSI obtained its second best electoral result ever at the 1983 general election (Kitschelt, 1995; Table 4.4).

Nevertheless, electoral decline persisted throughout the 1980s and Gianfranco Fini succeeded Almirante in 1987. Fini initially pursued a strategy of continuity with the MSI's neo-fascist legacy, but his leadership was briefly interrupted in favour of Pino Rauti (1990-1991) after

poor results at the 1989 European elections (Veugelers and Chiarini, 2002). Rauti proposed a “third way” and professed an anti-racist discourse but also proved unable to reverse the MSI’s electoral decline (Chiarini, 1995). In 1991, Fini was reinstated as party leader and continued to express his allegiance to the party’s Fascist heritage. At this point in time, the MSI’s structure of political opportunities was enhanced by three factors:

- (i) the end of the Cold War downgraded the importance of ideology in political debate and dissolved the pariah status associated with the label right-wing (Ignazi, 2007);
- (ii) the ‘*Tangentopoli*’ scandal in 1992 exposed high levels of corruption within both the DC and the Italian Socialist Party. The accusations favoured minor parties such as the MSI, which had been isolated by mainstream parties and were not involved in the system of bribes and favours (Spruce, 2007) and ;
- (iii) the electoral law reform in 1993 pushed Italy towards a majoritarian system and incentivised coalition building, which fostered the MSI’s coalition power due to its electoral entrenchment in southern regions (Morini, 2007).

Fini reacted to these new opportunities by developing a more moderate and democratic image. This new strategy paid off at the 1993 local elections, where the MSI won the local ballot in Rome and Naples with the support of Berlusconi (Chiarini, 1995). The MSI electoral breakthrough was further consolidated by the emergence of Berlusconi’s right-wing coalition and its victory at 1994 general elections (Table 4.4). At the MSI’s January 1995 party congress, Fini converted the MSI into the AN whilst Rauti’s faction abandoned the party to form another ERP (MSI– *Fiamma Tricolore*). Fini employed this event to re-state the AN’s moderate image and to abandon extreme-right positions (Ignazi, 2007). At the ideological level, the AN leader now praised the values of free market and individual entrepreneurship and dropped the MSI’s past attachment to corporatism and a “third way” (Chiarini, 1995).

Xenophobia was never central to the MSI's ideology, but opposition to immigration had been opportunistically employed in 1986 and 1990 (Geddes, 2008). Without dropping its strong authoritarianism, the AN simply referred to Italian immigration policy as being outdated and ineffective. The 1995 party programme condemned both racism and anti-Semitism (Veugelers and Chiarini, 2002). In a visit to Israel in 2003, Fini condemned Fascism as "absolute evil" leading to the exit of the dictator's granddaughter Alessandra Mussolini from the party (Morini, 2007). Despite the absence of a clear ideological reform, the AN effectively ended its neo-Fascist legacy and dropped its anti-system properties for a moderate centre-right programme, thereby moving from the ERP family into the mainstream right (Mudde, 2007; Ignazi, 2007; 2009). Nonetheless, the LN would soon fill the vacant space at the extreme-right edge, as seen below.

#### ***4.3.3.2 – The rise of the LN***

The LN was founded in 1991 under the leadership of Umberto Bossi, a charismatic leader who proved to have astute political instincts (Jori, 2009). This new party consisted of an aggregation of older northern regionalist leagues, such as the *Lega Lombarda* and *Lega Veneta* (Farrell and Levy, 1996). Its ideology evolved mostly along Italian north-south cleavage enshrined in the party slogan of "*Roma ladrona*" (thieving Rome, Cedroni, 2007). Italy's division into three self-governing regional structures was initially proposed by the LN to liberate northern regions from Rome's "*partitocrazia*" and centralised government, which undermined northerners' prosperity (Diamanti, 1997). In economic terms, the LN proposed a neo-liberal programme inspired by Thatcherism with large-scale privatisation, the end of excessive state bureaucracy and fiscal reform to assist northern small businesses and workers (Gilbert, 1993). Racism against southern Italian co-citizens was recurrent in the LN's discourse but the party was not publicly associated to the label of right wing unlike the MSI (Kitschelt, 1995).

The LN's electoral breakthrough into mainstream politics was observed after its electoral success at the 1992 general elections (Table 4.5) and its victory at Milan's local elections in 1993. This electoral success developed at the expense of the DC vote in northern regions and reflected Bossi's successful channelling of regional economic and political resentments against the established political system (Diamanti, 1996). The electoral breakthrough also benefited from the expansion of its structure of political opportunities, due to the three aforementioned factors: i) the end of Cold War; ii) *tangentopoli* and; iii) electoral reform. Nevertheless, the LN was unable to increase its vote at the 1994 general election (Table 4.5) because of the rise of another neo-liberal party also opposed to the Italian "partitocrazia" – *Forza Italia* (FI) (Giordano, 2003). Following a pre-electoral agreement designed to minimise losses, the LN participated in Berlusconi's first coalition government. Nonetheless, Bossi walked out of Berlusconi's coalition a few months later to reassert his party's antagonism towards both the political system and to assert his own political identity (Diamanti, 2007).

**Table 4.5** – Votes for the LN in Italian general and EP elections between 1992 and 1999

| Year | Elections | Number of votes | Proportion of total | Seats |
|------|-----------|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1992 | general   | 3,395,384       | 8.65%               | 55    |
| 1994 | EP        | 2,159,421       | 6.6%                | 6     |
| 1994 | general   | 3,235,248       | 8.4%                | 11    |
| 1996 | general   | 3,776,354       | 10.1%               | 20    |
| 1999 | EP        | 1,389,501       | 4.5%                | 4     |

Source: *Ministero Dell'Interno*, 2010

#### 4.3.3.2.1 – "Padania's" independence

In 1995, the LN offered its support to the technocratic government of Lamberto Dini (appointed by President Oscar Scalfaro) and developed a series of secessionist events such as the formation of a "Parliament of the North" in Mantova (Diamanti, 1996). Continuous

radicalisation was observed in the run-up to the 1996 general election, when the LN dropped federalism for the independence of northern regions and the formation of a new nation to be named – Padania (Cedroni, 2007). This shift has been interpreted in multiple ways, yet two lines of reasoning prevail: Bossi was seeking to distinguish the LN from centre-right allies, and to expand the LN’s electoral support beyond its traditional constituencies (Ignazi, 2007). By doing this, Bossi successfully turned the 1996 general election into a referendum on northern autonomy and obtained the LN’s best electoral results ever (Table 4.5), becoming the fourth biggest party and the leading party in the northern regions (Jori, 2009).

Claims for Padanian independence were followed by the adoption of a harder xenophobic stance towards non-nationals. The creation of a Padania myth by Bossi’s party was followed by a rejection of ‘otherness’ within the northern regions (Spruce, 2007). In 1998, a party pamphlet stated LN opposition to multiculturalism under the slogan of “saving the specificity of our people” that indicated a growing cultural xenophobia (Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001, p. 128–9). Prioritisation of access to social services by “Padanian” citizens also suggested growing welfare chauvinism within the party (Huysseune, 2003). Nonetheless, LN radicalisation failed to reverse the electoral decline evident since 1996 (Table 4.5), underpinned by the loss of Milan’s council in 1997 (Cedroni, 2007).

#### *4.3.3.2.2 – From independence to devolution*

The independence project left the LN increasingly isolated and dissipated Bossi’s influence within the Italian party system (Biorcio, 2002). At the March 1998 party congress, Bossi announced his new desire to adopt a consensual approach and proposed devolution for the first time in place of secession (Jori, 2009). Inspired by Tony Blair’s devolution project in the UK, Bossi sought to emulate a Scottish model and devolve part of the central powers concentrated in Rome to Northern and Southern Parliaments (Biorcio, 2002). Meanwhile, the party rank and file rallied against the centre-left Turco-Napolitano immigration law whilst



Joerg Haider<sup>23</sup> participated in Bossi's rally. Just before the 1999 EP election, Bossi also established relations with Slobodan Milosevic to constitute an anti-USA and anti-globalisation front (Signore and Trocino, 2008). As the separatist claim was downgraded, ideological traits characteristic of ERPs were simultaneously reinforced (Fella and Ruzza, 2009).

Disastrous results at the 1999 EP election, where the LN share of vote dropped from 6.6 per cent in 1996 to 4.5 per cent in 1999, buried the Padanian independence project and the isolationist strategy (Table 4.5; Parenzo and Romano, 2008). In consequence, Bossi presented his resignation and recognised that political identity had a greater effect on electoral mobilisation than ethnic identity (Jori, 2009, p. 113). After being reinstated, Bossi adopted an overt office-seeking strategy while Berlusconi expressed his availability to cooperate in an agreement. This provided a vital lifeline to Bossi and expanded the LN's structure of political opportunities (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005). A deal was celebrated two months later, providing Bossi with stand-down agreements in northern constituencies and support for the LN's depleted finances (Jori, 2009). Past associations of Berlusconi with the Sicilian mafia in Bossi's speeches were buried in consequence of the electoral agreement. In the meantime, internal conflicts hit the LN in the late 1990s, after the departure of Bossi's critic Domenico Comino (President of Piedmont region, who went on to form a new party in 1999; Giordano, 2003).

#### 4.3.3.2.3 – Bossi ideological U-turn

Under Berlusconi's mediation, another deal was brokered in January 2000 between Bossi and the other *Casa delle Libertà* (CDL) coalition party leaders – Fini for the AN, and Casini for the *Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (CDU) (Passalacqua, 2009). Bossi's office-seeking strategy

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<sup>23</sup> The leader of the Austrian ERP Freedom Party.

presupposed the abandonment of the past adversarial posture to appease his coalition partners (Chari et al., 2004). Consequently, independence claims were dropped following Fini's demand and the LN parliamentary group erased references to independence, changing their name to *Lega Nord Padania* (Passalacqua, 2009). Past support for EU integration turned into visceral opposition aligned with Berlusconi's scepticism on Europe, as Bossi described Europe as a "technocracy of paedophiles" whilst Berlusconi praised Bossi's "political instincts, courage and coherence" (Signore and Trocino, 2008, p.87). To appease Christian Democrats and the Vatican, the new LN included the defence of Italian families against marriage and adoption rights for homosexuals (Passalacqua, 2009).

Whereas xenophobia towards southern Italians disappeared from the LN discourse after the new electoral agreement, the LN's exclusionary politics focused on immigration and Islam (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). The "choice of immigration was ideological" according to Bossi, as the failure to control immigration by the left-wing parties covertly sought to "simplify the society" according to the dichotomy of "big business against the people" (Bossi, 2000, p. 6). In this way, this social phenomenon was framed by Bossi as a plot by left-wing elites (Huysseune, 2006). Consequently, the LN accepted immigration for labour purposes only as this social phenomenon was associated to the expansion of deprived and marginalised communities in the North (Bossi, 2000, p. 7). Identity concerns were raised in Bossi's rhetoric (2000) but other members of the LN leadership were more vocal in campaigning against Islam. In October 2000, Roberto Calderoli organised a rally against the construction of a mosque in Lodi (north of Milan) involving the spreading of pig excrement on the proposed site (Parenzo and Romano, 2008).

Xenophobia, devolution, family and opposition to European integration became Bossi's platforms to distinguish the LN from centre-right competitors (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). Electoral results for the new coalition were positive at the 2000 regional elections, as the CdL

triumphed with the LN support, whose electoral share rose to 4.9 per cent. The LN was also rewarded with the leadership of the Veneto region (Signore and Trocino, 2008). A new agreement between Bossi and Berlusconi for the 2001 general election secured FI's commitment to devolution and tackling irregular immigration in return for reassurances of LN support of the future CdL government (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005).

#### *4.3.3.2.4 – Classification of the LN as an ERP*

There has been significant debate over the classification of the LN, conceiving it either as an ethno-regional party (Messina, 2007) or as an opportunistic entrepreneur (Perlmutter, 1996; Diamanti, 1997). Nevertheless, the first categorisation implies acceptance of the “Padanian” myth constructed by the LN that is widely disputed (Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001). The second classification envisages the LN as a political agent that opportunistically exploits the political sentiments of northern regions and its subculture (Diamanti, 1996). Despite undeniable links to particular Italian subcultures, this classification implies that the LN would drop its federalist project for electoral purposes (Cento Bull and Gilbert, 2001). However, this project has been at the centre of LN's ideology ever since its formation.

Increasing opposition to immigration and growing cultural racism had been observed through the LN's construction of the “Padanian” independence project since the mid-1990s (Betz, 2002; Ignazi, 2007). These ideological properties of ERPs became cornerstones of the LN ideology after Bossi's dropping of Padania's independence project in favour of an office-seeking strategy. In terms of economic policy, the LN continued to uphold a Thatcherite neo-liberal programme up to 2001 but later shifted towards anti-globalisation and an anti-EU stance. The latter combination of ideological traits prompts the classification of LN as a xenophobic neo-liberal ERP from the late-1990s onwards (Carter, 2005). After the exhaustion of the secessionist project, the LN ended up filling the vacant space on the extreme-right edge vacated by the MSI/AN (Andall, 2007).

#### **4.4 – Immigration in the UK, France and Italy**

This section explores the British, French and Italian national immigration paradigms and experiences to highlight the cases' idiosyncrasies before assessing ERP impact on the distinct dimensions of immigration politics and policy. The point is not to reduce complex contemporary processes to legacies of the past (Solomos, 2003), but to contextualise the evolution of immigration to understand policy developments after 2001. Thus, a brief survey of structural characteristics of immigration and the development of immigration policy in each case is provided to understand continuities and discontinuities. The analysis is divided into two subsections: i) examination of their distinct national paradigms, and ii) illustration of the different immigration structure and policies.

##### **4.4.1 – UK: “zero-immigration” country?**

###### ***4.4.1.1 – “Race relations” paradigm***

In contrast to other European countries, immigration into the UK has been framed according to a “race relations” paradigm linking control and integration. Social Darwinism and eugenics were core premises of the ideology of “racial superiority” that supported the British Empire during the Victorian period (Saggar, 1992). In the late nineteenth century, British imperialists were already concerned with the undesirability of immigration flows by presumed inferior races and the subsequent degeneration of the British working class (Solomos, 2003). Apprehension with the inflow of eastern European Jews persecuted in Tsarist Russia presaged the promulgation of the 1905 Alien Act. This legislation placed an end to the free-movement of labour that characterised the UK throughout the nineteenth-century (Holmes, 1988).

Migration inflows into Britain in the post-Second World War period from new and independent Commonwealth countries occurred in the context of a post-imperial downsizing.

Racial thinking re-emerged towards “coloured” immigrants in the context of: i) a deeper national crisis in the post-war period; ii) economic downturn and; iii) diversification of immigration flows into UK (Geddes, 2008). Nonetheless, racial categorisation of immigrants in the post-war period was performed using a covert discourse – Commonwealth immigrants were regarded as problematic (Solomos, 2003). By the 1960s, an inter-party consensus between Labour and Conservatives was established over the necessity for racialised immigration controls to maintain good “race relations”. Consequently, immigration controls became linked to integration policy (Saggar, 1992). Despite the total discrediting of any scientific application of the term “race”, debate over immigration management in the UK still encompasses considerations of consequences for “race relations”. This national approach to immigration was subsequently institutionalised by the Race Relations Acts of 1965, 1968, 1976 and 2001 that forbade both direct and indirect discrimination against immigrants, as well as the incitement of racial hatred (Favell, 2001).

#### ***4.4.1.2 – Immigration into UK in the post-war period***

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the British government encouraged European migrants to fill domestic labour market shortages. Nonetheless, most immigration flows in the post-war period stemmed from the 1948 British Nationality Act, which distinguished between British subjects and Commonwealth citizens but recognised free movement into Britain to all Commonwealth citizens and from Eire (Holmes, 1988). This conception of British citizenship reflected Britain’s imperial legacy and supported the development of substantial immigration from Eire and other former colonial countries from south Asia and the Caribbean (Hansen, 2000). However, the latter inflows were “undesired” by political elites and political debate subsequently evolved over possible forms to block entry by “coloured” migrants (Miles, 1990). The settlement of “undesirable”-“coloured” immigrants

became increasingly associated with social problems and politicised especially after the urban riots in Notting Hill, London, and Nottingham in 1958 (Saggar, 1992).

Four years later, the Conservative government established a New Commonwealth Immigrants Act because the UK was becoming an overcrowded island (Geddes, 2003). The covert aim of this legislation was to curb further inflows of “coloured” immigrants. This was subsequently attacked by the Labour opposition as a betrayal of the Commonwealth. The introduction of the 1962 bill (Table 4.6) has been interpreted in the immigration literature either as a reflection of the racism entrenched at the elite level (Paul, 1997) or because of a breakdown in the Commonwealth imperial consensus and a responsible reaction to public hostility towards “coloured” immigration (Freeman, 1994; Hansen, 2000). Nevertheless, the evidence of strong levels of public hostility towards immigrants during the 1950s is disputed by research conducted by Miles (1990). Overall, it has been accepted that restrictions on immigration suggested that political priorities prevailed over economic considerations (Messina, 2007),

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act effectively curbed primary immigration but the restrictions led to the transformation of previous temporary migration into permanent settlement (Messina, 2007). At the 1964 general elections, former Labour Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker lost the election in Smethwick, Birmingham, to a Conservative candidate, who used a racist campaign slogan: “if you want a nigger for a neighbour vote Liberal or Labour” (Hansen, 2000, p.122). Despite Labour’s victory in the general election, concerns arose over the party’s vulnerability if it was seen as “soft” on migration controls (Geddes, 2003). Instead of challenging racist discourse, Labour formed a bi-partisan consensus with the Conservatives based on the necessity to halt further immigration to allegedly promote immigrant integration. This argument’s fallacy was the overwhelming focus on “coloured” immigrants, which led to discrimination at points of entry

**Table 4.6** – British legislation on immigration policy between 1945 and 1999.

| Legislation                            | Main modifications   |
|--|--|
| 1948<br>British<br>Nationality Act     | Distinguished between British subjects who were citizens of the UK and its colonies from Commonwealth citizens. Recognised the right to free movement into British territory to all subjects of the Commonwealth countries.  |
| 1962<br>Commonwealth<br>Immigrants Act | Distinguished between citizens of the UK and its colonies from citizens of Commonwealth countries, who were therefore subjected to immigration controls. Labour vouchers were introduced to control primary flows from the Commonwealth countries.   |
| 1968<br>Commonwealth<br>Immigrants Act | Introduced the concept of patriality, which specified that the free right to enter UK was only recognised to those citizens who had at least one parent or grandparent born or naturalised as British citizen.   |
| 1971<br>British<br>Nationality Act     | Replaced all previous legislation. Maintained the concept of patriality. Converted labour vouchers into temporary work permissions. Exempted citizens of EC member-states from immigration controls.   |
| 1981<br>British<br>Nationality Act     | Privileged the principle of <i>ius solis</i> and distinguished between: full British citizenship, British dependent territories, British Overseas Citizenship. The right of free movement into UK was refused to this latter category.   |
| 1988<br>Immigration Act                | Absolute right to family reunification by migrants who had settled in the country before 1973 was repealed, access to this right was made dependent on accommodation and financial support. Overstaying was made a criminal offense.   |
| 1993<br>Asylum and<br>Immigration Act  | Incorporated obligations under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees into UK law and introduced a right of appeal for rejected asylum seekers with strict time limits. All asylum seekers and dependents were to be fingerprinted. The Home Office was empowered to detain asylum seekers while their claim was being considered. |
| 1996<br>Asylum and<br>Immigration Act  | Removed welfare benefits to in-country asylum applicants. Introduced a “white-list” of safe countries. Asylum seekers who present their case in other safe countries would be returned to those nations.   |
| 1999<br>Asylum and<br>Immigration Act  | Introduced a work permit scheme to manage labour flows. Created the IND to support and disperse destitute asylum seekers. Removed the remaining welfare benefits from all asylum applicants.   |

(Layton-Henry, 2004). Labour's appeasement strategy was translated into the acceptance of a "racialised" framework for immigration controls elaborated between 1962 and 1971 (Saggar, 1992; Favell, 2001).

Labour bowed to the Conservative campaign instead of trying to lead the political debate on immigration. This strategy was interpreted as an attempt to de-politicise immigration through the establishment of an inter-party consensus, but its merits were doubtful (Katznelson, 1973). Against past criticism, the Labour government led by Harold Wilson introduced the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968, when he was pressed both by the movement to the UK of British Asians from East Africa and by Powell's public speeches (Boswell, 2003). The 1968 legislation was designed to subject "coloured" immigrants who still had British passports to immigration controls (Table 4.6). Restrictions to primary and secondary immigration were extended by the 1971 Immigration Act under a new Conservative government, whilst nationals from European Community (EC) member states were exempted from migration controls (Table 4.6). Despite the successful restriction of inflows, the politicisation of immigration and race continued to develop through the 1970s (Crowley, 1993).

Following Thatcher's election in 1979, tighter controls were imposed on primary and secondary flows from the Commonwealth. The conception of British citizenship was tightened by the British Nationality Act of 1981 that deprived British citizens, mostly of Asian origin, of their right to live in Britain (Table 4.6). Restrictions on immigration flows were extended through a new immigration bill introduced in 1988 by the Conservative government (Table 4.6). Thatcher's restrictive immigration policy was justified as a response to the rise of the NF in the 1970s, but the restrictive tendency towards Commonwealth immigration had been evident in the preceding decade. Immigration dropped from the



political agenda but this did lead to the overt association between the development of certain types of immigration with supposed damages on “race relations” (Crowley, 1993)

Immigration re-emerged on the political agenda in the 1990s due to a substantial rise in asylum seeking from 1988 onwards, although this was still below the average across Western European countries (Messina, 2007). The Conservative government led by John Major restricted access both to refugee status and to social provisions in legislation in 1993 and 1996 (Table 4.6). In the meantime, the Labour party shadow Home Secretary – Jack Straw – revealed that: “We should not allow so much as a cigarette card to come between the Labour Party and the Tory government on immigration” (cited from Saggar, 2001, p. 761). Therefore, Labour’s strategy was to refrain from challenging the Conservative positions on immigration. This political option was maintained in the following decade (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Following the Labour landslide at the 1997 elections, the government led by Tony Blair initially adopted a liberal approach to immigration policy by ending the primary purpose rule, which inhibited family reunion (Sales, 2007). Nevertheless, a White paper entitled “*Fairer, Firmer Faster*” issued in 1998 emphasised government efforts to control, enforce, and especially to deter “bogus” asylum seekers (Layton-Williams, 2004). Consequently, the 1999 immigration law reformed the asylum system and established a voucher system and a dispersal programme for asylum seekers (Table 4.6). The voucher system was justified by the supposed widespread abuses of the British welfare system by asylum seekers, despite the lack of evidence to support this presupposition (Bloch, 2000). The dispersal scheme accommodated asylum seekers in areas with low housing costs, which ended up nationalising a local issue previously delimited to London, fuelling broader national opposition to asylum (Messina, 2007).

A new narrative of ‘managed migration’ became apparent in a speech by Home Office minister Barbara Roche made in 2000 (Balch, 2009). Subsequently, an ‘Innovators Scheme’ was introduced to permit entry of highly skilled immigrants (HSI) into the UK (Flynn, 2004). This policy shift was driven by the growth of demand for foreign labour within the British labour market, particularly due to bottlenecks in key areas such as health services, teaching and information technology (Layton-Williams, 2004).<sup>24</sup> The Labour government’s emphasis on modernisation of public services through its second term, especially in regard to the National Health Service (NHS), only exacerbated the demand for skilled labour (Rawnsley, 2010). Lastly, the UK alongside Ireland opted out of the Title IV of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999 covering free movement, immigration and asylum within the EU (Geddes, 2008). The British government preferred to maintain their system of external controls with dominance by the executive branch of government than to cede powers to the EU (Geddes, 2003). The next section examines the French national paradigm on immigration.

#### **4.4.2 – France: The oldest country of immigration**

##### ***4.4.2.1 – The republican paradigm***

Immigration to France developed steadily from the nineteenth century onwards due to both economic and demographic pressures (Ogden, 1993). Since the French Revolution of 1789 preceded large-scale migration into France, immigration was not part of the nation’s founding myth that is based on the supposed ethnic homogeneity of French citizens (Hargreaves, 1995). The revolution proclaimed universal rights of groups in the name of freedom and Universalism. The French immigration paradigm arises from Jacobin principles of a “one and indivisible republic” and of equality (Cole, 1998). This approach inhibits the use of notions

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<sup>24</sup> Computer services and health and medical services accounted for a majority of permits issued by the Innovators scheme – 20 per cent and 23 per cent respectively (Home Office, 2002, p. 40).

like ethnicity or “race” in political debate and underlies France’s opposition to multiculturalism (Favell, 2001).

A relevant legacy of French colonialism was the prominence of assimilationism, derived from the concept of “*mission civilisatrice*” (civilising mission), which presupposed French cultural superiority over the “less civilized” peoples and a duty to spread civilisation (Haddad and Balz, 2006). Simultaneously, foreigners were welcomed as settlers and even as citizens, as long as they accepted French Republicanism and relegated their native cultures (Wadia, 1999). Therefore, the French immigration paradigm combines both Universalist and assimilation principles, which distinguishes France from its European counterparts (Geddes, 2003). In keeping with France’s republican heritage, immigration laws introduced in 1945 recognised immigrants’ rights to settle and to family reunion independent of their labour status (Table 4.7; Wadia, 1999).

#### ***4.4.2.2 – Immigration into France in the post-war period***

Immigration into France in the aftermath of the Second World War was supported by two pieces of legislation published in 1945: the Nationality Code of 19 October and the ordinance on immigration of 2 November (Table 4.7; Gastaut, 1999). In response to demographic and economic pressures, the *Office National de l’Immigration* (ONI) was established in 1945 (De Wenden, 2008). Concerns over the immigrants’ origins led the ONI to establish criteria for “assimilable” and desirable immigrants, which was later vetoed by the Council of State (Wadia, 1999). Throughout the 1960s, the French state granted a *laissez-faire* policy to the private sector to hire foreign workers according to labour market demand. These workers would obtain a regular status once they were already settled in the country (Ogden, 1993). The development of large-scale immigration was indispensable to the sustainment of the prosperous economic period named the “*Trente Glorieuses*” (1945–1974).

**Table 4.7** – French legislation on immigration policy introduced between 1945 and 1998

| Legislation                                | Main modifications  |
|--|---|
| 1945 Code of Nationality                   | Reinforced the principle of “ <i>ius solis</i> ”; granted French nationality to Algerians; recognised free movement of all French citizens  |
| 1945 Ordinance on Permanence of Immigrants | Right to settle in France was not dependent on employment status. Recognised right to family reunion. Ethnic quotas were rejected.  |
| 1972 Circulars ‘Marcellin’– ‘Fontanet’     | Subordinated recruitment of foreign workers to labour market incorporation. Residence permits became dependent of employment status; halt to further regularisation schemes. Nationals of EC member-states were exempted from immigration controls.   |
| 1980 ‘Bonnet’ Law                          | Restricted entry and residence status; irregular entry or stay by immigrants is subjected to expulsion. Immigrants whose permission was not renewed were subjected to deportation.  |
| Law n° 1981-973                            | Established an exceptional regularisation process; maintained halt to labour immigration. Reasserted the legal status of immigrants settled in the country. Recognized right of residence to certain categories of immigrants independent of employment status. Halted programme of forced removals.  |
| Law n° 1984-622                            | Granted automatically renewable residence authorisations to certain categories of immigrants. Dissociated right of residence from employment status.  |
| 1986 ‘Pasqua’ Law                          | Extended restrictions to entry and settlement in France. Rehabilitates the forced removals programme of the ‘Bonnet’ Law. Restricted access to the residence authorisation introduced in 1984.  |
| 1988 “Joxe” Law                            | Restored judicial control over forced removals. Regularised irregular immigrants. Re-established conditions of access to residence permits of 1984. Extended anti-discrimination provisions.  |
| 1993 “Pasqua” Second Law                   | Harmonised legislation according to the Schengen Agreement and Dublin Convention. Extended restrictions to entry and settlement of immigrants. Imposed a one-year ban on family reunion. Removes right to appeal on asylum; introduced the “ <i>double peine</i> ”. Extended powers granted to authorities to detain and deport foreigners. |
| 1996 “Debrét” Law                          | Renewal of residence permit became dependent on proof that the candidate was not a threat to public order. Imposes a two-year ban on access of foreign spouses to residence authorisations.   |

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| 1998 “Chevènement” Law | Established an exceptional regularisation process. Maintained restrictions to labour migration, but exempted HSI from migration controls. Liberalised access to family reunion. Renewal of long-term residence authorisations becomes automatic. Introduces new categories for asylum seekers. |
|------------------------|--|

After the 1970s oil shocks, immigration by nationals of countries outside the EC became dependent on labour market incorporation and regularisation *a posteriori* was suppressed by the ordinances Fontanet-Marcellin introduced in 1972 (Table 4.7).<sup>25</sup> Whereas the majority of immigrants were initially from Western European states during the 1950s, the proportion of European immigrants declined in favour of nationals from North African countries (Hargreaves, 1995). Following President Giscard D’Estaing’s election in 1974, the halt to all labour immigration and to processes of family reunification was established (Table 4.7; Le Moigne and Lebon, 2002). This decision actually encouraged permanent settlement of immigrants and created a considerable pool of irregular migrants – the “*sans papiers*”, who saw their chances to obtain regularisation of their status suddenly cut off by the French state (Geddes, 2003). Nevertheless, the halt to development of family reunion was overturned by the Council of State in 1978 as a violation of the constitutional right of an individual to conduct a normal family life (Schain, 1994). This event highlighted the role of French judicial power in the protection of immigrants from state abuses within the context of the French Republican paradigm (Hollifield, 1992).

A new immigration law was devised in 1979 by the centre-right government with the goal of reducing the immigrant population by 200,000 per year, through a forced repatriation programme (Table 4.7; Gastaut, 2000). The Bonnet law faced considerable opposition from

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<sup>25</sup> There had been previous attempts by the French state to control (through irregular administrative procedures) immigration from Algeria after its independence in 1962, who were considered less “*assimilable*” (Gastaut, 1999).

the left parties, trade unions and even from the RPR (Weil, 2001). The Socialist Party (PS) victory at the 1981 presidential and legislative elections was followed by a policy U-turn that led to the regularisation of 143,000 irregular migrants and reinstated the right to family reunification (Table 4.7). Nonetheless, the halt to further labour inflows persisted and the proportion of newcomers under family reunion purposes became paramount in comparison to the number of entries for work related motives (Schain, 1990). Lastly, in 1983, public demonstrations led by immigrant associations in favour of foreigners' rights pushed the draft of the Law no. 84-622 by the Socialist government (Table 4.7; Weil, 2001).

Whereas North-African immigrants had been regarded as workers until the end of the 1970s, they became increasingly defined as Muslims whose settlement endangered the French "culture" and Republicanism from the 1980s onwards (Gastaut, 2000). This trend reflected the social fractures caused by the Algerian war for independence that ended in 1962 (Wieviorka, 1993; Favell, 2001). Mitterrand's political strategy promoted the defence of immigrants' rights to politicise immigration and to reinforce the FN's ability to split the right's electorate (Weil, 2001). The UDF-RPR victory at the 1986 legislative elections was followed by the approval of a new immigration law, with a clear restrictive character (Table 4.7).<sup>26</sup> The Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua also unsuccessfully attempted to restrict the access to French nationality because of a veto from the Council of State (Hollifield, 2004). The government U-turn was capitalised upon by the FN, which accused the centre-right coalition of bowing to the immigrant lobby (Marcus, 1995). The re-election of President Mitterrand in 1988 and the subsequent dissolution of the National Assembly brought the left back to government. Mitterrand's opposition to the "Pasqua" law led to another revision of immigration policy by the new Socialist Interior Minister Pierre Joxe. This had a more liberal character (Table 4.7; De Wenden; 2002).

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<sup>26</sup> The 1986 immigration law was named after Interior Minister Charles Pasqua.

Immigration policy continued to be at the forefront of French politics during the 1990s. The overwhelming UDF-RPR coalition victory at the 1993 legislative elections was followed by the reinstatement of Pasqua as Interior Minister. Pasqua declared that France no longer wanted to be an immigration country and proposed a “zero-immigration” policy in a context marked by the growth of asylum-seeking (Thränhardt, 1995). This new immigration policy included reform of the Nationality Code, restrictions to both the entrance and settlement of immigrants, and limitation of access to asylum (Table 4.7; Marcus, 1995). Pasqua’s approach to immigration policy was interpreted as an attack on the French Republican heritage and as evidencing a shift by the RPR towards stricter anti-immigration policy to penetrate the FN’s ranks and diminish its appeal (Kitschelt, 1995; Hollifield, 2004).

The 1993 Pasqua law was vetoed by the Constitutional Court in August 1993 because it violated the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizens and the Constitution. Nevertheless, Pasqua fought back and proposed a constitutional amendment approved in a special joint session of the National Assembly and Senate in November 1993 (Geddes, 2003). Chirac’s victory at the 1995 presidential elections was followed by the appointment of a new centre-right government and the Interior Minister – Jean-Louis Debré – once more sought to extend restrictions on immigration (Table 4.7; Hollifield, 2004). However, Debré’s proposal faced large-scale left-wing mobilisations as well as objections from the Constitutional Council. It was withdrawn after another political shift to the left in the spring of 1997 (De Wenden, 2002).

The new left-wing government led by Lionel Jospin announced a new centrist approach to immigration based on a renewed Republican consensus (Weil, 2005). This move was interpreted as a response to the FN’s electoral success in the 1997 election (Schain, 2002). Following this new approach, the Interior Minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement implemented a regularisation programme that legalised 90,000 of 150,000 regularisation requests presented

by “*sans-papiers*” in 1997. A new immigration law was promulgated in 1998 that maintained rather than repealed the legislation drafted by preceding centre-right executives (Table 4.7). Yet, the new immigration law still met strong hostility from centre-right parties and the ERP (Hollifield, 2004). It was in this context of intense politicisation that French immigration policy was developed during the 1990s. The FN was regarded as an main driving force behind the debate on immigration policy in France during the 1980s and 1990s (Schain, 1994; Williams, 2006). The next chapters on France evaluate to what extent this assertion about FN impact was observed during the 2000s.

#### **4.4.3 – Italy: a new country of immigration**

##### ***4.4.3.1 – The absence of an immigration paradigm***

Italy was commonly regarded as an emigration country after 25 million Italians left the country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bonifazi; 2010). Significant flows of immigrants into Italy were observed from the 1970s onwards and the rate of new arrivals overtook levels of departures of Italian citizens from the 1980s onwards (Calavita, 2004). Immigration to Italy developed within a country that conceived itself merely as an emigration source and was marked by a deep north-south cleavage (Putnam, 1993), strong regional subcultures (Levy, 1996), and the presence of a diversity of local and regional dialects that persist (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004). Consequently, immigration interacted with a domestic context different from the UK and France, which both had a stronger sense of nationhood (Vasta, 1995). Within this context, the Italian approach to immigration continues to lack an official paradigm. Discrimination against Italian citizens on the grounds of race or religion is forbidden by the Constitution, which also recognizes the right to asylum.<sup>27</sup> Conceptions of ethnicity and race have been therefore excluded from Italian political debate, as in France.

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<sup>27</sup> Article 2 and article 10 of Constitution of Italian Republic.



Italy possesses one of the lowest fertility rates amongst OECD countries and the second highest rate of life expectancy, which sometimes propels a strong association between the management of inflows and the “demographic deficit” (Calavita, 2004; OECD, 2011). In parallel, Italian political elites have shown some reluctance to accept the permanent character of immigration (Di Pascale, 2002). Due to this vacuum, Italy has been associated with a southern European exceptionalism, based on weak external controls coupled with high tolerance of irregular flows that make this country a supposed “safe haven” for immigrants (King et al., 2000; Calavita, 2004). In contrast, other authors acknowledge the relevance of recurrent regularisation programmes, but argue that Italian immigration policy now focuses on external controls and a ‘stop and contain vision’ identical to the policies adopted by other European countries (Baldwin-Edwards, 1997; Sciortino, 1999).

#### ***4.4.3.2 – Immigration into Italy***

From the post-war period until the mid-1980s, Italian immigration policy was closely associated with an emigration policy designed to protect its citizens living abroad (Einaudi, 2007). Economic growth during the 1980s and subsequent demand for foreign labour coupled with the EC integration process led the Italian state to regulate non-communitarian immigration in 1982. The new legislation imposed a halt to regularisations *a posteriori* within Italian territory and included a small amnesty for 16,000 irregular foreign workers (Table 4.8). Four years later, the Italian government launched the first large-scale amnesty for irregular migrants with the approval of Law 943/86 that regularised around 120,000 immigrants by 1988 (Reynieri, 1999).

The 1986 immigration law increased the bureaucratic character of available legal channels to manage labour inflows, unlike the flexible nature of the Italian economic structure (Table 4.8). Italy is mostly dominated by small and medium-scale enterprises, whilst 28 per cent of its GDP is accounted for by the underground economic sector, wherein a considerable

**Table 4.8** – Italian legislation on immigration policy between 1945 and 2000

| Legislation                             | Main modifications   |
|---|--|
| Act 1961: 5                             | Established and distinguished between residence and labour authorisations, but right to residence was subordinated to employment status. Employers required to notify local council when hiring immigrant workers.   |
| 1982 Circular of the Ministry of Labour | Halted further regularisation for workers from states outside the EC. Included a minor amnesty for those with irregular status.  |
| Law n° 943/1986                         | Labour authorisations were granted to candidates after fulfilment of three conditions: 1) an Italian employer presented a request to hire a non-EC worker to the Italian authorities; 2) these authorities ensured that it was impossible to find an available native worker, and 3) prospective candidates had to be registered in waiting lists in their country of origin. Recognized right to family reunion and instituted the principle of equal treatment between nationals and foreign citizens. |
| Law n. 39/1990 or “Martelli” Law        | Introduced visa policy to non-EU nationals from countries of “high-immigration” risk. Established an annual quota system alongside a regularisation programme for irregular immigrants. Universalised access to the right of asylum. Reinforced border controls. Extended powers of state authorities to deport immigrants.  |
| 1995 Dini’s Decree                      | Extended powers to deport immigrants. Established a regularisation programme for irregular immigrants.   |
| 1998 Turco–Napolitano Law               | Introduced possibility of sponsored immigration and a long-term residence authorisation. Broadened access to the right of family reunion. Deployed another regularisation programme for irregular immigrants.  |

proportion of immigrants are economically active (Calavita, 2004). The failure to manage labour inflows from origin countries according to the growing domestic demand for labour supported the maintenance of irregular inflows into the country (Caponio, 2007). Labour

immigrants entered into Italy with short-term tourist visas instead of labour authorisations and then overstayed after their term expired with an irregular status (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004).

Under popular mobilisations in favour of immigrant rights, the Minister of Interior Claudio Martelli introduced new legislation in 1990 designed to bring Italy closer to the Schengen Agreement requirements (Sciortino, 1999). Despite the objective to reduce the intensity of immigration, about 240,000 irregular immigrants were granted a legal status through the general amnesty included in the new bill (Table 4.8; Zincone, 1998). Immigration policy came under pressure after the 1991 Albanian crisis, propelled by the deepening economic and political chaos in the latter country (Geddes, 2003). Reactions to this crisis were brutal, as refugees were assembled in football stadiums, and then deported without due process (Vasta, 1995). This event catapulted immigration to the forefront of the political agenda (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003).

Ambiguities in Italian immigration policy persisted during the mandate of Prime Minister Dini, who sought both to appease LN requests for stricter border controls, as well as the Catholic Church and left wing parties' pressures for a regularisation programme (Sciortino, 1999). Dini's decree granted the regularisation of more than 234,000 irregular immigrants, but was not converted into law due to lack of parliamentary approval (Reynieri, 1999; Geddes, 2003). The distinctive feature of the Italian foreign population consists of the heterogeneity of nationalities (King et al., 2000). A new Albanian crisis erupted in 1997, but the centre-left coalition government provided short-term protection authorisations to refugees and externalised border controls into Albanian international waters (Einaudi, 2007).

Immigration law was once again reformed by Prodi's executive in 1998, under pressures from the EU for greater control of irregular flows, with the draft of the Turco-Napolitano law (Geddes, 2003). Recognising demand for foreign labour, this new legislation reformulated the

1990 quota system by introducing an annual decree establishing caps on the concession of labour visas and by introducing the sponsored labour visa (Table 4.8).<sup>28</sup> Opposition to the new bill came from the LN that demanded a national referendum on the legislation, refused by the Constitutional Court due to Italy's obligations towards the EU. An overall cap of 60,000 entry authorisations was set in 1998 and 1999, which was beneath the levels of domestic demand for foreign labour (Colombo and Sciortino, 2004). By contrast, legislation proved efficient in tackling irregular inflows as illustrated by the substantial rise of expulsions (Barbagli, 2008).

#### **4.5 – Conclusions**

All the three cases are consolidated liberal democracies, EU member-states, possess significant ERPs, experienced large-scale immigration, and their electoral systems encourage bipolar inter-party competition. These common properties justify the selection of a most similar systems research design for attaining the purposes of this study. In parallel, these countries also share a certain degree of variation across the shared characteristics that enhance the scope of the analysis. The salient variations were identified as their distinct electoral systems, divergent levels of ERP electoral support, different types of government formation and variable positioning on the left-right spectrum, and their uneven history of immigration. The three subsequent sections explored the variations in the UK, French and Italian electoral systems, the development of the most prominent members of the ERP family, and these countries' national paradigms on immigration and their uneven experiences.

It was seen that electoral systems shape competition between political parties, the party system and government formation. Salient variations between the electoral systems influence the threats posed by ERPs. It was shown that the Westminster model inhibits multiparty

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<sup>28</sup> This entry permit was valid for one year and allowed immigrants to enter in Italy without a valid work contract if a regular citizen ensured housing and cover of medical assistance.

competition while the first-past-the-post component restrains breakthroughs by minor parties, such as the NF or the BNP, at first-order-ballots. The French dual-ballot system encourages a moderate pluralist party system and coalition building. Nonetheless, the FN has been excluded by mainstream parties from national coalitions because of its deep pariah status and Le Pen's adversarial stance. The Italian electoral system was reformed in the 1990s to reduce party system "polarised pluralism" without much success. In fact, the plurality tier enhanced the LN's electoral entrenchment in northern regions and its profile in the Italian party system.

The chapter then accessed the development of the most prominent members of the ERP family in the three case studies and variations across their ideological classifications. It is misleading to presuppose that the ERP ideologies are equal or that they have been static since their formation. The BNP was a neo-Nazi party type whilst the FN was initially classified as a neo-liberal ERP but later shifted to the authoritarian xenophobic type. The LN was not initially conceived as a member of the ERP family during the 1990s, but its continuous radicalisation under Bossi's leadership, especially from the late 1990s onwards, pushed this party to become a neo-liberal xenophobic ERP type. There is also a strong degree of variation across the selected ERPs' electoral fortunes: the BNP has a very poor electoral performance during the 1990s; while the FN was almost the third strongest party across the French party system during such period, although it remained isolated. The LN enjoyed a breakthrough into Italian mainstream politics in 1993 and participated in Berlusconi's first government. However, the LN entered the 2000s facing electoral decline after the exhaustion of its secessionist project.

Finally, the chapter examined the UK, France and Italy's distinct national paradigms of immigration and their uneven experiences. The British paradigm involves racial categorisation of immigrants and considerations of inflows' impact on "race relations". France's Republican legacy forbids any form of ethnic categorisation, whilst Italy lacks an

official paradigm because of being a new country of immigration and in consequence of the reluctance of Italian political elites to accept such fact. The UK was the first country to block labour immigration from non-EU countries during the 1960s. A similar action followed in France by the mid-1970s. Italy started to regulate immigration flows during the 1980s but has faced difficulties managing the development of regular labour inflows according to its domestic demand for foreign labour. By the 1990s, immigration was a highly politicised across the three case studies. Asylum inflows were most prominent in the British political agenda, whilst family reunion processes were more salient across France and irregular inflows dominated the Italian political debate.

## Chapter 5 – The BNP impact on British immigration policy from 2001 to 2005

“...Traditional tolerance is under threat. It is under threat from those who come and live here illegally by breaking our rules and abusing our hospitality. And, unless we act to tackle abuses, it could be increasingly exploited by extremists to promote their perverted view of race.”

Prime Minister, Tony Blair, 2005

This chapter examines the BNP's impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK between 2001 and 2005. During the first half of the 2000s, the BNP overturned the British ERP legacy of electoral failures by performing and consolidating an electoral breakthrough at local level. This chapter analyses the BNP's impact on the three selected dimensions of immigration politics and policy: inter-party competition, public behaviour, and policy developments. The research will show that the BNP lacked relevant impact on these three dimensions and benefited from events that were in large part an outcome of the agency of mainstream parties.

The first overall section of the present chapter focuses on the British 2001 general election and explores two main points: i) the BNP's impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration; and ii) the BNP's contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration. As this thesis indicates, immigration was moderately salient during the 2001 electoral campaign, especially amongst the BNP and the Conservatives. However, the BNP lacked impact on inter-party competition on immigration at this first-order-ballot. The research on the 2001 general election suggests that the British electorate did not consider immigration (in particular asylum) to be a salient issue, but significant levels of hostility to immigration were

still observed. This thesis will suggest that the BNP's contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration were also non-significant in 2001.

This chapter's second overall section examines the BNP's development within the British party system between 2001 and 2005 and its discourse on immigration. The British ERP's electoral breakthrough at local level in 2002 was successfully consolidated throughout the following years but the BNP still failed to break into mainstream politics in 2004. A modernisation programme promoted by Griffin sought to shift the BNP's ideology from a Neo-Nazi into an authoritarian xenophobic ERP type but this process was incomplete by 2005. The third and final section evaluates the BNP's impact on immigration policy during Blair's second term. This thesis will show that the Labour government adopted a two-pronged approach to immigration policy characterised by a *laissez-faire* approach towards HSI and intra-EU inflows coupled with a stringent policy on asylum. Against allegations found in immigration studies, this thesis will argue that the BNP lacked any impact on the development of immigration policy during Blair's second term.

### **5.1 – 2001 general election - Labour's second landslide**

Labour's second victory at the 2001 general election marked a new era in British politics after 18 years in opposition until the 1997 general election (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002). The election was widely perceived as a predetermined success as Labour enjoyed massive leads over the Conservatives from the outset (Bartle, 2003). Consequently, the electorate's interest in the ballot was seriously diminished culminating in an historic low of 59 per cent turnout (Norris, 2001). The 2001 general election developed in a context of intensification of asylum seeking in the UK and increasing salience of this issue in the tabloid media.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Research conducted for Reader's Digest in 2000 found that The Mail reported more than 200 stories about asylum-seekers in ten months (Kushner, 2005, p. 258).



### **5.1.1 – BNP impact on inter-party competition**

Did the BNP reinforce the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy and the salience of this issue in their electoral manifestos? Immigration policy was moderately salient during the British 2001 electoral campaign, whilst asylum was the most dominant type of immigration flow in the political debate. Despite the observation of a mainstream inter-party consensus on curbing asylum, the research developed below contends that the BNP lacked any impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy. The absence of a significant electoral challenge posed by the BNP to mainstream parties was considered the most relevant factor behind its non-significant impact on inter-party competition (Table 2.1).

#### ***5.1.1.1 – BNP electoral campaign***

The 2001 general election marked the first national ballot contested by the BNP under Griffin's leadership. The BNP presented candidates in 33 constituencies aiming to concentrate the party's scarce resources<sup>30</sup> and to prepare the ground for the 2002 local elections. Ethnic tensions in Oldham, a former industrial area riddled by economic deprivation, constituted an excellent opportunity for Griffin to apply his new modernisation strategy (Renton, 2003). Seizing the momentum, the BNP leader stood as candidate for the Oldham West constituency with a campaign focused on: "Equal rights for Oldham whites" (Copsey, 2007). This campaign highlighted crime rates of ethnic minorities against white citizens that were receiving wide coverage in the local media. Eruption of riots in Oldham in May 2001 involving the Asian youth community after weeks of provocative actions led by extreme-right groups such as the NF and C18 played into Griffin's hands. "Outsourcing"

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<sup>30</sup> Political parties contesting the 2001 general election were required to present 100 candidates to be eligible for a free national broadcast instead of the 50 candidates demanded in 1997 (Eatwell, 2004). After this change, the BNP did not have the incentive to match the number of candidates presented in 1997 nor the resources to present 100 candidates.

violence to the latter violent fringe groups reinforced the BNP image of relative moderation whilst the riots also strengthened its campaign of “rights for whites” (Eatwell, 2004).

Demonstrating the BNP’s weakness, a very short electoral manifesto entitled “Where we stand” was issued just before the 2001 election (BNP, 2001). Immigration policy was highly salient in this document, which demanded the halt of further immigration and forced removal of all irregular immigrants (Figure 5.1; BNP, 2001). The forced repatriation programme of all ethnic minorities proposed by Tyndall was dropped in favour of a voluntary resettlement scheme based on cash incentives (BNP, 2001). Through this “historical switch”, Griffin sought to downgrade the BNP’s legacy of violence (Griffin, 2003a). Griffin had also recognised by May 2000 that the growing importance of asylum in the debate between mainstream parties benefited his party:

“the asylum has been great for us. We have had phenomenal growth in membership. It’s been quite fun to watch government ministers and the Tories play the race card in far cruder terms than we would ever use, but pretend not to. This issue legitimises us” (Guardian, 2000).

Effectively, the salience and terms of the political debate on asylum has been widely recognised as an important factor enhancing the BNP structure of political opportunities (Renton, 2005; Goodwin, 2007; Copsey, 2009). The next section examines the Conservative populist approach to asylum.

#### ***5.1.1.2 – Conservatives’ “Britain is a soft touch on asylum”***

Conservative strategy under William Hague’s leadership (1997–2001) was based on a populist style encompassing extensive references to “common sense” and intense criticism of the “liberal elite” (Bale, 2010). Unable to detach the party from Thatcher’s unpopular legacy, Hague’s programme was a combination of neo-liberalism and authoritarian populism with an

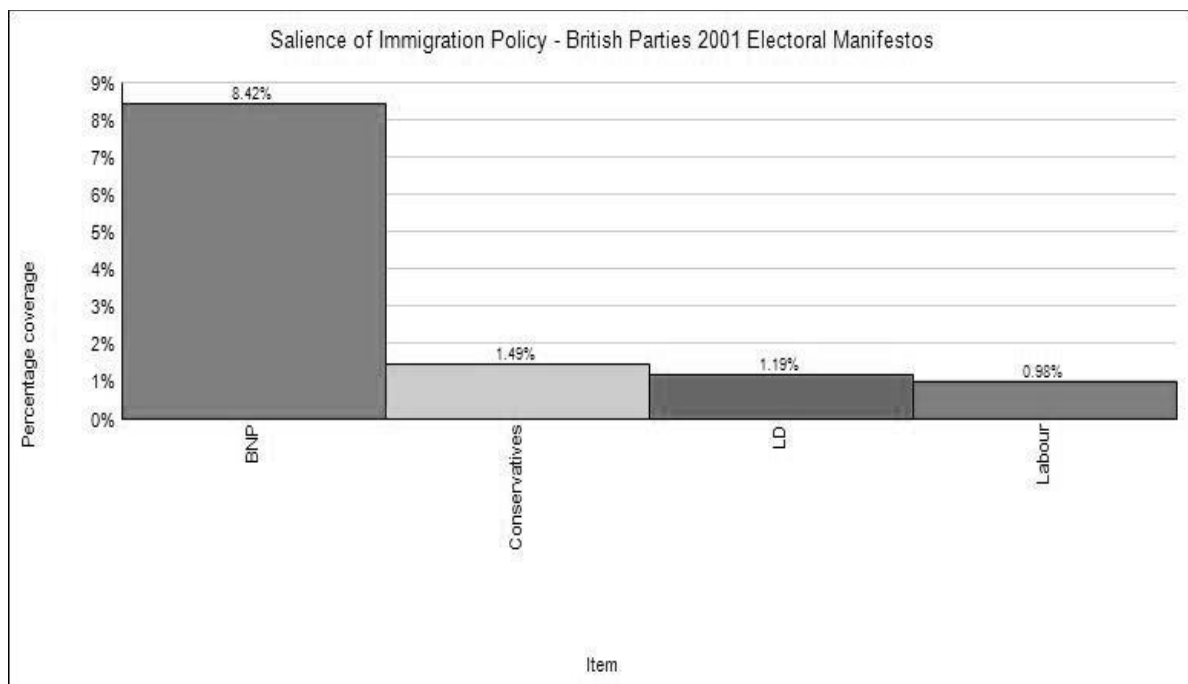
emphasis on tax cuts, asylum, law and order (Bartle et al., 2002). The inability to attack the government's record on public services and the economy exacerbated Hague's emphasis on the latter issues (Clarke et al. 2002). This strategy was commonly interpreted as appealing to the party core voters but was also designed to tackle the influence of internal challengers such as Michael Portillo, known for his social liberalism (Collings and Seldon, 2001; Butler and Kavanagh, 2002). Hague's populist style also sought to divide Labour's voters with stronger authoritarian attitudes and scepticism on Europe (Bale, 2010). The continuous emphasis on immigration in the Conservative agenda could favour the BNP's electoral expansion in the short-term.

Under tabloid pressures to launch a campaign against 'bogus' asylum seekers, Hague delivered a speech at the Social Market Foundation in 2000 entitled: "Common sense on asylum" (Hague, 2000; Copsey, 2007). Britain's long tradition of hospitality towards those fleeing persecution was under systematic abuse by the collapsing asylum system (Hague, 2000). The Conservatives' leader proposed the detention of all asylum seekers until a final decision of their claim revealing his highly repressive approach to asylum (Hague, 2000). At the 2000 local elections, the Labour government was accused of being a "soft touch" for the "organised asylum racketeers" who were "flooding" Britain with "bogus asylum seekers" (quoted from Messina, 2007, p. 115). This populist approach persisted at the Conservative 2001 spring conference, when Hague accused the government of turning Britain into a "foreign land" and promised to clean up Labour's "asylum mess" (Hague, 2001).

Immigration policy exhibited considerable levels of salience in the Conservatives' 2001 electoral manifesto (Figure 5.1) and asylum was the paramount type of immigration flow mentioned (Conservatives, 2001). The campaign on immigration started derailing when a few candidates refused to sign a pledge against "playing the race card" promoted by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), publicly supported by Hague (Saggar, 2001). Further

internal disarray erupted when a backbencher MP named John Townend overtly blamed immigration for undermining British society and fostering high crime rates (Bartle et al., 2003). Given the party was already being accused of racism because of its authoritarian populism, Hague disowned the Conservative MP and removed asylum from his campaign. In the end, Conservative strategy backfired and the party was portrayed as a “nasty” party, deeply divided on the issue of immigration and asylum (Saggar, 2001; Bale, 2010). The eruption of the Oldham 2001 riots, as well as Conservatives’ divisions on immigration and Hague’s sudden retreat on asylum could have left the ground open for the BNP (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002).

**Figure 5.1** – Salience of immigration policy in British parties’ electoral manifestos at the 2001 general election



Source: BNP, 2001; Conservatives, 2001; Liberal Democrats, 2001; Labour, 2001

### *5.1.1.3 – Centre-left parties' positions on immigration*

Immigration was practically absent from the Labour election campaign. The salience of this issue in the 2001 electoral manifesto was lower than in the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats' manifestos. Yet, asylum was also the most mentioned type of inflow in the document (Figure 5.1; Labour, 2001). The repressive approach to asylum contrasted with a liberal position towards highly qualified and secondary inflows (Labour, 2001). This strategy indicated that Blair opted to follow Straw's metaphor<sup>31</sup> rather than to challenge the Conservatives' campaign on asylum despite Labour's large leads in public polls (Benyon, 2002). Finally, immigration policy was salient within the Liberal Democrats' electoral manifesto with asylum also being the most prominent dimension (Figure 5.1; Liberal Democrats, 2001). At the national level, the Liberal Democrats adopted a more favourable position towards asylum than Labour by proposing an overall review of the asylum system, the reinstatement of refugees' right to work, and the abolition of the voucher system (Liberal Democrats, 2001). Shortages of skilled workers in the economy were also mentioned demonstrating a convergence with Labour Party on intensifying HSI (Liberal Democrats, 2001).

In short, immigration policy was highly salient in the BNP electoral campaign across the 33 contested constituencies whilst Hague led a populist campaign against 'bogus' asylum seekers since 2000. Two aspects of mainstream inter-party consensus on immigration policy were evident at the 2001 general election: i) between the Conservatives and Labour on curbing asylum inflows; ii) between the British Labour and the Liberal Democrats on promoting HSI. Despite these observations, the BNP had no relevant impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy. This suggests that the politicisation of immigration

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<sup>31</sup> In Jack Straw's own words "We should not allow so much as a cigarette card to come between the Labour Party and the Tory government on immigration" (cited from Saggat, 2001, p. 761).

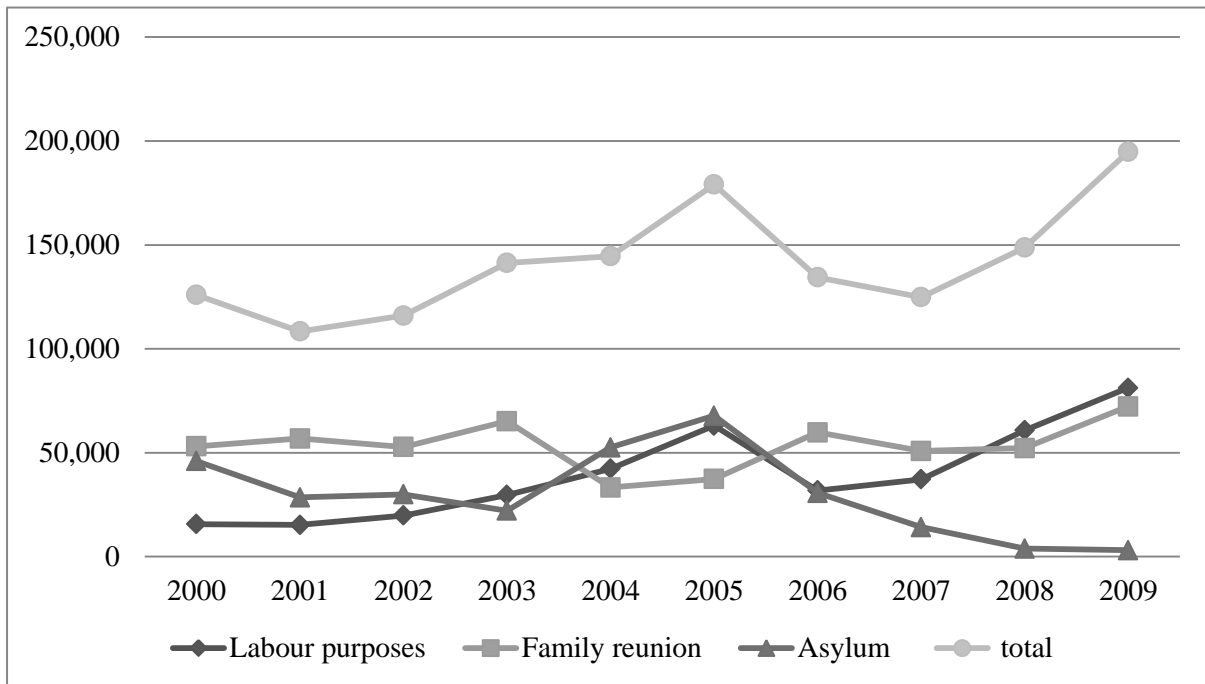
in the UK preceded any electoral breakthrough by the BNP and was the outcome of the Conservatives' political strategy and their political agency in the absence of a salient ERP. As Griffin recognised, the BNP benefited from the salience of asylum on mainstream political debate. The BNP's lack of impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy coincided with the negative behaviour of the four proposed hypotheses to understand the occurrence of this political process (Table 2.1).

Levels of immigration into the UK decreased before the 2001 general election, mainly due to settlement for asylum purposes, whilst immigration was disregarded as a priority issue by the British electorate in 2001 (Figures 5.2; 5.3). By the 2001 general election, the BNP also posed a completely insignificant electoral threat to mainstream parties, illustrated by its poor performance in the 33 contested constituencies at the 2001 ballot (Table 4.2). Finally, mainstream parties' ostracism of the BNP reinforced its pariah status and isolation at the fringes of the British party system. The BNP's failure to pose a strategic dilemma to mainstream parties is the most relevant factor behind its lack of impact. The BNP's electoral irrelevance at the 2001 election led mainstream parties to disregard this party as a possible challenger and precluded any sort of influence on mainstream proposals on immigration policy. The next section evaluates BNP impact on public attitudes to immigration.

### **5.1.2 – BNP impact on public attitudes to immigration**

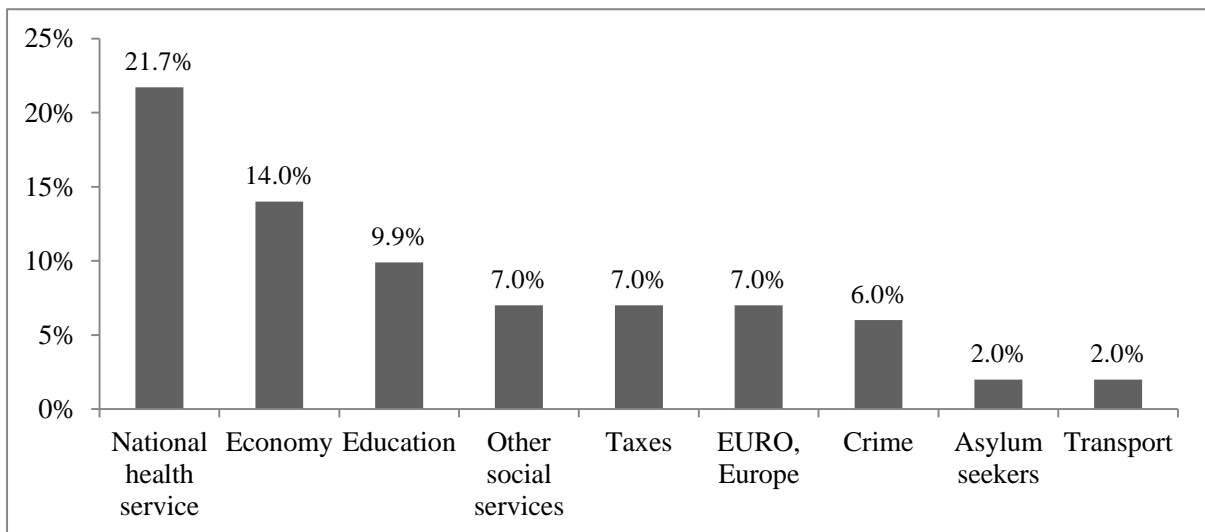
Did the BNP intensify levels of anxiety and hostility to immigration across the British electorate in 2001? Immigration was overlooked as a priority issue for the British electorate at the 2001 ballot despite the levels of hostility towards this social phenomenon. This research contends that the BNP had no impact on public attitudes to immigration and failed to intensify levels of anxiety and hostility. The BNP's insignificant electoral support and subsequent incipient electoral organisation looked as the most important factor behind its lack of impact on this dimension of immigration politics (Table 2.1). Consequently, the significant

**Figure 5.2** – Grants of settlement by category of grant in the UK, excluding EEA and Swiss nationals between 2000 and 2009



Source: Home Office, 2010

**Figure 5.3** – Most important issue at the British 2001 general election



Source: BES, 2001

levels of hostility to immigration across the British electorate preceded the BNP's electoral breakthrough at local level in 2002.

Asylum was ranked at the bottom of British voters' priority issues alongside transport issues at the 2001 general election while the National Health Service and the economy were the top priorities (Figure 5.3). The few voters who ranked asylum as their top priority conceded a 47 points advantage to the Conservatives over the Labour Party as the best party to deal with this issue (Clarke et al., 2004, p. 90). In contrast, only two respondents out of 3,219 in the BES 2001 identified the BNP as the best party to deal with this issue (BES, 2001). This data confirms the Conservatives' issue ownership of opposition to immigration and helps to understand Hague's emphasis on this issue (Mudde, 2001). However, his strategy failed to resonate with voters' priorities and doubts over its efficiency mounted as the massive lead on asylum was cut to a mere 15 points in the post-election survey (Clarke et al., 2004, p. 90). The Conservatives' emphasis on asylum proved more effective in influencing public priorities in the long-term than in the short term (see Chapter 6).

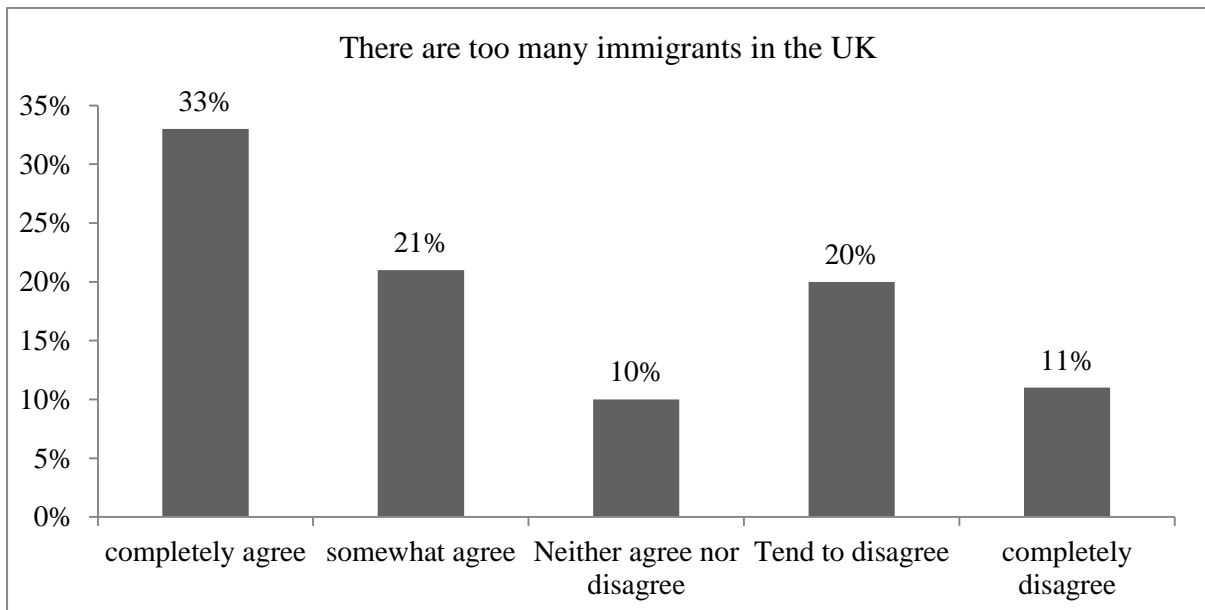
In terms of public attitudes to immigration policy, an IPSOS-MORI poll (2001) conducted in January 2001 revealed that a majority of respondents agreed that there were too many immigrants in the UK (Figure 5.4). Immigration was mostly perceived as a threat to employment (Figure 5.5) rather than associated with insecurity (Figure 5.6). Separate analysis of BNP supporters' attitudes towards immigration is prevented by their insignificant representation within the BES<sup>32</sup>. The negative perception of immigration varied according to the different types of inflows with a clear majority of respondents supporting the immediate removal of asylum seekers in January 2001 (Figure 5.7). In contrast, an ICM (2001) poll conducted in May 2001 showed that 77 per cent of respondents supported immigration by those with valuable skills in short supply in the domestic labour market. This data suggests

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<sup>32</sup> Only two respondents to the BES 2001 pre-electoral panel identified themselves with the BNP.

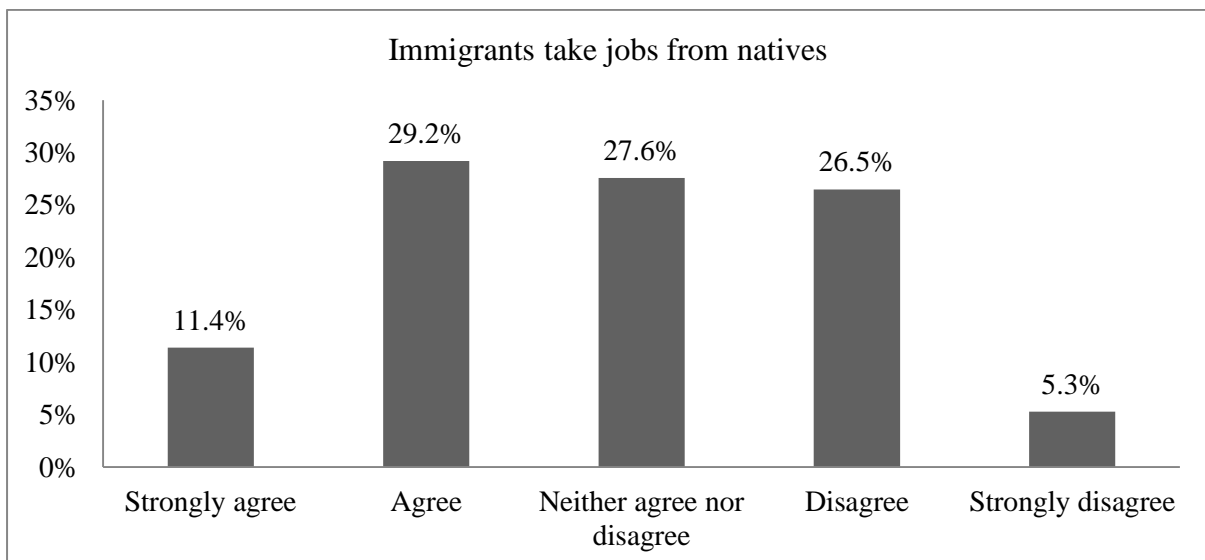


**Figure 5.4** – Public perception of intensity of immigration in the UK prior to the 2001 general election (N = 1,005)



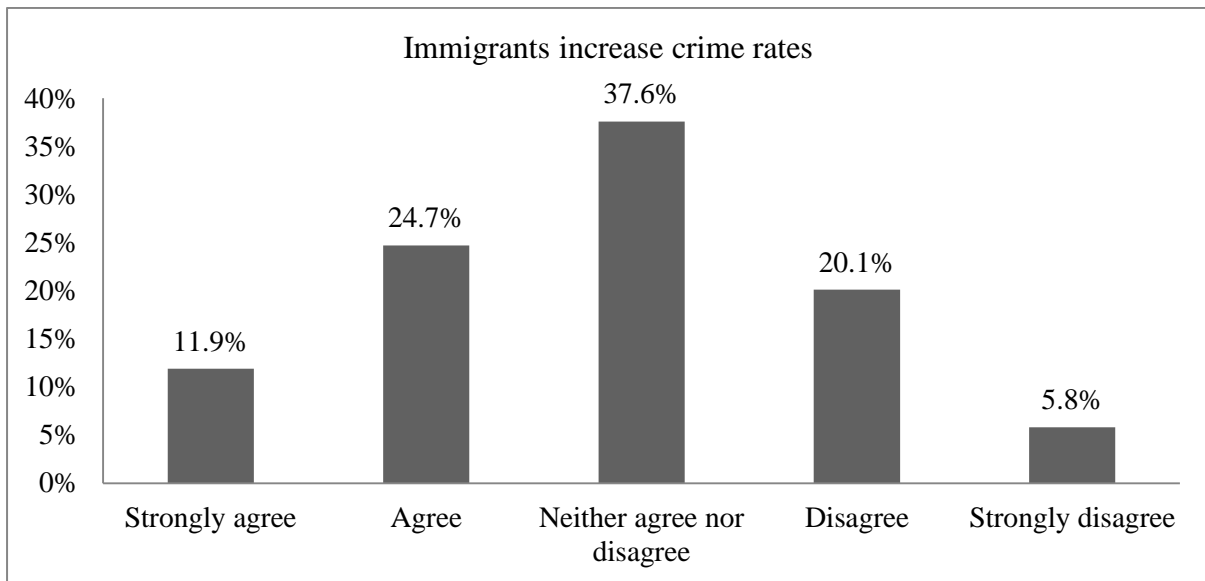
Source: IPSOS-MORI January 2001

**Figure 5.5** – Public Perception of immigrants as a threat to employment at the British 2001 general election (N = 3,219)



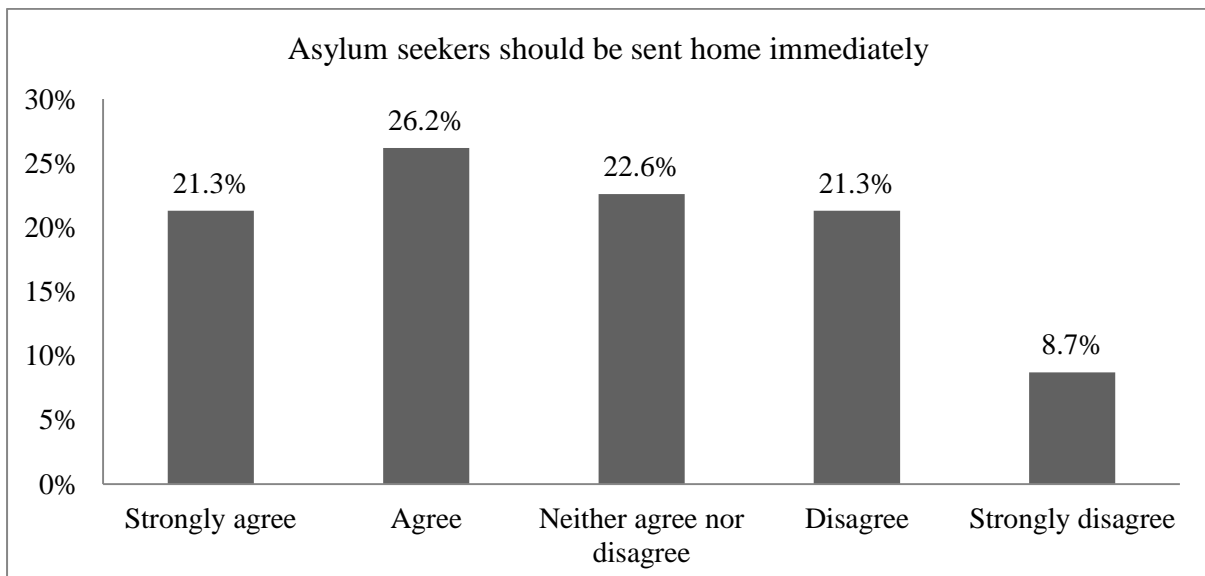
Source – BES, 2001 Pre-election

**Figure 5.6** – Public perception of immigrants and crime rates at the British 2001 general election. (N = 3,219)



Source – BES, 2001 Pre-election

**Figure 5.7** – Public perception of asylum prior to the British 2001 general election (N = 1,005)



Source – IPSOS-MORI January 2001

that mainstream parties' discourse on immigration might influence the public's perception of the different types of inflows, with a majority of voters indirectly sanctioning the Conservative populist approach on asylum and another majority supporting the development of HSI as proposed by Labour and the Liberal Democrats.

Tolerance to immigration amongst the British electorate was already fragile by 2001, especially on asylum, but overall concern with immigration was low. Significant hostility to immigration presaged the BNP's electoral breakthrough at the local level in 2002 and cannot be considered an outcome of this ERP's agency. Hence, responsibility for hostility to immigration in 2001 lay elsewhere than the BNP raising the potential responsibility of the British mainstream parties in shaping public attitudes to immigration, especially the Conservatives' emphasis on asylum. Moreover, correspondence between the British voters' attitudes towards the different types of inflows and the inter-party consensus observed during the 2001 electoral campaign reinforces the former observation on mainstream parties and public attitudes to immigration. The BNP's electoral prospects in the short-term were enhanced by the enormous gap between its insignificant electoral support and levels of public hostility to immigration. Any future success would depend on its ability to overcome its legitimacy deficit (Goodwin, 2009).

The BNP's lack of contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration coincided with the negative behaviour of the three proposed hypotheses to understand ERP impact on public attitudes (Table 2.1). Levels of immigration (in particular asylum) declined before the 2001 general election (Figure 5.2), whilst the rate of BNP's electoral support was very low. This trend is illustrated by the BNP's insignificant representation in the BES 2001 and by the fact that it only contested 33 constituencies (Table 5.1). The mainstream parties' lack of engagement with the British ERP also reinforced the BNP's pariah status and denied exogenous support to reverse its irrelevant impact on public attitudes to immigration. Within

the former context, the BNP’s lack of electoral support seems the most relevant factor behind the BNP’s irrelevant contagion effects on this dimension of immigration politics.

### 5.1.3 – Electoral results

“Another Labour landslide” was the common depiction of the 2001 general election after Labour won 42 per cent of the vote against 32.7 per cent for Conservatives and 18 per cent for the Liberal Democrats (Norris, 2001). The Conservatives’ electoral strategy failed to break beyond core voters and Hague resigned from the party leadership (Bale, 2010). Labour obtained 64 per cent of the total seats in parliament providing a solid base for Blair’s second term (Berrington, 2001). The BNP secured deposits in five constituencies and won over 10 per cent of the vote in three constituencies (Oldham East and Saddleworth, Oldham West and Royton, Burnley) (Wilks-Heeg, 2008). Remarkably, Griffin collected 16.4 per cent of the vote in Oldham West apparently benefiting from urban disturbances and a significant drop in Labour’s share of the vote (Copsey, 2007). Griffin thus achieved the best electoral result by an ERP in British history, raising the BNP electoral prospects for the 2000s.

**Table 5.1** – Votes for BNP at general, EP and London Assembly elections between 2001 and 2009

| Year | Elections                    | Number of votes | Contested Constituencies | Proportion of total on contested constituencies |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|
| 2001 | general                      | 47,129          | 33                       | 3.9%  |
| 2004 | EP <sup>1</sup>              | 808,201         | –                        | 4.9%  |
| 2004 | London Assembly <sup>2</sup> | 90,365          | –                        | 4.8%  |

<sup>1</sup> Average of the vote across Britain

<sup>2</sup> Votes for Members of London Assembly– London totals

Source: London Elects, 2008; Tetteh, 2009

## **5.2 – BNP development between 2001 and 2005**

This research now explores the BNP's electoral performance according to its structure of political opportunities to evaluate this ERP's electoral threat to mainstream parties before the 2005 general election, and its discourse on immigration policy. Whereas past BNP electoral successes included the election of one city councillor in London in 1993, Griffin was able to overturn the BNP's meagre electoral fortunes. This thesis shows that the BNP was a fast-rising party before the 2005 general election, but failed to secure an electoral breakthrough at national level and to shatter British mainstream politics. Griffin's modernisation project introduced innovations in this party's xenophobic discourse on immigration and entailed a shift from a neo-Nazi ERP model to an authoritarian xenophobic model but this process was not fully accomplished by the 2005 general election.

### **5.2.1 – 2002–2003 local elections**

By mid-2001, Griffin obtained increasing access to mainstream media outlets due to his election result in Oldham and the urban riots in Burnley, Bradford and Stoke (Renton, 2005). Increasing access to media benefited the BNP's structure of political opportunities by expanding its visibility and contributing to the relative normalisation of its image (Koopmans and Muis, 2007). The 9/11 attacks in the USA intensified the BNP's campaign against Islam in defence of "Western civilisation". This event provided an opportunity for Griffin to downgrade the BNP's anti-Semitism by supporting Israel's war against Islamic terrorism and to try to forge links with Hindus and Sikh groups under an anti-Islamic alliance (Griffin, 2002; Eatwell, 2004).

A strong BNP poll in a local council by-election was registered in Burnley at the end of 2001 (it obtained around 20 per cent of the vote in the three wards contested). Holding a similar background to Oldham, Burnley also provided fertile ground for the BNP with local

resentment being directed at supposedly positive discrimination in favour of ethnic minorities by the local Labour council (Rhodes, 2009). Stimulated by Le Pen’s success in France, the election of three BNP councillors in Burnley and another two in by-elections in Blackburn and Halifax marked the May 2002 local elections (Yonwin, 2004; Table 5.2). These were the BNP’s first electoral successes under Griffin’s leadership and endorsed his disavowal of what he described as the “3 hs: hard-talk, hobbyism and Hitler” in favour of increasing professionalism and moderated local activism (Eatwell, 2004, p. 77). Griffin’s modernisation project was thus producing some favourable electoral results for the BNP.

Extreme-right electoral breakthrough at local level was confirmed at the 2003 local elections with the election of 13 new local councillors (adding up to 16 after the ballots), proving the BNP’s ability to elect councillors on a nationwide basis (Table 5.2). Apart from the more favourable set of political opportunities for minor parties at second order ballots, these successes were also indebted to four factors: i) the disappearance of mainstream parties as local campaigning organisations (Wilks-Heeg, 2008); ii) voting among traditional Labour supporters (Rhodes, 2009); iii) increasing association of terrorism with asylum seekers

**Table 5.2** – BNP performance at local elections between 2000 and 2004

| Year | Candidates | Councils | Votes   | Seats won | Total of seats |
|------|------------|----------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| 2000 | 17         | 12       | 3,022   | 0         | 0              |
| 2001 | 4          | 3        | 867     | 0         | 0              |
| 2002 | 67         | 26       | 30,998  | 3         | 3              |
| 2003 | 217        | 71       | 101,221 | 13        | 16             |
| 2004 | 312        | 59       | 190,200 | 14        | 21             |

Source: Tetteh, 2009

following the discovery of a lethal toxin in north London (Renton, 2005); iv) the success of the BNP's own electoral strategy inspired by Liberal Democrats' electioneering techniques involving the development of intense canvassing and grassroots organisation (Goodwin, 2009). The BNP continued to benefit from the high salience of asylum within the British political debate.

### **5.2.2 – BNP discourse on immigration policy**

Xenophobic discourse was a driving force behind BNP local campaigns through its articulation of local and national grievances including crime rates against whites, positive discrimination, terrorism, unemployment, housing issues, access to public services and even traffic congestion (John et al., 2006; Copsey, 2007). This strategy allowed the BNP to successfully evade accusations of racism and extremism and to simultaneously enhance local respectability (Rhodes, 2009). Meanwhile, Griffin's modernisation programme entailed a shift from Tyndall's biological racism to 'cultural' racism following the xenophobic discourse of Le Pen in France. In an article entitled: "Time is running out for Western Civilisation", Griffin (2002) expressed his concerns that "Western ancient cultural and ethnic identities are being submerged in a sea of colour". The article ended with an accusation of liberals' responsibility for "rushing to finish the job by swamping our homelands" (Griffin, 2002). The repositioning of BNP ideology towards a post-modern far-right model was not a surprise as similar shifts had been observed among other European ERPs throughout the 1990s (Ignazi, 2006).

In another article entitled "Race and Reality" published in 2003, Griffin (2003) sought to distance the BNP from the Conservatives' campaign on asylum as an economic burden. Henceforth, Griffin (2003) deemed all types of inflows independent of their origin as a direct threat to British identity overlooking economic considerations. In place of past biological determinism, recognition of British nationality was now "first and foremost decided by

ethnicity” whilst members of mixed marriages or of ethnic minorities were overtly undesired within the party ranks (Griffin, 2003). Griffin’s emphasis on shifting BNP racism from old anti-Semitism to cultural racism and focusing it on Islam was designed to enhance the BNP’s respectability before the EP election in 2004. However, this ideological reform was far from complete by the 2005 general elections whilst anti-Semitism continued to pervade party ranks throughout the decade (Goodwin, 2009).

### **5.2.3 – Elections in 2004**

Favourable results obtained by the BNP in 2002 and 2003 fuelled expectations for the 2004 EP ballot, London Assembly election and local elections. These ballots used new PR electoral systems<sup>33</sup> that expanded minor parties’ political opportunities (Hainsworth, 2008). Griffin overconfidently predicted the election of four BNP MEPs, plus representation in the London Assembly and a record number of local councillors. Le Pen joined the presentation of the 2004 EP electoral manifesto increasing BNP media coverage and showing his influence over Griffin’s ‘modernisation’ programme (Copsey, 2007). The BNP collected 4.9 per cent of the vote in the 2004 EP ballot representing a fourfold growth in relation to 1999, yet failed to obtain a single seat (Table 5.1). A substantial electoral expansion was also observed at the London Assembly election with 4.9 per cent but the BNP still missed representation by a margin of 5,000 votes (Cruddas et al; 2005). Finally, the BNP won a total of 14 seats in the 2004 local elections to demonstrate the BNP’s apparent consolidation of its electoral breakthrough at local level (Table 5.2).

Electoral results between 2001 and 2005 evidenced a fast-growing party but considering Griffin’s expectations and the favourable context, the 2004 super-election year represented

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<sup>33</sup> A regional system of proportional representation was introduced for the elections to the EP while seats in the London Assembly were guaranteed for every party that overcome a 5 per cent threshold. Local elections in most places were conducted with three-members constituency – a system under which the BNP has won its first councillors in Burnley (Renton, 2005).



another false dawn after the failure to perform the expected electoral breakthrough at national level (Copsey, 2007). BNP performance in 2004 was hampered by several factors: i) poor canvassing by rank-and-file members, who relied on TV broadcasts and leaflet distribution ensured by the EP election (Copsey, 2007); ii) revival of anti-fascist organisations; iii) revival of the Conservative Party, which presented candidates in all local wards while its leader – Michael Howard – delivered a speech in Burnley against the BNP describing it as a “stain on British democracy” (Independent, 2004). In addition, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) posed a strong challenge to the BNP because it led a campaign on withdrawing from the EU and on opposition to further immigration into the UK by describing themselves as “a non-racist party that takes a firm line on immigration” (Renton, 2005, p.36). Financially supported by public figures and enjoying favourable tabloid coverage, UKIP possessed far more resources than the BNP and competed for a similar share of the electorate (Copsey, 2007).

UKIP’s strong performance at the 2004 EP ballot – over 2,5 million votes and 12 elected MEPs – severely undercut the BNP vote (Hainsworth, 2008). Immigration was the electorate’s top priority issue with 25.5 per cent at the 2004 EP exit poll. Unsurprisingly, 77 per cent of the BNP voters had pointed out immigration as their most important issue against 53 per cent of the UKIP’s electorate while the latter party showed a stronger ability to attract dissatisfied Conservative voters than the BNP (John et al., 2006, p. 8). Whereas the Conservatives’ campaign on asylum was splitting Labour’s core electorate and attracting those with authoritarian attitudes, it was apparently working to the BNP’s advantage. Griffin justified his unfulfilled electoral predictions by accusing UKIP of being a product of a mainstream party conspiracy to hamper BNP success (Renton, 2005). Facing a renewed

challenge for the leadership from John Tyndall and a legal action for inciting racial hatred,<sup>34</sup> Griffin promised a major ideological reform at the 2005 general election (see Chapter 6).

In sum, the BNP had an electoral breakthrough at local level and expanded its electoral support in second-order-ballots before the 2005 general election. Political debate over immigration, particularly asylum, was among the factors expanding the BNP's structure of political opportunities through the first half of the 2000s. The BNP was a fast-growing party, already the most successful ERP in British history, yet it failed to make a national electoral breakthrough at the 2004 ballots, despite a favourable structure of political opportunities. Griffin's modernisation programme entailed dropping biological racism and anti-Semitism in favour of cultural racism with a particular focus on Islam. Nevertheless, as already noted, the shift from the neo-Nazi ERP type to an authoritarian xenophobic type was not fully accomplished before the 2005 general election. Henceforth, the BNP was not perceived as either a serious electoral challenge by mainstream parties in first-order-ballots or a strategic dilemma beyond the local level.

### **5.3 – BNP impact on immigration policy under Blair's second term**

Did the BNP intensify the restrictive character of developments in British immigration policy according to its xenophobic agenda during Blair's second term? Alternatively, did the BNP benefit from developments within this area instead of making significant impact? British immigration policy was characterised by a narrative of "managed migration" that encompassed a liberal approach to HSI and intra-EU inflows and a repressive character on asylum. This research suggests that the BNP had no relevant impact on policy developments observed between 2001 and 2005, a trend that was associated to the BNP's failure to pose an electoral threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots (Table 2.1).

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<sup>34</sup> A BBC documentary entitled *The Secret Agent* broadcasted on 15 July showed Griffin calling Islam a "wicked, vicious faith". Griffin refused to withdraw his comments, so he and BNP member Mark Collett were tried for incitement to racial hatred (Miller et. al., 2010).

### 5.3.1 – 2002 White Paper: “Secure Borders, Safe Haven”

Immigration became Blair’s number one domestic priority after 2001 (Seldon et al., 2007). Early concerns were indicated by Blair’s appointment of David Blunkett as the new Home Secretary, known for his “calculated populism”. Blunkett shared Blair’s obsessive concern to close ranks with the Conservatives and boasted that: “I will make Jack Straw look liberal” (quoted from Rawnsley, 2010, p. 282). His new job started under intense pressure with the rise of asylum claims and a barrage of tabloid reports about the Sangatte camp, near Calais, France (Layton-Henry, 2004).<sup>35</sup> Initially regarded as a French problem, the Sangatte camp was closed down in July 2002 after negotiations between French and British authorities led to the deployment of British immigration officers in Calais (Shuster, 2003). In response to mounting criticism, Blunkett published a White Paper on immigration policy that would entail “radical change at home” and send a “signal to everyone that the UK is not a soft touch”, informally co-opting a Conservative slogan.<sup>36</sup>

The February 2002 White Paper: “*Secure Borders, Safe Haven*” proposed a system that combined “rational controlled routes for economic migration with fair robust, procedures for dealing with those who claim asylum” (Home Office, 2002, p. 5). The benefits derived from primary immigration were widely praised by Blunkett, who favoured the liberalisation of channels for labour inflows. This reflected a pro-business policy and was underpinned by research conducted by the Cabinet Office (Balch, 2009). As Boswell noted (2003, p. 38), Labour strategy to present its case for ‘managed migration’ involved the ‘packaging’ of liberalism with highly restrictive rhetoric on forced inflows. By distinguishing inflows on the basis of an economic utilitarianism criteria (Weil, 2005), the Labour government ensured that its proposals on asylum conformed to Jack Straw’s “cigarette papers” metaphor.

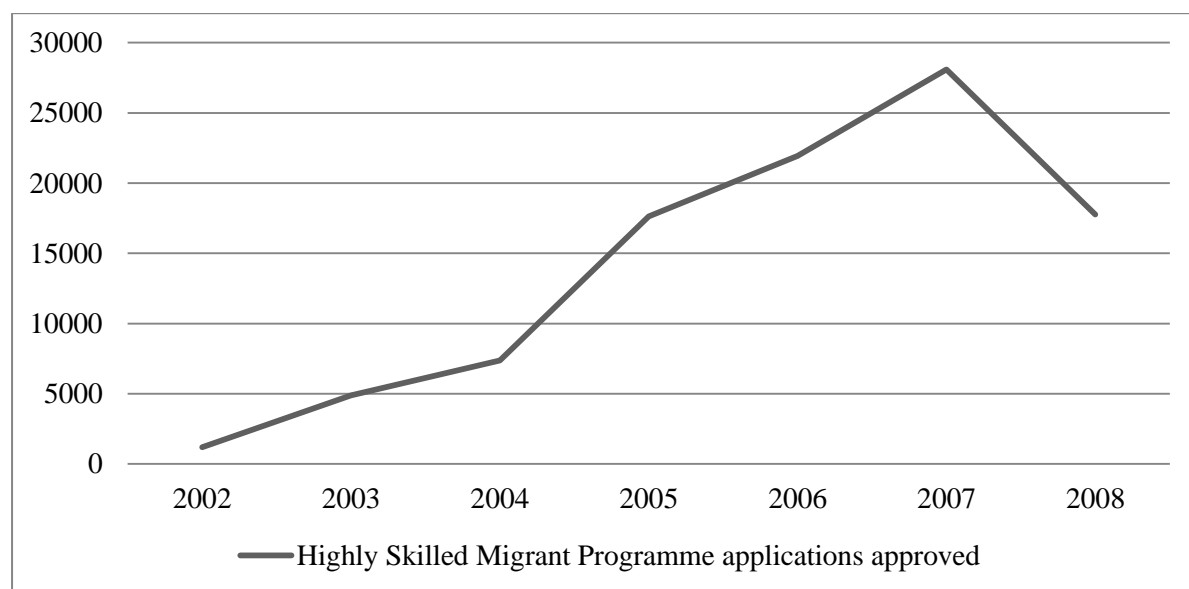
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<sup>35</sup> Many potential asylum seekers from Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan waited in this camp for an opportunity to enter in the UK illegally mostly through the Channel Tunnel (Shuster, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Hansard, 29 October 2001, Column 627.

The Highly Skilled Immigrant Programme<sup>37</sup> (HSMP) was introduced replacing the previous “Innovators Scheme” (Geddes, 2008). In the context of an expanding economy, the HSMP marked the adoption of a *laissez-faire* approach towards HSI by the Labour government. Therefore, concession of residence authorisations was linked to the labour market incorporation of skilled newcomers and there was a substantial expansion of HSI henceforth (Figure 5.8). Demand for unskilled immigrant labour was also acknowledged and diverse temporary schemes<sup>38</sup> were deployed by similar administrative means to fill bottlenecks in the British labour market (Balch, 2009). Temporary residence authorisations granted to unskilled

**Figure 5.8** – Applications approved under the HSMP and Tier A of the points-system between 2002 and 2008



Source: Salt, 2009, p. 109

<sup>37</sup> HSMP was a system of points based on qualification, income and achievement that permits entrance without a sponsor. After securing employment at a level warranted by their skill bases, further leave to remain is granted and immigrants’ right to family reunion is acknowledged. After a probation period of 4 years, HSI were entitled to long-term residence permits (Messina, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Such entry routes were formed by the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme, Sector Based Schemes Workers, and the extension of the ‘working holidaymakers’ scheme. These schemes were constituted by labour permits of a temporary character based on short-term contracts, which denied the right to family reunion or welfare benefits (Sales, 2005).

immigrants were dependent on duration of their work contracts and were similar to guest-worker programmes while immigrants selected by the HSMP were entitled to long-term settlement. Recognition of the right to long-term residence for HSI indicated a distributive policy and the presence of a client politics model behind the HSMP. The option for granting temporary residence authorisations to unskilled inflows suggested the presence of a redistributive policy and an interest-group politics model (Table 2.2).

Temporary schemes for unskilled immigrants were presented by Blunkett as a mean to tackle irregular inflows but immigration studies suggest that such policy can have the opposite outcome (Home Office, 2002, p. 9; Castles, 2006). A new bill on immigration policy presented in 2002 was almost entirely devoted to asylum inflows and to the forced removal of irregular immigrants (Table 5.3; Shuster and Solomos, 2004). Blunkett announced a new approach to asylum based on “induction, accommodation, removal or integration” in British society<sup>39</sup>, which generalised the detention of asylum seekers during Labour’s term (Bloch and Shuster, 2005). This repressive approach presupposed the criminalisation of asylum seekers, who were treated as an exogenous body within British society to be isolated from the public (Back et al., 2002; Bosworth, 2008). Labour’s policy on asylum became known as a “politics of deterrence” for the extensive restrictions or regulations imposed to curb the number of asylum-seekers (McGhee, 2005; Table 5.3). The expansion of regulations on asylum claims indicated a regulatory policy and the adoption of an entrepreneurial model by the Labour government (Table 2.2).

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<sup>39</sup> Hansard, 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2002, Column 1027.

**Table 5.3** – Modifications to British immigration policy introduced by the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act

| Primary inflows | Secondary inflows  | Asylum   | Irregular inflows   |
|-----------------|--|--|---|
|                 | Probationary period of marriage extended from 1 to 2 years | New controls on entry. Established a system based on induction/ accommodation/ removal centres. Separate education for asylum seekers' children. Abolished voucher system. Removed financial support for applications not presented "as soon as reasonably practicable". Allowed the removal of refugee status where an applicant or dependent commits a listed offence. Right to work is revoked. | Penalty for migrant-smuggling increased to 14 years. Extends powers for police to conduct searches for irregular migrant workers. Intensification of carriers sanctions and the "Authority to Carry" scheme |

Moreover, a last minute provision was included in the bill that enabled the removal of asylum seekers' children from the mainstream school system and confined them in detention centres (Sales, 2005). Blunkett justified this action on BBC Radio 4's Today programme by considering that while the parents' asylum claim was examined, the "children will be educated on the site, which will be open. People will be able to come and go, but importantly not swamping the local school" (Guardian, 2002). This remark was widely condemned for the use of word "swamp" that resembled Margaret Thatcher racist comments in the late 1970s. In parliament, the Home Secretary provided a different justification by pointing out:

"the difficulty sometimes with families whose removal has been attempted is that their youngsters have become part of a school, making it virtually impossible in some circumstances to operate the managed system".<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Hansard, 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2002, Column 353.

Therefore, the detainment of asylum seekers' children sought to enhance rates of forced removals regardless of the children's welfare. This behaviour conformed to an old logic of creating a non-existent problem (asylum seekers' children overcrowding schools) to justify a solution to an entirely different concern (obstacles to forced removals processes) (March and Olsen, 1979). Furthermore, this event evidenced an interdiscursive relationship between Blunkett's rhetoric and the general ERP's frame of immigration as a threat to the host society, which was linked to a particular illiberal measure (see Chapter 2).<sup>41</sup> In particular, the Home Secretary presented the asylum seekers' dependents as a menace to British children's welfare and this was employed to legitimise the illiberal measure of locking children in detention centres. As Copsey noted (2007, p. 141), Blunkett's remark increased the credibility of the BNP's xenophobic discourse because of his wider political capital than any member of the BNP.

As debate over the new immigration law developed in the aftermath of the French 2002 presidential 'earthquake' (see p.195). The Labour Party guru Anthony Giddens claimed that the "third way" could beat the BNP's xenophobia "by modernising, liberalising and being tough on immigration" (Giddens, 2002). Therefore, a consistent challenge to the extreme-right's xenophobia from Labour was precluded. Furthermore, some authors have argued that the BNP successes in the May 2002 local elections as well as the extreme-right success in continental Europe "drove New Labour into a stance of aggressive defence in relation to migration, and specifically asylum" (Schuster and Solomos, 2004, p. 280; Sales, 2005; Copsey, 2009). However, these authors pre-empt Labour's responsibility for the shape of British immigration policy by overstating the BNP's impact. Both the 2002 White Paper and the draft of the 2002 immigration law preceded the extreme-right successes in Britain or

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<sup>41</sup> In the article entitled "Time is running out for Western Civilization", Griffin argued that a popular backlash was expected, since "the only thing that can save us is that the liberals (...) are rushing to 'finish the job' by swamping us in our own homelands" (Griffin, 2002).

France. Instead, Labour's repressive approach to asylum reflected the inter-party consensus to curb asylum inflows observed in the 2001 electoral campaign (Messina, 2007). A positive approach to HSI combined with a repressive approach to asylum was the strategy found at the time to neutralise the Conservatives' challenge not the BNP.

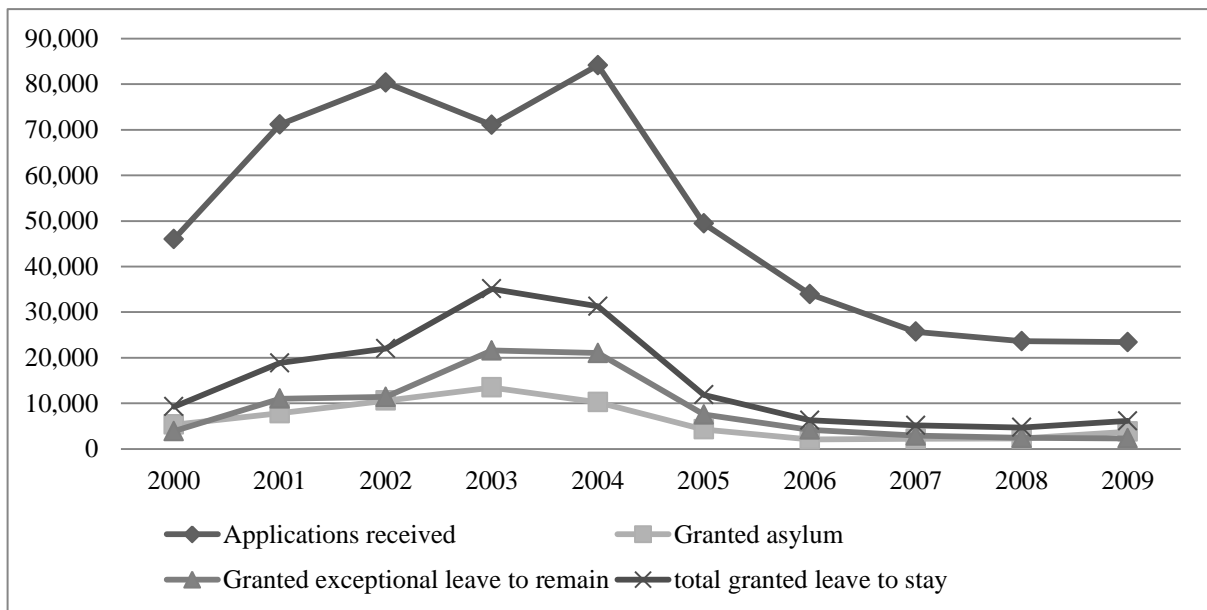
### **5.3.2 – Blair's personal grip on immigration policy**

In the context of repeated tabloid focus on asylum and facing a Conservative challenge on immigration, Blair's concerns with the issue intensified (Spencer, 2007). Unconvinced about the effectiveness of Blunkett's repressive approach and concerned to prove New Labour's competence over asylum, Blair started intervening directly (Seldon et al., 2007). At the EU summit in Seville in June 2002, Blair sought to transpose British domestic priorities to the EU level. The offshore processing of asylum applications either on borders of the EU or closer to the countries of origin was proposed by Blair but vetoed by other EU leaders (Geddes, 2005).

In February 2003, in a TV interview about which he did not consult Blunkett, Blair pledged to halve the number of asylum requests in the following six months (Newsnight, 2003). By the Labour Party conference in September 2003, the UK observed the greatest drop in asylum seeking observed in any EU country (Figure 5.9; Quinn, 2006). This demonstrated the British state's ability to severely restrict undesired inflows despite the substantial growth in the number of refugees because of the conflict in Iraq from 2003 onwards (Messina, 2007). Unlike the government's approach to asylum, qualification levels required to access the HSMP were lowered in 2003 to counter a drop in the number of applications (Figure 5.8, Boswell, 2003). The subsequent rise of labour inflows demonstrated the British government's ability to promote policy outcomes according to its liberal labour market objectives.



**Figure 5.9** – Asylum requests in the UK between 2000 and 2009



Source – Home Office, 2009

A second immigration law was approved by Parliament in 2004 extending the restrictions introduced two years earlier and providing further evidence of Blair’s focus on asylum (Table 5.4).<sup>42</sup> The enactment of new legislation reinforced the descending trend of asylum seeking in the UK (Figure 5.9). Blair’s success in curtailing this inflow raises doubts about judicial constraints on the management of asylum inflows (Joppke, 1998; Gibney and Hansen, 2003). Furthermore, UK legislation on asylum has been charged of neglecting human rights laws and the provisions of the 1951 Geneva Convention (Statham, 2002; Sales, 2007; Spencer, 2007). Nonetheless, Blair and his cabinet became increasingly concerned as the massive drop in asylum seeking failed to diminish the salience of immigration in public opinion, as it will be seen in the next chapter (Bartle, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> A new immigration and asylum law was announced by Blair at the Labour Party conference in September 2003. This would not only help genuine refugees but was the “best defence against racism gaining ground” (Blair, 2003).

**Table 5.4** – Modifications to British immigration policy introduced by the 2004 Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act

| Primary inflows | Secondary inflows   | Asylum  | Irregular inflows  |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
|                 | Marriages between non-EEA and UK nationals must be noticed at a designated registration centre. Non-EEA nationals getting married must hold entry clearance for the purpose of marriage. Home Office is empowered to require written applications and to charge fees. | Creates a single tier of appeal for asylum seekers, the asylum and immigration court. Allows electronic monitoring of asylum seekers and refusal of support for asylum seekers with family dependents for not cooperating with removal process. | Criminalises destruction of identification documents on entry. |

Further restrictive developments on immigration reflected Blair’s obsession with closing ground with the Conservatives, after the British state’s recognition of the right to free movement to the new A-8 countries in December 2002 at the Copenhagen European Council (Balch, 2011). By the end of 2003, the Conservatives’ leader Michael Howard<sup>43</sup> lent his support to a tabloid campaign focusing on “gypsy benefit tourists” and subsequent welfare system abuses by newcomers from A-8 countries (Bale, 2010). This campaign illustrated a further interdiscursive relationship between mainstream parties’ discourse and ERPs’ frame of immigration as a threat to the host society (see Chapter 2). In this case, the citizens of new EU member-states of Roma origin were stigmatised as welfare abusers even before these

<sup>43</sup> Howard succeeded Ian Duncan Smith, whose term as the Conservatives’ leader lasted from 2001 to 2003. The new leader was known for his past record in John Major’s government as a hard-line Home Secretary and a Eurosceptic. In his first public interview to The Sun, Howard stressed Europe and asylum plus Thatcher neoliberal tax cuts as his electoral priorities providing evidence of continuity in the Conservatives’ discourse rather than a rupture (Bale, 2010).

countries' accession into the EU. The stigmatisation of this particular type of immigration but on different grounds would also be observed later on in Italy (see Chapter 10).

Bowing to the tabloids' and Conservatives' campaign, Blunkett announced that citizens from A-8 countries would have restricted access to welfare benefits and a Worker Registration System would monitor their number (the restrictions on welfare access lasted for a year).<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the employment of CDA allowed the identification of an interdiscursive relationship between the ERP's frame of immigration with the tabloid and the Conservative campaign on "gypsy benefit tourists" and its linkage with the deployment of an illiberal measure towards immigration. Furthermore, this curtailment of rights possessed deep symbolic value and sent a message to public opinion confirming the association between welfare abuses and immigration (Naletto, 2010). The Labour government reinforced rather than challenged the perception of immigration as a threat to British society, a trend that had short-term repercussions on public concern with immigration (see Chapter 6).

In 2004, events at the Home Office exacerbated Blair's concerns in a period of low popularity and with Chancellor Gordon Brown pressing to succeed him as Prime Minister (Seldon et al., 2007). The first crisis unfolded when the Shadow Home Secretary David Davis denounced a 'scam' within the Home Office in April 2004 (Independent, 2004). This swindle involved a couple of thousand business applications from Romania and Bulgaria. The Immigration Minister, Beverley Hughes, resigned. This coincidence between the Home Office crisis and the lowest trough in the Prime Minister's popularity, in the context of the Iraq War and the Hutton Inquiry started in 2003, led Blair to announce a review of the entire immigration system (BBC, 2007; Spencer, 2007).

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<sup>44</sup> This scheme recorded the new member-states citizens' employment and monitored their highly restricted access to social benefits (Spencer, 2007).

In addition, an important speech on immigration policy was delivered by Blair himself at the Confederation of British Industry, a few days before the A-8 countries joined the EU. In this speech Blair addressed the electorate by claiming that British people “accepted migration that is controlled and selective” but would not accept abuses of the system (Blair, 2004, p. 3). Recognition of the economic benefits of “controlled migration” was accompanied by extensive assurances as regards tackling abuse (Blair, 2004, p. 4). This emphasis continued to confirm the hegemonic perception of widespread abuse whilst his efforts to defuse the salience of immigration were undermined by a later crisis at the Home Office. Inflows of unskilled workers from non-EU countries were controlled by strict quotas and would be further reduced with EU expansion (2004, p. 5).

In contrast, inflows from new member-states were entirely welcomed by Blair, who argued that: “there are half a million vacancies in our job market and our strong and growing economy needs migration to fill these vacancies” (Blair, 2004, p.9). This was the core message to his business audience, providing evidence of Labour's liberal approach to intra-European migration. Consequently, the government option to recognise free-movement to citizens of A-8 countries was directly legitimised by the British Prime Minister. The granted right to long-term settlement to the citizens of A-8 countries conforms to the outline of a distributive policy that indicates the presence of a client politics model. The maintenance of the option for a guest-worker system for unskilled labour from non-EU countries suggests the continuous presence of the interest group model mentioned earlier (Table 2.2).

### **5.3.3 – Second White Paper: “Controlling our borders: Making migration work for Britain”**

By December 2004, Blunkett’s resignation fuelled the government’s perceived vulnerability on immigration after another scandal at the Home Office involving alleged abuse of his position concerning the concession of a work permit (Geddes, 2005). Charles Clarke was

appointed as Home Secretary. He presented a new White Paper designed to maintain public confidence in the immigration and asylum system (Sales, 2007). Publication of a new white paper a few months before the 2005 general election suggested the subordination of immigration policy to Blair's strategy for re-election. A senior member of Labour's campaign recognised that a pillar of the 2005 electoral strategy was:

“reassurance on immigration, asylum and crime. We sought to neutralise these issues by dealing with them systematically through the five year plans and counterattacking the Tories” (Gould, 2007, p. 21).

Thus, Blair's concerns were caused by the Conservatives' challenge on immigration rather than by BNP electoral successes at the local level.

The new five-year strategy contained a foreword by the Prime Minister demonstrating his personal focus on immigration. According to Blair's foreword, “race relations” were “a quiet success story” in the UK, but “British traditional tolerance is under threat (...) from those who come and live here illegally by breaking our rules and abusing our hospitality” (Blair, 2005a, p. 5). Hostile attitudes to immigration were thus legitimised by the Prime Minister, justified by immigrants' alleged misconduct that reinforced the perception of widespread abuse. If such abuses were not tackled, Blair argued that the extremists could promote their “perverted view of race” (Blair, 2005, p. 5). Apart from such broad references to extremism, the BNP was never directly mentioned in association with immigration policy by the government during Blair's second term (Eatwell, 2010).

Whereas the 2002 White Paper contained an appraisal of immigration's economic benefits, the 2005 document indicated the subordination of inflows to national interests only (Sales, 2007). Consequently, long-term settlement would only be recognised to those immigrants who brought benefits to the UK (Blair, 2005). The document presented another two-pronged

approach to the management of immigration with the introduction of a points-system to streamline the plethora of entry channels and the deployment of biometric controls to tackle ‘widespread’ abuse by immigrants (Clarke, 2005; Spencer, 2007). Once more, Labour’s liberal approach to labour inflows was packaged alongside a restrictive approach with highly symbolic security measures, included in the Italian 2002 Bossi-Fini law (see p. 267). Additionally, a new asylum model was announced granting refugee status on a temporary instead of a permanent basis to deter further asylum inflows by increasing immigrants’ vulnerability of arbitrary expulsion (Clarke, 2005). The continuous expansion of regulations on asylum seeking and on refugee status indicated the continuous presence of an entrepreneurial model on asylum (Table 2.2).

Besides providing HSI in a context of growing shortages in the domestic labour market and an expanding economy, Blair acknowledged the Labour government’s vested interest in promoting HSI:

“Our vital public services depend upon skilled staff from overseas. Far from being a burden on these services, our expanding NHS, for example, would have difficulty meeting the needs of patients without foreign-born nurses and doctors” (Blair, 2005a, p. 5)

Besides framing HSI as a cost-free policy producing diffuse costs, Blair positioned the UK state among the concentrated groups directly benefiting from immigration, which organise in defence of their interests (Freeman, 1995; 2006). The overall costs of Labour’s investment in public services, especially the NHS, could soar up if a bottleneck of skilled labour was found in the labour market (Borjas, 2006). Henceforth, Labour’s vested interest on promoting HSI to attain its own political objectives helps to understand the *laissez-faire* approach and the client politics model on HSI.

A Labour backbench MP and former adviser to Number 10, Jon Cruddas, noticed:

“the government triangulates around immigration and colludes in the demonization of the migrant whilst relying on the self same people to rebuild our public and private services and make our labour markets flexible” (Cruddas, 2005, p. 23).

In time, Blair’s unwillingness to challenge the tabloids and Conservative campaigns against immigration coupled with his emphasis on tackling abuses in the immigration system reinforced the demonization of immigrants. Promotion of labour inflows in a context of hegemonic perception of widespread abuse by immigrants could provide fertile ground to the BNP’s xenophobic discourse (Cruddas, 2005). Despite increasingly stringent immigration policy during Blair’s second term in office, the BNP had no impact on policy developments. The stringent approach to asylum by the Labour government and the mounting perception of immigration as a threat were more an outcome of mainstream party agency than a reflection of BNP electoral breakthrough at the local level. This observation diverges from the growth of levels of immigration and coincides with the negative behaviour of the remaining factors proposed to understand ERP impact on policy developments (Table 2.1).

Increased levels of immigration during Labour’s second term failed to reverse the BNP’s irrelevance on immigration policy (Figure 5.2). Immigration policy was not a priority for the British electorate at the 2001 general election, though issue salience increased as Labour’s second term progressed (Figure 5.3). The BNP’s failure to secure an electoral breakthrough at national level before the 2005 general election also precluded any salient threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots (Table 5.1). Finally, ostracism of the BNP deprived Griffin of exogenous support to enhance the BNP’s impact on immigration policy. Overall, it is the BNP’s insignificant electoral challenge to mainstream parties that seems the most relevant factor behind its lack of impact on immigration policy during Labour’s second term.

## 5.4 – Conclusions

Immigration policy was moderately salient at the 2001 electoral campaign, mostly due to the Conservative leader's populist campaign on asylum until a few weeks before the ballot. Two mainstream inter-party consensus were observed on curbing asylum inflows and promoting HSI. Notwithstanding the Conservatives' populism on asylum, the BNP lacked a relevant impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy at the 2001 general election. The BNP's failure to pose an electoral threat to mainstream parties in the context of declining levels of immigration, low public concern with immigration and mainstream parties' isolation of the BNP was regarded as the most relevant factor behind the BNP's lack of impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2001 general election. Effectively, Hague's emphasis on asylum presaged rather than responded to a British ERP's electoral breakthrough.

The British electorate at the 2001 general election overwhelmingly overlooked immigration (in particular asylum) as an important issue. However, hostility to immigration (mostly perceived as a threat to employment) was significant across the electorate, mostly perceived as a threat to employment. Interesting variations were found across public attitudes to distinct types of inflows four months prior to the 2001 general election, as HSI were welcomed whilst asylum inflows highly undesired. Despite these trends, the BNP has no relevant contagion effects on British public attitudes to immigration in 2001. Within the context of decreasing levels of immigration and mainstream parties' non-engagement with the British ERP, the BNP's insignificant electoral support was considered the most important factor to understand its lack of impact on this dimension. The coincidence between British voters' positive perception of HSI and the negative perception of asylum alongside the salient levels of hostility to immigration presaged any BNP's electoral breakthrough and cannot be considered



an outcome of this ERP's agency. These trends enhance the profile of British mainstream parties in shaping public attitudes to immigration in the context of a non-relevant ERP.

Electoral support for the BNP expanded between 2001 and 2005. After scoring the best result ever for a British ERP at a general election in 2001, the BNP achieved an electoral breakthrough at the local level in Burnley in the following year. Electoral successes at the local level were further consolidated at the 2003 and 2004 local elections. Beside the BNP's encouraging structure of political opportunities at local elections, political debate over immigration was among the identified factors propelling BNP successes suggesting that this ERP benefited from mainstream politics on this topic. In spite of a favourable structure of political opportunities at the 2004 ballots, the BNP increased its electoral support but failed to attain the expected breakthrough either in the EP election or in the London Assembly election. Consequently, the BNP failed to pose a strategic dilemma to mainstream parties before the 2005 general election. As already noted, Griffin's modernisation programme sought to shift the BNP from a neo-Nazi type into an authoritarian xenophobic type (Carter, 2005). Thus, anti-Semitism was replaced by criticism of Islam whilst opposition to immigration was justified on ethno-cultural grounds instead of the previous biological racism.

Blair's government adopted a two-pronged approach to immigration policy involving a *laissez-faire* approach towards HSI packaged alongside a highly restrictive approach to asylum. HSI expanded continuously reflecting Labour's liberalism whilst asylum seeking was successfully reduced with indifference for conventions on human rights. The recognition of the right to long-term settlement and the *laissez-faire* approach to HIS suggest the presence of a client politics model on this type of immigration. Moreover, Blair framed the intensification HSI as a cost-free policy and placed the British state amongst the groups directly benefited from this type of immigration. In contrast, the guest-worker systems imposed on unskilled labour immigration suggest the adoption of an interest group politics

model. As the government's term progressed, immigration became Blair's top domestic priority reflecting his fixation on neutralising the Conservatives' challenge on this topic. Subsequently, restrictions on asylum seeking were successively expanded in 2002 and 2004 indicating the presence of a regulatory policy and entrepreneurial politics. Furthermore, this thesis has highlighted how the articulation of the ERPs' frame of immigration was employed by Blunkett to legitimise the repressive measure of detaining asylum seekers' dependents in detention centres in the context of an irrelevant ERP.

The Labour government recognised free movement to the citizens from A-8 countries, indicating the adoption of a client politics model on the management of this type of immigration directly legitimised by the Prime Minister. Nonetheless, the emphasis on tackling abuse of the immigration system led to the curtailment of access to welfare benefits for A-8 citizens that reflected Blair's reaction to the Conservative and tabloids' campaign that demonised immigrants of Roma origin. Once again, mainstream discourse on immigration and its articulation as a threat to the British society was directly related to the imposition of immigrants' unequal access to the welfare system in the context of a non-relevant ERP. Blair's obsession with closing grounds with the Conservatives rather than the BNP's electoral breakthrough at the local level led to the inclusion of high profile security measures in the 2005 White Paper and the drop of the narrative of managed immigration before the 2005 general election.

Despite assertions in the literature (Schuster and Solomos, 2004; Sales, 2005; Copsey, 2009), this thesis has shown that the BNP lacked relevant impact on the development of immigration policy during Blair's second term. The Labour government's repressive approach to asylum reflected Blair's obsession to close grounds with the Conservatives rather than BNP's electoral breakthrough at local level. The BNP's non-existent impact coincided with the low concern with immigration among the British electorate in 2001 and mainstream parties'

isolation of the British ERP. Once more, the BNP's insignificant electoral threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots was considered the most relevant factor hampering its impact on the development of British immigration policy during Labour's second term. The adoption of a repressive approach to asylum throughout Blair's second term was therefore developed in the context of an insignificant ERP.

## Chapter 6 – The BNP impact on British immigration policy between 2005 and 2009

“We need a tougher immigration policy and we need to stop seeing it as a dilemma. It's not. It's easy. I'm going to do my best to help the British back to work.”

Minister of Immigration, Phil Woolas, (2008)

This chapter analyses BNP impact on the British immigration politics and policy between 2005 and 2009. Chapter 5 demonstrated that the BNP lacked any impact on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy at the 2001 general election and during Blair's second term. Nevertheless, the BNP electoral breakthrough was still incorrectly associated with Labour's government repressive approach to asylum. This chapter explores whether the BNP had a significant impact on inter-party competition on immigration and on public attitudes to this social phenomenon at the 2005 general election. It then surveys the BNP's electoral development between 2005 and 2009 and its frame of immigration policy. Finally, this chapter's last section examines whether the BNP had a relevant impact on the development of immigration policy during the Labour government's third term.

### **6.1 – The 2005 general election - Blair's third victory**

The May 2005 general election developed in a different political context in comparison to the 2001 ballot, as Blair's position as Prime Minister was no longer unassailable. Under pressure from the Iraq War and both the Hutton and Butler inquiries of 2003 and 2004, Blair's popularity and credibility was low before the ballot (Butler and Kavannagh, 2005). In October 2004, Blair announced that the next general election would be his last, yet he could still attain a unique achievement for a Labour Prime Minister by securing three consecutive terms (Rawnsley, 2010). Interest in the 2005 general election amongst the British electorate

was modest with a turnout of 61.4 per cent, the second lowest turnout since 1918 (Butler and Kavannagh, 2005).

### **6.1.1 – BNP impact on inter-party competition**

The research developed through Chapter 5 found that the BNP lacked impact on inter-party competition on immigration in 2001. Now, this thesis explores whether the BNP reinforced the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions on immigration and the salience of this issue in their electoral manifestos at the 2005 general election. The salience of immigration policy increased substantially in 2005 and mainstream parties adopted increasingly restrictive positions. This was especially true of the Conservatives under Michael Howard's leadership. Despite these observations, the BNP lacked any relevant impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy at the 2005 general elections. As seen below, the BNP inability to mount an electoral threat to mainstream parties by 2005: looked as the most relevant factor behind its lack of impact on this dimension of immigration politics (Table 2.1).

#### ***6.1.1.1 – The BNP's electoral campaign***

The BNP contested 119 constituencies in 2005, a fourfold growth in comparison to 2001 (Table 6.1). Internal party documents suggested that the leadership's objective was to identify potential voters in specific wards to increase the BNP effectiveness at the 2006 local elections (Copsey, 2009). The BNP's political opportunities were marginally improved by the high salience of immigration and the party's eligibility for mail shots across the UK, as well as a five-minute TV broadcast. Demonstrating the BNP's radical xenophobia, the TV broadcast focused on the shortage of social housing caused allegedly by its allocation to asylum seekers and on the supposed failings of the Labour and Conservatives Parties on asylum (BNP, 2005a).

As in the past, the BNP electoral strategists continued to associate cultural xenophobia with local grievances in particular constituencies to enhance the party's respectability at the local level (John et al., 2006). In Barking and Dagenham, the shortage of cheap social housing was exploited by a BNP leaflet entitled "Africans for Essex Scheme", which alleged that African immigrants received incentives from the local council to buy houses in Barking (Cruddas et al., 2005). In Keighley, West Yorkshire, the BNP tried to exploit a local campaign against schoolgirl prostitution by framing it as an issue of Asians' grooming of white girls for sex. As in Oldham in 2001, Griffin was the BNP's candidate in Keighley in a bid to exploit local tensions (Guardian, 2005a). The launch of the BNP electoral manifesto entitled "Hope not Hate" was ignored by the mainstream media, demonstrating Griffin's feeble access to the British media.<sup>45</sup> At this event, Griffin declared that British troops should be pulled out of Iraq and deployed to patrol the "Channel Tunnel and Dover ports to keep out illegal immigrants and asylum seekers" (BBC, 2005).

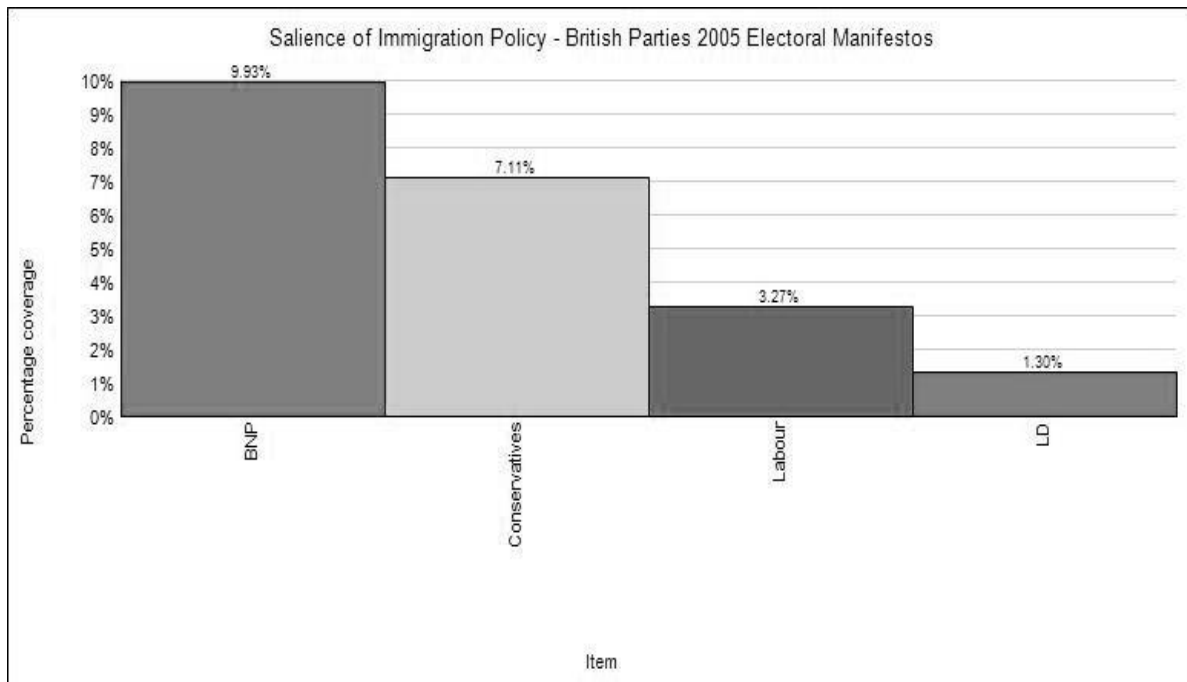
The BNP 2005 electoral manifesto integrated Griffin's ideological reform with a new critique of multiculturalism (Copsey, 2009). The document devoted high salience to immigration policy with particular emphasis on irregular immigration (Figure 6.1, BNP 2005b). Arguing that "Britain's existence is threatened by immigration", the BNP demanded an immediate halt to all types of inflows (BNP, 2005b). By contrast to the absence of references to irregular immigration across mainstream parties' discourse, a regularisation programme for irregular immigrants was proposed alongside the forced deportation of all irregular immigrants settled in the UK (BNP, 2005b). Respect for the 1951 Geneva Convention was acknowledged, but it was deemed that asylum seekers ought to find refuge in third states rather than in the UK (BNP, 2005b). Finally, the voluntary resettlement programme of ethnic minorities and immigrants was still proposed. The BNP's agenda on immigration had a clear restrictive

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<sup>45</sup> Apart from the BBC team, there were only three other reporters at the session (BBC, 2005).

character while its inherent ambiguity reflected Griffin’s aim to water down his party’s pariah status.

**Figure 6.1** – Saliency of immigration policy in British parties’ electoral manifestos at the 2005 general elections



Source: BNP, 2005; Conservatives, 2005; Labour, 2005; Liberal Democrats, 2005

#### **6.1.1.2 – Conservatives’ “it is not racist to impose limits on immigration”**

The Conservative Party, under Howard’s leadership, quickly recognised its inability to challenge the government’s record on public services and the economy without dumping Thatcher’s unpopular legacy (Bale, 2010). Instead, Howard opted for a valence strategy on the only issue on which the Conservatives had a clear advantage over Labour – immigration (Whiteley et al., 2005). Thereby, “loss of control” of immigration and the “chaotic” asylum system dominated his speech made in September 2004 (Howard, 2004). References to his origin from a Jewish asylum seeker family preceded projections that “immigration will account for 85 per cent” of Britain’s future population growth and associated immigration with shortages of social housing in the UK (Howard, 2004, p. 4). Conservatives’ proposals

included a points-system inspired by the Australian experience and “pulling out of the 1951 Refugee Convention” (Howard, 2004). The disrespect for such international conventions and human rights could lead to withdrawal from the EU and drove the Conservatives onto increasingly extremist grounds.

The Conservatives’ emphasis on immigration was reinforced by the appointment of Lynton Crosby in October 2004 as campaign director. He was a marketing guru widely known for his dog-whistle strategy on immigration employed in Australian elections (Geddes and Tonge, 2005). Instead of proposing positive and constructive policies, Howard opted for an aggressive and negative electoral campaign that involved playing the “race card” (Saggar, 2001). This strategy targeted the Conservatives’ core voters and sought to tackle UKIP’s success at the 2004 EP election (Cowley and Green, 2005). Moreover, this choice was also ideological: Howard and his entourage were convinced in 2001 that Hague had the right issues at the wrong election whilst the Conservatives’ populism would resonate with the electorate in 2005 (Bale, 2010).

A Conservative campaign poster with the slogan: “It is not racist to impose limits on immigration” received wide condemnation from ethnic minorities who considered it provocative and racist (Independent, 2005). In a speech in Telford in April 2005, which specifically focused on immigration, Howard justified the slogan as “plain common sense” (Howard, 2005, p. 2). “Bigots who preach racial hatred” (Howard, 2005, p. 2) would be assisted if the Conservatives failed to tackle the immigration issue. In addition to the proposals previously presented, Howard announced an annual limit to immigration approved by Parliament (including a quota on asylum seekers) and 24-hour security at all ports of entry. Despite the criticism of racial extremists, his speech ended with a strong populist statement that recalled the 1960s Smethwick election:



“Vote Conservative to limit and control immigration or vote Mr Blair or Liberal Democrats for no limits to immigration and an increase in the population by five million over the next three decades” (Howard, 2005, p. 4).

Reflecting Howard’s populist campaign, the salience of immigration in the Conservatives’ 2005 electoral manifesto expanded in comparison to the 2001 document (Figure 6.1). Benefits of economic migration were acknowledged in contrast to 2001 whilst asylum continued to be the most salient type of inflow (Conservatives, 2005). Two weeks before the election, Howard was forced to deny internal opposition to his political strategy after senior figures, such as Kenneth Clarke, urged him publicly to move on from immigration (Butler and Kavannah, 2005). Later on, Howard justified his strategy on immigration by pointing to the need to tackle ERP growth at a time when the BNP electoral strength amounted to 21 city councillors by 2004 (Table 5.2). Instead, Howard’s playing of the “race card” reflected his valence issue strategy, based on ideological convictions, alongside his failure to challenge the government on other key issues.

### ***6.1.1.3 – Centre-left parties’ positions on immigration***

The Labour’s government immigration policy had been subordinated to Blair’s electoral strategy to neutralise the Conservatives’ challenge. Consequently, the 2005 White Paper integrated the points-system proposed by the opposition alongside the introduction of biometric ID cards and a reduction of protection granted to refugees (Home Office, 2005). The Labour 2005 electoral manifesto also doubled the salience granted to immigration policy, and framed the management of inflows as a security issue like the 2005 White Paper (Figure 6.1). Effectively, irregular inflows were the most paramount type of immigration flows in the document (Labour, 2005). Yet, Labour refused to establish an annual cap on immigration as Conservatives demanded proving its strong liberalism towards labour inflows. By moving Labour’s position on immigration policy onto the centre-right grounds by co-opting the

opposition proposals, Blair pushed the Conservatives onto extremist grounds and forced them to present unfeasible proposals.

In contrast to 2001, Blair addressed the topic of immigration through his electoral campaign and delivered a strong speech in Dover (Howard's own constituency) in April 2005 (Butler and Kavannah, 2005). For the first time, the Prime Minister directly challenged the Conservatives' campaign on immigration by stating that: "It is an attempt deliberately to exploit people's fears" and blamed Howard for leading a single issue party (Blair, 2005b, p.2). After defending his government's record in contrast to Howard's poor record as past Conservative Home Secretary, Blair labelled the Conservatives' proposals as "incoherent babble" (Blair, 2005b, p. 2). Among other criticisms, Blair questioned the viability of Howard's plan for 24-hours surveillance over the existing 650 ports of entry and airports and simultaneously halve the costs of the immigration service (Blair, 2005b, p. 9). The premier ended with a robust defence of immigration's benefits to the UK. Instead of past convergence on the demonization of immigrants, Blair's direct challenge to Howard's campaign pictured the opposition as unrealistic and populist.

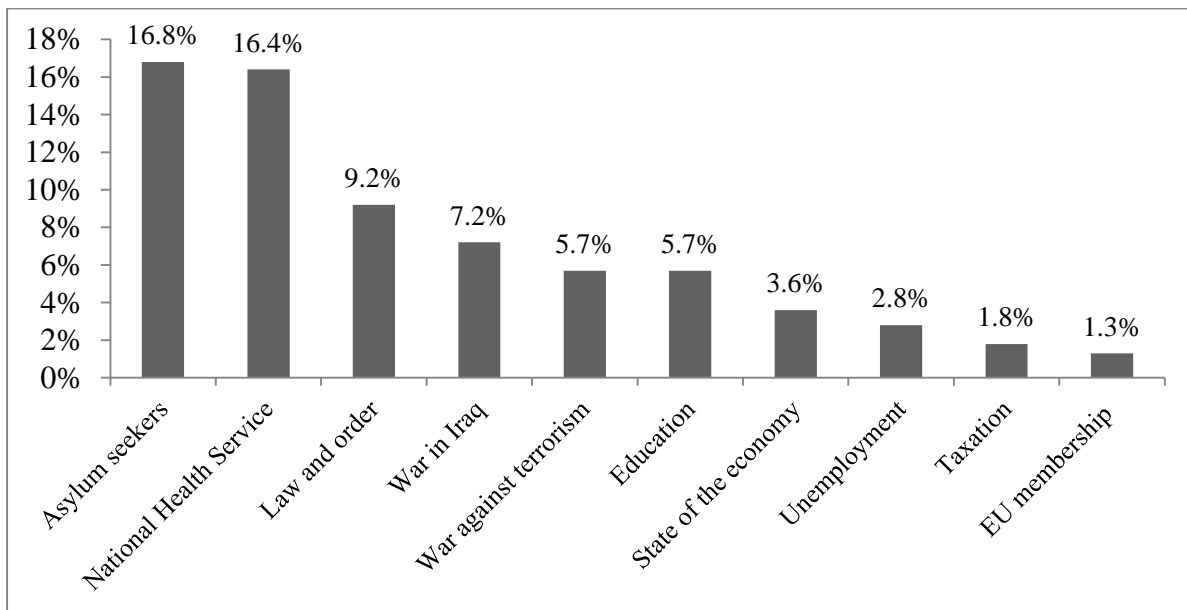
Finally, the Liberal Democrats proposed the introduction of a quota system for labour inflows set by an independent panel (BBC, 2004). The Liberal Democrats' manifesto devoted less salience to immigration policy and only addressed labour and asylum inflows (Figure 6.1, Liberal Democrats, 2005). Migration's economic benefits were praised and a new governmental agency to deal only with asylum was proposed, as well as the suppression of refugees' ineligibility to work (Liberal Democrats, 2005). Hence, the Liberal Democrats converged with the Conservatives on the establishment of a quota system for labour inflows. In short, the salience of immigration policy expanded considerably at the 2005 general election in comparison to 2001, and asylum and irregular inflows were the most salient types of inflows. A broad inter-party consensus was observed on the benefits of labour inflows

demonstrating the success of Labour's narrative of managed migration in leading the political debate. Nonetheless, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats converged on the proposal of a quota system for labour inflow while Labour and the Conservatives agreed on deploying high profile security measures to tackle the supposed widespread abuse of the immigration system.

Despite the increasing salience of immigration and the more restrictive positions of British mainstream parties in comparison to 2001, the BNP had no impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2005 general election. Intense salience of immigration at the electoral campaign was an outcome of the intense inter-party competition between Labour and the Conservatives on this issue, observed since the early 2000s. The Conservatives' valence issue strategy was designed to appeal to the wider electorate and tackle the success of UKIP, not the BNP. However, Blair's occupation of the centre-right ground on immigration policy pushed Howard to increasingly extremist grounds, a trend reinforced by his failure to challenge the government's record on other key areas. Once more, the Conservatives' escalation of their populist approach to asylum and restrictive mainstream parties' consensus developed in a political context marked by a non-relevant ERP. It presaged the BNP's electoral breakthrough at national level and cannot be conceived a response to the ERP's moderate success at local elections before 2005.

The BNP's lack of impact on inter-party competition on immigration at the 2005 general election coincided with its insignificant electoral threat and with the agency of mainstream parties. In contrast, the expansion of immigration rates up to 2005 (mostly supported by the increase of grants of settlement for asylum and labour purposes; see Figure 5.2) and the high salience of immigration amongst the public opinion (Figure 6.2) failed to coincide with the preceding observation. The BNP's failure to mount an electoral threat to mainstream parties was evident by its lack of electoral breakthrough at national level before

**Figure 6.2** – Most important issue at the British 2005 general election (N=3,589)



Source: BES 2005, Pre-election

2005 (Table 5.1). Finally, British mainstream parties' full isolation of the BNP at the fringes of the party system also diminished Griffin's chances to influence the BNP's competitors positions on immigration. Within the former context, the BNP non-relevant electoral threat to mainstream parties at the 2005 general election seemed the most important factor behind this party's lack of impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

### **6.1.2 – BNP impact on public attitudes**

Whereas immigration was considered largely irrelevant by the British electorate in 2001, significant levels of hostility towards this social phenomenon had been observed across the electorate. Now, did the BNP intensify levels of concern and hostility towards immigration across British public opinion at the 2005 general election? Immigration became the top priority issue of British voters and this social phenomenon was associated mostly with employment concerns in 2005. Despite these observations, this research points to the BNP's lack of impact on public attitudes to immigration. The British ERP's irrelevant levels of

electoral support at national level and its subsequent limited party organisation were considered the most relevant factors behind the preceding observation (Table 2.1).

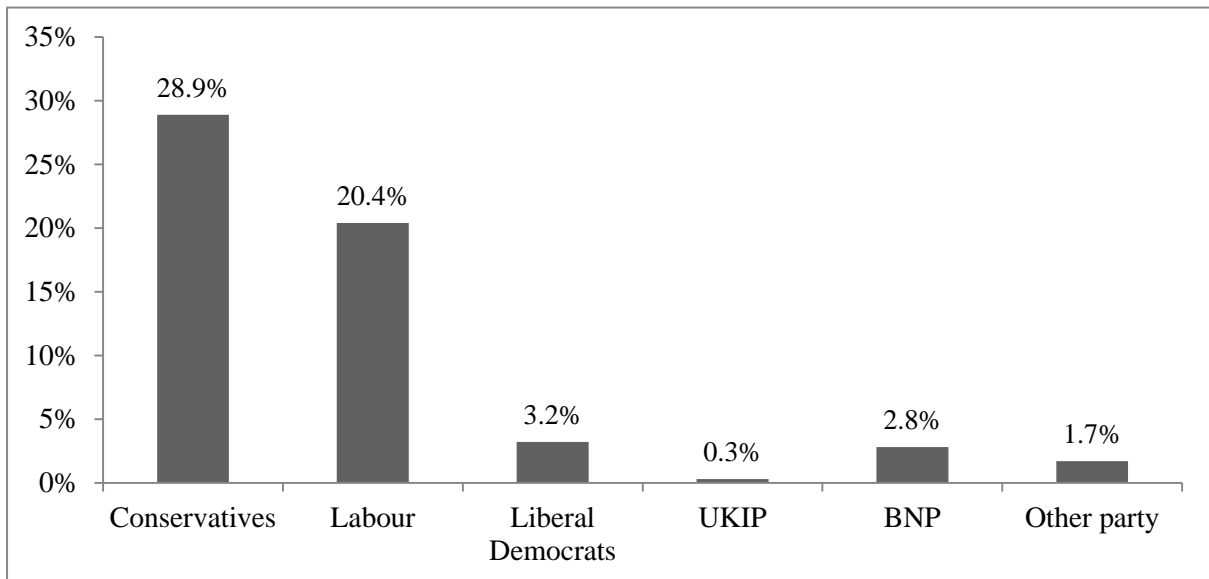
Surprisingly, immigration (in particular asylum) was the top priority of British voters at the 2005 general election, above the NHS or law and order (Figure 6.2). This trend had not been observed in the UK since the late 1970s, when Thatcher informally co-opted the British NF discourse on immigration (Geddes and Tongue, 2005). The acute rise of concern with immigration in 2005 developed in the context a dramatic drop on asylum seeking into the UK and cannot be dissociated from the intense inter-party competition on immigration between Labour and the Conservatives through Blair's second term (Figure 5.9). The Conservatives continued to be ranked as the best party to deal with immigration by voters most concerned with this issue, but the advantage over Labour was cut to eight percentage points (Figure 6.3). Furthermore, the BNP was considered a better party to deal with immigration by such voters than UKIP, and ranked at similar levels to the Liberal Democrats (Figure 6.3). This contrasted with its insignificance in 2001. Yet, the BNP was still very far from holding the issue ownership of opposition to immigration.

British public attitudes to immigration at the 2005 general election were similar to those at the 2001 ballot. Immigration continued to be perceived mostly as a threat to employment by a majority of respondents to the BES 2005 pre-electoral survey (Figure 6.4). Immigration was also positively regarded as a source of new ideas and cultures to the UK by a majority of such respondents (Figure 6.5). Once more, separate analysis of BNP voters' attitudes towards immigration is prevented by the residual sample of this party's voters in the BES 2005.<sup>46</sup> A majority of the respondents to an IPSOS-MORI poll in March 2005 also rejected the association between immigration and the growth of criminality in March 2005 (Figure 6.6).

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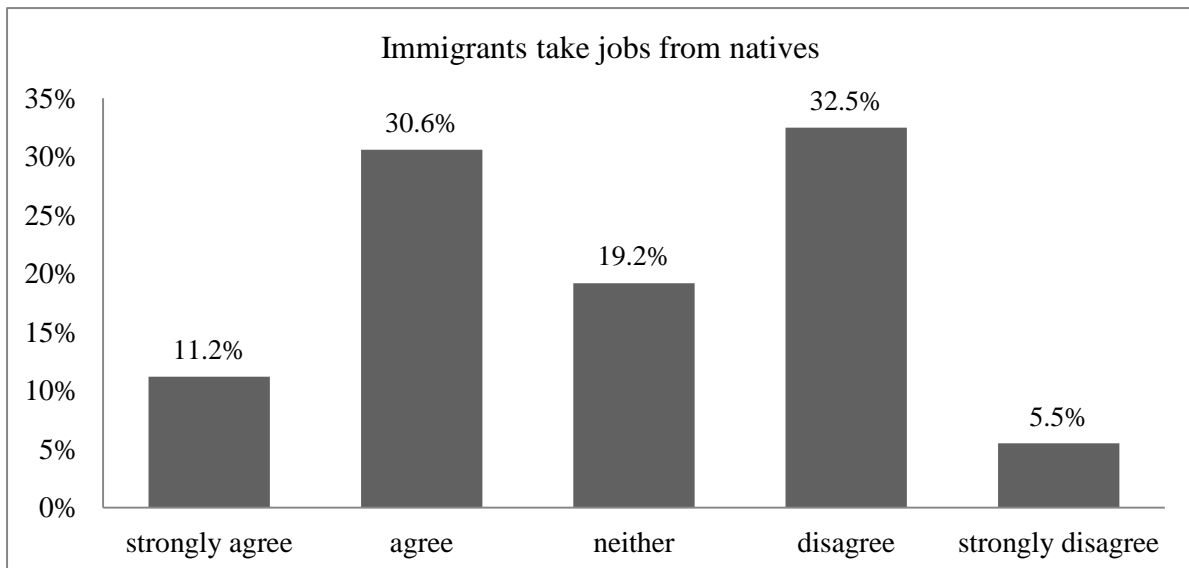
<sup>46</sup> Only 7 respondents sympathised with the BNP out of an entire sample pool of 3,542 British respondents (BES, 2005).

**Figure 6.3** – Best party to deal with asylum seekers among respondents who ranked immigration as top priority at the British 2005 general election (N = 603)



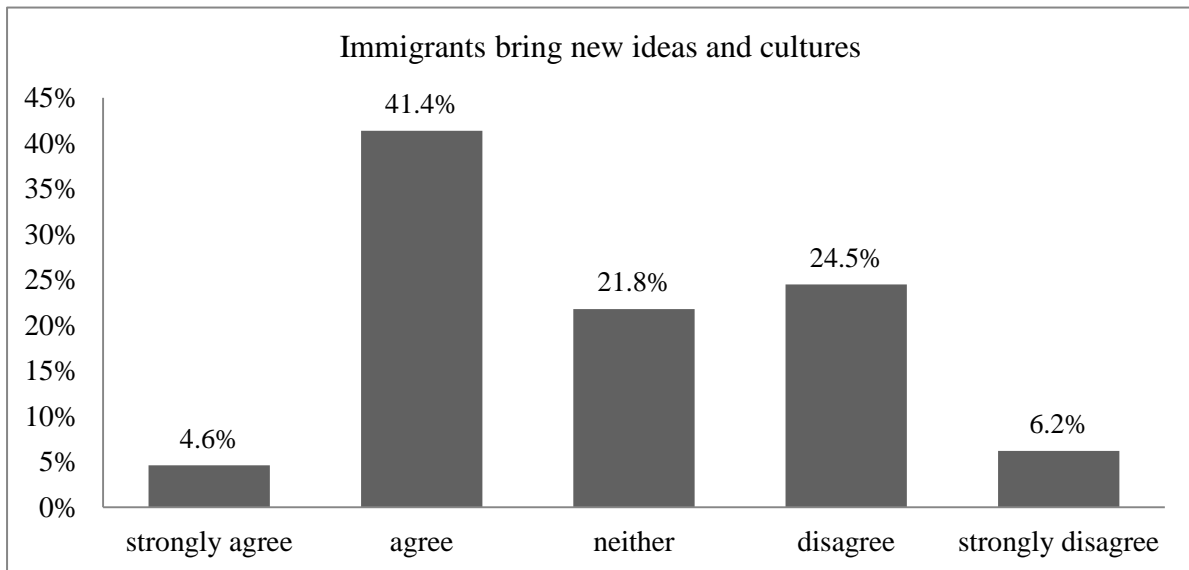
Source – BES 2005 Pre-election

**Figure 6.4** – Public perception of immigration and employment at the British 2005 general election (N = 3,589)



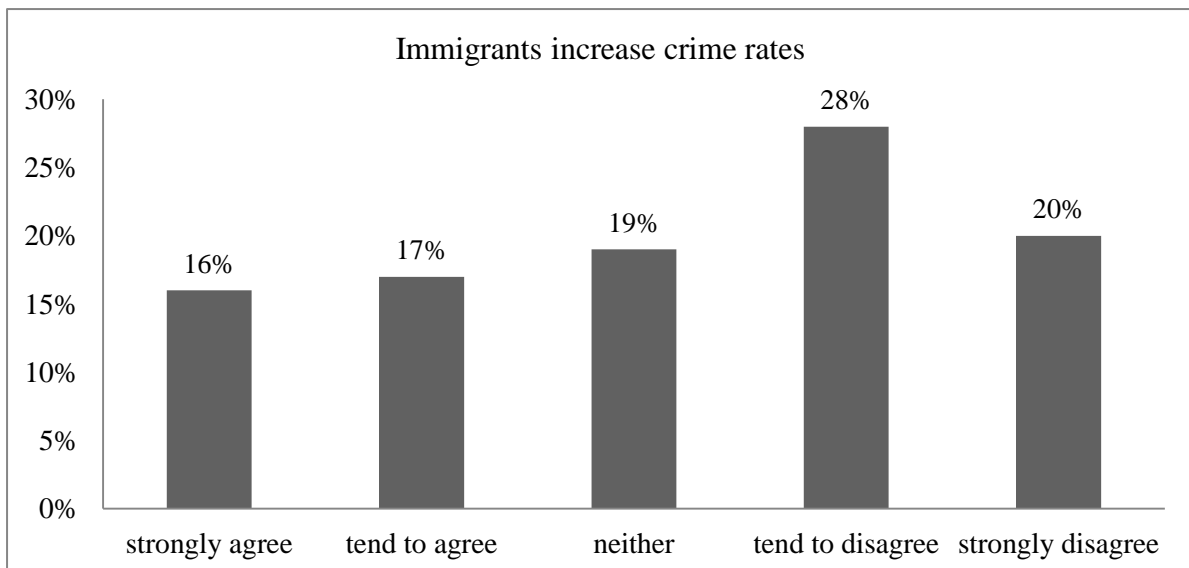
Source – BES 2005 Pre-election

**Figure 6.5** – Public perception of immigration contribution to cultural enrichment at the British 2005 general election (N = 3,589)



Source – BES 2005 Pre-election

**Figure 6.6** – Public perception of immigration and criminality at the British 2005 general election (N = 1, 004)



Source – IPSOS-MORI Poll, 2005

Hostility to immigration at the 2005 general election persisted at similar levels to the 2001 ballot despite the intense concern across the electorate. Therefore, the BNP failed to intensify resentment towards immigration amongst the British electorate increasing the responsibility of the British mainstream parties for the observed trends across public concern with immigration. Moreover, the expansion of concern exceeded the expansion of electoral support for the British ERP while the levels of hostility to immigration were similar to those observed in 2001. The trends in public attitudes to immigration observed in 2005 should be regarded as an outcome of the intense mainstream inter-party competition on immigration and the hegemony of widespread abuse of the immigration system in mainstream political elites' discourse on immigration.

Overall, the BNP lacked impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2005 general election. This observation coincided with the BNP limited electoral support and with the agency of mainstream parties (Table 2.1). The opposite relationship was found with the expansion of immigration up to 2005, mainly supported by the growth of labour and intra-EU immigration flows (see Figure 5.2). The coincidence between the levels of immigration and the dramatic expansion of concern with immigration suggests that the increasing presence of immigrants might have influenced public attitudes to immigration, but this relationship is challenged by the observations across France and Italy in the second half of the 2000s (see Chapters 8; 10).

The BNP's tiny electoral organisation was illustrated by the absence of a breakthrough at national level and the number of constituencies contested at the 2005 general election (Table 6.1). Finally, British mainstream parties' isolation of the BNP, plus Howard's direct attack, reinforced the BNP's pariah status amongst the public opinion and deprived Griffin of exogenous support to have an impact on public views of immigration. The BNP's electoral support seems the most relevant factors behind its lack of impact on public attitudes in 2005



and the trends across public attitudes to immigration cannot be conceived as an outcome of the British ERP's agency. Thus, responsibility for the high concern with immigration in 2005 lay elsewhere than with the BNP, enhancing the profile of mainstream parties' discourse over public attitudes to immigration.

### **6.1.3 – Electoral results**

Blair collected his third consecutive victory at the 2005 ballot though with the lowest share of the vote for a single party-majority in the UK (Kavannagh and Butler; 2005). Labour's share of the vote plummeted to 36.2 per cent whilst the Conservatives registered marginal gains with 32.3 per cent. Nevertheless, Labour enjoyed a 66 seats majority in Parliament due to the first-past-the-post electoral system (Norris, 2005). Once more, the Conservatives' campaign failed to go beyond its core voters and Howard presented his resignation as party leader (Bale, 2010). The BNP observed a fourfold growth of its electoral share in comparison to 2001 and saved deposits in 34 constituencies. Richard Barnbrook achieved a new BNP record in Barking with 16.9 per cent of the vote whilst Griffin collected a mere 9.2 per cent in Keighley (Copsey, 2009; Table 6.1). Data suggests that the BNP continued to perform most strongly among Labour's disenfranchised working class than among Conservative voters (Wlezien and Norris, 2005).

### **6.2 – The BNP development between 2005 and 2009**

This chapter's second section explores the BNP's discourse on immigration and its position within the British party system between 2005 and 2009. Did the BNP fully consolidate its ideological shift from a neo-Nazi ERP party model into an authoritarian xenophobic model through this period? At the broad level, Griffin's leadership effectively repositioned the BNP as an authoritarian xenophobic ERP, yet doubts persist over the extent of this ideological

**Table 6.1** – Votes for BNP at general, EP and London Assembly elections between 2005 and 2009

| Year | Election                     | Number of votes | Contested Constituencies | Proportion of total on contested constituencies |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|---|
| 2005 | General                      | 192,850         | 119                      | 4.3%  |
| 2008 | London Assembly <sup>1</sup> | 130,714         | –                        | 5.42%   |
| 2009 | EP <sup>2</sup>              | 943,598         | –                        | 6.2%  |

<sup>1</sup> Votes for London-wide Assembly Members – London totals

<sup>2</sup> Average of the vote across Britain

Source: London Elects, 2008; Tetteh, 2009

reform beyond the surface level. Whereas the BNP’s electoral support increased rapidly during Labour’s second term in office, did the BNP finally attain its long-awaited breakthrough into mainstream politics during Labour’s third term? After the deceleration of its electoral growth at the local level from 2006 onwards, the BNP finally broke the mould of British mainstream politics after the 2008 London Assembly election and the 2009 EP elections.

### **6.2.1 – 2005 ideological reform**

New critical approaches to the British state and to multiculturalism were the two main benchmarks of Griffin’s ideological reform included in the 2005 electoral manifesto. The BNP was now the utmost defender of free speech both against the excessive powers of the British state and the “liberal elite” that haunted the party. Griffin sought to dilute the BNP’s strong Fascist image and simultaneously present the party as a victim of a liberal conspiracy responsible for the BNP’s judicial persecution (Copsey, 2009). The second innovation involved the opposition to multiculturalism on cultural xenophobic grounds, as observed in

Griffin's articles published in 2003 (Griffin, 2003). Eugenic conceptions of the British race were replaced by the "genocide through integration" of immigrants of distinct cultures (BNP, 2005, p. 20). Multiculturalism was no longer the outcome of a Semitic conspiracy but a product of the "blind economic force of global capitalism" (Griffin, 2003; BNP, 2005, p. 19). However, Griffin's modernisation project faced increasing difficulties to appease his core voters and simultaneously expand the party's electoral support (Eatwell, 2010).

The 7/7 2005 terrorist attacks in London were quickly exploited by pamphlets with photos of the attack under a headline: "Maybe it's time to start listening to the BNP" (Copsey, 2009). After the 2005 judicial investigation, Griffin was acquitted of charges of incitement to racial hatred by a jury in a court in Leeds in February 2006.<sup>47</sup> An exuberant Griffin stated that his party would continue to uphold the right to freedom of speech. Furthermore, he did not oppose asylum seeking but was against the "government for putting their people above our people" (Guardian, 2006a). The BNP anti-immigration positions were apparently refocused on the government rather on the immigrants themselves – a strategy the FN has pursued in the past. Nevertheless, doubts persisted over the depth of Griffin's ideological shift and whether it was consolidated beyond the surface level by 2010 (Goodwin and Eatwell, 2010).<sup>48</sup>

### **6.2.2 – 2006 and 2007 local elections**

At the May 2006 local elections, the BNP obtained a further 33 local council seats bringing its total to 48 (Table 6.2). This success had been preceded by an attack by the newly elected Conservative leader, David Cameron, who denounced the BNP as an organisation that "thrives on hatred" (Independent, 2006). The BNP's best result in Barking and Dagenham,

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<sup>47</sup> In a later retrial in November 2006, the BNP leader and his counterparts were acquitted once more (Eatwell, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> The promotion of Arthur Kemp – a white supremacist author of far right classics on the "white race and its destiny" – as Griffin's aide reinforced such doubts (Gable and Ossowski, 2009).

where 12 local councillors were elected, was largely associated with a Labour Minister’s public interview before the ballot. Margaret Hodge (Dagenham MP) claimed that the “white working class” was deserting Labour because: “they can't get a home for their children, they see black and ethnic minority communities moving in and they are angry” (Daily Telegraph, 2006). Endowed with far superior political capital than Griffin, Hodge provided visibility and legitimacy to the BNP’s “Africans for Essex” campaign (Koopmans and Muis, 2009). Subsequently, the BNP’s profile in the media was enhanced to unprecedented levels (Guardian, 2006b).

**Table 6.2** – BNP performance at local elections between 2005 and 2009

| Year | Candidates | Councils | Votes   | Seats won | Total of seats |
|------|------------|----------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| 2005 | 41         | 18       | 21,775  | 0         | 21             |
| 2006 | 363        | 78       | 229,389 | 33        | 48             |
| 2007 | 744        | 148      | 292,911 | 10        | 50             |
| 2008 | 612        | 159      | 240,968 | 15        | 55             |
| 2009 | 428        | -        | -       | 3         | 58             |

Source: Tetteh, 2009

Positive results at the 2006 local elections fuelled Griffin’s expectations for the short-term future and he sought to maintain the momentum at the 2007 local elections. The BNP continued to benefit from contagion effects of its welfare xenophobia and Griffin granted his support to Hodge’s proposal to prioritise British-born families’ access to council homes over immigrants (Guardian, 2007a).<sup>49</sup> The BNP doubled the number of candidates presented at the 2007 ballots, yet it only won 10 more local seats (Table 6.2). This time, the BNP’s electoral

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<sup>49</sup> A study carried for the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) in 2009 found that only 1.8 per cent of social tenants were immigrants who had moved to the UK in the past 5 years. Furthermore, 87.8 per cent were UK born. The report also mentioned that despite the lack of evidence of abuse of the system by immigration, “*those perceptions were widespread in certain areas*” (Guardian, 2009a). This social problem reflected the “failure to supply social housing to meet the demands of the population” (Guardian, 2009a).

expansion developed at the expense of the Conservative Party, as the party faced increasing difficulties in Labour strongholds (five of the local seats were taken from the Conservative Party; Copsey, 2009). Overall results indicated a deceleration of the BNP's rate of electoral growth, also evident at the 2008 local elections (Table 6.2).

The BNP leader's electoral strategy overstretched his party's scarce resources without attaining success and deepened the BNP's financial crisis evident since 2006 (Goodwin, 2010). Furthermore, the BNP contested the Scottish and Welsh parliamentary elections without winning any seats, despite the use of PR in these ballots (Ford, 2010). Meanwhile, the high salience of immigration policy in British politics and the Labour's government discursive realignment on immigration policy from mid-2007 onwards favoured the BNP's political opportunities. However, an internal dispute led to several resignations and a purge in the party ranks after an unsuccessful leadership coup in December 2007. By the spring of 2008, the dissidents launched an umbrella group named the "Voice of Change" that attacked Griffin's leadership without disclosing any relevant policy differences (Miller et al., 2010). This event marked the return of the endemic internal instability, a trend that persisted up to 2010 and threatened the BNP's existence.

### **6.2.3 – 2008 London Assembly elections and 2009 European elections**

In early March 2008, Griffin was invited for an interview on the BBC's *Newsnight* programme entitled "White Season" focusing on the alleged under-representation of the British "White working class." This series enhanced the visibility of the BNP's long-standing campaign of "Rights for Whites" (Guardian, 2008). During his interview, Griffin accused Muslims of being responsible for Britain's hard drugs problem in another demonstration of its xenophobia towards Islam and demonization of immigrants. This event also exposed his lack of charisma and limited media skills in comparison to Le Pen in France or Bossi in Italy (Eatwell, 2010). The BNP acquired its first high profile position in the British political

system at the 2008 London General Assembly election. Barnbrook was elected as a BNP representative in the Assembly with 5.4 per cent of the vote, a slight increase in comparison to 2004 (Table 6.3). Once more, the ballot results suggested the slowing of BNP electoral expansion but its breakthrough into mainstream politics was now closer.

A vast MPs' expenses scandal broke out in 2009 involving hundreds of MPs, publicly accused of abusing the system for reimbursement of expenses (Newell, 2010). The subsequent intense public distrust in mainstream parties, during a period of economic downturn, could provide fertile ground for the BNP capitalise at the ballot (Ford, 2010). The BNP campaigned for UK withdrawal from the EU, the halting of all further inflows and the protection of British jobs (BNP, 2009). Exploiting the Labour government's discursive realignment on immigration, the BNP campaign included posters of Gordon Brown with the statement: "British jobs for British workers" underlined by a plea: "When we say it, we mean it" (Miller et. al., 2010). In a historic date for the British extreme-right, the BNP won 6.26 per cent of the vote in the EP elections of 2009 and elected two MEPs – Griffin for the North West and Andrew Brons for the Yorkshire and Humber electoral regions (Table 6.1; in contrast the UKIP elected 13 MEPs and was the second most voted for party). Whereas the BNP had fewer votes in both regions in 2009 than in 2004, the low turnout (only 34 per cent) meant it was able to win more seats under the proportional system (Carter et al., 2010).

Consequently, the 2009 EP ballot was still a modest achievement considering the highly favourable context (Messina, 2011). Shortly afterwards, Griffin faced another judicial challenge from the EHRC's decision that the BNP "whites only" membership policy breached the Race Relations Act, which excluded this party from receiving public funding (Millet et al., 2010). The BNP was subsequently forced to change its constitution and presented its first non-white party member (Guardian, 2009b). In late 2009, the BNP leader was invited onto BBC Question Time leading to widespread debate over the provision of a

platform to the ERP. Nonetheless, Griffin's performance in the TV programme was weak once more (Guardian, 2009c). A YouGov poll conducted immediately after the programme revealed that two-thirds of the respondents definitely refused to vote for the BNP under any circumstances (Daily Telegraph, 2009). Consequently, there were still doubts about whether the BNP had successfully watered down its deep pariah status during the 2000s (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2010).

In short, Griffin's ideological reform effectively repositioned the BNP from a Neo-Nazi party into an authoritarian xenophobic ERP type at the surface level. The BNP's overt anti-Semitism was ditched in favour of cultural xenophobia against Muslims. The ascension of the "white working class" and its widespread uncritical use within the British political debate can be considered an outcome of the BNP's rise. Electoral support was consolidated in a limited number of localities in local elections between 2005 and 2009. Whereas the BNP rate of electoral expansion decelerated significantly from 2006 onwards, its breakthrough into mainstream politics still materialised at the 2008 London Assembly election and the 2009 EP ballot. Thus, the BNP finally posed a relevant strategic dilemma to mainstream parties in second-order-elections beyond the local level by the late 2000s. Yet, this challenge failed to extend to the British general election due to the constraints imposed by the first-past-the-post system and the high turnouts.

### **6.3 – The BNP impact on immigration policy under Labour's third term**

This research has previously demonstrated that the BNP lacked impact on the development of British immigration policy between 2001 and 2005 (see Chapter 5). Now, did the BNP reinforce the restrictive character of the British immigration policy developed between 2005 and 2009? Alternatively, the research also evaluates if the BNP continued to benefit from policy developments instead of driving them. Blair's *laissez-faire* approach towards HSI was watered down in 2007 while the management of inflows was framed under an increasingly

security related approach instead of the ‘managed migration’ narrative. Whereas the BNP continued to lack impact on policy developments, salient contagion effects on the Labour government’s discourse on immigration were observed from 2007 onwards when Gordon Brown was Prime Minister with salient repercussions on public attitudes. The BNP’s weak electoral challenge posed to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots until the late 2000s was regarded as the most relevant factor behind its lack of impact on this dimension of immigration policy (Table 2.1).

### **6.3.1 – A-8 immigration**

As a consequence of the Labour government’s decision to open the labour market to EU citizens from the A-8 states, between 2004 and 2007 there were 769,500 applicants to the Worker Registration Scheme, most from Poland (Home Office, 2008). Benefiting from free-movement, there is evidence to suggest that most of these immigrants settled for short periods and the vast majority integrated into the lower tiers of the British labour market (Duvel, 2007; Home Office, 2008). The development of intense intra-EU inflows without adequate planning to manage their impact on the host society led to pressures on social services in some areas (Sales, 2007). As a result, criticisms emerged of the Labour’s government inability to anticipate the intensity of A-8 inflows.

Nonetheless, the option to open the labour market to A-8 immigrants sought to appease high demand for workers to perform unskilled jobs in a context of low unemployment (Blair, 2004). This objective had also been acknowledged in Parliament by the Home Secretary Charles Clarke: “We believe that the labour available from EU member states – old and new – should over time meet our national needs for low-skilled work”.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, Tier 3 of the proposed points-system for non-EU immigrants would not be activated suggesting that

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<sup>50</sup> Hansard, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2005, No.430, Col. 1182



the previous redistributive policy model adopted in 2002 towards non-EU labour immigration was reversed for regulatory and entrepreneurial politics. This option reflected the political pressures from the intensity of A-8 immigration despite the distributive policy adopted involving recognition of right to long-term settlement. The politicisation of A-8 immigration suggests that the client politics model adopted by the Labour government failed to keep this type of immigration off the political radar as had been expected (Table 2.2)

As Spencer (2007) noted, Labour's decision to open its labour market to intra-EU inflows represented an indirect amnesty to A-8 immigrants irregularly settled in the UK before 2004. Another limited regularisation programme involved the concession of a discretionary "family amnesty" to all asylum seekers with a dependent minor since 2003 (16,870 families benefited from this action by 2006; Duvel, 2007, p. 349). In March 2006, the Home Secretary published his policy for a points-system whose primary aim was to enhance public confidence (Clarke, 2006, p.4). Henceforth, the government sought to "attract the brightest" and simultaneously be "more robust against abuse" packaging a positive approach to HSI with the tightening of security controls on immigrants to defuse concern over immigration (Clarke, 2006, p.4). This strategy was severely undermined by Clarke's forced resignation after another crisis at the Home Office, involving the failure to deport 1,023 foreign convicts after they served their sentences. The opposition leader quickly exploited the government's inefficiency with a new Conservative strategy refocused on government failures rather than on immigrants themselves (Smith, 2008).

### **6.3.2 – Labour's adoption of a security approach**

Clarke was replaced in March 2006 by John Reid. This appointment reinforced the hegemony of a security related approach to tackle abuse of immigration system over the previous

narrative of ‘managed immigration’.<sup>51</sup> A new plan to reform the Immigration and Nationality Directorate was published with the following primary objective: “Above all, we need a system which protects the security of this country” (Home Office, 2006b, p. 2).<sup>52</sup> Another Asylum and Immigration Act was introduced in 2006, the third in less than five years, indicating the uninterrupted salience of asylum on the British political agenda. The new bill reduced protection granted to refugees, and it was followed by a further drop of asylum seeking into the UK (Table 6.3; Figure 5.9). The recurrent association between immigration and security by the Labour government after the 2005 electoral campaign provided legitimacy to the 2007 UK Borders Bill, which established a new Borders and Immigration Agency with extended powers and biometric ID cards for non-EU nationals (Table 6.4).

Labour’s emphasis on the deployment of biometric technology to root out abuse of the immigration system continued to reinforce the perception of widespread deviant behaviour amongst immigrants. Furthermore, Blair’s response to each crisis with the publication of a new bill or a new strategy eventually intensified public anxiety instead of defusing it (Spencer, 2007). Overturning Labour’s liberal policy to intra-EU inflows, Reid announced the closure of the British labour market to citizens of the new two-member states: Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the EU in January 2007 (Guardian, 2006c). The government’s decision was justified with reference to the intensity of A-8 immigration, despite the expectation that levels of immigration from the A-2 countries would be lower (Balch, 2009).

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<sup>51</sup> In November 2008, the former Home Office Secretary John Reid commented in an interview that mass migration threatened Britain’s national security: “The great questions of mass migration, international crime and international terrorism were much higher than they were previously” (Daily Telegraph, 2008).

<sup>52</sup> The new document was entitled “Fair, effective, transparent and trusted – Rebuilding confidence in our immigration system” pointed to the government’s emphasis on appeasing public opinion through another reform.

**Table 6.3** – Modifications to British immigration policy by the 2006 Immigration and Asylum Act

| Primary inflows | Secondary inflows | Asylum   | Irregular inflows  |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|--|
|                 |                   | Refugee status is granted on a temporary basis, reviewed after five years according to the safety of the origin country. Extends detention and electronic tagging of asylum seekers. Allows exclusion of protection for refugees associated to terrorism | Increases penalties for hiring of irregular immigrants that can extend to 2 years imprisonment |

**Table 6.4** – Modifications to British immigration policy by the 2007 UK Borders bill

| Primary inflows | Secondary inflows | Asylum | Irregular inflows   |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------|---|
|                 |                   |        | Imposes compulsory biometric identity documents for non-EU immigrants. Allows automatic deportation of individuals imprisoned for more than 1 year. Extends the powers of immigration officers. |

### 6.3.3 – “British jobs for British workers” and the 2008 points system

In May 2007, Blair left No. 10 and was replaced by Gordon Brown, the Labour Chancellor who had long ambitions to become Prime Minister (Rawnsley, 2010). Consequently, Reid was replaced at the Home Office by Jacqui Smith, the third Home Secretary in less than three years. Facing a financial meltdown during the summer of 2007, the new Labour government watered down Blair’s past *laissez-faire* approach to HSI. In his first speech as Prime Minister at the Trade Unions Congress in September 2007, Brown announced his plan to provide “a British job on offer for every British worker” (Daily Telegraph, 2007). This programme

included the expansion of standards imposed for access to the HSMP<sup>53</sup> and the subsequent association between immigration and employment suggested a crackdown on newcomers to increase job availability. Despite the maintenance of the client politics model, the decline of HSI observed from 2007 onwards confirmed the British government's full ability to attain the proposed objectives (Figure 5.8).

At the later Labour Party conference, the new Prime Minister restated his previous pledge: "to create British jobs for British workers" and went on to add:

"let me be clear: any newcomer to Britain who is caught selling drugs or using guns will be thrown out. No-one who sells drugs to our children or uses guns has the right to stay in our country." (Brown, 2007, p. 9)

A first interdiscursive relationship was found between Brown's framing of immigration as a threat to employment and the ERP's frame of immigration, which helped to legitimise curtailed access to the HSMP. Hence, the CDA allowed the identification of another linkage between interdiscursive relationship and subsequent illiberal policy developments. Effectively, Brown's speech was interpreted as an attempt to reconnect with the disenfranchised working class that had deserted Labour Party for the BNP and a case of clothes-stealing that would later haunt him (Eatwell, 2010). His proposal lacked viability because, in relation to his labour argument, EU legislation imposed equal rights to EU citizens living and working in the UK. Furthermore, Brown's rhetoric associated criminality with new arrivals implicitly suggesting that immigration could be a threat to law and order in the UK, in a period when rights-based EU immigration was particularly intense.<sup>54</sup> A

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<sup>53</sup> The new access criteria included English proficiency tests for HSI and was applied from September 2007 onwards (Guardian, 2007b).

<sup>54</sup> David Cameron, the Conservative leader, pointed that the prime minister had borrowed a BNP slogan whilst Clarke urged his Labour counterpart to end "dog-whistle politics" (Independent, 2008a).

prominent Labour trade unionist, Jack Dromey, urged politicians to “stop demonising immigrants” (Dromey, 2007).

A proposal for a limited regularisation programme<sup>55</sup> presented by the Liberal Democrats was quickly rejected by Labour and the Conservatives demonstrating further convergence between these two parties (Smith, 2008). Independent studies carried out in 2009 estimated the presence of 725,000 irregular immigrants settled in the UK and pointed to the unfeasibility of removing such a large number of individuals from the country due to financial and human costs (IPPR, 2009). Despite the presence of this large contingent of irregular immigrants in the country, this type of immigration was kept off the mainstream political agenda.

In 2008, the government implemented the points-system to reform the 80 different entry schemes into the UK. Labour’s policy towards HSI continued to conform to a general outline of a client politics model (Table 2.2), but the expansion of criteria to access the Tier 1 reinforced the declining intensity of HSI (Sales, 2007).<sup>56</sup> Yet, the Minister for Borders and Immigration, Phil Woolas (Times, 2008), declared in an interview in October 2008 that employers favoured hiring immigrants over natives. Furthermore, the minister added that:

“In times of economic difficulties, racial stereotyping becomes stronger but also if you've got skills shortages you should, as a government, attempt to fill those skills shortages with your indigenous population” (Times, 2008).

A further interdiscursive relationship was found between the Labour government’s discourse and the ERPs’ frame of immigration as a threat to the host society, in particular to

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<sup>55</sup> Irregular Immigrants would be eligible for citizenship after 10 years if they had no criminal record, proved their commitment to the United Kingdom and passed an English and civics test (Independent, 2007). A similar proposal was agreed by all mainstream candidates at the 2008 London Mayoral Election demonstrating the increasing salience of irregular inflows in the British political debate (Independent, 2008b).

<sup>56</sup> Increase of access criteria to the Tier 1 of the 2008 points-system forced many workers to apply through Tier 2.

employment, which had been previously observed in Brown's speeches in 2007. Therefore, the Labour government's discourse on immigration derailed into extreme-right grounds, as the clothes stealing of the BNP's frame of immigration sought to mobilise Labour's working class and was followed by salient repercussions at a non-discursive level. In a period of economic crisis, a series of wildcat strikes erupted in February 2009. The disputes started at the Lindsey oil refinery, Lincolnshire, over the hiring of EU workers over British counterparts, and this quickly spilled over to a national level, with protesters holding banners with Brown's pledge (Guardian, 2009d).<sup>57</sup> The Labour government's clothes stealing of the ERP's frame of immigration unintentionally legitimised and influenced anti-immigration mobilisations by industrial workers in 2009, months before the BNP's electoral breakthrough at national level at the 2009 elections. Consequently, Labour's employment of the ERP's frame of immigration might have enhanced the BNP's accomplishment in the late 2000s.

Summarising, British immigration policy acquired an increasingly restrictive character after the 2005 general election, after Labour had shifted its position on immigration policy onto centre-right grounds. Henceforth, the narrative of managed migration was replaced by a security related approach, especially after Reid's appointment in 2006. Asylum and intra-EU inflows were the most prominent types of inflows in the British political debate. Brown's ascension to No.10 in a period of economic downturn was accompanied by the curb of Blair's *laissez-faire* approach to HSI. The realignment of the Labour government's discourse on immigration policy to the extreme-right grounds suggested that Blair's cabinet had a more liberal approach to immigration than his successor, and was followed by significant public mobilisations against immigration. Notwithstanding the contagion effects observed on the Labour government's discourse on immigration in the late 2000s, this thesis suggests that the BNP lacked a relevant impact on policy developments during Labour's third term.

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<sup>57</sup> Facing an awkward position, Brown expressed his understanding of people's anxieties without condoning the industrial strike and pressed the unions to halt the protests (Guardian, 2009d).

The BNP's lack of impact coincided with its weak strategic dilemma posed to mainstream parties and with the agency of the latter parties rather than with the expansion of immigration rates and issue salience in 2005 . Immigration rates expanded between 2005 and 2009, mainly supported by intra-EU inflows rather than by non-EU inflows (Figure 5.2). Acute public concern over immigration at the 2005 ballot also appears weakly related to the BNP's irrelevant impact on policy developments (Figure 6.3). In contrast, the BNP's failure to pose a substantial challenge to mainstream parties at the 2010 general election coincides with its lack of impact. This failure was demonstrated by its late electoral breakthrough into mainstream politics at the 2009 EP election whilst the first-past-the-post electoral system reduced the BNP's threat at the general election (Table 6.1). Finally, mainstream parties' non-engagement and ostracism of the British ERP also failed to provide exogenous support for the BNP to have an impact on policy developments. Overall, this research highlights the BNP's insignificant electoral threat to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots as the most relevant factor behind its lack of impact on policy developments during Labour's third term.

#### **6.4 – Conclusions**

Like in 2001, the BNP lacked impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2005 general election. The higher salience of immigration was an outcome of intense competition between the mainstream parties on this issue rather than of BNP electoral successes at local level. Howard's populist approach to immigration reflected his electoral strategy and inability to challenge the government's record on other issues. Blair's repositioning of Labour onto the centre-right grounds on immigration forced the Conservatives to extremist grounds. The Conservatives' valence campaign on immigration was an outcome of the party's leadership agency rather than a reflection of the BNP's electoral breakthrough at local level. Effectively, the BNP lack of a substantial electoral threat to mainstream parties was considered the most relevant factors behind its lack of

contagion-effects on this dimension of immigration politics, in the context of expanding immigration and intense concern across public opinion.

Immigration was the top priority issue of the British electorate at the 2005 general election, a trend not seen since the late 1970s despite the dramatic drop of asylum seeking into the UK. The Conservatives were regarded as the best party to deal with immigration, whilst the BNP was ranked at a similar level to the Liberal Democrats. This trend captures some BNP progress amongst the voters most concerned with immigration. Levels of hostility to immigration in 2005 remained at similar levels to the rates observed in 2001 and this social phenomenon continued to be mostly associated with unemployment. Overall, the acute expansion of concern and the persistence of levels of hostility to immigration were not considered an outcome of BNP's agency. This ERP's diminished electoral support and insignificant party network at national level was identified as the most relevant factor behind the British ERP lack of relevant impact on this dimension of immigration politics. Thus, responsibilities for the increasing concern with immigration lay elsewhere than with the BNP raising the profile of British mainstream parties' influence on public attitudes to immigration.

The 2005 general elections were marked by Griffin's ideological reform that repositioned the BNP from a neo-Nazi to an authoritarian xenophobic type, at least at surface level. The BNP benefited from higher levels of media exposure and the ascension of the "White working class" on the political agenda was the outcome of the BNP's agency. The BNP electoral inroads at the local level progressed between 2005 and 2009 but its rate of electoral expansion decelerated after 2006. Nonetheless, the long-awaited breakthrough at national level was finally achieved at the 2008 London Assembly elections and at the 2009 EP ballot. For the first time in British history, an ERP broke into British mainstream politics. Nonetheless, the BNP's performance at the 2009 EP ballot was modest considering the highly favourable set of political opportunities.



During Labour's third term, British immigration policy acquired an increasingly restrictive character framed as a security issue in place of the previous narrative of "managed migration". This policy shift reflected Labour's new priorities set before the 2005 general election to neutralise the Conservatives' challenge on this issue and defuse public concern over immigration. The interest group model adopted for immigration from non-EU countries was replaced by an entrepreneurial politics model, reflecting the controversy over the adopted client politics model towards immigration from the A-8 countries. Further restrictions on asylum were deployed in 2006 indicating the continuity of an entrepreneurial politics model and high salience of this type of immigration in the British context.

Blair's *laissez-faire* approach to HSI was watered-down after Brown's ascension to No. 10 in a context of economic downturn without dropping the adopted client politics model. The BNP's contagion-effects on the Brown government's discourse on immigration had salient repercussions on non-discursive events such as the anti-immigration mobilisations of industrial workers in 2009. Nonetheless, the BNP lacked impact on the development of the British immigration policy. This was because of the fact that the party posed a trivial threat to mainstream parties at the first-order-ballots and because the mainstream parties did not engage with the British ERP.

## Chapter 7 – The FN impact on French immigration policy from 2002 to 2007

“The wheel of legal immigration is entirely fed by inflows that we endure, as family reunion processes and asylum seekers”

Minister of Interior, Nicholas Sarkozy (2003, p. 3)

After the overview of the BNP’s impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK during the 2000s throughout the last two chapters, this seventh chapter explores the FN’s impact on French immigration politics and policy between 2002 and 2007. Regarded as the most prominent member of the ERP family in Western Europe, the FN was unable to hold cabinet seats as the LN had in Italy. Despite its isolation within the French party system, the FN is regarded as the main driving force behind French political debate on immigration since the early 1980s (Schain, 1994). A political earthquake occurred at the first round of the 2002 presidential election when Le Pen progressed to the second round instead of the Socialist Lionel Jospin. Within this context, did the FN have a salient impact on inter-party competition, public attitudes, and the development of immigration policy?

The first section focuses on the 2002 presidential election and addresses both: i) FN impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy, as well as ii) FN contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration. This research will point out that immigration policy was practically absent from mainstream parties’ electoral campaigns for the 2002 presidential election, which deprived the FN of contagion effects over its competitors’ proposals. In contrast, high levels of concern and widespread hostility to immigration across French public opinion were observed in 2002. This research will suggest that the FN had a very significant impact on public attitudes towards immigration in 2002 and reinforced the concern and hostility to immigration across the French electorate.

The FN development between the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections is analysed through the chapter's second section to assess the FN's position within the French party system and Le Pen's discourse on immigration. The 2002 presidential election constituted a Pyrrhic victory for Le Pen, yet the FN demonstrated solid levels of electoral resilience before the 2007 presidential election. Cultural xenophobia continued to be a cornerstone of the FN's approach to immigration until 2007, while Le Pen continuously demanded a halt to regular inflows into France. Finally, the third section probes FN impact on French immigration policy during Chirac's final presidential term. The Interior Minister Nicholas Sarkozy became closely associated with the development of French immigration policy, especially after the policy shift to a "selective" immigration policy from 2005 onwards. This research will contend that the FN had an indirect and significant impact on policy developments, considered disproportional in light of its isolation within the domestic party system.

### **7.1 – The 2002 presidential elections: a political earthquake**

The 2002 presidential election was perceived as a long-awaited duel between President Chirac and the socialist Prime Minister Jospin after five years of peaceful co-habitation. This trend diminished the public's perception of the PS as being a genuine opposition party (Parodi, 2003). Furthermore, the announced pre-selection of the candidates of the two mainstream parties made it difficult to mobilise the electorate as demonstrated by the drop in turnout to 71.6 per cent (Sauger, 2009). The greatest novelty at this ballot was the great number of presidential candidates – 16 at the ballot, which was expected to promote a fragmentation of the vote (Perrineau and Ysmal, 2004).<sup>58</sup> After this brief contextualisation of the 2002 presidential ballot, the FN contagion effects on inter-party competition policy is now examined.

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<sup>58</sup> Fragmentation was expected to be higher amongst left-wing parties due to the candidature of Jospin's former Interior Minister Jean Pierre Chevènement.

### **7.1.1 – FN impact on inter-party competition**

Did the FN reinforce the restrictive character of mainstream party positions on immigration policy and issue salience in their electoral manifestos? Immigration was irrelevant within the mainstream parties' electoral campaigns at the 2002 presidential election in contrast to the high salience conceded by the FN. The research developed below argues that Le Pen's party lacked any impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy at the 2002 presidential ballot. The analysis highlights the agency of mainstream parties as the most relevant factor behind the FN's lack of contagion effects on this dimension of immigration politics (Table 2.1).

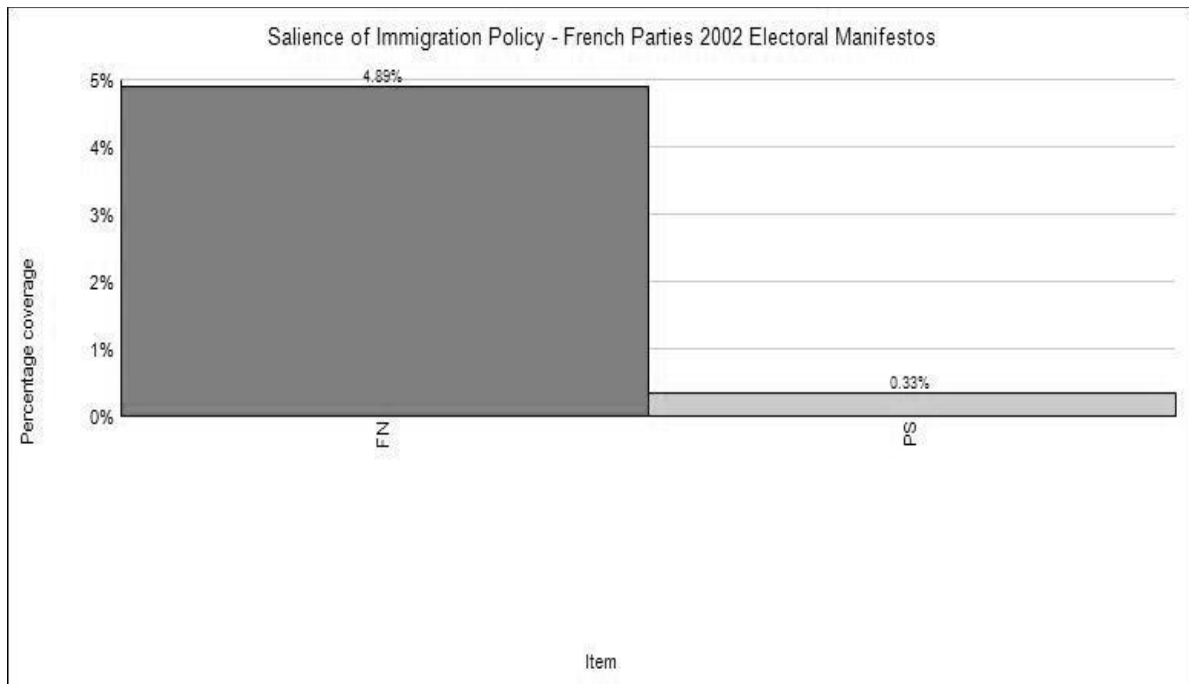
#### ***7.1.1.1 – French mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy***

In 2002, the electoral campaigns of the French mainstream parties were overwhelming regarded as dominated by a single-issue: insecurity associated with crime rates (Perrineau and Ysmal, 2004; Cole, 2002). Immigration policy was virtually absent from the electoral strategies of mainstream parties for the 2002 presidential election both in their electoral campaigns and party manifestos (Figure 7.1). Chirac's electoral manifesto lacked a single reference to immigration policy whilst the only reference found in Jospin's manifesto mentioned the creation of an EU police force to control member states' borders (PS, 2002, p.12). The centrist UDF candidate Bayrou mentioned the creation of a common EU immigration and asylum policy (*Le Monde*, 2002a).

This “conspiracy of silence” on immigration policy among French mainstream parties can be understood as an outcome of the Republican pact proposed by Jospin in 1998 and Chirac's rejection to engage with the FN, as demonstrated at the 1998 regional elections (Kitschelt, 1995; see Chapter 4). Overall, the RPR and PS electoral campaigns were regarded as a “rush to the centre” (Gerstlé, 2003). The absence of immigration policy from mainstream parties'

electoral campaigns was surprising in light of the FN’s weight within the French party system through the 1990s. This observation also contrasts with the moderate salience of immigration at the electoral campaign for the British 2001 general elections (see Chapter 5).

**Figure 7.1** – Salience of immigration policy in French parties’ electoral manifestos at the 2002 presidential elections



Source: FN, 2001; PS, 2002.

### 7.1.1.2 – The FN electoral campaign: the binomial “immigration-invasion”

The French political context in 2002 provided a very favourable set of political opportunities for Le Pen’s candidacy.<sup>59</sup> Chirac and Jospin’s long co-habitation favoured a ‘protest vote’ against the dominant parties (Perrineau, 2003). Additionally, Le Pen benefited from the hegemony of insecurity within the electoral campaigns of the mainstream parties since he was perceived as the best candidate on this issue (Cautrès, 2003). In the face of Chirac’s agenda, the veteran FN leader predicted that: “the lepenisation of minds will end up bringing

<sup>59</sup> Difficulties to collect the 500 required signatures to participate in the presidential ballot expanded the FN’s democratic legitimacy after support for Le Pen’s inclusion from usually unsympathetic quarters of the political system (Vedel, 2007).

politicians' discourse closer to our own" (quoted from Perrineau, 2003, p.206). Finally, Le Pen also enjoyed high levels of media coverage during the pre-campaign period coupled with an indifferent treatment during the first round of the electoral campaign (Gérstle, 2003; Mercier, 2003).

On immigration policy, Le Pen considered that: "the immigration-invasion of millions of foreigners dilutes the required identity of our people and dangerously aggravates criminality" (Le Pen, 2001). FN cultural xenophobia was also evident in Carl Lang's<sup>60</sup> statement that immigrants' "integration leads to national disintegration" (quoted from Ivaldi, 2005, p. 20). The electoral manifesto for the 2002 presidential elections stated that: "The massive immigration that we [French] endure threatens our national identity and consequently France's existence" (FN, 2001, p.26). Thus, the articulation of immigration as an illegitimate social phenomenon and a threat to French identity was overwhelming in the FN's approach to immigration.

The higher intensity of family inflows as compared to labour immigration was decried by the FN manifesto whilst the right to asylum and concession of long-term residence authorisations were the cause for the "savage" levels of immigration (FN, 2001, p. 18). Immigration policy had acute salience within the FN electoral manifesto, which addressed all its four distinct dimensions (Figure 7.1; FN, 2001). During the second round electoral campaign, Le Pen adopted the innocuous slogan of "reversing the current" and campaigned for the halt of all legal inflows coupled with an "imperative" repeal of the constitutional article protecting individuals' right to conduct a family life (*Le Monde*, 2002b). The FN agenda therefore articulated immigration as a threat to French national identity and Le Pen focused his criticism on regular types of immigration like family reunion and asylum.

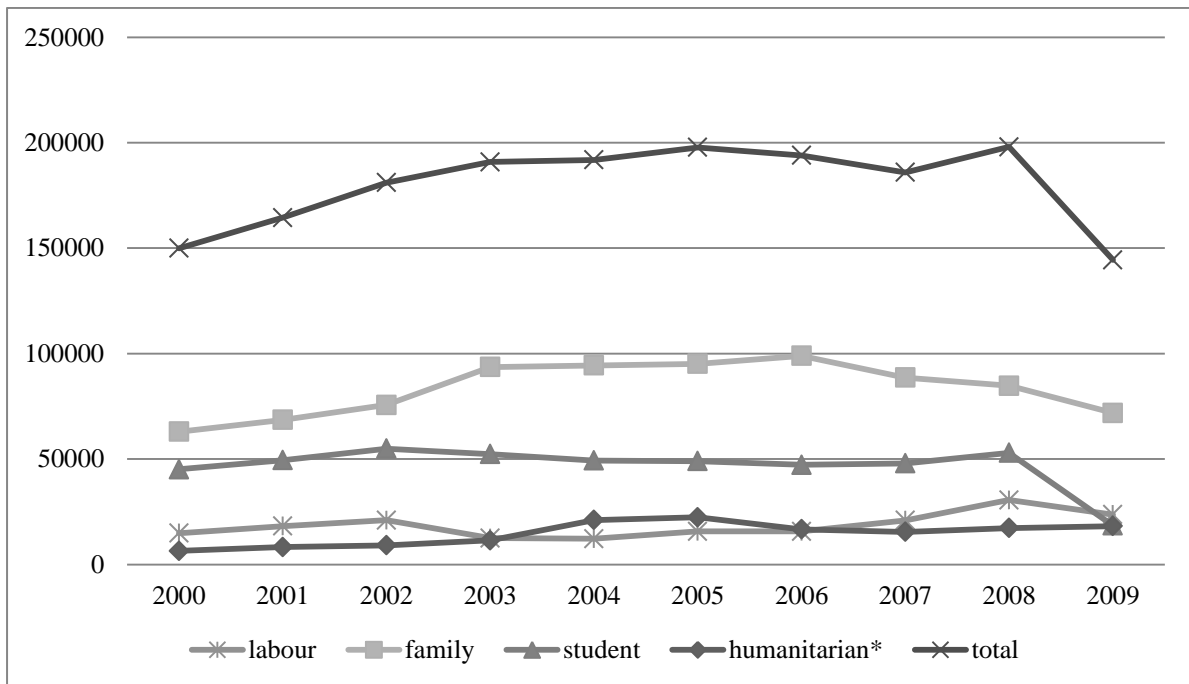
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<sup>60</sup> The FN general secretary.

Overall, the FN failed to intensify the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions and the salience of immigration at the 2002 presidential election. Williams' (2006, p. 201) assertion that Le Pen forced established parties to readjust their agendas to a necessary consensus on restricting immigration during the 1990s is therefore not observed in 2002. This trend indicates that such political process may have a more contingent nature than being an unconditional consequence of the FN's political relevance. De facto, the FN's lack of impact on inter-party competition appears weakly related to the first three factors (Table 2.1). The levels of immigration into France increased before 2002, mainly supported by the growth of family reunion processes (Figure 7.2), whilst this issue was also amongst the top four priority issues of the French electorate (Figure 7.3).

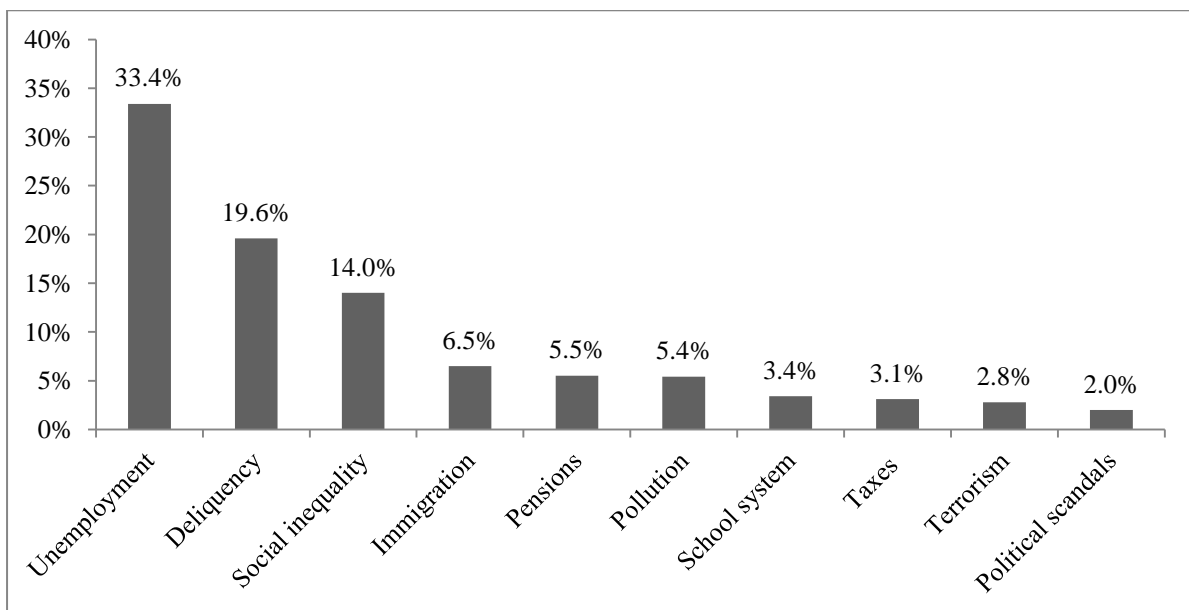
As the preceding presidential elections demonstrated, the dynamic of these ballots favoured Le Pen's profile and the FN posed a substantial obstacle to mainstream parties' ambitions in 2002 (Table 4.3). The refusal of mainstream parties to engage with the FN and their exclusion of immigration from their electoral campaigns deprived the FN from having contagion effects on inter-party competition. In short, the agency of mainstream parties was considered the most important factor behind the FN's lack of impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2002 ballot. The "conspiracy of silence" on immigration demonstrated that mainstream political elites enjoy full autonomy to set their electoral strategies independently of the intensity of immigration flows, the salience of immigration and the dimension of the ERP's electoral threat (Table 2.1).

**Figure 7.2** – Grants of settlement by category of grant in France, excluding EEA and Swiss nationals between 2000 and 2009



Source: SGCICI, 2007, 2011

**Figure 7.3** – Most important issue at the French 2002 presidential elections



Source: PEF 2002, vague 1



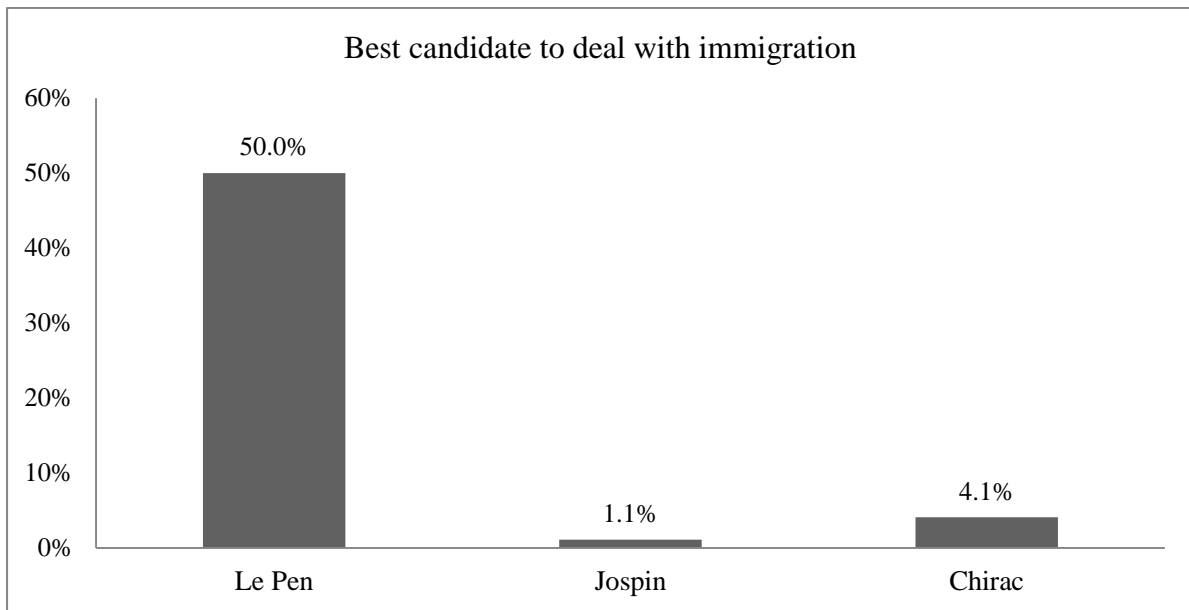
### **7.1.2 – FN impact on public attitudes**

Did the FN intensify the anxiety and hostility towards immigration across French public opinion in 2002? Immigration was amongst French voters' top priorities at the 2002 presidential election and hostility towards immigration was widespread. This research suggests that the FN had a very significant impact on public attitudes to immigration at this 2002 ballot and the "Lepenisation of minds" was acute across French public opinion. The FN level of electoral support is considered as the most relevant factor behind the widespread "Lepenisation of minds" (Table 2.1).

Unemployment and delinquency were ranked as the most important issues by the French electorate in 2002, whilst immigration was ranked as the fourth priority (Figure 7.3). Voters most anxious about this issue considered Le Pen as the best candidate to deal with immigration. He has a 40 points advantage over Chirac (Figure 7.4). Thus, the FN enjoyed the issue ownership of opposition to immigration at the 2002 presidential election and led political debate. Despite its intense prominence at the 2002 electoral campaign, linkages between insecurity and immigration were low across the French electorate (Cautrès, 2003, p. 106).

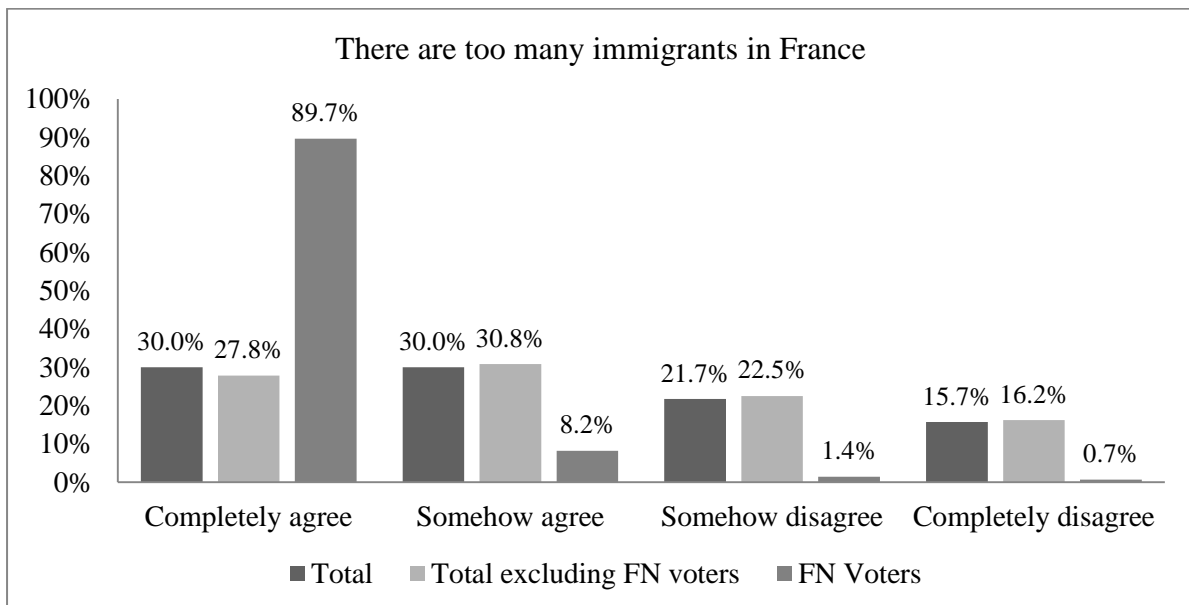
Regarding general attitudes towards immigration, almost two thirds of the electorate agreed that there were too many immigrants in France, while the FN electorate overwhelmingly shared this perception (Figure 7.5). In addition, over half of the respondents expressed a strong sense of alienation in their own home country, while this sentiment was also higher across FN voters (Figure 7.6). As these trends suggest, the FN's core electorate was still distinctive for its extreme xenophobia despite the general levels of hostility to immigration

**Figure 7.4** – Best candidate to deal with immigration among voters who rank immigration as top priority at French 2002 presidential election (N = 268)



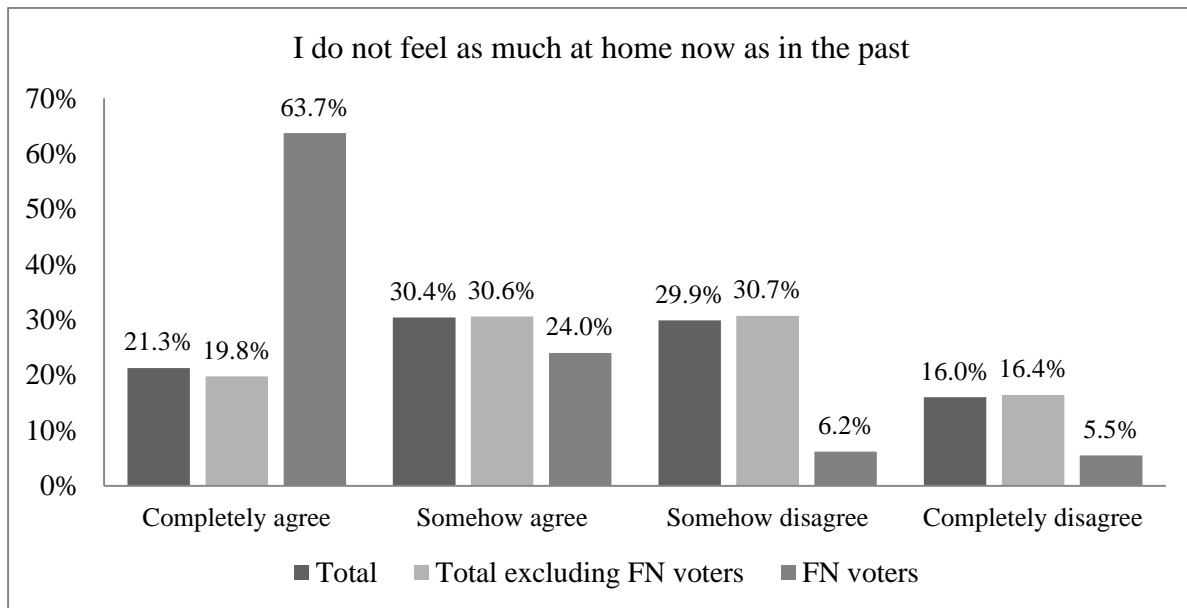
Source – PEF 2002 Vague 1

**Figure 7.5** – Public perception of intensity of immigration at French 2002 presidential elections (N = 4,017; FN voters = 146)



Source: PEF 2002 Vague 1

**Figure 7.6** – Public perception of alienation in home country at French 2002 presidential elections (N = 4,017; FN voters = 146)



Source: PEF 2002 Vague 1

across French electorate (Mayer, 2002). The FN’s consolidated electoral support at national level and the subsequent broad electoral organisation enabled Le Pen to influence general public attitudes unlike the BNP in the UK and the LN in Italy (see Chapters 5 and 9). Effectively, the research suggests that the FN had a significant impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2002 presidential ballot and intensified levels of concern and hostility to immigration across the national electorate. This classification captures Le Pen’s undisputed issue ownership of opposition to immigration and the high levels of hostility to immigration across the electorate. The FN’s significant impact on public attitudes in 2002 coincided with the expansion of levels of immigration into France and the FN’s substantial level of electoral support rather than with the agency of mainstream parties.

As aforementioned, immigration rates had expanded before the 2002 presidential ballot (Figure 7.2). The FN enjoyed strong levels of electoral support at the presidential elections that enabled Le Pen to overcome the 10 per cent share of the vote in the preceding ballots

(Table 4.3). Finally, the mainstream parties' non-engagement failed to enhance the legitimacy of its xenophobic discourse, but their "conspiracy of silence" on immigration left the hegemony of Le Pen's xenophobic approach unchallenged and could have inadvertently enhanced surplus space for the "Lepenisation of minds". Within this context, the FN's level of electoral support and party network are considered the most relevant factors behind Le Pen's impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2002. This trend apparently confirms Schain's (2006) suggestion that the FN and its voters continued to have substantial influence on the remaining electorate, as well as Williams' (2006) assertion that the FN succeeded in stirring anxiety and hostility across public opinion in 2002, as was the case in the 1990s.

### **7.1.3 – Electoral outcome**

In the context of low turnout, Le Pen obtained 16.8 per cent of the vote and defeated Jospin who only collected 16.2 per cent (Table 7.1; Ysmal, 2004). Le Pen's passage to the second round in place of Jospin at the 2002 Presidential elections provoked a political earthquake (Miguet, 2003). The incumbent President Chirac collected the lowest score of any outgoing President of the Fifth Republic with only 19.9 per cent (Cole, 2002). After the publication of the first round results, Chirac addressed French citizens on TV to declare that the electoral outcome was a profound attack on Republican values. All French left-wing parties advised a vote for Chirac and street mobilisations developed under the slogan of "better a crook than a fascist" (Berezin, 2009).

The electoral campaign in the second round became a referendum on Le Pen and a rally for the Republic against extremism whilst Le Pen's unanticipated success left him without a plan for the second round (Perrineau, 2003; Chombeau, 2007). Unsurprisingly, Chirac obtained 82.2 per cent of the vote in the second round in contrast to Le Pen's 17.8 per cent (Ysmal, 2004). Le Pen's share of the vote in the second round increased marginally by more than

700,000 votes, mostly derived from Mégret’s MNR supporters (Cole, 2002). The following section assesses explanations for the 2002 earthquake.

**Table 7.1** – Votes for the FN at presidential, parliamentary, regional and EP elections between 2002 and 2007

| Year | Election      | Number of votes | Per cent of total |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2002 | presidential  | 4,804,713       | 16.9%             |
| 2002 | parliamentary | 2,873,556       | 11.4%             |
| 2004 | regional      | 3,564,059       | 14.7%             |
| 2004 | EP            | 1,684,947       | 9.8%              |

Source: *Ministère de l’Intérieur*, 2011

## **7.2 – The FN: from the 2002 presidential elections to 2007**

This second section explores the FN’s position within the French party system and its discourse on immigration. To what extent did the FN still pose an electoral threat to mainstream parties at the 2007 presidential election? This research shows that the FN enjoyed a strong electoral resilience during the chain of second-order-ballots before 2007 notwithstanding the acute internal divisions. The ascension of Marine Le Pen as Le Pen’s successor had important repercussions on the FN’s political strategy. Nonetheless, cultural xenophobia, alongside the defence of a zero-immigration policy, continued to be a cornerstone of the FN’s ideology until the preparations for the 2007 presidential campaign.

### **7.2.1 – Explanations for the 2002 earthquake**

Whereas the first round of the 2002 presidential election marked the highest point in Le Pen’s political career, the second round revealed the limits of his success. Perrineau (2003) interpreted the first round result as a protest vote against the French political system and emphasised Le Pen’s capitalisation on the electorate’s disgruntlement with the Chirac-Jospin co-habitation (Parodi, 2002). However, comparison between Le Pen’s results at the 1995 and

2002 presidential ballots suggest a strong level of stability rather than a contingent upswing while the FN's inability to expand its electoral share beyond the extreme-right fringe between rounds also diminishes the relevance of the protest thesis (Tables 4.3, 7.1; Neocleous and Startin, 2003; Ysmal, 2004). Le Pen's success at the 2002 presidential election reflected Jospin's disastrous electoral result<sup>61</sup> and the recovery of the FN's loyal electorate of the 1990s (Jaffré, 2003; Duhamel, 2008; Shields, 2009). Finally, Le Pen's failure to present an alternative to French mainstream parties at the second round led to the identification of an internal credibility deficit and a lack of a culture of government (Shields, 2007, p. 303).

### **7.2.2 – The 2002 legislative elections and Le Pen's succession**

A month after the 2002 presidential elections, the legislative elections occurred in a political context dominated by the French public's rejection of another potential period of cohabitation and by insecurity concerns (Perrineau, 2003). In the meantime, Chirac created a new presidential party – *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle* (UMP) under the leadership of his loyal supporter Alan Juppé (Haegel, 2002). The UMP was a fusion of centre-right parties<sup>62</sup> designed to dominate the right and respond to the FN threat of forcing triangular competitions at the legislative ballot (Shields, 2007). The re-elected French President also nominated an interim government under Jean-Pierre Raffarin's leadership with Nicolas Sarkozy as Interior Minister aiming to prevent the FN from exploiting insecurity issues (Cole, 2002). Sarkozy presented a vast range of policy initiatives with high levels of media coverage that were welcomed by extreme-right sympathisers. This overshadowed the PS and the FN's electoral campaigns (Kuhn, 2004).

In the first round of the 2002 legislative elections, the FN collected 11.4 per cent of votes and maintained 71 per cent of the vote obtained at the same round of the preceding presidential

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<sup>61</sup> Only 47 per cent of PS sympathisers voted for Jospin in the first round of the 2002 presidential election (Duhamel, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> These parties were the RPR, the *Démocratie libérale* and part of the UDF.

ballot (Table 7.1; Miguet, 2002). Similar divergences between results at presidential and legislative elections were observed in the past (Table 4.3). The FN presented candidates in 37 second round contests against the 132 in 1997 and failed to elect any deputies (Ysmal, 2004).<sup>63</sup> FN results were hampered by high levels of abstention in its strongholds and widespread opposition to co-habitation, which enhanced the tactical vote for the UMP (Neocleous and Startin, 2003). Unsurprisingly, the UMP won the 2002 legislative election with 399 out of 577 seats in the National Assembly (Hollifield, 2004).

In the aftermath of the 2002 ballots, questions over Le Pen's succession mounted within the FN's ranks. At the 2003 party congress in Nice, Le Pen promoted his younger daughter, Marine Le Pen, to the leadership to enhance her bid for his succession against other potential challengers Bruno Gollnisch or Carl Lang (Ivaldi, 2005).<sup>64</sup> Marine Le Pen was known for her hostility towards Islam and her defence for the FN's "feminisation" and "modernisation", which involved distancing herself from the traditional FN opposition to abortion and contraception (Chombeau, 2007). Her passage to the second round of the 2002 legislative elections in Lens (a former left-wing stronghold in Pas-de-Calais) strengthened her popularity within the FN (Shields, 2007). However, Marine's excessive "republicanism" and soft image disturbed the FN Catholic faction that supported Gollnisch (Gautier, 2009). Consequently, an internal fracture between Marine Le Pen's and Gollnisch's factions became evident and the FN was unable to present similar levels of internal cohesion to those observed before Mégret's departure in 1998.

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<sup>63</sup> The FN's best result was in Orange, where the FN mayor Jacques Bompard won 42.2 per cent of the vote in the second round (Ivaldi, 2005).

<sup>64</sup> The party's general deputy and general secretary respectively.

### 7.2.3 – The 2004 regional and EP elections

A new electoral system<sup>65</sup> was introduced for the 2004 regional elections clearly designed to prevent a repeat of the FN's 1998 performance. This diminished the FN's structure of political opportunities. In spite of the electoral reform and the isolation imposed by the UMP, the electoral support for the FN registered a new record at the 2004 regional elections with 14.7 per cent of the vote in a context of a higher turnout (Table 7.1; Martin, 2004a). Triangular competition was forced by the FN in 17 regions and Le Pen elected 156 electoral councillors against 275 in 1998 (Hainsworth, 2005). Despite the decline of the FN's political relevance, Le Pen still contributed to the UMP overall defeat at the 2004 regional elections and to the centre-left victory (Shields, 2007).

During preparations for the 2004 EP election, Le Pen withdrew a prominent member of the FN Catholic faction – Marie-France Stirbois<sup>66</sup> – from the list of candidates to downgrade the party's "old fashioned image" (Chombeau, 2007). Gollnisch and the Catholic faction leader – Bernard Antony – criticised Le Pen's decision and denounced his despotism in public. Moreover, Stirbois and Bompard led a rival summer school in Orange to the event promoted by the FN's leadership, which included extensive criticism of Le Pen's leadership style and methods (Gautier, 2009). Whereas Le Pen reacted to Mégret's challenge with the purge of his faction from the party, the possible disruptive effect of a similar action against the internal critics imposed caution on the autocratic FN leader (Shields, 2007). The cleavage within the FN over Le Pen's succession persisted.

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<sup>65</sup> Previous regional elections developed under a strict proportional system. The new electoral system for the regional elections imposed a 10 per cent threshold to access the second round, where coalitions were allowed to fuse with other lists that overcome a 5 per cent threshold. The victor of the second round collected a bonus of 25 per cent of the seats in the regional assembly with the remaining distributed on a proportional basis to party lists constituted on a departmental basis (Martin, 2004).

<sup>66</sup> The widow of François Stirbois.



A new electoral system<sup>67</sup> was also established at the 2004 EP elections that reduced the FN's structure of political opportunities. The FN electoral manifesto for this ballot also conceded high salience to immigration. The EU immigration policy was framed as a threat to French sovereignty and the FN argued that: "labour migration does not explain the progression of immigration. Today, the engine of immigration is family reunion" (FN, 2004, p. 10). Thus, the halt to this type of immigration was at the forefront of Le Pen's demands. Cultural xenophobia was also evident in the FN's opposition to Turkish EU accession due to the subsequent risks to European and French identity (FN, 2004). This thesis is interested to evaluate potential interdiscursive relationships between the FN's particular frame of immigration during the electoral campaigns and the French mainstream parties and governmental discourse on immigration (see Chapter 2).

Results at the 2004 EP election were positive, as the FN won 9.81 per cent of the vote and obtained seven seats in the EP, which pointed to an electoral recovery after the 1999 setback (Table 7.1). The 2004 regional and EP elections demonstrated the FN's electoral penetration across all French regions, as well as the recovery of its core electorate of the 1990s (Ivaldi, 2005). Hegemony within the ERP family was evident after the successive victories over the Mégret's MNR (which obtained only 0.31 per cent of the vote for the EP) in the two second-order-ballots after 2002 (Chombeau, 2007). Nonetheless, the two million votes lost between the regional and EP ballots demonstrated the FN's difficulties in mobilising its own electorate for the EP ballot and in capitalising on the government's unpopularity (Minkenberg and Perrineau, 2007).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Seats in the EP had been allocated under a nationwide basis in past ballots, whereas the new 2004 electoral system distributed seats according to eight inter-regional constituencies (Bréchon and Tebbakh, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> The high levels of abstention across the FN strongholds reflected internal divisions over both Le Pen's radical approach on Europe and the succession quarrel (Shields, 2007).

#### **7.2.4 – “De-demonization” strategy and the 2005 European Constitution referendum**

Months before the 2005 referendum on the EU Constitution, Le Pen’s extremism resurfaced once again when, in an interview to an extreme-right newspaper – the *Rivarol* in the spring of 2005, he pronounced his attachments to the Vichy regime and expressed his doubts over the harshness of the German occupation of France (*Le Monde*, 2005). On a previous occasion, Gollnisch had also expressed his doubts about the Holocaust. These events caused apprehension among Marine and her supporters who accused the FN leaders of “demonizing” the party and widening its credibility deficit (Shields, 2007). In response, Le Pen revealed his doubts over his daughter’s political strategy: “Marine is affable but her strategy of “de-demonization” has nothing to offer us. The media ignores us. A cordial FN is in nobody’s interest” (*Le Monde*, 2005). In her autobiography published in 2006, Marine expressed her inspiration from Fini’s transformation of the MSI into a government party in Italy, but by 2005 she had not yet won her father over to her de-demonization strategy (Chombeau, 2007).

During the campaign for the May 2005 referendum on the European Constitution, the FN adopted a low profile assuming that an early association with the “No” camp could be damaging due to its pariah status (Ivaldi, 2006). The FN electorate could decide the referendum outcome and a “No” victory would reinforce the party’s long-standing opposition to Europe (Berezin, 2009). Once more, the FN campaign represented the EU integration process and immigration as direct menaces to French sovereignty and national identity (Le Pen, 2005). The Bolkestein directive on liberalisation of services became a symbol of the “No” campaign with the image of the “Polish plumber” eager to swamp the labour market by working on substandard wages (Cole et al., 2008). The rejection of the European Constitution at the referendum allowed Le Pen to celebrate a rare victory (Hainsworth, 2006). Nevertheless, internal divisions over Le Pen’s succession mounted with Bompard abandoning the party in 2006 (Knapp and Sawicki, 2008). The succession debate ended up being

postponed by Le Pen's announcement in August 2005 of his candidature for the presidency in 2007 (Chombeau, 2007).

In short, the FN recovered its loyal electorate from the 1990s in the succession of second-order-ballots between the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections. This trend demonstrated the FN's electoral entrenchment in the French party system despite its continuous isolation and intense intra-party conflicts over Le Pen's succession. Triangular competitions were still imposed by the FN at the legislative and regional elections, though at a lower level than in the past. Thus, Le Pen continued to pose a threat to French mainstream parties' ambitions at the 2007 presidential election like the LN in Italy. Cultural xenophobia continued to be a cornerstone of FN ideology until the preparation for the 2007 first-order-ballot. Immigration was framed as an invasion and a threat to French national identity, whilst Le Pen continuously demanded the halt of regular inflows.

### **7.3 – FN impact on immigration policy under Chirac's presidential term**

Did the FN reinforce the restrictive character of immigration policy implemented during Chirac's last presidential term according to its xenophobic agenda? Immigration policy was at the top of the French legislative agenda as demonstrated by the approval of two immigration laws and a reform of the asylum system in a single presidential term. Furthermore, this policy development became closely associated with Sarkozy, especially after the policy shift announced in 2005 to attain a stronger balance between "selected immigration" and "endured" inflows (Sarkozy, 2005). This thesis indicates that the FN had significant and indirect impact on the development of French immigration policy during Chirac's last term. This trend was considered disproportional in light of the FN's isolation within the French party system. As it is shown further on, the agency of mainstream parties was considered the most relevant factor behind the preceding observation (Table 2.1).

### 7.3.1 – Immigration law no 2003-1119

The UMP victory at the 2002 legislative elections led to Chirac's reconfirmation of Raffarin's government with Sarkozy as Interior Minister. Notwithstanding the absence of immigration policy from mainstream parties' electoral campaigns at the 2002 presidential election, this issue became a priority of the new government after 2002. Sarkozy immediately deployed his hyperactive style and closed the Sangatte camp in November 2002 (Schuster, 2003). A reform of French immigration policy was then submitted to the National Assembly following a confidential report<sup>69</sup> detailing abuses in procedures to access family reunification and a lack of screening of unfounded asylum claims (Gonneau and Defrance, 2006). In parliament, Sarkozy announced that zero-immigration policy was a "myth" thereby distancing himself from the FN's discourse (Sarkozy, 2003, p.1).

However, Sarkozy added that: "the wheel of legal immigration is entirely fed by inflows that we endure, as family reunion processes and asylum seekers" (Sarkozy, 2003, p. 3). The employment of CDA allows the identification of an interdiscursive relationship between the Interior Minister and the FN over the framing of particular types of regular immigration as illegitimate, which would have important future repercussions. The 2003 immigration law contained a two-pronged strategy: the abolition of the "*double peine*"<sup>70</sup> followed by the introduction of restrictions to inflows, particularly against irregular immigration (Lochak, 2004; De Wenden, 2008). In contrast to his socialist predecessor, Sarkozy appeased immigrants' associations by reforming the "double peine" and maintaining the mechanism of exceptional regularisation to neutralise demands for a new regularisation programme

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<sup>69</sup> This confidential report had been elaborated by a civil servant named Jean Pierre Lafon.

<sup>70</sup> *Double-peine* refers to the legal mechanism of double penalty that decrees the imprisonment/incarceration of foreign citizens followed by their automatic deportation after expiration of judicial sentences deployed by Pasqua in 1993 (Table 7.4)

(Guiraudon, 2005; Weil, 2005).<sup>71</sup> In parallel, these measures concealed the introduction of restrictions on the development of primary, secondary and irregular inflows (Table 7.2; Schain, 2008).

**Table 7.2** – Modifications to French immigration policy by the 2003 immigration law<sup>72</sup>

| Primary inflows   | Family reunion   | Asylum | Irregular inflows  |
|---|--|--------|--|
| Probationary period required to access to long-term residence authorisations extend from 3 to 5 years. Access to residence permits in 12 departments became dependent on signature of the CAI | Extends powers of mayors to control marriages between nationals and foreigners, as well as housing conditions and financial resources to apply for family reunion visas. Authorities can withdraw residence permit for 4 years after marriage Family members who enter France are granted temporary residence permits for first 3 years. |        | Criminalises marriages for convenience. Extends detention limits from 9 to 32 days. Authorises collection of biometric data from all candidates granted entrance visas |

Due to “difficulties of integration”, proof of integration into French society was for “the first time a condition demanded to access long-term residence cards” following Sarkozy’s initiative (Sarkozy, 2003, p.1). Consequently, the logic of promoting immigrants’ integration through concession of long-term residence authorisations was reversed and the requirements demanded for immigrants’ settlement with a regular status were expanded (Verynaud, 2006). Moreover, an experimental compulsory *Contract d’Accueil et Integration* (CAI; contract of welcome and integration)<sup>73</sup> was introduced by the 2003 immigration law, which presupposed

<sup>71</sup> On behalf of this regularisation mechanism, the French state regularised 28,390 irregular immigrants in 2004; 31,650 in 2005; 32,001 in 2006; 27,511 in 2007 (SGCICI, 2008, p. 94).

<sup>72</sup> Law n° 2003–1119 of 26th of November 2003 on control of immigration, settlement of foreigners in France and nationality.

<sup>73</sup> This contract obliges foreigners to have language training and civic formation, which includes a presentation of French institutions and Republican values, especially on equality between genders and

the fusion of the management of immigration with integration policy. Since integration issues had been absent from mainstream parties' electoral campaigns (*Le Monde*, 2002b), Sarkozy's innovation reflected a new Republican inter-party consensus materialised in the aftermath of the 2002 political earthquake (Noiriel, 2008). This consensus entailed the defence of French sovereignty from the menace posed by particular immigrant communities, in particular those that "resisted to Republican integration with their practices of endogamy" as Sarkozy put it (2003, p.3).

Consequently, another interdiscursive relationship was found between the Interior Minister's discourse on particular types of immigration and the FN frame of immigrant integration as a threat to the host society. The employment of CDA allowed the linkages between the latter interdiscursive relationship and the legitimisation of illiberal practices, such as the fusion of immigration and integration policies to be explored. The 2003 immigration law seemed like a balancing act that sought to appease both centre-left and right wing voters but the policy's development was influenced by the shockwaves provoked by the 2002 presidential election suggesting that the FN had a moderate impact on policy developments. Meanwhile Sarkozy's image of a statesman was strengthened and he was the preferred politician of right-wing voters with 91 per cent approval ratings by right-wing voters (IPSOS, 2004; Perrineau, 2008). The Interior Minister's approach to immigration seemed therefore to appease the extreme-right voters (Schain, 2008b).

### **7.3.2 – Law no 2003–1176 of 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003 on asylum**

Further confirmation of the sudden prioritisation of immigration policy was provided by the asylum reform presented by the UMP government in 2003. Asylum seeking in France had risen since the approval of the 1998 Chevènement law, yet this type of immigration had been

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secularity. This contract is valid for one year and mayors are responsible for supervising abidance with the contract. Failure to comply with the contract can lead to the rejection of renewal of residence authorisation.

irrelevant in Chirac's 2002 electoral campaign. Nevertheless, President Chirac claimed in a TV interview on 14 of July that: "We must immediately reform asylum (...) Today, when someone asks for asylum, the decision takes eighteen months, it is absurd and serves no purpose" (RFI, 2002). In less than three months, Chirac had suddenly changed his mind and the reform of the asylum system became a top priority, as the FN had campaigned on the halt of all regular inflows.

Doubts continued over the government's objective to provide a fair and balanced legal procedure and simultaneously reduce periods necessary to process asylum claims to two months only as the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dominique de Villepin envisaged (de Villepin, 2003). In fact, the asylum reform had a clearly restrictive aim that sought to reduce asylum seeking in France (Table 7.3; Guiraudon, 2005; Weil, 2005). The most controversial modification was the introduction of an internal asylum status<sup>74</sup> and the authorisation of detention of asylum seekers (Bouteillet-Paquet, 2005; Table 7.3). Henceforth, this practice became generalised by the UMP's government and presupposed the criminalisation of asylum seekers, as had been the case in the UK from 2002 onwards (Bosworth, 2008). The expansion of regulations on asylum seeking suggests the adoption of a regulatory policy and an entrepreneurial politics model, like in the UK (Table 2.2).

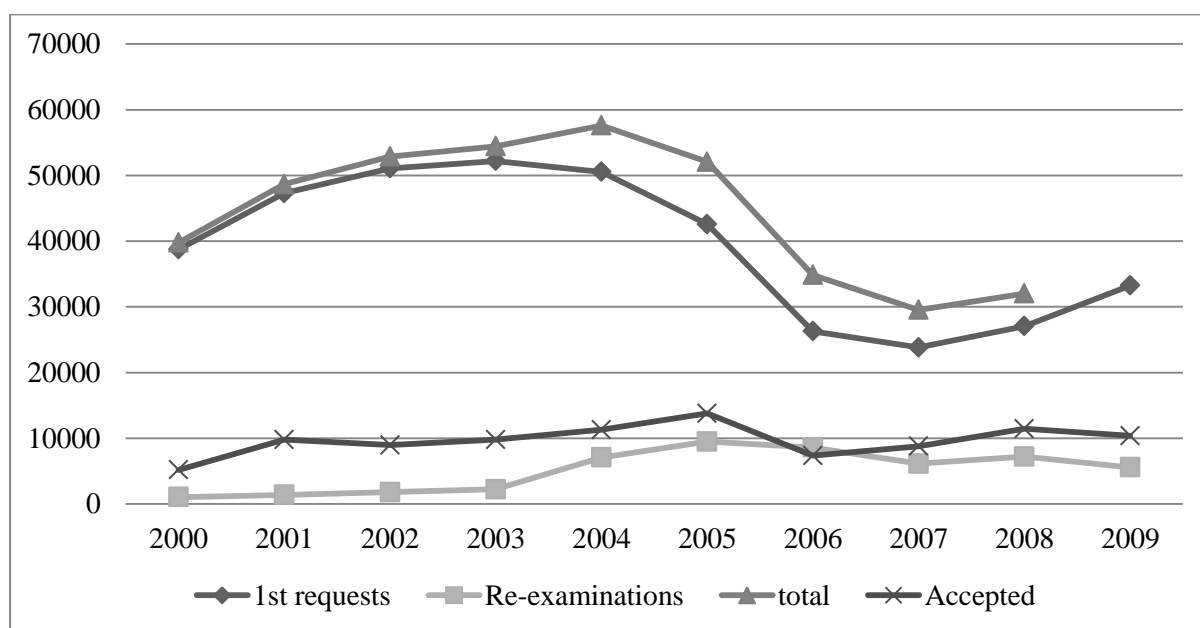
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<sup>74</sup> Internal asylum is granted to immigrants within protected zones in origin countries. These immigrants are ineligible to apply for asylum in France.

**Table 7.3** – Modifications to French immigration policy by the 2003 asylum law<sup>75</sup>

| Primary inflows | Secondary inflows | Asylum   | Irregular inflows |
|-----------------|-------------------|--|-------------------|
|                 |                   | <p>Abolishes concept of territorial asylum and introduces concept of subsidiary protection, annually renewable.</p> <p>Introduces notion of internal asylum. Establishes a list of “safe” countries. Centralises all asylum demands in the OPFRA office. Introduces accelerated procedures.</p> <p>Reduces right to appeal of asylum seekers</p> |                   |

**Figure 7.7** – Asylum requests in France between 2000 and 2009



Source: SGCICI, 2007, 2011

<sup>75</sup> Law n° 2003-1176 of 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003 on asylum.



The outcome of the 2003 asylum law included the reduction of timeframes to evaluate a claim to eight months and the dramatic drop of asylum seeking (Sarkozy, 2006, p. 42). The French government demonstrated its ability to reduce an undesirable inflow without facing insurmountable obstacles (Figure 7.7). The 2003 asylum reform provided further evidence of the political shockwaves of the 2002 presidential ballot and Chirac's new political priorities suggesting that the FN had a moderate impact on policy developments. Asylum quickly faded from the French political agenda after the 2003 reform. This contrasted with the continuous salience of this type of immigration in the UK, after a similar decline of asylum seeking. Nonetheless, immigration policy continued to be at the forefront of French political agenda, as seen below.

### **7.3.3 – The second reform of immigration policy**

By the mid-2000s, the struggle within the centre-right for Chirac's succession mounted after his chances for re-election were overridden by his unpopularity and the UMP's defeat at the 2004 regional elections (Cole et al., 2008). By the end of March 2004, Chirac operated a second re-shuffle of Raffarin's unpopular government and allocated the interior ministry to his protégé, de Villepin, who was his chosen successor for the UMP presidential nomination for the 2007 ballot.<sup>76</sup> Under Chirac's direct pressure, in November 2004, de Villepin announced a plan to tackle the "mass of irregular inflows" framed as a "threat to the French Republic" echoing FN discourse on immigration (*Corriere della Sera*, 2004d). Eager to overcome his predecessor's popularity, de Villepin attacked his predecessor's legacy as too lax and appointed a public official named Maximme Tandonnet to elaborate a confidential

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<sup>76</sup> Sarkozy was assigned the Finance Ministry and adopted a low-profile, focusing on winning the UMP leadership to launch his own presidential ambitions. Sarkozy's subsequent victory at the UMP poll was followed by his resignation from cabinet, because of Chirac's opposition to Sarkozy's accumulation of the Finance Ministry alongside the UMP's leadership (Jeudy and Vignone, 2007).

report on immigration policy. This document ranked immigration as a vital issue for the French Republic and proposed the introduction of ethnic quotas (Weil, 2007).

However, Tandonnet's proposals clashed with France's Republican paradigm and de Villepin disregarded them as inefficient, inapplicable or unconstitutional (Weil, 2007). Furthermore, the deployment of ethnic quotas would constitute a huge U-turn by Chirac after his dramatic defence of the French Republic against Le Pen's extremism in 2002. After the 2005 referendum, Chirac operated his third governmental re-shuffle and appointed de Villepin as Prime Minister, whilst Sarkozy was reinstated to the Interior Ministry to boost the UMP government's popularity (Jeudy and Vignone, 2007). The two main competitors for the UMP candidacy to the French presidential election – Sarkozy and de Villepin – were reunited in the French executive and immigration policy became a centre of intra-party conflict (Schain, 2008b). As the UMP leader, Sarkozy had organised a series of UMP conventions on specific topics to launch his precocious electoral campaign and by-pass the President and Prime Minister's agenda-setting powers (Vedel, 2007).

#### ***7.3.3.1 – UMP convention “Selected immigration, ensured integration”***

At the June 2005 UMP convention entitled “Selected immigration, ensured integration”, Sarkozy announced that:

“it was necessary to acknowledge government and parliament's rights to select annually, category by category, the number of persons admitted to settle in French territory” (Sarkozy, 2005).

Subsequently, a quota system was proposed by the Interior Minister but without specifying the proposed selection criteria. This shifted the UMP position to anti-equalitarian grounds close to the ERPs (Defrance and Gonneau, 2006; Ivaldi, 2008). Sarkozy's objective was to “move from endured immigration to selected immigration” and attain a stronger balance

between “labour immigration” and “rights immigration” referring to secondary inflows (Sarkozy, 2005). Therefore, a positive approach to labour inflows was packaged with a negative approach to other regular inflows similar to the UK Labour government’s approach in the early 2000s. The intended intensification of the proportion of labour immigration clashed with the decreasing recruitment difficulties observed across the French labour market between 2004 and 2006.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, an interdiscursive relationship was found between the UMP leader’s rhetoric and the FN’s discourse in 2002 (see p. 189; Noiriel, 2008). This rhetoric reinforced public perceptions of particular types of immigration as illegitimate in a way that drew from the FN’s discourse. This process would have important repercussions at the policy development level in the short term.

This UMP convention marked the subordination of French immigration policy to Sarkozy’s presidential ambitions. He adopted a two-pronged strategy to project a rupture with President Chirac and simultaneously attract the FN electorate towards his future candidature. First, the UMP leader’s awareness that detachment from Chirac’s unpopular figure was required to win the UMP presidential nomination led Sarkozy to promote his programme as a “rupture” with the President’s political and economic legacy (Perrineau, 2008). The proposal for a quota system was coldly received by Chirac, who rejected it in a presidential TV statement in November 2005 because of its unfairness, thereby watering-down the scope of FN impact on policy developments (*Le Monde*, 2005b). Effectively, the French domestic political system posed a significant constraint on the intensity of this political process. The disagreements between the President, Prime Minister and Sarkozy over immigration issues dominated the French political agenda (Schain, 2008b). The disputes reinforced Sarkozy’s image as an

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<sup>77</sup> An annual survey undertaken in France pointed out that the proportion of employers that faced recruitment difficulties in 2004 was 46 per cent of the total of the respondents; 45 per cent in 2005; 44 per cent in 2006; and 46 per cent in 2007 (CREDOC, 2008). The research developed in 2005 highlighted the existence of recruitment difficulties with a structural character in: the construction sector (builders, plumbers), the health sector (nurses and care assistants) and the catering sector (CREDOC, 2005, p. 2).

outsider within the executive and created immunity from the government's unpopularity whilst his political capital and image as a statesman were reinforced by holding the position of Interior Minister (Cole et al., 2008).<sup>78</sup>

Secondly, Sarkozy had foreseen in 2002 that: “presidential elections will not be won at the centre. If the right does not do its job, it will leave a boulevard to the extreme-right” (quoted from Jeudy and Vigogne, 2007, p.58). This comment shed light on his electoral strategy for the 2007 ballot. The FN's electoral resilience throughout the mid-2000s provided evidence of Le Pen's continuous ability to split the right-wing electorate in 2007 (Table 7.1). To neutralise Le Pen's threat, Sarkozy started to informally co-opt Le Pen's discourse on immigration and seduce the FN electorate towards his potential candidacy at the first round of 2007 presidential election (Marthaler, 2008; Cautrès with Cole, 2008). Therefore, the informal co-option of the FN agenda on the management of immigration by Sarkozy in 2005 was employed to project a rupture with Chirac and attract the FN electorate.

### ***7.3.3.2 –The 2006 immigration Law***

Once reinstated as Interior Minister after the 2005 referendum, Sarkozy escalated his predecessor's plan to tackle irregular inflows. The fight against irregular immigration was now ranked as a public policy priority, regional removal quotas were announced and a circular was issued to provide legal coverage of the intensification of public controls on irregular immigration (Gresh, 2005).<sup>79</sup> Consequently, stop and searches of irregular immigrants rose from 44,545 in 2004 to 67,130 in 2006. But without a corresponding growth in forced removals, doubts were raised about the efficiency of Sarkozy's repressive approach beyond the symbolic level (SGICI, 2010, p. 69). The gap between Sarkozy's political

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<sup>78</sup> By November 2006, Sarkozy continued to collect 91 per cent of favourable opinions from right-wing sympathisers (Ipsos, 2006).

<sup>79</sup> *Circular of 21st of February 2006* relative to stop and searches of irregular immigrants. It authorises stop and searches of suspected irregular immigrants in their private domicile and in public services.

objectives and reality was widened by the regularisation of 31,650 immigrants in 2005 and 32,001 in 2006 as part of the regularisation mechanism included in the 2003 immigration law (SGCICI, 2008, p.94).

Nevertheless, Sarkozy recognised his covert agenda on immigration policy by publicly acknowledging his intention to seek extreme-right voters “one by one” and that:

“if the FN has made headways, it is because we have not done our job. By refusing to talk about some subjects which Le Pen has taken ownership of, we have driven part of our electorate to despair” (*Le Parisien*, 2006).

Reflecting Sarkozy’s presidential plans, a new reform of immigration policy was presented as a profound transformation of French immigration policy (Sarkozy, 2006, p.39). Celebrated as the re-opening of France to labour inflows (De Wenden, 2008), a new labour visa – the *Carte de Competences et Talents* (CCT; card of competences and skills)<sup>80</sup> – was introduced by Sarkozy to promote HSI. Although it was left inoperative until late 2007, the CCT indicated a distributive policy and client politics model that involved the granting of right to long-term residence to HSI (Tables 2.2; 7.4). A general reform of the work visas for unskilled labour inflows from the A-8 Countries and non-EU states was operated under the model of a strict guest-worker system dependent on the publication of an available jobs list by the French state (Table 7.4; Freeman, 2006).<sup>81</sup> The option for concession of temporary residence authorisations to A-8 citizens and unskilled labour from non-EU states indicates the presence of a redistributive policy and an interest group politics model (Table 2.2).

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<sup>80</sup> The CCT is a labour permit, which authorises residence for periods of three years, with a renewable character, destined for immigrants able to participate in the economic development of France or to promote the intellectual, cultural or sports capacities of France or their origin countries. Right to family reunion is recognised to holders of this residence permit, as well as the access to long-term residence authorisations after six years. A commission was appointed to identify the priority areas.

<sup>81</sup> The jobs list was published for the first time in 2007.

Against those who welcomed the reopening of the French labour market to immigrants (De Wenden, 2008), Sarkozy's recognised in parliament that the overall opening of French labour market was not amongst his objectives (Sarkozy, 2006, p.46). His ambiguity on the promotion of labour immigration contrasted with Blair's approach in the UK. Furthermore, the 2006 law was particularly distinctive for the scope of obstacles imposed on family reunion and the consolidation of the post-2002 integration consensus (Table 7.4). Disclosing his strong authoritarianism, Sarkozy considered that "it was the state's responsibility to define in which conditions it (the constitutional right to family life) can be applied" (Sarkozy, 2006, p. 42). Consequently, there was an increase in the conditions placed on immigrants' access to family reunion to hinder this "endured inflow" (Table 7.4; Schain, 2008). The application of the CAI to all newcomers and to access to long-term residence authorisations deepened the fusion between the immigration and integration policy. It also placed further obstacles to immigrants' long-term settlement with a legal status (Weil, 2007).

The outcome of the 2006 immigration law was the curbing of secondary inflows whilst the intensity of labour inflows remained feeble (Figure 7.2). This trend confirmed the French government's ability to restrain undesired inflows according to the proposed policy aims but failed to intensify desired inflows. French immigration policy during Chirac's last term was characterised by a policy shift announced in 2005 that was materialised by the 2006 immigration law. Therefore, the employment of CDA allowed for the identification of interdiscursive relationships between Sarkozy's discourse and the FN's frame of immigration in 2003 and 2005. It has also enabled the exploration of its linkages with non-discursive events such as the illiberal measures included in the 2006 immigration law. Overall, the expansion of restrictions on asylum and especially family reunion, the escalation of means deployed against irregular immigration and the fusion of immigration and integration policy provided

**Table 7.4** – Modifications to French immigration policy by the 2006 immigration law<sup>82</sup>

| Primary inflows   | Secondary inflows  | Asylum | Irregular inflows   |
|---|--|--------|---|
| <p>Introduces the CCT; opens access to labour visas according to shortages in designated areas.</p> <p>Establishes the <i>carte salarié</i> for job contracts of 12 months or longer and the <i>carte travailleur temporaire</i> for contracts of less than 12 months. Access to long-term residence autorisations dependent on signature of CAI.</p> | <p>Access to family reunion processes delayed from 12 to 18 months of previous legal residence. Social benefits are excluded from calculation of financial resources of immigrants who apply for a family reunion process.</p> <p>Temporary residence autorisations for family purposes are only granted three months after arrival.</p> <p>Access to residence authorisation by foreign conjoint of French citizen is made dependent on probationary period of 3 years and proof of Republican integration in French society.</p> |        | <p>Replacement of automatic regularisation of irregular immigrants after ten years of settlement by a mechanism of regularisation for humanitarian concerns.</p> <p>Authorises creation of database of French citizens who hold contacts with foreigners.</p> |

evidence of the FN's indirect and significant impact on policy developments during Chirac's last presidential term.

Le Pen's success at the 2002 presidential election was followed by the formation of an integration consensus enshrined in the new immigration law and an asylum law reform established in 2003 that had a clear restrictive character. Nevertheless, FN impact on

<sup>82</sup> Law n° 2006-911 of 24th July 2006 over control of immigration, settlement of foreigners in France and nationality.

immigration policy grew substantially following Sarkozy's reinstatement at the Interior Ministry from 2005 onwards and the harnessing of immigration policy to his electoral strategy. The subsequent policy shift to attain a better balance between "selected immigration" and "endured inflows" represented the start of Sarkozy's informal co-option of the FN agenda on immigration, with significant spill-over effects on the 2006 immigration law. FN contagion effects on policy developments were disproportional in light of Le Pen's isolation and exclusion from the policy-making process. This observation concurs with the past research that highlighted the FN ability to push for more restrictive immigration policies throughout the 1990s (Schain, 2002; Williams, 2006).

The FN's significant impact on policy development coincided with the high salience of immigration across the electorate; its substantial electoral challenge, and the agency of mainstream parties. A weak relationship was found with the decreasing levels of immigration from 2003 onwards (Figure 7.2). In contrast, French voters ranked immigration amongst their top priority issues at the 2002 presidential ballot (Figure 7.3). The FN also continued to pose a salient electoral challenge to mainstream parties' objectives at the 2007 presidential election. This trend was confirmed by its strong performance in elections before 2007 even in a context of diminishing political opportunities (Table 7.1). Finally, Sarkozy's strategy to engage with the FN through the informal co-option of its approach to immigration policy from 2005 onwards also coincides with the FN's significant impact on policy developments. Moreover, the engagement of mainstream parties, especially the UMP, is the only factor whose behaviour coincided with the FN's increasing impact during Chirac's last term, and appears to be the most relevant factor.



## 7.4 – Conclusions

The 2002 presidential elections were marked by the absence of immigration policy from mainstream parties' electoral campaigns and by the high salience devoted to this issue by the FN. Cultural xenophobia and opposition to regular types of immigration were cornerstones of Le Pen's discourse. The "conspiracy of silence" on immigration policy amongst French mainstream parties deprived the FN from holding contagion effects on inter-party competition on immigration at the 2002 presidential ballot. This observation diverged from the behaviour of the first three factors and only coincided with the agency of French mainstream parties. Therefore, mainstream parties' isolation of the FN was considered the most relevant factor behind Le Pen's lack of impact on this dimension of immigration politics. In parallel, French mainstream parties demonstrated their full autonomy to determine their electoral strategies independently of intense public concern over immigration and the FN's prominent electoral challenge.

Immigration was ranked amongst French voters' top electoral priorities at the 2002 ballot and Le Pen enjoyed the undisputed issue ownership of opposition to immigration. Hostility to immigration was also widespread across the French electorate and overwhelmingly acute amongst the FN core electorate. These trends suggest that the FN had a very significant impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2002 presidential election, which coincided with the growth of immigration before 2002 and the FN's substantial levels of electoral support rather than with the agency of mainstream parties. Within this context, the FN consolidated support at the nationwide level, and the dimension of its party network alongside the ideological cohesion of its core voters were considered the most relevant factors behind Le Pen's widespread impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2002.

Le Pen's passage to the second round of the 2002 presidential election reflected the recovery of his loyal electorate from the 1990s and Jospin's poor result rather than a contingent

upswing in protest voting. The FN's deep credibility deficit helped to understand Le Pen's inability to extend his electoral share between the two presidential rounds. Nevertheless, the FN exhibited strong electoral resilience throughout the ballots taking place before the 2007 presidential election and contributed to the "No" victory in the 2005 referendum. This electoral resilience persisted in a context of a diminishing set of political opportunities because of the party's internal instability and the institutional constraints at the 2004 regional and EP ballots. Consequently, the FN continued to pose a prominent electoral threat to mainstream parties' objectives at the 2007 presidential election. Cultural xenophobia persisted as a cornerstone of the FN ideology until 2007 and opposition to the development of regular inflows, such as family reunion or asylum were at the forefront of Le Pen's criticism of French immigration policy.

Reflecting the shockwaves of the 2002 presidential election, the 2003 immigration and asylum laws expanded restrictions on family reunion, asylum and irregular inflows. The fusion of immigration and integration policies with the experimental institution of the CAI in 2003 also provided evidence of the concerns with immigrant integration that were an outcome of the 2002 ballot. Asylum seeking declined substantially henceforth and this type of immigration flow dropped from the French political agenda. Whereas the legislation approved in 2003 demonstrated that the FN had a moderate impact on French immigration policy until President Chirac's mid-term, the reinstatement of Sarkozy as Interior Minister in 2005 expanded the intensity of this political process. Sarkozy first pushed the UMP onto extremist grounds with the proposal for a quota system and his intention to promote selected immigration against "endured" inflows in 2005, as Le Pen had proposed in 2002. The escalation of a repressive approach to irregular inflows after Sarkozy's reinstatement proved to be more effective at a symbolic level than in terms of actual outcomes.

The 2006 immigration law was particularly distinctive for the extension of restrictions on family reunion, which had been framed as an “endured inflow” and the consolidation of the fusion between immigration and integration policy. These trends suggest Sarkozy’s informal co-option of the FN’s agenda on immigration policy into the 2006 immigration law. Therefore, the FN had a significant and ascendant impact on the development of immigration policy during President Chirac’s final term, ranked as indirect and disproportional in light of the FN’s isolation within the French party system. The FN’s significant impact on policy developments coincided with the high salience of immigration amid French voters’ concerns in 2002, the prominence of the FN’s electoral challenge to mainstream parties, and lastly the agency of mainstream parties. Within this context, Sarkozy’s engagement with the FN through the informal co-option of Le Pen’s agenda on the management of inflows was considered the most relevant factor behind FN impact on immigration policy.

## Chapter 8 – The FN impact on French immigration policy between 2007 and 2009

“I want to draw a clear link between future immigration and our identity to tell those who are going to be arriving that they have to respect these values, which they will enrich with their own identity and on which we are not prepared to compromise.”

UMP candidate for French 2007 presidential elections, Nicholas Sarkozy, 2007

This chapter examines the FN’s impact on French immigration policy and politics between 2007 and 2009. Chapter 7 indicated that the FN had highly significant impact on public attitudes to immigration as well as a significant and disproportional impact on the development of French immigration policy. Surprisingly, the FN lacked impact on inter-party competition on immigration at the 2002 presidential election considering it was the most successful ERP in Europe. Now, was the FN able to maintain and reinforce its impact on immigration politics and policy at the 2007 presidential elections and the first two years of Sarkozy’s presidential term?

### **8.1 – The 2007 presidential elections**

The presidential elections of 21 April and 5 May 2007 developed in a political context distinct from the 2002 ballot. In 2007, the French electorate believed that the election could produce a substantive change and the first round had an 83 per cent turnout (Sauger, 2009). There were fewer candidates than in 2002 but electoral fragmentation was still high with twelve candidates at the ballot (four from right wing and centre parties, eight from left-wing parties; Kuhn, 2007). The 2007 election had four leading candidates: Le Pen for the extreme-right; Sarkozy on the centre-right (after winning the UMP presidential nomination with 98

per cent of the vote); François Bayrou for the centre-right UDF; and Ségolène Royal for the PS (Duhamel, 2008).

### **8.1.1 – FN impact on inter-party competition**

Immigration had been completely ignored by French mainstream parties at the 2002 presidential election and the FN lacked contagion effects on inter-party competition. Now, did the FN reinforce the restrictive character of mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy and the salience of this issue in their electoral manifestos? The salience of immigration policy expanded substantially at the 2007 presidential election, especially due to the UMP candidate's informal co-option of the FN approach to immigration. Consequently, this analysis suggests that the FN had highly significant impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration in contrast to 2002. The agency of mainstream parties, particularly Sarkozy's electoral strategy, was regarded as the most relevant factor enhancing the FN's very significant impact on inter-party competition (Table 2.1).

#### ***8.1.1.1 – The FN shift on immigration***

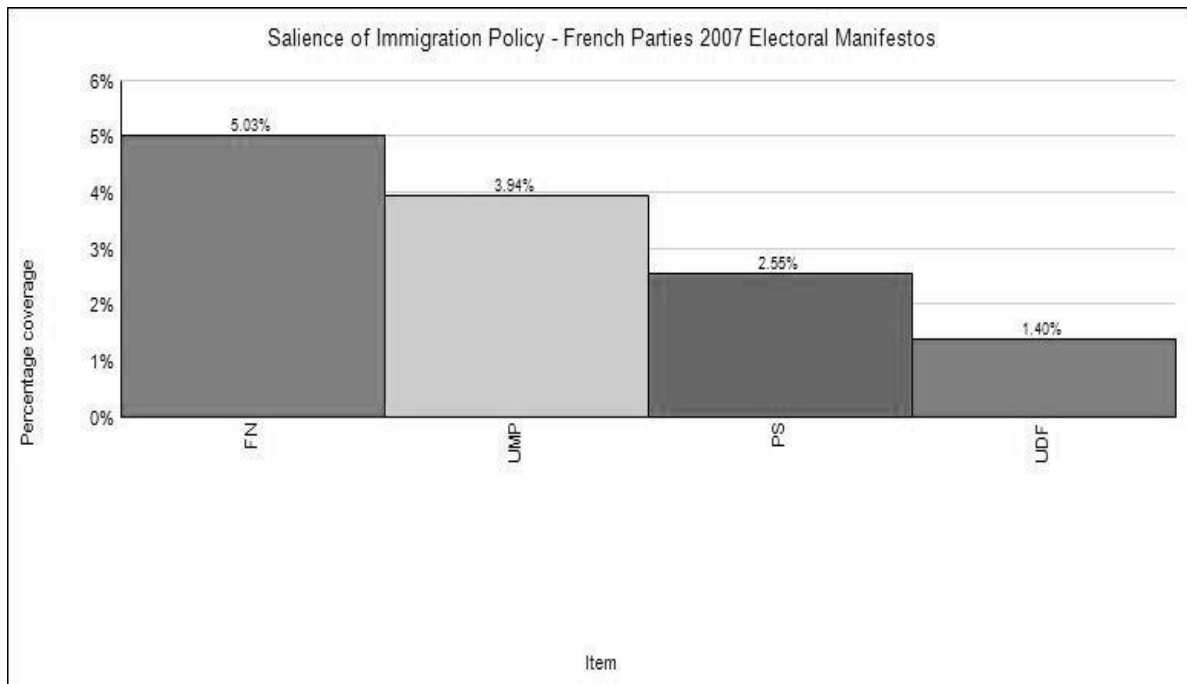
Demonstrating the reconciliation between Le Pen and his daughter, the FN electoral campaign for the 2007 ballot was launched from Valmy in September 2006, a symbol of the French revolution and Republic (Shields, 2007). The choice of this location projected the FN as a Republican force to reposition the party onto centre-right grounds. The FN's struggle against globalisation, communalisation and uncontrolled immigration were the major themes of the FN leader's discourse (Le Pen, 2006). Nonetheless, this speech was overwhelmingly noticed by Le Pen's final appeal: "And you too, French of foreign origins, I invite you to join us" (Le Pen, 2006). Consequently, a broader conception of nationhood was embraced by Le Pen, in complete opposition to the FN's past radicalism and cultural xenophobia. This new

phase reflected “republicanisation” and the de-demonization project of Marine Le Pen, who had been appointed as the strategic campaign director (Chombeau, 2007).

Research demonstrates that the FN’s electoral campaign received significant media coverage, but adopted a rather passive strategy confident that “voters always prefer the original to the copy” (Gerstlé and Piar, 2008; Le Pen quoted from Ivaldi, 2008, p. 12). Le Pen, now 78 years old, adopted a more consensual style through the electoral campaign. Stronger moderation was evident in his proposals on negotiating the reinstatement of French borders with the EU or the reassurances that the struggle on “chaotic immigration” would respect Republican laws (Le Pen, 2007a). Against Sarkozy’s “selective immigration policy”, Le Pen counterattacked with two proposals: zero-immigration policy and welfare xenophobia. The first objective would be achieved “through the elimination of family reunification and a total halt to labour immigration” (Le Pen, 2007b). National preference programmes were justified as “a response, in the present and future, to uncontrolled immigration” (Le Pen, 2007a).

The FN’s electoral manifesto devoted high salience to immigration policy and addressed all types of immigration flows (Figure 8.1; FN, 2007). Moreover, immigration was framed as an economic burden driven by employers’ interests in association with demands for welfare chauvinism (FN, 2007). References to the immigration threat to French national identity, predominant at the 2002 electoral campaign, were almost completely absent from Le Pen’s 2007 rhetoric and electoral manifesto (Ivaldi, 2008). Marine Le Pen’s strategy presupposed overt detachment from previous overwhelming cultural xenophobia and a certain degree of ideological de-radicalisation. Nevertheless, Le Pen’s extremist outbursts undermined such strategy as was evident by his remarks that Sarkozy’s immigrant origins disqualified him from becoming a French President (Le Pen, 2007c). Consequently, strategic contradictions and internal divisions over Le Pen’s succession diminished the FN’s structure of political opportunities at the 2007 presidential election.

**Figure 8.1**– Saliency of immigration policy in French parties’ electoral manifestos at the 2007 presidential elections



Source: FN, 2007; UMP, 2007; PS, 2007; UDF, 2007

#### ***8.1.1.2 – Sarkozy’s informal co-option of identity politics***

The UMP position on immigration policy had shifted rightwards since the 2005 UMP convention when Sarkozy informally co-opted Le Pen’s opposition to legal or “endured” inflows. Nonetheless, the process of “clothes stealing” escalated as the electoral campaign for the 2007 presidential ballot developed. The second major theme<sup>83</sup> of Sarkozy’s electoral campaign was that: “France is going through a moral crisis, (...) an identity crisis” (Sarkozy, 2007a). Sarkozy then added that:

“whoever enters France illegally, who makes no effort to integrate, that person should not expect to be granted the same rights as a French person (...) France’s problem is that persistently, for far too long, it has asked nothing of anyone, not even respect of

<sup>83</sup> The first theme of Sarkozy electoral campaign was the consequences of May 1968 (Dargent and Barthélemy, 2009).

its values and laws and in this way has fed one of the most serious identity crises of its history. That is why we must control immigration.” (Sarkozy, 2007a).

Henceforth, immigration was associated with a French identity crisis and subsequently framed as a threat, providing evidence of Sarkozy’s “clothes stealing” of the FN’s identity politics (Noiriel, 2008; Hainsworth, 2008). Le Pen had pioneered the cultural xenophobia strand of ERPs in the late 1970s that encompassed the defence of French cultural uniqueness and purity from the threat of immigration (see Chapter 4). In order to protect “France and its values,” Sarkozy proposed the deployment of a quota system, demanded previous proof of knowledge of the French language from all newcomers, and rejected the development of regularisation programmes (Sarkozy, 2007a). Four days later, Sarkozy announced in a TV interview his intention to establish a Ministry of immigration and national identity and to associate “future immigration to our national identity” (RFI, 2007).

The proposal for the creation of an immigration and national identity ministry crystallised the UMP leader’s informal co-option of the FN approach to immigration and its cultural xenophobia and the shift to anti-equalitarian grounds implicit in the proposal of a quota system (Ivaldi, 2008). Furthermore, Sarkozy framed the 2007 presidential ballot as a choice:

“between those attached to national identity and who want to defend it, and those who think that France lacks an existence and does not even have an identity” (Sarkozy, 2007b).

Immigration was the third most covered issue by the media in Sarkozy’s electoral campaign, after insecurity and social issues (Gerstlé and Piar, 2008). The UMP 2007 electoral manifesto devoted high salience to immigration policy and secondary inflows was the most dominant type of inflow (Figure 8.1; UMP, 2007). Additional proposals to hinder the development of this “endured inflow” were found in the UMP’s electoral manifesto (UMP, 2007). Sarkozy’s



informal co-option of the FN's cultural xenophobia and agenda on immigration policy had the objective to aggregate all right-wing voters in the first round of the 2007 presidential election (Perrineau, 2008).

### ***8.1.1.3 –The UDF and the PS approach to immigration***

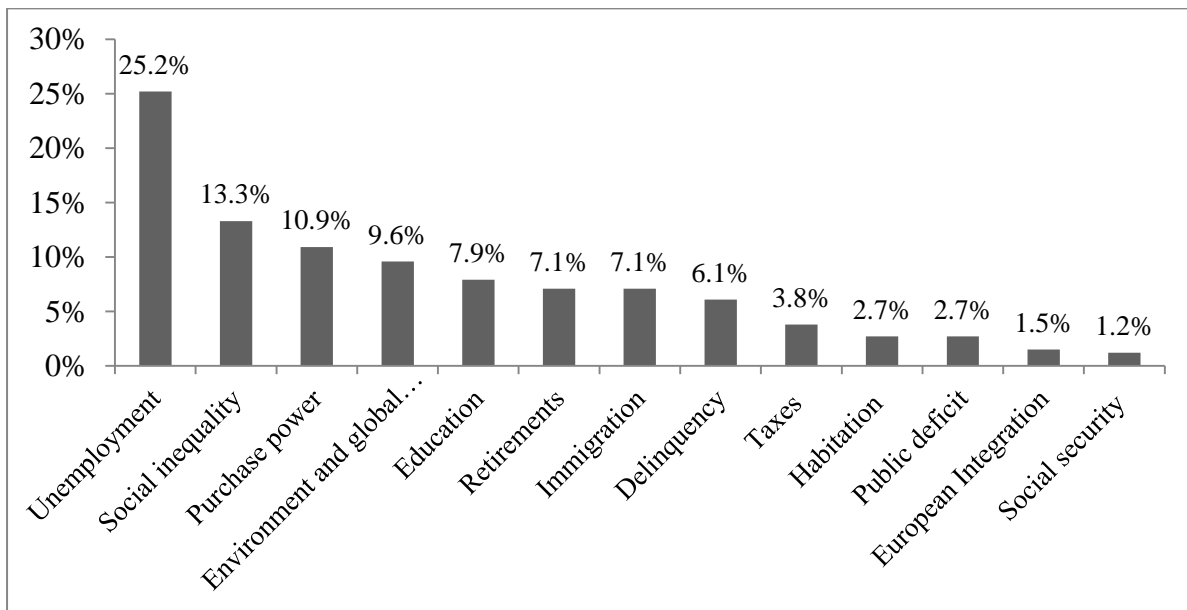
The centrist candidate for the 2007 presidential election François Bayrou proposed the delegation of regulation of immigration to the EU and advocated a more liberal approach to inflows from new EU member-states (Bayrou, 2006). His agreement with Sarkozy's contract of integration and reception provided evidence of the hegemony of the post-2002 integration consensus (Bayrou, 2006, p.5; Geisser, 2007). The UDF's electoral manifesto devoted less prominence to immigration than other mainstream parties did and was dominated by irregular inflows (Figure 8.1; UDF, 2007). Finally, the French PS had internal divisions on immigration policy and some realignment onto rightist grounds in a 2005 internal report drafted by a senior party member – Malek Boutih. This document proposed the deployment of a quota system and the repeal of immigrants' automatic entitlement to family reunion as the FN had proposed in 2002 (Boutih, 2005).

Nonetheless, the Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal dropped this report but adopted a cautious approach to immigration policy. Sarkozy's association of immigration and national identity was criticised by Royal who also rejected regularisation programmes (Royal, 2007). The salience of immigration policy also increased in the PS's electoral manifesto at the 2007 presidential ballot, which focused mostly on irregular inflows (Figure 8.1). Hegemony of the post-2002 integration consensus was detected in the proposal to introduce selective regularisation processes of irregular immigrants according to integration criteria (PS, 2007). Despite some ambiguities, Royal refrained from articulating immigration as a threat, unlike Sarkozy (Noiriel, 2008). The socialist candidate's criticisms of Sarkozy were nonetheless undermined by the absence of a distinct agenda on this topic.

In short, the salience of immigration policy during the electoral campaign for the 2007 presidential election expanded substantially in comparison to 2002 (Figures 7.1, 8.1). Irregular inflows were the most dominant type of inflows in the French political debate and a broad mainstream inter-party consensus was observed over the rejection of regularisation programmes. An important interdiscursive relationship was found between mainstream parties' proposals and the FN's frame of immigrant integration as a threat to the host society. Moreover, Sarkozy informally co-opted the FN's approach to immigration policy and its identity politics. Whereas Le Pen shifted the FN position on immigration policy onto centre-right ground, mainstream parties' positions, especially the UMP's, drifted rightwards (Shields, 2007; Ivaldi, 2008). Therefore, the FN had a very significant impact on inter-party competition on immigration at the 2007 presidential election.

This observation coincided with the FN's substantial strategic dilemma to established parties and with the agency of mainstream parties. A weaker relationship was observed with the deceleration of rates of immigration before 2007 (mainly due to the lower intensity of secondary inflows; Figure 7.2) and the lower overall salience of immigration amongst the electorate in 2007 (Figure 8.2). In contrast, the FN's electoral threat to mainstream parties was obvious in 2002 whilst the observed electoral resilience across the ballots taking place before the 2007 presidential election demonstrated its continuous ability to present a strong challenge to mainstream parties (Table 7.1). Finally, whereas Sarkozy lacked misgivings about informally co-opting the FN approach to immigration, former President Chirac had opted to ostracise the FN and to ignore immigration in 2002 in the face of a similar FN electoral threat. Within this context, the agency of mainstream parties, in particular Sarkozy's, seems once more the most relevant factor enhancing the FN's very significant impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

**Figure 8.2** – Most important issue at the French 2007 presidential elections



Source: PEF 2007, vague 1.

### 8.1.2 – FN impact on public attitudes

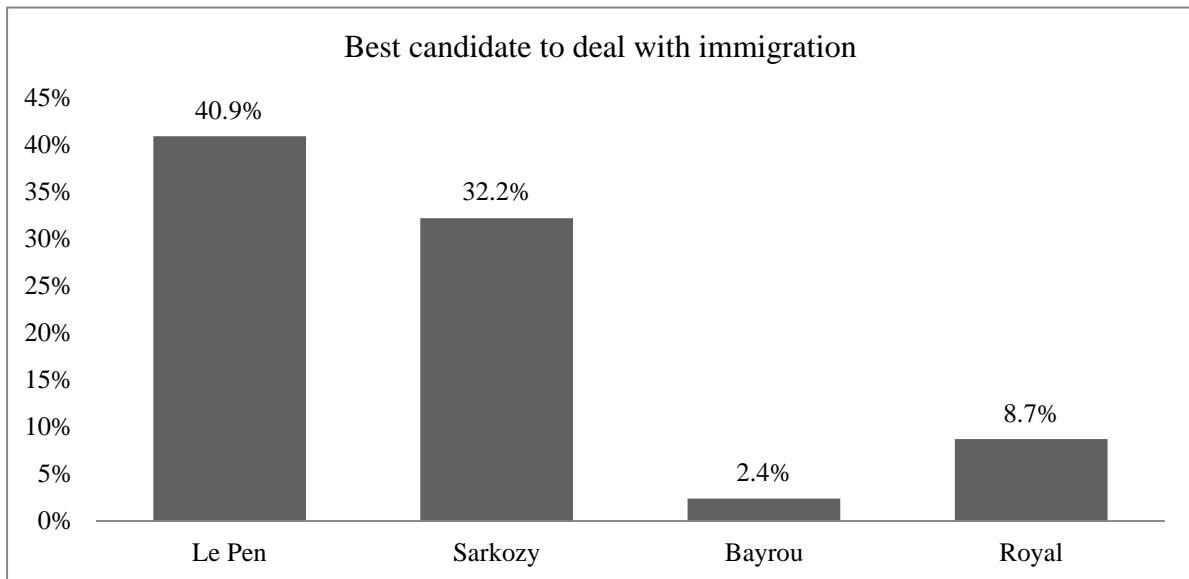
The research developed through Chapter 7 pointed to a widespread effect of the political process named “lepenization of minds” across the French electorate at the 2002 presidential election. Now, did the FN intensify the levels of concern and hostility to immigration across the French electorate at the 2007 presidential ballot? Concern with immigration and hostility to this social phenomenon declined at the overall level at the 2007 presidential election in comparison to the 2002 ballot. This analysis suggests that FN impact on public attitudes to immigration was significant in 2007 but was less intensive than in 2002. Nevertheless, the analysis fails to highlight a salient relationship between the lower level of FN impact in 2007 and the behaviour of the selected factors (Table 2.1).

Immigration dropped to sixth place amongst the most important issues of the French electorate at the 2007 presidential election despite a slight increase regarding the proportion

of voters most concerned with immigration in comparison to 2002 (Figure 8.2). This trend deviated from the intense salience of immigration across French mainstream parties' electoral campaigns for the 2007 presidential election and the dramatic expansion of salience of immigration at the British 2005 general election (Figures 8.1; 6.2). Le Pen continued to be rated as the best candidate to deal with immigration by voters most concerned with immigration, but lost nine points in comparison to 2002 (Figure 8.3). Sarkozy was ranked as the best candidate to deal with immigration by almost one third of such voters. This contrasted with Chirac who had collected only 4 per cent of positive responses in 2002. The reduced gap between Le Pen and Sarkozy indicated the success of the UMP candidate's strategy in disputing the FN's ownership of opposition to immigration through the informal co-option of its agenda. However, the FN candidate still possessed the issue ownership, albeit at a lower level than in 2002.

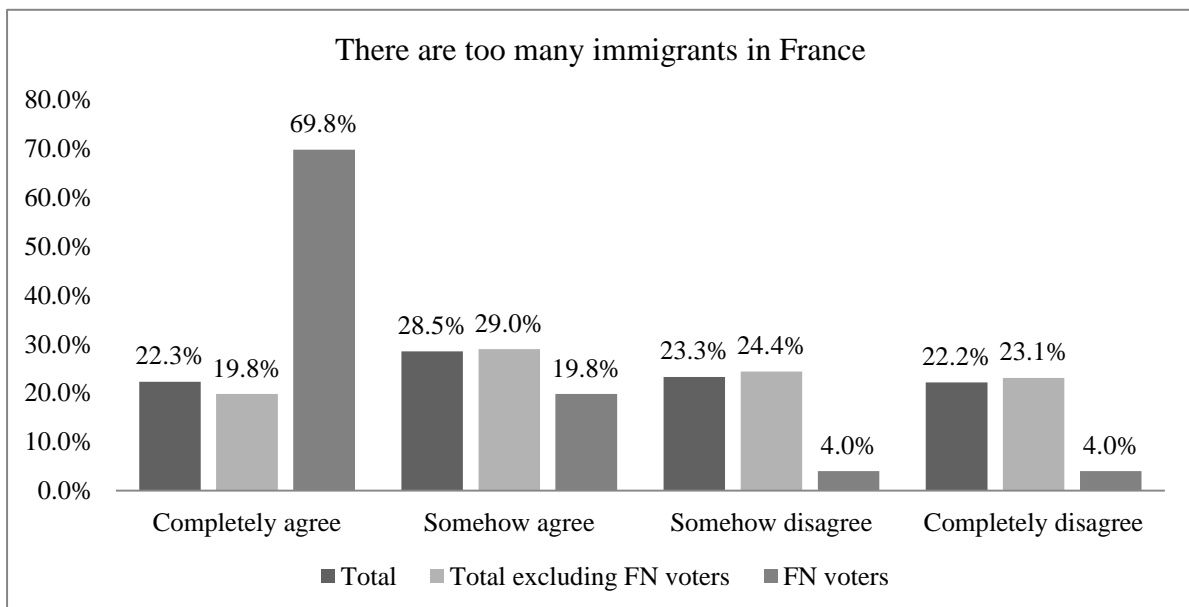
Regarding public attitudes to immigration, only half of the respondents to the PEF 2007 survey agreed with there were too many immigrants in France against almost two thirds of the respondents who shared the same perception in 2002 (Figure 8.4). Furthermore, hostility to immigration also dropped both in terms of extent and in terms of intensity among FN sympathisers in comparison with 2002, yet it was still common across 90 per cent of such voters (Figure 8.4). A similar trend was observed as concerned the perceptions of alienation in their home country, as this opinion dropped almost seven points across the general respondents to the PEF 2007 survey and eleven points amongst FN voters in comparison to 2002 (Figure 8.5). Finally, Sarkozy's proposal to create an immigration and national identity ministry divided the electorate, yet the majority of the FN's sympathisers welcomed it (Figure 8.6). This trend provides further evidence of the effects of Sarkozy's informal co-

**Figure 8.3** – Best candidate to deal with immigration among voters who rank immigration as top priority at French 2007 presidential election (N = 286)



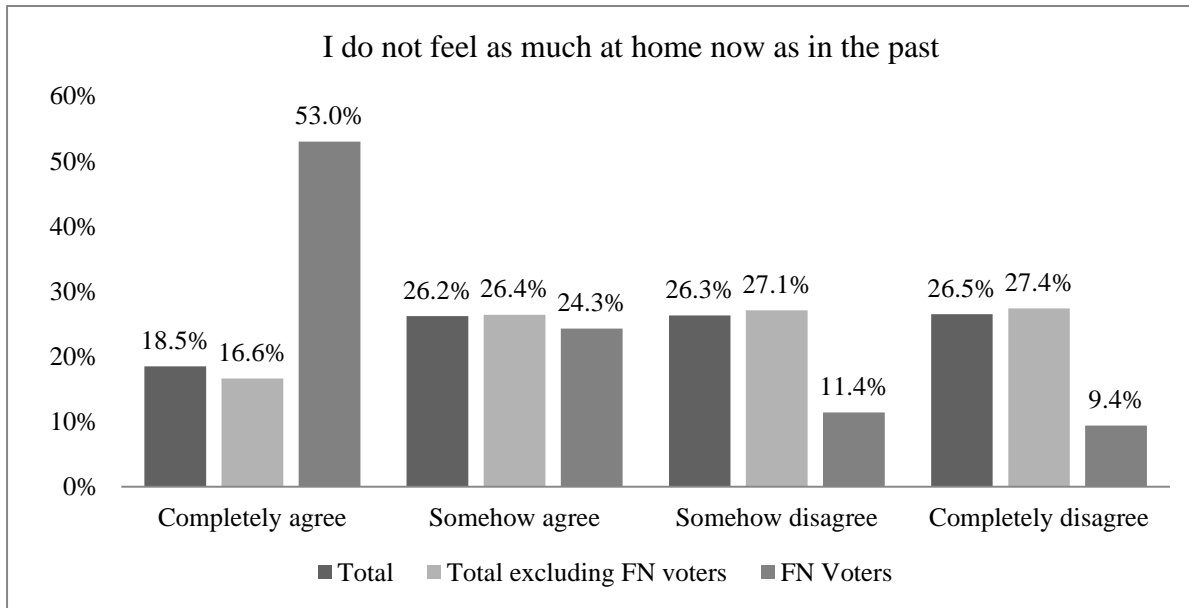
Source: PEF 2007 vague 1

**Figure 8.4** – Public perception of intensity of immigration at French 2007 presidential elections (N = 4,004; FN voters = 202)



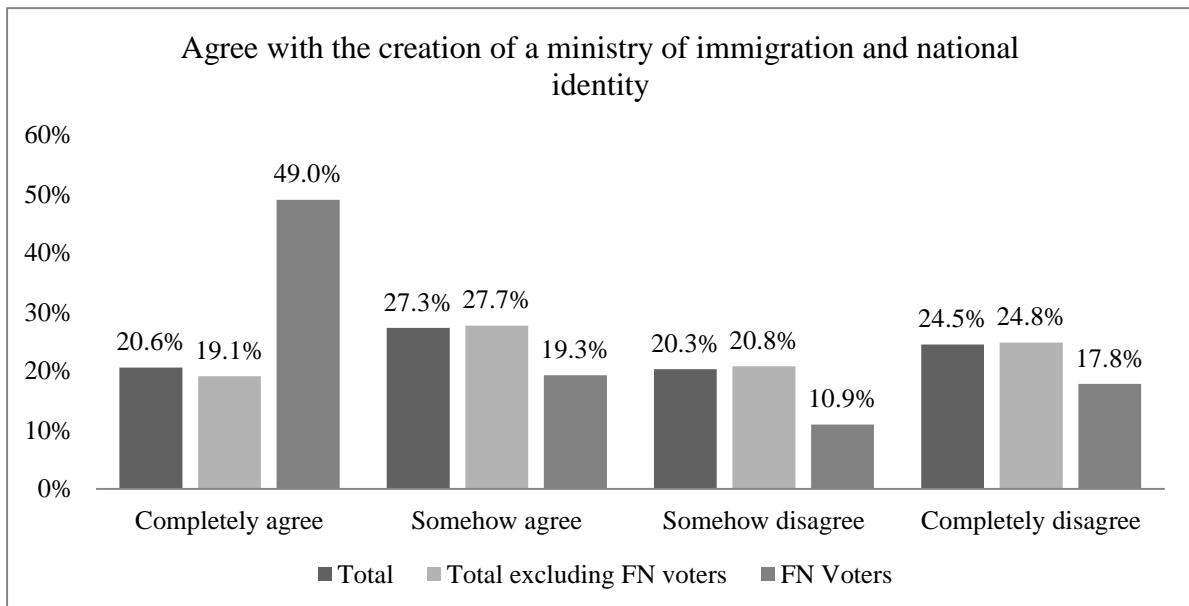
Source – PEF 2007 vague 1

**Figure 8.5** – Public perception of alienation in home country at French 2007 presidential elections (N = 4,004; FN voters = 202)



Source – PEF 2007 vague 1

**Figure 8.6** – Agreement with the creation of ministry of immigration and national identity (N = 4,004; FN voters = 202)



Source – PEF 2007 vague 1

option of Le Pen's agenda over the FN electorate. Summarising, salience of immigration and hostility to this social phenomenon across the French voters dropped at the 2007 presidential elections and the FN contagion effects seemed concentrated on its core electorate and voters most concerned with immigration.

The trends across French public opinion in 2007 differed from the expansion of salience of immigration across the British electorate in 2005 (see Chapter 6). Jaffré (2008, p. 237) suggested that Le Pen had exhausted the FN's electoral niche but a similar argument was made in the late 1990s and then challenged by the 2002 presidential ballot. The FN had a significant impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2007 presidential election, but its ability to intensify levels of anxiety and hostility amongst the French electorate was at a lower level than in 2002. The FN's significant impact on public attitudes to immigration was only positively related to the French ERPs' electoral support, yet this relationship does not suggest a drop in the intensity of the FN's impact on this dimension of immigration politics. The deceleration of levels of immigration before 2007 (Figure 7.2) failed to coincide with the level of FN's impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2007. Despite the annual intake of more than 150,000 immigrants from 2002 to 2007, the significant drop of hostility to immigration in France challenges the validity of the "ethnic backlash" thesis (Mudde, 2007). It suggests that trends across public attitudes to immigration are less contingent on the intensity of immigration than on other political factors.

In contrast, the FN's strong electoral resilience throughout the elections before 2007 coincided with the FN's significant impact on public attitudes (Table 7.1). In parallel, Marine Le Pen's "republicanisation" project might help to understand the lower intensity of hostility across the FN electorate. Finally, Sarkozy's engagement with the FN through the informal co-option of Le Pen's agenda on immigration helps to explain the FN's lower ability to maintain the issue ownership of opposition to immigration. Overall, the FN's electoral

support seemed the most relevant factor behind the insignificant impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2007, but does not help to understand the decline in the intensity of this political process in comparison to 2002. Therefore, the FN's electoral support and party network did not seem to hold the same level of influence on the remaining electorate as Schain (2002, 2006, p.277) had identified in the past. Perhaps the lower intensity of FN impact on public attitudes in 2007 reflected the intense mobilisation against Le Pen's success in 2002 that de-legitimised the FN xenophobic discourse across the electorate, as Marine Le Pen's strategy seemed to acknowledge.

### **8.1.3 – Electoral results**

The first round outcome of the 2007 presidential elections lacked surprises in contrast to 2002, as the PS and the UMP candidates passed to the second round. Royal's share of 25.8 per cent of the vote represented the second best ever result by a Socialist candidate in a first round (Dupoirier, 2008). Bayrou collected 18.7 per cent of the vote and his voters would have a decisive role in determining the second round victor (Kuhn, 2007). The great winner was Sarkozy, who obtained the best result of a right-wing candidate in a presidential first round since 1974 with 31.2 per cent of the vote (Sauger, 2008).

Le Pen scored his weakest score in a presidential election since the early 1980s with just 10.4 per cent (Table 8.1), after not being able to secure one in two voters who had voted in his favour at the 2002 presidential election (Mayer, 2007). Unsurprisingly, Sarkozy was elected French President at the second round on the 6 of May 2007 with 53 per cent of the vote. The UMP leader profited from attracting more of Le Pen's and Bayrou's first round voters in the second round than Royal (Perrineau, 2007). Further explanations for the FN's electoral setback in the 2007 presidential election are provided in the next section.



**Table 8.1** – Votes for the FN at presidential, parliamentary, and EP elections between 2007 and 2009

| Year | Election      | Number of votes | Per cent of total |
|------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2007 | presidential  | 3,834,530       | 10.4%             |
| 2007 | parliamentary | 1,116,136       | 4.3 %             |
| 2009 | EP            | 1,091,691       | 6.3%              |

## **8.2 – FN development from 2007 and 2009**

This chapter's second section examines Le Pen's discourse on immigration policy and the FN's position within the French party system after the 2007 presidential election until 2009. Cultural xenophobia had been a cornerstone of the FN's ideology until 2007, when Le Pen dropped identity politics for a more Republican conception of French citizenship. Now, did the FN continue to water down its past cultural xenophobia after the 2007 presidential election? Under Marine Le Pen's influence, the FN emphasised welfare xenophobia alongside a zero-immigration policy but her de-radicalisation project continued to be undermined by her father's extremist outbursts. The FN had enjoyed high levels of electoral resilience at the ballots before 2007, despite the diminishing structure of political opportunities. Was the FN able to recover from the set back of the 2007 presidential election at the subsequent second-order-ballots? The analysis presented below points to a significant electoral demobilisation of the FN electorate until 2009 prompting prospects of the FN's terminal decline once more.

### **8.2.1 – Explanations for the 2007 disaster**

FN difficulties at the 2007 presidential election reflected Le Pen's lack of credibility in the face of a centre-right candidate who occupied his political space and was perceived as most efficient to implement his plans. Sarkozy's emphasis on insecurity and particularly on

immigration, alongside his superior political capital accumulated from his experience in office, operated as a magnet for Le Pen's 2002 voters. The two candidates campaigned on a similar agenda but Sarkozy was considered less radical than Le Pen (Fourquet, 2008) and enjoyed a much stronger credible image of a statesman than the FN candidate did (Mayer, 2007). Consequently, 30 per cent of Le Pen's 2002 voters rallied for Sarkozy in the first round of the 2007 presidential election while the transfer of votes in Sarkozy's favour expanded to 67 per cent of Le Pen's first round voters at the second round (Perrineau, 2008, p. 211). Sarkozy's capture of FN voters confirmed the success of his informal co-option of the FN on immigration policy reflecting the UMP's shift on immigration to extremist grounds and his stronger image of a statesman.

Despite the latter trend, the FN's still evidenced an ability to mobilise new voters as 32 per cent of Le Pen 2007 electors were first-time voters for the French ERP (Mayer, 2007). In a context of intense bipolarisation between the PS and the UMP, the FN only collected 4.3 per cent of the vote at the 2007 legislative elections (Table 8.1). The leakage of FN support to the UMP persisted and the high levels of abstention across its electorate hampered its electoral performance (Fourquet, 2008).<sup>84</sup> Unsurprisingly, the UMP won the second round ballot with a majority of 313 deputies out of 577 (Cole et al., 2008). As a result of the electoral disaster at the legislative elections, the FN faced a drop of 60 per cent in its share of public funds prompting an unprecedented financial crisis (Evans and Ivaldi, 2007).<sup>85</sup>

Overall, the 2007 presidential and legislative ballots marked Le Pen's failure to attract centrist voters and move from the right-wing fringes. As Le Pen (2007, p. 2) recognised: "paradoxically winners on ideological grounds, we have temporarily lost in the electoral

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<sup>84</sup> 27 per cent of Le Pen's first round voters at the 2007 presidential election shifted to the UMP at the legislative elections while 30 per cent abstained (Fourquet, 2008).

<sup>85</sup> French state subventions to political parties are calculated on the basis of their performance in the first round of legislative elections (Evans and Ivaldi, 2007).

arena”. Despite the hegemony of the post-2002 integration consensus and Sarkozy’s informal co-option of the FN agenda on immigration, electoral results had been disastrous. The FN leader assumed full responsibility for the events but internal critics were directed to Marine Le Pen’s “republicanisation” project (Gautier, 2009). Notwithstanding Le Pen’s promise to abandon the FN leadership after the 2009 EP elections, his tenure as leader was extended until January 2011. In the meantime, Marine Le Pen’s position within the FN was strengthened by her performance at the 2007 legislative elections. Marine Le Pen qualified for the second round with 24.4 per cent in Hénin-Beaumont, a traditional left-wing bastion, enhancing her position vis-à-vis her competitor Gollnisch, who only obtained 6.95 per cent in Rhône (Chombeau, 2007). By January 2011, Marine Le Pen’s position as her father’s successor was unassailable.

### **8.2.2 – The 2009 EP elections**

The electoral crisis evident in 2007 intensified after the 2009 EP election, reflecting the acute internal divisions over Le Pen’s succession and the UMP’s occupation of its ideological space (Gautier, 2009).<sup>86</sup> Marine Le Pen’s “de-demonization” project was challenged by Le Pen’s extremist outbursts. In the EP in March 2009, he once again argued that the Holocaust was a detail of history (Shields, 2010). The FN electoral campaign for the 2009 European ballot was based on opposition to immigration and globalisation promoted by stateless technocrats (Le Pen, 2009). Le Pen (2009, p.1) claimed that: “Europe was colonised by African and Asian immigrants” and continued to emphasise the FN’s welfare xenophobia and his “historical defence of national preference programmes” (Le Pen, 2009). The absence of associations between immigration and national identity confirmed Le Pen’s abandonment of identity politics without dropping his anti-immigration positions.

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<sup>86</sup> Additionally, the number of French MEPs was reduced from 78 to 72 MEPs diminishing the FN’s structure of opportunities at the 2009 EP ballot.

Electoral results at the 2009 EP ballot were disappointing as the FN collected just 6.3 per cent of the vote (Table 8.1). Once more, Marine Le Pen was the most voted for candidate with 10.18 per cent of the vote in the north-west region (Shields, 2010). The electoral decline between 2007 and 2009 strengthened predictions of the FN's terminal. However, the fact that the FN's ideology still resonated with a significant share of the French electorate challenged such expectations (Shields, 2010). By 2009, the FN continued to face three main challenges: ideological renewal, strategic positioning, and leadership (Evans and Ivaldi, 2007). The answer to these issues depended on the outcome of the leadership contest between Marine Le Pen and Gollnisch, which took place in January 2011. Marine Le Pen won the FN leadership with 68 per cent of favourable votes against 32 per cent for Gollnisch in the FN poll (*Liberation*, 2010). A later electoral recovery was evident from the results at the 2011 cantonal elections after the FN collected 11.73 per cent of the vote (*Le Monde*, 2011).

In short, the FN's frame of immigration was now based on the proposal of "zero-immigration" policy and welfare chauvinism whilst past cultural xenophobia has been effectively dropped from 2007 onwards. This ideological shift was an outcome of Marine Le Pen's "republicanisation" project and of Sarkozy's informal co-option of the FN's identity politics. In contrast to the electoral resilience evidenced before the 2007 presidential elections, the FN's position within the French party system waned considerably between 2007 and 2009. After Sarkozy's raid of Le Pen's 2002 electorate, the FN leadership was unable to reverse the subsequent electoral decline in 2009 within a set of political opportunities severely diminished by the acute internal cleavage over the leadership's succession. The prospects of terminal FN decline dissipated after Marine Le Pen's succession to her father in January 2011 and after the results at the 2011 regional elections.

### **8.3 – The FN impact on immigration policy between 2007 and 2009**

This research suggested through Chapter 7 that a significant and disproportional FN impact on the development of immigration policy had been observed during Chirac’s last presidential term, especially from 2005 onwards. Now, did the FN reinforce the restrictive character of French immigration policy developed between 2007 and 2009? President Sarkozy institutionalised the association between national identity and immigration with the creation of the *Ministère d’Immigration, d’Intégration et d’Identité Nationale et Co-Development* (MIIINC)<sup>87</sup> in 2007. Another immigration law was approved in 2007 including further measures to reduce the intensity of “endured” inflows whilst Sarkozy’s internal agenda on immigration was transposed to the EU level. Consequently, FN impact on policy developments is ranked as highly significant between 2007 and 2009 and even more disproportional than during Chirac’s last presidential term. The agency of mainstream parties, particularly Sarkozy’s informal engagement with the FN was regarded as the most relevant factor behind the preceding trend (Table 2.1).

#### **8.3.1 – The 2007 Immigration law**

After being invested as President, Sarkozy appointed a new UMP government under the leadership of Prime Minister François Fillon, a UMP member and a close aid of the new French president. As he had set out in his electoral campaign, the President created the MIIINC in May 2007 (Decree Law 2007-999 of 31 May 2007) under the guidance of Brice Hortefeux, Sarkozy’s loyal supporter. The interdiscursive relationship identified between Sarkozy’s electoral campaign with the FN’s frame of immigration as a threat to national identity was therefore related with an important non-discursive event: the creation of MIIINC. The President set two main objectives for Hortefeux: “to reinforce and deepen the

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<sup>87</sup>Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development. This ministry was later renamed Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity Solidarity and Development in 2008 instead of Co-Development.

selective immigration policy” and to develop a common EU policy alongside other member states (Sarkozy, 2007c, p.1). Annual caps on immigration were demanded by Sarkozy to increase labour inflows to half of the total of long-term residence authorisations granted in France, at a time when they only represented 7 per cent (Figure 7.2). This demonstrated the President’s voluntarism on the management of inflows (Sarkozy, 2007c).

To attain these objectives, Hortefeux presented a new immigration law to the French National Assembly in July 2007, the third bill in less than five years (Table 8.2). The Minister announced the implementation of the CCT<sup>88</sup> based on the French state’s discretionary consideration of the “added value” of hiring an immigrant, which could lead to a very restricted application (Hortefeux, 2007; Chaloff and Lemaitre, 2009). This channel for HSI was implemented in the context of low recruitment difficulties of highly skilled workers in the French economy in contrast to the high demand for skilled construction workers or nurses and care workers (CREDOC, 2008).<sup>89</sup> Therefore, the criteria imposed to access the CCT was unfit to attain the desired intensification of labour immigration and provided evidence of President’s Sarkozy unwillingness to open the labour market to immigration.

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<sup>88</sup> A commission set the highly discretionary access criteria to the CCT in December 2007 (CNCT, 2007). Apart from liberalising grant of residence authorisation to high-ranking employees of multinationals, the CNCT designated priority areas as: physics; chemistry, biology; maths; IT; agronomy; marketing; human resources; management; and finance (CNCT, 2007). Possession of a master’s degree or higher qualification was demanded whilst candidates without previous work experience were ineligible to apply (CNCT, 2008).

<sup>89</sup> The report on recruitment difficulties in the French economy noticed lower problems in hiring HSI as compared to 2006 whilst the opposite trend was observed across skilled construction and industry workers, drivers, nurses, midwives, cooks (CREDOC, 2008, p. 2).

**Table 8.2** – Modifications to French immigration policy by the 2007 immigration and integration law

| Primary inflows           | Secondary inflows  | Asylum  | Irregular inflows   |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| Turns the CCT operational | Candidates for family reunion must prove knowledge of French language and Republican values before entry. Increase of financial resources demanded to access right to family reunion. Introduces CAI for immigrant families. | Introduced the right to appeal in cases of rejection of asylum request. Delegates supervision of OPFRA to the MIINC | Authorises regularisation of irregular immigrants in areas with labour market bottlenecks and after proof of work contract. |

To tackle the crisis of the integration system, the government demanded previous proof of integration from candidates applying for a visa for family reunion. This included proof of knowledge of the “French language and Republican values in the origin country and the signature of the CAI for newcomers benefiting from family reunion<sup>90</sup> (Hortefeux, 2007, pp. 5-6; Table 8.2). Therefore, concerns with immigrant integration resulted in further obstacles on access to family reunion and the increasing fusion of immigration and integration policies (Table 8.2). The President’s electoral campaign of promoting a selective immigration policy legitimised the obstacles placed on foreign citizens’ right to conduct a normal family life and the destabilisation of their long-term legal settlement with the fusion of immigration and integration policies. Furthermore, a controversial amendment was proposed by a UMP deputy, Thierry Mariani, introducing the possibility of voluntary DNA tests to determine parental relationships to accelerate the screening of applications for family reunion (Loyer,

<sup>90</sup> This contract is signed by the foreigner and his parents or conjoint. Parents are obliged to engage in training in the rights and duties of parents in France and to respect obligatory school. Failure to abide by the contract can result in residency authorisations not being renewed by the local mayor (Lochak and Fouteau, 2008).

2008). This action contained a deep symbolic value reinforcing perceptions of widespread abuse of the immigration system and met widespread opposition from centre-left parties and immigrants' associations.

Overall, the 2007 immigration law had a clearly restrictive character, particularly towards family reunion (Table 8.2).<sup>91</sup> Consequently, the interdiscursive relationship found between the UMP leader's policy shift in 2005 and the FN's frame of particular types of immigration flows as "endured" had further consequences at the non-discursive level with the promulgation of the 2007 immigration law (see Chapter 7). Furthermore, the employment of CDA provided further insights to the analysis of policy developments. The outcome of this legislation was the salient reduction of the proportion of family reunion, whilst labour inflows persisted with the same level of intensity as in the past (Figure 7.2). Sarkozy's policy towards HSI failed to have an impact on the proportion of labour inflows as only 1,042 CCTs were granted by the French state between 2007 and 2009 (SGCICI, 2011, p. 49). The client politics model reflecting the granting of the right to long-term settlement to HSI by the French state was not followed by intense levels of this type immigration as expected and as observed in the UK.

The promulgation of a "list of jobs under tension"<sup>92</sup> in December 2007 reflected Sarkozy's ambiguities towards labour inflows. Whereas 152 professions were made available for the citizens of A-8 countries, only 30 professions were open to non-EU immigrants (Lochak and Fouteau, 2008). Job availability was therefore contingent upon immigrants' origins, suggesting the adoption of implicit geographical criteria by the UMP government. The redistributive policy associated with the guest-worker programme for unskilled workers from

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<sup>91</sup> The liberal developments on asylum were a response to France's condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights in 26 April 2007 for the lack of right to appeal to asylum seekers (Loyer, 2008).

<sup>92</sup> Circular N° NOR : IMI/N/07/00011/C related to work permits granted to citizens from new EU member-states throughout a transitional period and to citizens from third states and was based on a list of jobs under pressure.



A-8 countries and non-EU countries suggests the presence of a weak interest group model on these types of immigration, if not regulatory politics in contrast to the British *laissez-faire* approach to intra-EU inflows (Table 2.2). The low intensity of labour inflows into France between 2007 and 2009 reflects the ambiguities of the policymaker to increase the proportion of labour immigration without opening the French labour market, as well as the highly restrictive mechanisms to manage labour immigration. Apparently, Sarkozy's attainment of a better balance between selected immigration and "endured" inflows resumed to the reduction of the latter types of immigration instead of the intensification of labour inflows.

### **8.3.2 – Sarkozy's quota system and the Mazeaud Commission**

Sarkozy's informal co-option or the "clothes stealing" of the FN approach to immigration politics and its transposition into French legislation progressed after 2007. In January 2008, Hortefeux appointed a commission<sup>93</sup> presided by Pierre Mazeaud<sup>94</sup> (a centre-right personality close to Chirac) on the constitutional framework for a new immigration policy, at a time when an overall process of Constitutional reform was taking place in both the National Assembly and the Senate. The commission's objectives were "to consider the necessary modifications to the definition of immigration quotas" including quotas by "areas of origin of migration flows" (Hortefeux, 2008). In a speech to the South African Parliament in February 2008, Sarkozy announced the preparation of a global reform of the French immigration system, which encompassed an annual immigration quota. In the President's words: "the caps would include sub-categories by motives of immigration – labour or family reunion" (Sarkozy, 2008).

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<sup>93</sup> Commission sur le cadre constitutionnel de la nouvelle politique d'immigration (CCCNPI, Commission about the constitutional framework for a new immigration policy).

<sup>94</sup> Former president of the National Assembly Law Commission between 1988 and 1989 and between 1993 and 1997 and former President of the Constitutional Court.

Therefore, President Sarkozy recovered the quota system that had been vetoed by Chirac in 2005 that proposed the categorisation of immigrants according to geographic origins or purposes of settlement and presupposed the subsequent reform of the French Republican paradigm. The UMP government adopted an overtly anti-egalitarian approach to the management of immigration flows, a distinctive ideological trait of ERPs (Ivaldi, 2008). Nevertheless, the Mazeaud commission concluded that “binding immigration quotas were impractical or without interest” and added that the French state “lacked discretionary powers to determine inflows relative to the two major sources of settlement: secondary and asylum inflows” (CCCNPI, 2008, p. 5). The Mazeaud commission thus vetoed the President’s plans and potential modification to the Constitutional text to accommodate ethnic discrimination of immigrants that would have institutionalised the rejection of equalitarianism as the FN proposed. Once more, the French domestic political system posed a very significant constraint on the intensity of the FN’s impact on policy developments during President Sarkozy’s term.

### **8.3.3 – The EU immigration pact and the Return Directive**

After the preceding veto, Sarkozy focused the French EU presidency on immigration policy to advance his own political agenda. A European Pact on Immigration and Asylum was signed by the 27 member-states at an EU summit in October 2008 promoted by the French government, without legal binding force. References to selective immigration policy or to integration contracts were excluded from the final text, particularly due to Spain’s intervention (Collet, 2009). Yet, Hortefeux announced the final version of the pact on immigration and asylum as a great victory for the French EU presidency (Le Monde, 2009a). Following this event, the EP and the European Council adopted the directive 2008/115/EC on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning irregular immigrants, known as the Return directive. The two most controversial points of this Directive were the

extension of authorised detention periods for irregular immigrants to 18 months and a re-entry ban on deported immigrants of 5 years (Baldaccini, 2010). Establishment of these measures at the EU level can be interpreted as a means for Sarkozy to evade domestic judicial constraints that similar measures could have raised if proposed to the French National Assembly (Guiraudon, 2002).

Demonstrating the government's objectives on immigration policy, Hortefeux congratulated himself for the removal of 29,786 irregular immigrants from French territory and for the fact that family reunion registered a "spectacular drop" of 10.6 per cent in January 2009 (*Le Monde*, 2009a). However, the growth of the rate of removals reflected the intensification of immigrants' applications to the voluntary return programme, whilst forced removals effectively dropped from 19,885 in 2007 to 19,724 in 2008 (*Le Monde*, 2009b). As Weil (2009) noticed, the government masked the statistics to attain its political objectives and maintain the high salience of immigration on the political agenda to ensure a permanent mobilisation of right-wing voters. Furthermore, the new immigration minister – Eric Besson (appointed by Sarkozy in March 2009) – dropped the introduction of DNA tests because of legal difficulties in its implementation (*Le Monde*, 2009c). Alongside the proposed quota system, DNA tests were amongst the UMP unfeasible but highly symbolic proposals.

President Sarkozy's immigration policy during the first two years of his presidential term was marked by the institutionalisation of the association between national identity and immigration alongside an increasing gap between policy aims and subsequent outcomes on labour inflows. Thus, the outcome of the President's selective immigration policy was the reduction of the rates of secondary inflows rather than the intensification of labour inflows (Figure 7.2). The institutionalisation of the FN's identity politics through the creation of MIIINC in 2007 legitimised perceptions of immigration as a threat to national identity. Conflation of immigration and integration policy led to the deployment of further obstacles to

family reunion and destabilisation of immigrants' long-term legal settlement in France. Reform of channels for labour inflows with a clear restrictive character help to understand the low intensity of labour inflows from 2007 to 2009. Therefore, the FN had a very significant and indirect impact on the development of French immigration policy during the first two years of Sarkozy's presidential term. This trend was considered disproportional in light of the FN's isolation and the electoral crisis observed between the 2007 presidential and the 2009 EP elections.

The preceding observation coincided with the increase of levels of immigration in 2008, the FN's still salient threat to mainstream parties, and the agency of mainstream parties. Whereas the rates of immigration increased slightly in 2008 due to the growth of humanitarian inflows (Figure 7.2), the salience of immigration was low at the 2007 presidential election and decreased in comparison to 2002 (Figure 8.2). FN's electoral challenge to mainstream parties was neutralised in the 2007 presidential and legislative elections leading to prospects of this party's terminal decline (Table 8.1). Yet, the FN's electoral threat would recover to past levels after the conclusion of Le Pen's succession, as the 2011 cantonal elections demonstrated. Like the dimension of the FN electoral threat, the agency of mainstream parties also coincided with the FN's very significant impact. Whereas former President Chirac refused to engage with the FN, President Sarkozy informally co-opted the FN's agenda on immigration policy into the French legislation. In the former context and comparing to President Chirac's term, the agency of mainstream parties, especially President Sarkozy's strategy, was considered the most relevant factor enhancing the level of FN's impact on French immigration policy between 2007 and 2009.

## 8.4 – Conclusions

The salience of immigration policy expanded significantly at the electoral campaign for the 2007 presidential election and compared to 2002, and family reunion and irregular inflows were the most prominent types of immigration in the political debate. Whereas the FN shifted its stance on immigration onto centre-right ground, French mainstream parties' (particularly the UMP) shifted their positions rightwards. The post-2002 integration consensus was observed across all mainstream parties' proposals whilst the UMP informally co-opted the FN's frame of immigration, particularly the frame of family reunion and asylum as "endured" and the Le Pen's identity politics. Therefore, this ERP's impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2007 presidential election was considered very significant. The major difference found in the behaviour of the proposed factors in 2007 compared to 2002 was the lower salience of immigration across public opinion and Sarkozy's willingness to engage at the informal level with the FN whereas Chirac had refused. Thus, the agency of mainstream parties, in particular Sarkozy's electoral strategy, was considered the most relevant factor behind the FN's impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

Salience of immigration across the French electorate at the 2007 presidential election was lower than it had been in 2002. This contrasts with the situation in the UK where salience of this issue had risen substantially between 2001 and 2005. Le Pen maintained the issue ownership of opposition to immigration but was directly challenged by Sarkozy's informal co-option of the FN agenda on this topic. General levels of hostility to immigration declined substantially across the overall electorate and amongst the FN's voters as well. Therefore, the FN had a significant impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2007 but at a lower level than in 2002. The dimension of the FN's electoral support and its party organisation were considered the most relevant factor enhancing its significant impact on public attitudes in 2007. However, this factor still fails to account for the overall decline of hostility to

immigration. Further research is required to understand the decline of concern and hostility to immigration across the French electorate during the 2000s.

Sarkozy's informal co-option of the FN's frame of immigration succeeded at the 2007 presidential election after the capture of a large share of Le Pen's 2002 vote. The success of this political process reflected the UMP candidate's adoption of a similar agenda to Le Pen's alongside his superior political capital accumulated from being former Interior Minister. The FN's electoral disaster at the 2007 presidential election extended to the subsequent second-order-ballots taking place until 2009. The internal cleavage between Marine Le Pen and Gollnisch over Le Pen's succession diminished the FN's structure of political opportunities between 2007 and 2009. Nonetheless, the prospects of the FN's terminal decline were dissipated after Marine Le Pen's victory at the FN ballot in 2011 and after elections that followed. Marine Le Pen's "republicanisation" project presupposed the watering-down of the FN's cultural xenophobia in favour of zero-immigration policy and welfare chauvinism. However, Le Pen's xenophobic outbursts undermined this electoral strategy and damaged the FN's structure of political opportunities.

President Sarkozy's term was marked by the institutionalisation of the association between immigration and national identity through the creation of the MIIINC. The 2007 immigration and integration law deepened the selective immigration policy with further obstacles to reduce "endured" inflows, such as family reunion. Despite the granting of the right to long-term settlement, the implementation of the CCT failed to intensify labour immigration between 2007 and 2009 indicating that the client politics model was not followed by the subsequent expansion of HSI. The limited scope of the guest-worker programmes towards A-8 countries and non-EU unskilled immigration suggested the presence of a weak interest politics model. Sarkozy's political priorities were focused on restricting "endured" inflows rather than intensifying labour immigration. Consequently, a gap between Sarkozy's policy

objective to increase the proportion of labour inflows and subsequent policy outcomes was identified between 2007 and 2009.

Challenging the French Republican paradigm, Sarkozy failed to put forward a quota system to manage inflows based on geographical origin or purpose of immigration. The French President also transposed his agenda on immigration to the EU level in 2008 apparently to evade possible domestic judicial constraints and to seek the mobilisation of the FN electorate in favour of the UMP. Consequently, the FN had a highly significant and indirect impact on policy developments during the first two years of Sarkozy's presidential term. This trend was considered disproportional in light of the FN's decline within the French party system. The preceding observation coincided with the slight increase of levels of immigration, the FN's substantial threat to mainstream parties, and the agency mainstream parties. In the former context, Sarkozy's willingness to informally co-opt the FN agenda was the most relevant factor enhancing the FN's highly significant impact on the development of French immigration policy between 2007 and 2009.

## Chapter 9 – The LN impact on Italian immigration policy from 2001 to 2006

“Padanians did not work the land for thousands of years to give it away to Bingo Bongo<sup>95</sup> and the Chinese”

Minister of Devolution, Umberto Bossi, 2003

This chapter analyses the LN’s impact on the Italian immigration politics and policy between 2001 and 2006. After being the leading party in northern regions at the 1994 general election, the LN’s electoral support dropped dramatically in the late 1990s demonstrating the dissatisfaction with its secessionist project in its regional strongholds. Consequently, Bossi abandoned “Padania’s” independence project in favour of “*la devolution*” and adopted a cultural xenophobic discourse towards immigration. Benefiting from the vital lifeline provided by Berlusconi’s invitation to join the CdL, the LN obtained access to national office after the CdL’s victory at the 2001 general election raising expectations over the LN’s potential impact on Italian immigration policy. Within this context, the chapter explores whether the LN had a significant impact on the three selected dimensions of immigration politics and policy.

The chapter’s first overall section addresses the Italian 2001 general election and analyses: i) the LN’s impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy during the electoral campaign and; ii) the LN’s contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration. Immigration policy was a salient issue within the 2001 electoral campaign and irregular inflows were the most prominent type of immigration flow. This research will suggest that the LN had a significant impact on the mainstream parties’ proposals, particularly of the centre-right

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<sup>95</sup> Bossi was inspired by an American song of the 1940s, translated to Italian, named *Civilisation* that included reference to “bingo bongo are only well in Congo” (Passalacqua, 2009, p. 179).



coalition. As the first section also shows, immigration was a top priority issue of Italian voters at the 2001 general election and this social phenomenon was overwhelmingly associated with insecurity. Despite these observations, this research will contend that the LN's ability to intensify concern and hostility towards immigration seemed limited and irrelevant at the national level in 2001.

The chapter's second section analyses the LN's development between 2001 and 2006, a period characterised by the reversal of the LN's electoral decline, which was evident at the 2001 general election. In contrast to the expected de-radicalisation reflecting its participation in government, the LN's cultural xenophobia was exacerbated during this period. The third and final section evaluates the LN's impact on the development of Italian immigration policy during Berlusconi's term. An increasing gap between the highly restrictive objectives set during the electoral campaign and the subsequent acute intensity of immigration flows outcomes throughout Berlusconi's term was observed. Nevertheless, this research will suggest that the LN had a direct and moderate impact on the policy developments, regarded as disproportional considering its position within the governmental coalition.

### **9.1 – The Italian general election of 13 May 2001**

The 2001 general election followed the end of a full term government led by the centre-left *Ulivo* coalition that had three different Presidents of the Council of Ministers (Romano Prodi, Massimo D'Alema, and Giuliano Amato). Incumbency advantages were not evident as the *Ulivo's* candidate Francesco Rutelli (Mayor of Rome) had not been a member of the preceding government (Pasquino, 2002). The *Ulivo's* troubles mounted with the failure to reach an electoral agreement with the left-wing *Rifondazione Comunista* (RC) and with centre-left Antonio Di Pietro's *L'Italia dei valori* (Donovan, 2002). By contrast, Berlusconi was the undisputed leader of a vast electoral coalition aggregating the FI, AN, LN,

*Biancofiore*<sup>96</sup> and the new Socialist Party into the CdL (Fabbrini and Gilbert, 2002). Italian voters showed strong interest in the 2001 general election as the 81 per cent turnout demonstrated (Newell, 2002).

### **9.1.1 – LN impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy**

Did the LN reinforce the restrictive character of Italian mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy and the salience attached to it in their electoral manifestos? Immigration policy was a salient issue within the 2001 electoral campaign, which was dominated by irregular inflows. As seen below, this research argues that the LN had a significant impact on the inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2001 ballot, particularly amongst the centre-right parties. Analysis of relationships between the preceding observation and the proposed hypotheses points to the agency of mainstream parties, especially the FI leader, as the most relevant factor behind the LN's impact on this dimension of immigration politics (Table 2.1).

#### ***9.1.1.1 – The CdL's position on immigration policy***

Supported by a vast electoral campaign, Berlusconi successfully set a distinct political agenda with a strong emphasis on crime, insecurity and immigration (Belluci and Bull, 2002). The salience of immigration reflected Bossi's demand to make it a key issue in the CdL's formal electoral pact<sup>97</sup> signed with Berlusconi in exchange for the LN's guarantee of full support for the government (*Corriere della Sera*, 2001a). This formal electoral pact ensured that the CdL was formally bound to Bossi's electoral priorities and that Berlusconi could be held accountable throughout the term (*Corriere della Sera*, 2001b). Consequently, Berlusconi integrated the LN's approach to immigration into the CdL's 2001 electoral strategy. The

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<sup>96</sup> Alliance between the Christian Democrat parties, *Centro Cristiano Democratico* (CCD) and *Cristiani Democratici Uniti* (CDU).

<sup>97</sup> The four key issues of the formal electoral pact were: family, development, devolution, security and immigration (*Corriere*, 2001a).

weakness of the 1998 Turco-Napolitano law and the *Ulivo*'s alleged excessive tolerance of irregular inflows were recurrent themes of Berlusconi's electoral campaign (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003). In parallel, the AN campaigned for the criminalisation of irregular immigrants as proposed by the 1999 Fini-Landi proposal (Geddes, 2008). Immigration was subsequently articulated as a law and order issue rather than a labour market problem.

As Zincone (2002, p. 61) noted the centre-right parties were unwilling to cede the monopoly of opposition to immigration to the LN despite their electoral coalition. Immigration policy was included within the CdL's long electoral manifesto that focused mostly on irregular inflows, framed as a question of law and order with overt association to growing criminality<sup>98</sup> (Figure 9.1; CdL, 2001). Alternatively, a guest-worker programme was proposed to manage labour inflows revealing a utilitarian approach to labour inflows and ignoring the intense demand for foreign labour in the domestic labour market (CdL, 2001). The CdL discourse stigmatised irregular immigrants as a deviant criminal group and framed the management of inflows immigration under a "wanted, but not welcome" approach.

#### *9.1.1.1.1 – LN electoral campaign*

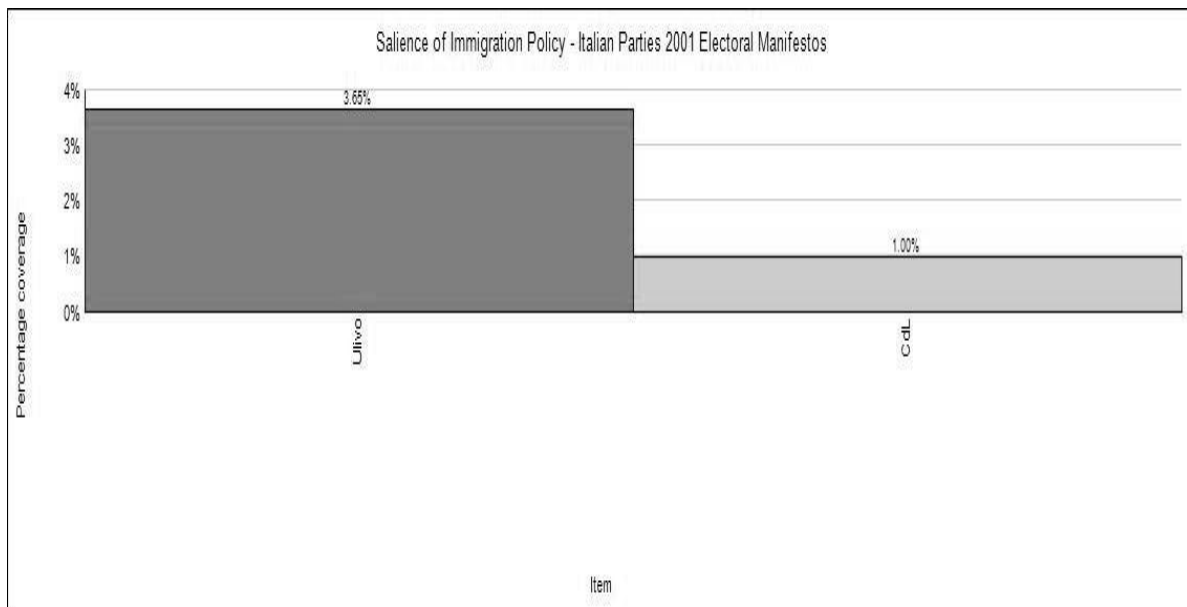
In a fragile position within the CdL coalition, the LN refrained from issuing its own manifesto to prevent conflicts with its coalition partners. To overcome its weak media coverage, the LN developed an electoral campaign close to northern voters (Legnante and Sani, 2002). This strategy encompassed the organisation of several street parades against immigration (*Corriere della Sera*, 2001c) under slogans such as "entry for labour purposes only and not for delinquency" evidencing an interdiscursive relationship between the LN's frame of immigration as a law and order issue and the mainstream parties' discourse. Bossi proposed the construction of a net over the Slovenian border and argued that irregular

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<sup>98</sup> "Regulate immigration: cause of criminality" (CdL, 2001, p. 50).

immigrants “once entitled to vote, would provide 2.5 million additional votes for left parties in five years” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2001d). The fusion of anti-immigration stances with the old anti-establishment discourse was the new formula found to mobilise the LN’s core electorate after the end of the secessionist project (Fella and Ruzza, 2009).

**Figure 9.1** – Salience of immigration policy in Italian party coalitions’ electoral manifestos at the 2001 general election



Source: Ulivo, 2001; CdL, 2001

### 9.1.1.2 – *Ulivo’s position on immigration policy*

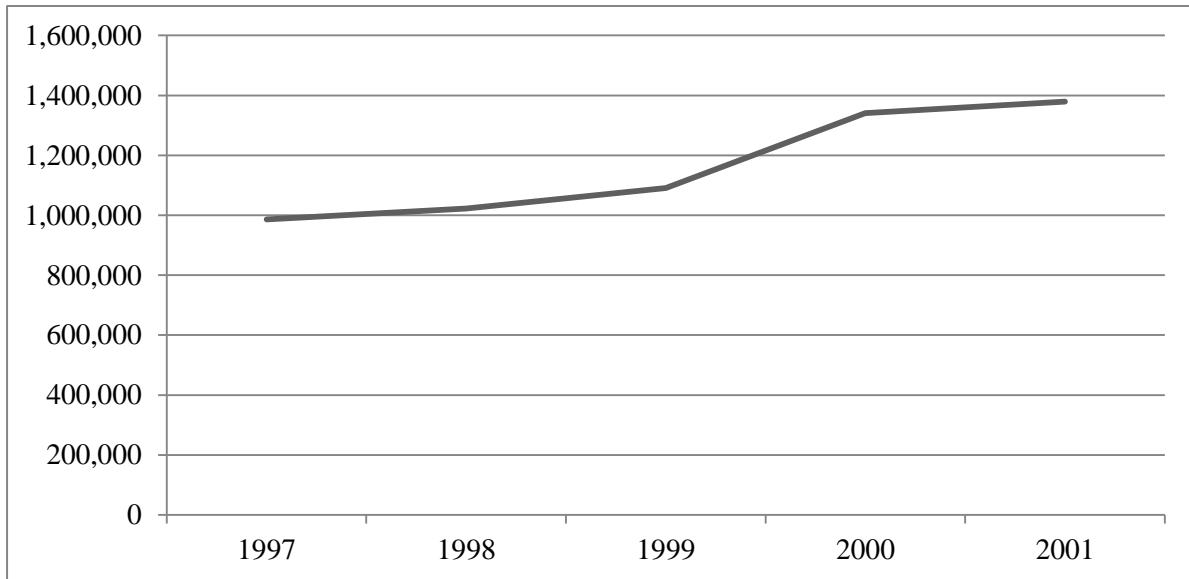
According to Colombo and Sciortino (2004), the centre-left coalition lacked any efforts to defend the 1998 Turco-Napolitano law and even failed to explore faults within the CdL campaign on immigration. In an alternative to Berlusconi’s slogan of “better control of immigration”, Rutelli proposed “the end of the racket of irregular immigrants” without challenging the CdL approach (*Corriere della Sera*, 2001f). The *Ulivo’s* electoral manifesto conceded higher salience to immigration policy than the CdL’s and irregular immigration dominated the centre-left proposals (Figure 9.1; *Ulivo*, 2001). Most of the proposed objectives focused on the containment of irregular inflows whilst a quota system was also

proposed (*Ulivo*, 2001, p.34). The only point distinguishing the two coalitions was the *Ulivo*'s vague proposal to concede long-term residence authorisations to all legal immigrants (*Ulivo*, 2001, p.36). Therefore, the centre-left coalition converged with the CdL's frame of immigration and favoured the perception of immigration as a question of police control rather than a labour market issue.

In short, immigration policy was a salient issue at the 2001 electoral campaign and mainstream parties' strongly focused on irregular inflows. Two mainstream inter-party consensuses were found on immigration policy involving its framing as a law and order issue and on the adoption of guest-worker systems to manage labour inflows. The LN had a significant impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy, particularly amongst the centre-right coalition. Bossi's formal electoral pact with Berlusconi presupposed the CdL adoption of the LN's frame of immigration as a law and order issue and under a temporary approach. The *Ulivo*'s convergence with the CdL approach strengthened the LN's impact on inter-party competition, as the high salience of immigration within the *Ulivo*'s electoral manifesto suggests and as Colombo and Sciortino (2004) argued too. The LN significant impact on inter-party competition was positively related to the behaviour of the four proposed factors (Table 2.1).

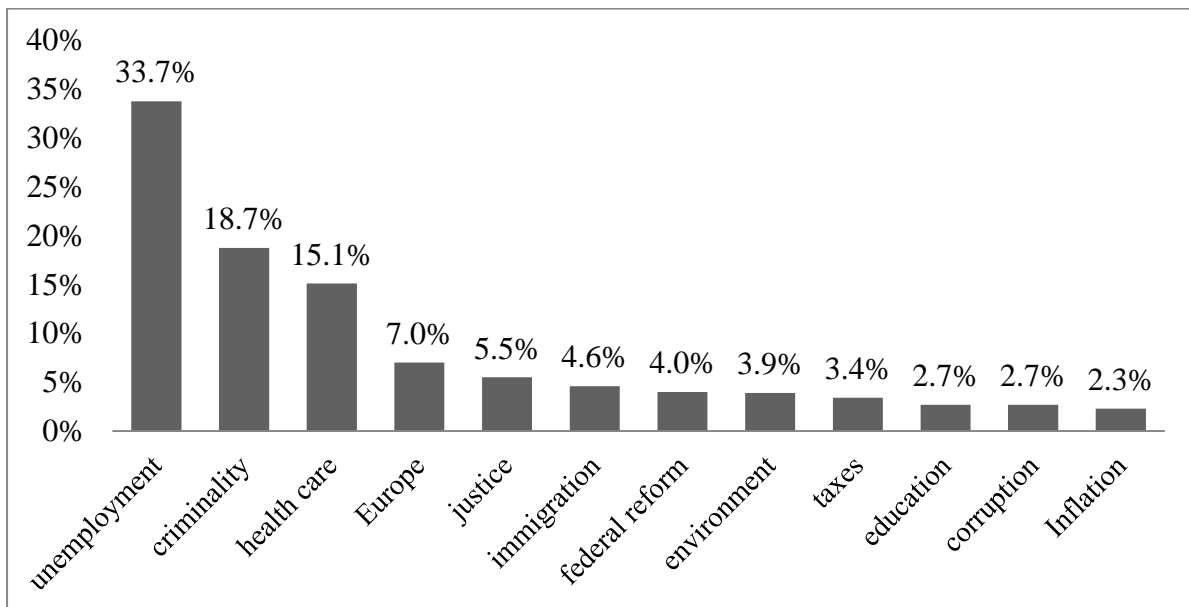
The growth of the foreign population settled in Italy with a regular status and the dimension of the 2002 regularisation process suggest an increase of levels of immigration before 2001 (Figure 9.2). Immigration was a top priority amongst the Italian voters most important issues in 2001 (Figure 9.3). Despite its electoral decline before 2001, the LN continued to pose a substantial strategic dilemma to mainstream parties. Due to the dynamics imposed by the Italian electoral system, an independent LN candidacy and its ability to win seats under the majoritarian tier could still hinder the CdL's overall victory as observed at the 1996 general

**Figure 9.2** – Foreign population with legal residence authorisation in Italy between 1997 and 2001



Source: ISTAT, 2005

**Figure 9.3** – Most important issue at the 2001 general election (N= 3,173)



Source: ITANES, 2001

election (Table 4.5). Finally, the CdL's formal engagement with the LN and the signature of the formal electoral pact also coincided with the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition. Within this context, Berlusconi's close relationship with Bossi consummated by the electoral agreement was considered the most relevant factor enhancing the LN's significant impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

### **9.1.2 – The LN's impact on public attitudes to immigration**

Did the LN intensify levels of concern and hostility towards immigration amongst the Italian electorate in 2001? Immigration was ranked amongst the top priority issues of the Italian electorate at the 2001 ballot and was mainly associated with insecurity issues. Despite intense anxiety and levels of hostility, this thesis argues that the LN lacked relevant contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration at the national level. The analysis developed further on suggests that the LN's limited electoral support and concentrated party network looked as the most relevant factor behind its lack of impact on this dimension of immigration politics (Table 2.1).

Unemployment and criminality were the two top priority issues of Italian voters at the 2001 ballot, whilst immigration was ranked as the sixth highest priority (Figure 9.3). However, the salience of immigration was actually likely to be higher due to the strong association between criminality and irregular inflows amongst the electorate in contrast to its irrelevance at the 1996 ballot (Legnante and Sani, 2002, p.50). The CdL's electoral strategy resonated with the electorate and it was considered the best coalition to deal with immigration, enjoying a lead of almost twenty points over the *Ulivo* (Itanes, 2001, p. 162). Data from Itanes (2001) indicated that the voters most concerned with immigration ranked Bossi negatively and at a lower level than Fini, Berlusconi and even Rutelli (Figure 9.4). This trend suggests that the perception of Bossi as the best candidate to deal with immigration by voters most concerned

with this issue should have been low in 2001. Therefore, the LN was far from holding the issue ownership of opposition to immigration unlike the French FN in 2002 (see Chapter 7).

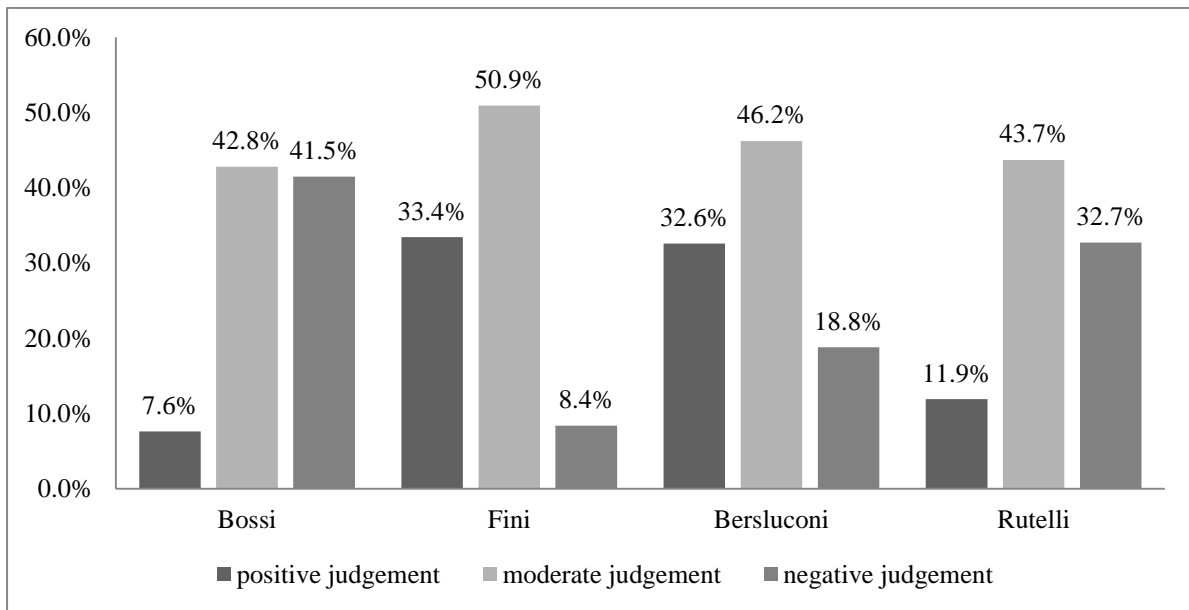
In terms of public attitudes to immigration, perceptions of threat to employment were low amongst the electorate, but higher among LN voters (Figure 9.5). Perceptions of immigration as a threat to national identity were very low at national level in contrast to the consensus found among LN voters (Figure 9.6). Finally, the association between immigration and insecurity was high across the Italian electorate and overwhelming amid the LN's voters (Figure 9.7). Curiously, the British electorate exhibited the opposite perceptions of immigration at the 2001 general election (see Chapter 5). Public perceptions were confirmed by the continuous rising proportion of foreign citizens amongst individuals denounced for a crime and sentenced since the early 1990s. However, the share of irregular immigrants among the total of convicted foreign citizens dropped between 1988 and 2006 (Barbagli, 2008). Attitudes to immigration of the LN's voters confirmed the effects of Bossi's xenophobic approach to immigration but the Italian ERP's contagion effects did not extend to the national level.<sup>99</sup> Bossi's low ranking across voters most concerned with immigration, the LN's concentrated territorial dimension, and its limited media coverage suggest that the LN lacked a relevant impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2001.

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<sup>99</sup> Nonetheless, levels of hostility towards immigration among the LN electorate were still at a lower level than among the French FN voters in the 2002 presidential elections.

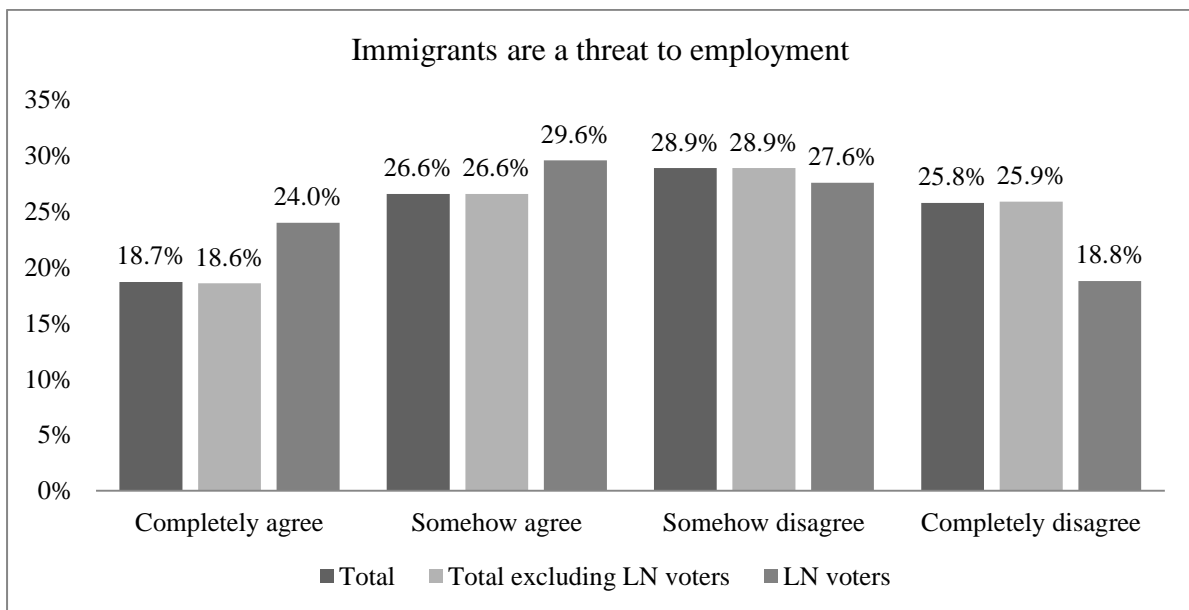


**Figure 9.4** – Ranking of Bossi, Fini, Berlusconi and Rutelli amongst respondents most concerned with immigration at the 2001 general election (N= 148)



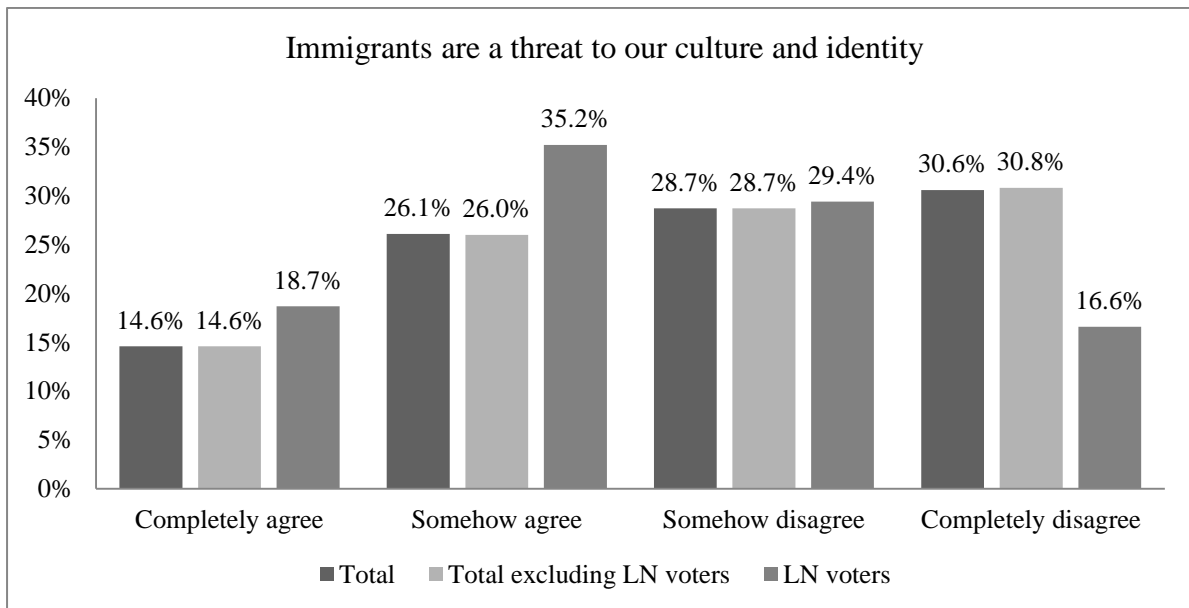
Source – ITANES, 2001

**Figure 9.5** – Public perception of immigrants as a threat to employment at Italian 2001 general election? (N = 3,121; LN voters = 40)



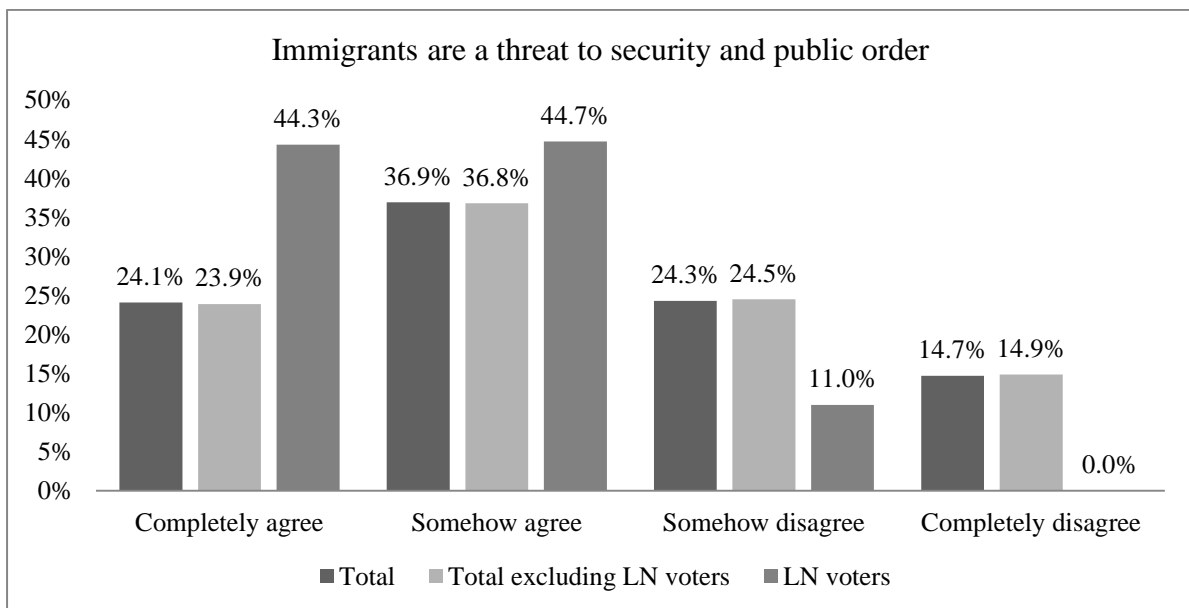
Source: ITANES, 2001

**Figure 9.6** – Public perception of immigrants as a threat to culture and identity at Italian 2001 general election (N = 3,130; LN voters = 38)



Source: ITANES, 2001

**Figure 9.7** – Public perception of immigrants as a threat to security and public order at Italian 2001 general election (N = 3,155; LN voters = 40)



Source: ITANES, 2001

This observation was weakly related to the expansion of levels of immigration rates before 2001 and to the agency of mainstream parties, but it coincided with the levels of LN's electoral support. As noted, immigration rates into Italy expanded before the 2001 general election as evidence by an increase in the foreign population legally settled in Italy and by the dimension of the 2002 regularisation programme (Figure 9.2). The formal engagement between Italian mainstream centre-right parties and the LN legitimised Bossi's xenophobic discourse but this trend failed to expand the LN's contagion effects to the national level. In contrast, the concentration of the LN's electoral support exclusively on northern regions in a context of electoral decline coincided with Bossi's inability to influence the national electorate (Table 4.5). Within this context, this last factor seems the most relevant behind its lack of impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2001. Consequently, responsibility for the intense anxiety and hostility to immigration across the Italian electorate lay elsewhere than the LN, a trend that subsequently enhances the profile of mainstream parties and other political actors.

### **9.1.3 – 2001 Electoral outcome**

The CdL was the victorious coalition at the 2001 general election after securing 45.4 per cent of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies against *Ulivo's* 35 per cent (Newell and Bull, 2002, p. 631). At the Senate elections, the CdL obtained 42.7 per cent of the vote against 38.7 per cent won by the *Ulivo* allowing Berlusconi to enjoy a comfortable majority in both chambers. Berlusconi's victory was enhanced by the fact that the FI was the leading party and enjoyed a redistribution of votes within the centre-right coalition to its advantage (Pasquino, 2002). Consequently, the FI only depended on support from the AN to maintain a majority rather than on the LN or the Christian-Democrat parties (Chiaromonte, 2002).

The LN's share of the vote decreased to 3.9 per cent (Table 9.1) and the electoral decline extended to the northern strongholds: whereas the LN had been the leading party in the

Veneto region in 1996, it dropped to fourth place in 2001 (Giordano, 2003). Consequently, the LN was the single coalition party that failed to overcome the 4 per cent threshold under the proportional tier, but the electoral agreement provided 47 seats in the Chamber of Deputies (Fabbrini and Gilbert, 2002). The coalition was still decisive for the CdL's victory as it recovered 35 seats lost to independent LN candidates in 1996 (Newell and Bull, 2002, p. 631). Berlusconi rewarded Bossi with LN overrepresentation within the Cabinet by allotting three cabinet posts to his party<sup>100</sup> to counterbalance the weight of the remaining coalition parties (Donovan, 2004).

**Table 9.1** – Votes for LN in Italian general and EP elections between 2001 and 2006

| Year | Election | Number of Votes | Proportion of total | Seats |
|------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| 2001 | general  | 1,464,301       | 3.9%                | –     |
| 2004 | EP       | 1,613,506       | 4.96%               | 4     |

Source: *Ministero dell'Interno*, 2010

## 9.2 – LN trajectory 2001-2006

Extremist parties like the LN are regarded as highly successful in opposition but usually confront “insurmountable” difficulties once they reach public office (Heinisch, 2003). These obstacles encompass the pressures to de-radicalise their political agenda, their inexperience in policy-making and confrontational posture. These pose difficulties in accommodation within coalition governments, and they risk alienating their core voters' support in consequence of adaptation (Minkenberg, 2001; Heinisch, 2003, p.12). Within the context of an electoral crisis, was Bossi's leadership capable of inverting the LN's electoral downturn before the

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<sup>100</sup> Bossi was appointed as Minister for Reform responsible for promoting devolution; Roberto Maroni became the Minister for Welfare and Roberto Castelli was appointed Minister of Justice.

2006 general election? Effectively, the LN started a period of electoral recovery from the 2004 EP elections onwards despite Bossi's forced absence. Furthermore and contrary to initial expectations, the LN actually intensified its cultural xenophobia with a strong focus on Islamic immigration and criticised the CdL government's management of immigration flows.

### **9.2.1 – The LN's position within the Italian party system and in Berlusconi's executive**

In the aftershock of the 2001 electoral election, Bossi's alliance with Berlusconi and the LN's subsequent integration into a "Roman" government provoked widespread internal dissatisfaction (Passalacqua, 2009). The office-seeking strategy was justified by Bossi who argued that it was impossible to push for reforms such as devolution from outside government (Bossi, 2001a). To overcome internal unrest, Bossi concentrated his party on immigration policy reform (analysed in depth in this chapter's third section) and on devolution. In August 2001, a proposal for devolution was approved by the Council of Ministers but was left pending until 2003 due to opposition from the southern AN and the *Biancofiore* parties (Cotta, 2002). These delays infuriated Bossi who threatened to pull out of the government, but this threat never materialised because it would lead to terminal isolation within the Italian party system. Henceforth, Bossi diverted the LN's internal agenda from devolution to opposition to Europe and immigration (Passalacqua, 2009).

As the weakest coalition partner, the LN was expected to hold weak agenda setting powers (Cotta, 2002). Nonetheless, a 'northern axis' formed by Berlusconi, Bossi and the Milanese Finance Minister – Giulio Tremonti – was widely regarded as dominant within the government by 2003 provoking the dissatisfaction of the other coalition partners (Diamanti, 2007).<sup>101</sup> In exchange for favouring Bossi, Berlusconi received unconditional LN support in cabinet (Diamanti and Lello, 2005). The post of Minister of Justice was assigned to Roberto

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<sup>101</sup> The resignation of the pro-European FI Foreign Minister, Renato Ruggiero in early 2002 was fostered by Bossi's extensive criticism of the EU integration process and the lack of support by Berlusconi (Donovan, 2004).

Castelli demonstrating the Prime Minister's confidence in the LN on issues of key personal interest, such as judicial reform and media regulation (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005).

Recovery from the 2001 electoral disaster was evident at the 2003 administrative elections, as the LN maintained its strongholds in small northern cities such as Treviso and Vicenza (Signore and Trocino, 2008). The geographic concentration of the LN electoral support provided a decisive contribution to its structure of electoral opportunities at local elections. Divisions within the coalition resurfaced after a defeat at the 2003 administrative ballot, with the AN and Christian-Democrat parties blaming the 'northern axis' for poor results. Relations between Fini and Bossi were classified as mutual competition throughout the entire legislature, whilst Berlusconi was regarded as a broker between the two opposing parties' interests (Hopkin and Ignazi, 2008).

Disagreement about devolution reform was finally overcome in August 2003 and a "road map" agreed within the coalition government.<sup>102</sup> Bossi employed a two-pronged strategy in office by adopting a radical discourse to the outside and simultaneously remaining open to cooperation with governmental partners (Parenzo and Romano, 2008). Hence, the LN was the opposition party within the executive and simultaneously accumulated political capital from holding cabinet seats (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005). The hegemony of the 'northern axis' within government through the first half of Berlusconi's term ensured disproportional influence to Bossi over the legislative agenda despite the 2001 electoral setback. Nevertheless, the attainment of the LN's objectives demanded extensive negotiations with coalition partners within the context of strained relations with the AN and the *Biancofiore* parties.

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<sup>102</sup> The agreement saw devolution of power to regions over health, education and policing exchanged for the reinforcement of the Prime Minister's executive powers as Fini demanded (Bull and Newell, 2009).

### 9.2.2 – Bossi’s stroke in 2004

A crisis erupted within the LN in March 2004 following Bossi’s hospitalisation after a stroke (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). Calderoli became the Minister for Constitutional Reform whilst the party’s leadership and organisation of the 2004 EP electoral campaign were left to a directory formed by Giancarlo Giorgetti<sup>103</sup>, Maroni, Calderoli and Castelli (Bendicenti, 2006). This electoral campaign was based on opposition to European integration considered responsible for the homogenisation of member-states’ immigration policies and imposition of a multi-racial society (LN, 2004). Consonant with its cultural xenophobia, opposition to Turkey’s admission into the EU was justified by its “national-Islamic” identity and subsequent threat to European identity (LN, 2004). LN results at the 2004 EP election were unexpectedly positive as its electoral share exceeded the 4 per cent threshold (Table 9.1). In contrast, whereas support for Berlusconi’s FI dropped, the AN and *Unione di Centro*<sup>104</sup> (UdC) vote shares increased reinforcing their ambitions to have a stronger profile within the governmental coalition (Diamanti, 2007).

A crisis within the coalition followed the CdL’s heavy defeat to the *Ulivo* at the 2004 administrative elections (Donovan, 2004). Consequently, Berlusconi’s leadership was overtly contested and Tremonti was forced to resign whilst Fini was promoted to Foreign Minister (Diamanti and Lello, 2005). This recalibration of forces among the coalition partners and the “northern axis” disappearance led to a substantial drop in LN influence on the political agenda (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). Nonetheless, the devolution bill passed in the Senate on 23 March 2005, representing a symbolic victory for the LN (Bendicenti, 2006). In turn, the LN won 5.6 per cent of the national vote at the 2005 regional elections and contributed to CdL victories in the Lombardy and Veneto regions (Jori, 2009). The LN proved its ability to

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<sup>103</sup> Giorgetti was a LN MP since 1996 and National Secretary of *Lega Lombarda-Lega Nord* since 2001.

<sup>104</sup> Union di Centro resulted from the fusion of Christian Democrat parties CCD and CDU.

succeed without Bossi and its electoral expansion affronted the antagonistic coalition partners that faced an electoral decline (Passalacqua, 2009).

Bossi returned to politics gradually from 2005 onwards without re-entering Berlusconi's government. His return was marked by the reinforcement of LN opposition to the EU integration process now responsible for favouring bankers and multinationals (Passalacqua, 2009). The LN's defence of Italians' interests against big business marked Bossi's shift to a left-wing spectrum on economic policy alongside his previous economic protectionism. This action resembled the FN's shift to "left-lepénism" during the 1990s. By the mid-2000s, the LN ideology conformed to the model of an authoritarian xenophobic ERP in contrast to previous neoliberal classification. Whereas the LN's anti-system properties related to its threat to Italian state unity were downgraded after abandoning the secessionist project, the LN can still be considered an anti-system party insofar as equality between people is considered a pillar of liberal democracy.

Meanwhile, the LN devolution bill was subjected to a referendum after the centre-left parties voted in bloc against it at the final parliamentary vote on 16 November 2005 (Bull and Newell, 2009). Despite the referendum, the LN's hard-core members expressed their dissatisfaction with the watered down proposal since it fell short of secessionist ambitions and recognised Rome as the capital (Signore and Trocino, 2008). In response to internal disarray, Bossi quickly restated both the federalist path and the coalition with Berlusconi for the 2006 general election. By the end of Berlusconi's second term in office, Bossi and the LN had succeeded in passing their two top priority issues that suggests an overall success against the expected difficulties (Heinisch, 2003).



### 9.2.3 – The LN’s position on immigration

Participation in government was expected to tame the LN’s radical ideology in favour of a pragmatic approach but this was not the case (Minkenberg, 2001). The 9/11 attacks only exacerbated LN cultural racism towards Islam (Parenzo and Romano, 2008), which was legitimised at public level by other centre-right political figures in 2000.<sup>105</sup> Berlusconi himself claimed in the aftermath of the attacks that: “The West must be aware of its civilization’s superiority” (*La Repubblica*, 2001). Accusations of racism were denied by Bossi, yet an end to the “invasion and erasure of our culture” was simultaneously demanded (Bossi, 2001b). One of Bossi’s techniques to re-acquire prominence was to deliver xenophobic outbursts as after the 2003 administrative election (Geddes, 2008). In the meantime, Fini decided to distance the AN from the LN’s xenophobia in 2003 by defending immigrants’ right to vote in administrative elections and provoking Bossi’s public fury (*Corriere della Sera*, 2003a).

Welfare chauvinism previously observed during Bossi’s construction of the ‘Padanian’ myth also resurfaced from 2003 onwards (Fella and Ruzza, 2009). Centre-left unions were accused of harming Italian families as they “argue that we must give housing to immigrants before our own youth and workers” (Bossi, 2003, p. 19). An ideological innovation introduced by Bossi was the conflation of economic protectionism with cultural xenophobia as “imports and immigrants are two faces of the same problem”, demanding the deployment of strict quotas so as to avoid “social chaos” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2003b). The LN’s anti-immigration position was also evident from Calderoli’s comments on a report on immigration published in 2005: “we welcome zero-growth. We face a true invasion that envisages the progressive replacement of our people by them”. He added that his party would continue to fight “those

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<sup>105</sup> The famous Italian political scientist named Giovanni Sartori theorised opposition to multiculturalism by focusing particularly on Muslim immigration (Calavita, 2004).

who seek to cancel our identity” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2005). Calderoli was forced to resign from government following his TV appearance with a t-shirt depicting the Danish cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed considered blasphemous (Fella and Ruzza, 2007). Lastly, the LN successfully watered down the anti-racist law (*Legge Mancino*) in 2006, broadening the impunity for incitement of racial hatred (*Corriere della Sera*, 2006a).<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the LN’s cultural xenophobia and welfare chauvinism were reinforced during the term (Bouilland, 2007).

Summarising, the LN’s electoral recovery developed slowly from the 2001 general election onwards in the context of its coalition partners’ electoral decline. Against initial expectations, Bossi had disproportionate influence on the policy agenda until the dissolution of the ‘northern axis’ in 2004 that reflected the special relationship between Berlusconi and Bossi. The LN’s tactic in office was to present itself as opposition to the government without provoking a rupture with its coalition partners. Participation in government failed to pose constraints on LN extremism, as cultural and welfare xenophobia were reinforced during the term with particular emphasis on irregular inflows and Islam (Bouilland, 2007). Furthermore, cultural xenophobia became a cornerstone of the LN’s new political identity in disregard of previous ethnic “Padanian” identity (Bendicenti, 2006).

### **9.3 – LN impact on immigration policy during Berlusconi’s term**

Did the LN reinforce the restrictive character of Italian immigration policy between 2001 and 2006 according to its xenophobic agenda? Immigration policy was quickly set as a governmental priority leading to the approval of the 2002 Bossi-Fini law with a clear restrictive character. Berlusconi’s term was characterised by an extensive policy gap between restrictive policy aims set at the 2001 electoral campaign and the subsequent policy outcomes

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<sup>106</sup> The *Mancino* law was causing unrest within the LN because of the judicial processes imposed on party-members for public incitement of racism, as the case of Calderoli (Einaudi, 2007).

throughout the second half of the term. This research argues that the LN had a direct and significant impact on the development of immigration policy during Berlusconi's term, which was disproportional in view of the LN's position as the weakest coalition partner. The agency of mainstream parties seemed the most relevant factor behind the LN's moderate impact on the Italian immigration policy (Table 2.1).

### **9.3.1 – The Bossi Fini-Law**

In contrast to Berlusconi's first term, the CdL government quickly prioritised reform of immigration policy (Geddes, 2008). Seeking to lead intra-coalition negotiations, the LN Welfare minister Maroni proposed the introduction of a "contract of residence" to replace the 1998 "guarantor" permit, which had been a LN proposal since the parliamentary debate on the 1990 Martelli Law (Einaudi, 2007). This "contract of residence" subordinated immigrants' legal entrance in Italy to prior acquisition of a valid job contract, the employer's insurance of proper accommodation and financial means to cover costs of return after expiration of the job contract (Caponio, 2007). Initial negotiations between Fini and Bossi culminated in a highly restrictive proposal including the contract of residence, regional quotas and the criminalisation of irregular immigration. Nevertheless, the UdC's opposition led to its rejection (Einaudi, 2007).

Prioritising pragmatism over ideology and to antagonise his rival Fini, Bossi dropped the AN proposal for the criminalisation of irregular immigrants preferring to keep it an administrative offence for pragmatic purposes.<sup>107</sup> A watered down version of the initial proposal was approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2001 including the LN's contract of residence. The UdC presented a parliamentary amendment proposing a regularisation

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<sup>107</sup> In Bossi's own words: "if we opt for the judicial path, we will have tens of thousands of non-EU immigrants that commit a crime, because between removal and appeal, they will manage to hide within the country. Instead, if it is an administrative offence they can be automatically removed to their home countries and they can appeal at our consulates, if they want to" (Corriere della Sera, 2001g). This reflection would be completely forgotten when the LN returned to government in 2008.

programme restricted to domestic workers and carers (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003). In parallel, the employers' organisations demanded a general amnesty for all active irregular immigrants. Northern employers' associations criticised the negative impact of the "contract of residence" and claimed that the LN did not represent their interests (Zaslove, 2006).

Opposition to a general amnesty by the LN, which only accepted the regularisation of domestic workers and carers, was overturned following negotiations with coalition partners (Einaudi, 2007). Awareness of his party's inability to veto its coalition partners and Italian employers' demands led Bossi to demand the introduction of additional high profile security related measures to appease his own voters (Geddes, 2008). Consequently, the collection of biometric data from all regular immigrants who applied for access/renewal of residence authorisations was imposed, which stigmatised immigrants as a deviant population.<sup>108</sup> The interdiscursive relationships identified between the LN's association of irregular immigration and criminality and Italian mainstream parties' discourse at the 2001 electoral campaign legitimised the unequal treatment of immigrants in comparison to national citizens. Furthermore, immigrants' entitlement to child benefits was also suppressed by a LN parliamentary initiative demonstrating the party's welfare chauvinism (Zincone, 2002). In return for the coalition partners' acceptance of LN demands, Bossi compromised with the approval of a separate law enlarging the amnesty to all irregular immigrants (Decree-Law no. 9 of 7 September 2002).

A final draft of the Bossi-Fini law was approved in July 2002 extending restrictions on all types of inflows (Table 9.2). Consequently, the 1998 quota system was maintained but the bureaucratisation of channels for labour immigration prevented the deployment of an active entry policy (Table 9.2). Furthermore, rigid association between residence permits and work contracts hindered immigrants' renewal of their residence authorisations and consequently

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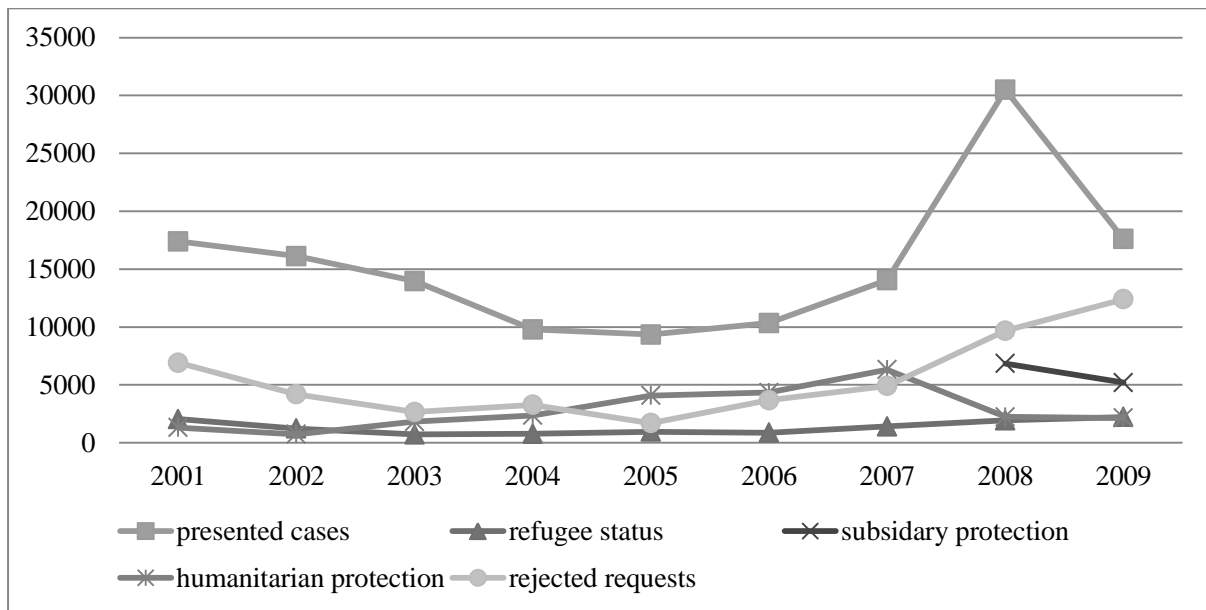
<sup>108</sup> By 2004, 700 000 data units had been collected by the Italian authorities (Barbagli, 2008).

destabilised their long-term legal settlement in the country. Access to family reunion by immigrants was also limited and a restrictive reform of the asylum system was deployed (Table 9.2). However, asylum continued to hold a weak salience in Italian political debate demonstrated by the absence of separate legislation on asylum in spite of an increase in asylum seeking (Figure 9.8). The lack of a right to appeal for failed asylum seekers in disregard of the EU directive no. 9 of 2003 led to later criticism by the EU Commission (Quaglia and Radaelli, 2007). Finally, measures to tackle irregular inflows were reinforced whilst the criminalisation of irregular immigrants was restricted to those found with an irregular status for a second time (Table 9.2).

**Table 9.2** – Modifications to Italian immigration policy introduced by the 2002 Bossi-Fini Law

| Primary inflows  | Secondary inflows  | Asylum  | Irregular inflows   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>Suppresses sponsored entry visa. Prospective employers forced to ensure accommodation and financial means to cover return costs after end of work contract. Residence authorisation dependent on contract duration, valid for maximum of 2 years, and remains valid for 6 months after loss of employment. Probationary period to access permanent residence extended to 6 years. Introduced exceptional quotas for immigrants of Italian origin and countries who signed readmission agreements.</p> | <p>Family reunion was limited and only recognised to conjugal and minor dependents. Removes access to child benefits for immigrant families.</p> | <p>Instituted seven “territorial commissions” to examine asylum requests. Introduced identification centres for asylum seekers. Established two distinct procedures (simplified or ordinary) for asylum seekers depending on their permanence in identification centres</p> | <p>Detention limit expanded to 60 days. Reinforces sanctions on employers of irregular immigrants. Reforms deportation procedures</p> |

**Figure 9.8** – Asylum requests in Italy between 2001 and 2009



Source: *Ministero Dell'Interno*, 2010

### 9.3.2 – 2002 regularisation programme

The development of the 2002 regularisation process demonstrated the acute demand for foreign workers to perform unskilled labour. By the end of 2002, 705,000 requests for regularisation were presented to Italian authorities and 645,000 residence authorisations were granted (ISTAT, 2005). This outcome exceeded the sum of all previous amnesties and represented the largest regularisation programme ever in Europe (Bonifazi, 2010). A substantial growth of the number of Eastern European citizens (especially Romanians, Ukrainian and Albanians citizens) among regularised citizens was observed, intensifying the already highly diverse foreign population legally settled in Italy (Zucchetti, 2004). Finally, a majority of the regularised immigrants (316,000) worked in the domestic sector, thereby enabling Italian families to hire private domestic assistance in a context of 18 million retired

Italians and a crisis of welfare provision (Pugliese, 2010).<sup>109</sup> The structural dependence of the domestic sector on foreign labour would have significant repercussions in the future. Migrant workers fill low-skilled and low productivity jobs usually shunned by Italians, a trend that helps to understand the public's weak perception of immigration as a threat to employment (Reyneri, 2007). The demand for HSI was irrelevant in Italy as the country continued to lose human capital to other industrialised countries (Becker et al., 2003).

The amnesty was presented by Berlusconi himself as a great success due to the emergence of thousands of workers from the underground economy, thereby ignoring the rhetoric used during the 2001 electoral campaign and the divisions within the coalition government (Einaudi, 2007). Thus, a gap between the restrictive policy aims set in 2001 and the liberal outcome of the 2002 regularisation process can be identified (Pugliese, 2010). Notwithstanding this liberal outcome, the LN had a significant impact on the 2002 immigration law with the inclusion of the residence contract, the restrictions on immigrants' access to welfare benefits and the imposition of biometric controls on non-EU citizens. Against those authors who regarded the LN contagion effects on immigration policy as limited (Fella and Ruzza, 2007), the LN's impact also extended to the management of the quota system, as is seen below.

### **9.3.3 – Maroni's management of the quota system**

The Provisional Ministerial decrees issued between 2001 and 2003 setting the official caps on labour inflows were supervised by the LN Welfare Minister Roberto Maroni (Geddes, 2008). Under pressures to supply immigrant labour to agriculture and tourism, Maroni raised the 2001 cap (Figure 9.9). This action proved that the LN could not ignore demands for foreign

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<sup>109</sup> The remaining regularised immigrants were concentrated in industrial sectors whilst only a small number of regularised migrants were active in agriculture or were seasonal workers. The geographic distribution of regularised immigration indicated a concentration in northern regions, where chances of employment were stronger (Farsini, 2008).

labour from the Italian economy (Zincone, 2006; Geddes, 2008). However and as Einaudi (2007) noticed, the LN accepted immigration under a strict utilitarian approach with limited access to social rights (temporary immigrants were granted a short term residence permit of a maximum duration of 9 months and were ineligible for family reunion). These short-term residence authorisations provided few legal guarantees to immigrants against the vulnerability of arbitrary forced removal and prevented their long-term legal settlement in Italy. Bossi's legitimised the management of immigration under this strictly utilitarian approach as the CdL proposed in 2001 by stating:

“who comes into our country should enter by the front door, holding a work contract whose duration should not exceed three years. During such period, the worker's performance can be evaluated and he can remain if his contribution is positive or else be removed from the country” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2001g)

Therefore, the disproportional dimension of temporary quotas over permanent quotas was reinforced during 2002 and 2003 under Maroni's guidance (Figure 9.9), suggesting that the interdiscursive relationship found in 2001 had a subsequent linkage to policy developments.

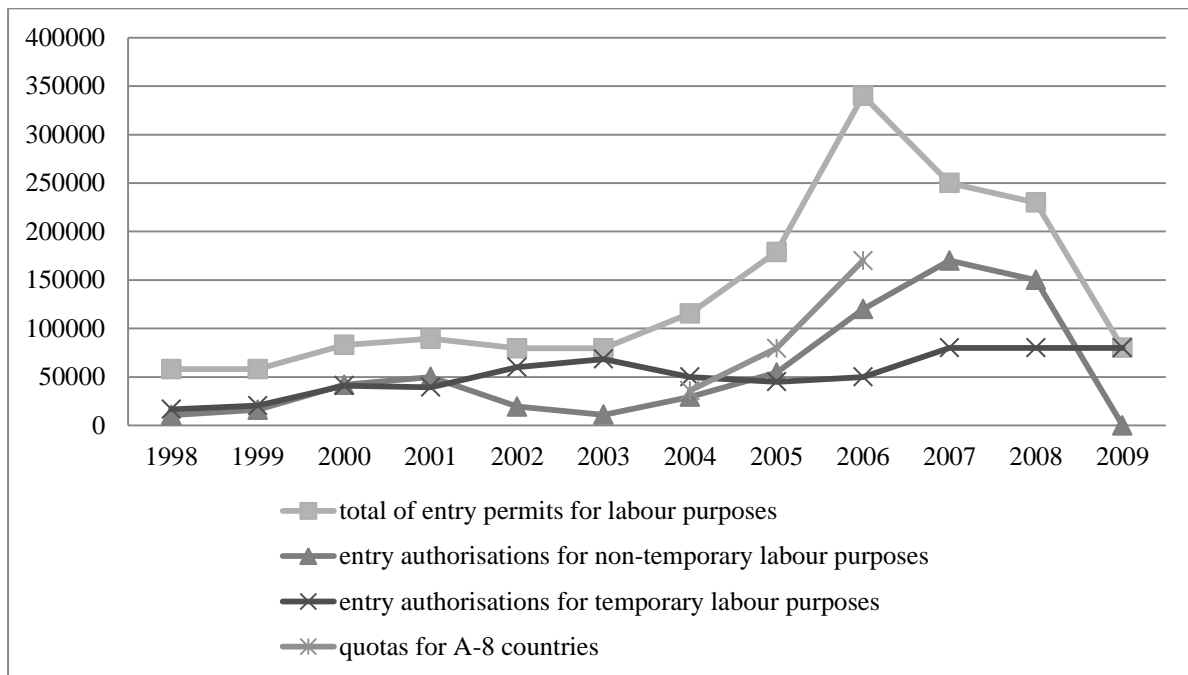
The hegemony of the LN's political priorities over economic concerns was evident by the gap between the intense domestic demand for foreign workers and the limited supply of labour visas by the Italian state, particularly between 2001 and 2003 (Reyneri, 2007).<sup>110</sup> In short, the LN sought to deploy a strict guest-worker system to manage labour inflows similar to the interest groups politics model (Table 2.2). This approach strengthened the potential growth of irregular immigration due to the inherent difficulties in enforcing the return of immigrants after expiration of work contracts (Castles, 2006). However, the Italian quota system regularised immigrants already settled in the country instead of being an active channel for

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<sup>110</sup> Reyneri (2007, p.7) reported that Italian companies forecasted hiring an annual minimum of 105,000 non-seasonal immigrants between 2001 and 2005 (this forecast did not include domestic labour demand), a number much superior to the annual caps on labour inflows decreed until 2005 (Figure 9.9).



**Figure 9.9** – Italian quotas for labour inflows between 1998 and 2009



Source: Caponio and Colombo, 2007; Flows Decrees, 2008; 2009

regular labour inflows (Colombo and Martini, 2007). In this respect, the LN's impact only reinforced the Italian state inability to manage labour inflows according to the domestic demand (Finotelli and Sciortino, 2009). Nonetheless, the LN's profile on immigration policy dropped after 2004 reflecting the recalibration of forces within the coalition.

### 9.3.4 – Judicial intervention and the A-8 countries

Declining LN influence on immigration policy from 2004 onwards mirrored a conjugation of distinct factors: i) judicial intervention; ii) intra-coalition dynamics; iii) and the new EU member-states' accession. First, the Constitutional Court in 2004 questioned the legitimacy of the Bossi-Fini law on the deportation of irregular immigrants (Gherzi, 2005).<sup>111</sup> A compromise between the coalition partners led to the acceptance of the court's recommendations and the promulgation of a corrective decree (Statute 271/2004) watering

<sup>111</sup> In particular, the generalisation of escorted forced removals and imprisonment of individuals for commitment of an administrative offense (Gherzi, 2005).

down the repressive components of the 2002 immigration law (Bouillaud, 2007). The judicial intervention apparently circumscribed LN impact on legislation, but the expulsion rates had topped 45,185 forced removals in 2002 and were declining ever since (Barbagli, 2008, p. 121). Secondly, decision making on the quota system became a more formal and consensual process from 2003 onwards as supervision passed from Maroni to the FI Interior Minister, Giuseppe Pisanu (Einaudi, 2007).

Intense disagreements over Maroni's supervision of the Flows Decrees had been observed within the coalition. Notwithstanding his authorship of legislation, Fini stated that the AN would: "not exclude in the future, not in years but in a few months, the option of removing the quota mechanism of entry" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2003a). Similar dissatisfaction was shared by the UdC that represented the employers' interests in intensifying labour inflows (*Corriere della Sera*, 2004a). Finally, Berlusconi's government had to deal with the new-member states' accession to the EU as Italy had opted to deploy a transitional period on the right of citizens from A-8 countries to access the Italian labour market (Colombo and Martini, 2007). Thus, separate quotas for these foreign citizens were deployed by the 2004 Flows Decree increasing the number of labour visas granted by the Italian state against LN objections (Figure 9.9). Berlusconi's government adopted a guest-worker system for labour migrants from both non-EU member-states and A-8 countries, suggesting the presence of interest-group models as observed in France (Freeman, 2006).

### **9.3.5 – U-turn on inflows management**

A policy shift was observed after the dissolution of the 'northern axis' and Fini's ascension within the government in 2004 (Einaudi, 2007). Reflecting the new correlation of forces within the governmental coalition, Pisanu proposed a revision of the Bossi-Fini law joking "that if there were not immigrants, we could not even milk a Padanian cow" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2004b) and the 2004 consolidation act of the Bossi-Fini law increased the quota

system's flexibility (Colombo and Martini, 2007).<sup>112</sup> Consequently, the cap on A-8 countries was doubled whilst the quota on non-EU inflows was also substantially raised in 2005 (Figure 9.9). In the absence of Bossi, the LN opposition was spearheaded by Calderoli who declared that: "immigration quotas would only be raised over his dead body" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2004c). However, the erosion of LN influence within the cabinet in a period when the devolution bill was under parliamentary debate forced the LN to adopt a consensual approach to not jeopardise the approval of this project. As a result of intra-coalition dynamics, the LN was compelled to accept the coalition partners' demands, as also occurred with the 2002 regularisation.

The covert policy U-turn became consolidated after the overall cap on labour inflows was increased to a maximum of 340,000 labour visas in 2006 (Figure 9.9), the largest number ever issued by Italian authorities. The government recognised the intention to regularise immigrants already settled in the country, implicitly admitting the failure of legal channels deployed for labour inflows (Colombo and Martini; 2007). Consequently, the 2006 Flows Decree became an implicit amnesty for irregular immigrants (Pastore et al; 2010) and was followed by the presentation of 520,000 demands for regularisation.<sup>113</sup> Increasing concession of non-temporary residence authorisations by the coalition government suggests the adoption of a policy model closer to the client politics model than the previous interest group politics model (Freeman, 2006).<sup>114</sup> Whereas the 2002 regularisation programme was developed under pressures from the UdC, the covert U-turn on the management of the quota system reflected Fini's realignment alongside the UdC and employers' associations against his past

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<sup>112</sup> Before, the maximum number of entry permits granted by the Flows Decrees had to be similar to the cap established in the preceding year.

<sup>113</sup> In the face of the number of requests for regularisation, the Prodi government elected at the 2006 general election issued a second Flows Decree in 2006 to absorb the 350,000 supplementary requests in excess of the cap set by the first 2006 Flows Decree approved by Berlusconi's government (*Corriere della Sera*, 2006b).

<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, labour migrants continued to fill unskilled rather than skilled jobs and the Italian government did not present the option for non-temporary residence permits as a cost-free policy.

collaboration with Bossi. Therefore, intra-coalition dynamics had a substantial influence on the policy developments observed between 2001 and 2006 (Geddes, 2008).

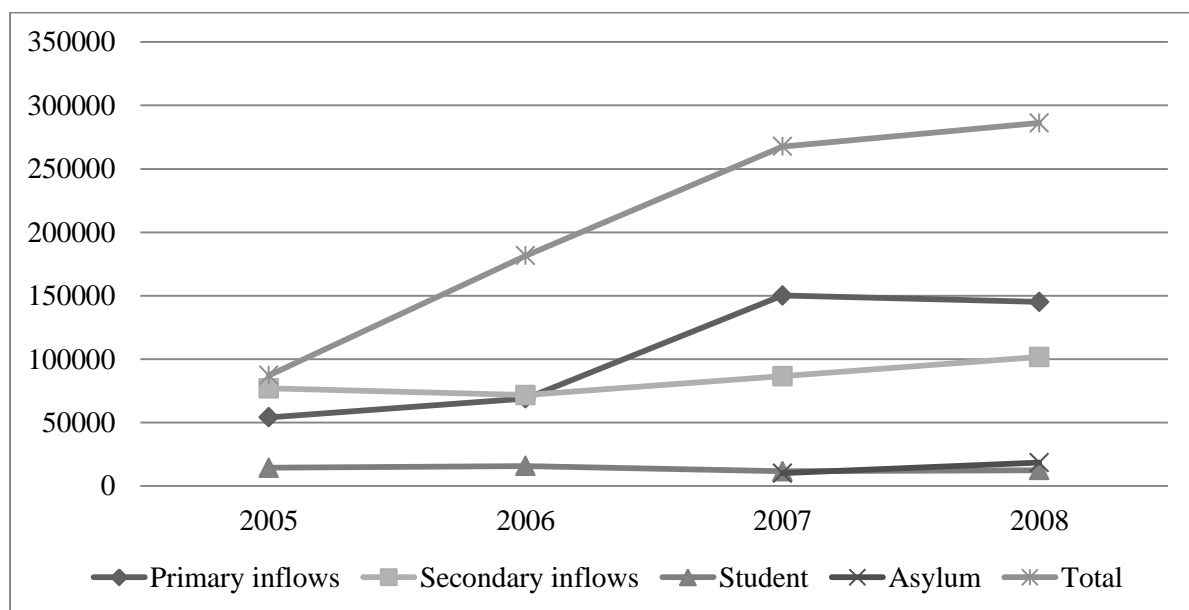
Italian immigration policy during Berlusconi's second term was marked by a gap between the restrictive objectives set at the electoral campaign and the subsequent more liberal policy outcomes arising from the 2002 regularisation process and the expansive character of the caps set by the Flows Decrees (Pugliese, 2009). Labour and irregular inflows were the most prominent types of immigration in Italy during the selected period while the 2002 Bossi-Fini law extended restrictions on all types of inflows. The management of the quota system was highly inconsistent during Berlusconi's term, initially managed as a strict guest-worker system under the LN's guidance. The LN framing of immigration under a strict utilitarian approach legitimised the restricted access to social rights and the short-term character of the residence authorisations granted to labour immigrants. A covert U-turn on Italian immigration was observed from 2004 onwards materialised by the expansion of caps on labour inflows and the intensification of non-temporary immigration.

Analysis of Italian immigration policy suggests a watering-down effect by centrist parties and judicial intervention on the LN initial significant impact on policy developments (Zincone, 2006). Nonetheless, the introduction of the residence contract, the restrictions on immigrants' access to the welfare state and the biometric controls persisted untouched within the Bossi-Fini law. Additionally, the privileging of temporary over non-temporary immigration by the Flows Decrees set under Maroni's supervision provided further evidence of LN direct significant impact until 2004. The LN's inability to veto the development of the 2002 regularisation process and the covert U-turn on the management of the quota system reflected its fragile position within the executive. Therefore, the LN had a moderate and direct impact on the development of Italian immigration policy between 2001 and 2006. This political

process was regarded as disproportional, especially between 2001 and 2003, and coincided with the behaviour of the four proposed factors (Table 2.1).

Levels of immigration into Italy expanded between 2001 and 2006, mainly supported by the increase of irregular inflows (see p. 269; Figure 9.10) whilst immigration was ranked amongst Italian voters' top priorities at the 2001 general election (see p. 254). The LN's electoral recovery up to the 2006 general election strengthened this ERP's electoral challenge to mainstream parties, especially in the context of the centre-right parties' electoral decline. CdL's formal engagement with the LN as well as Berlusconi's personal favouring of Bossi also coincided with the LN's contagion effects on policy development. Moreover, Fini's initial cooperation with the LN coincided this ERP's initial significant impact until the AN's leader repositioning alongside the CdU and the Italian employers' associations in 2003. Within the overall context, the agency of mainstream parties seems to hold a stronger relationship with the LN's declining impact on policy developments during Berlusconi's term than the other factors.

**Figure 9.10** – Grants of settlement by category of grant in Italy between 2005 and 2008



Source: Istat, 2009

## 9.4 – Conclusions

Immigration policy was highly salient in mainstream parties' electoral campaigns for the 2001 general election. Irregular immigration dominated the political debate. An inter-party consensus was found between the two mainstream coalitions over the framing of immigration under a law and order approach rather than as a labour market issue. This research indicated that the LN had a significant impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy at the 2001 ballot, especially within the centre-right coalition as a result of the salience of immigration in the electoral agreement made between the LN and the CdL. The LN's significant impact was positively related to the behaviour of the four factors (Table 2.1). The CdL's formal co-option of the LN into the coalition neutralised the LN's electoral challenge at the expense of the centre-right alignment with Bossi's approach to immigration. Henceforth, the agency of mainstream parties, in particular FI, was the most relevant factor enhancing LN impact on this dimension of immigration politics at the 2001 ballot.

Immigration ranked amongst Italian voters' top electoral priorities at the 2001 ballot but the LN's ability to drive the attitudes of voters most concerned with immigration was weak as these voters had a negative perception of Bossi. Association between immigration and security was acute across the general electorate whilst perceptions of being a threat to employment and national identity were low amongst the general electorate but not across the LN core voters. Nevertheless, LN contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration seemed diminished by the negative judgment of Bossi by voters most concerned with this issue, the party's weak media coverage and its concentrated electoral support in northern regions. Therefore, LN impact on public attitudes to immigration was considered irrelevant at the 2001 general election, which raised the profile of other mainstream political actors behind Italian public attitudes to immigration. The LN's non-significant impact was positively related to the levels of LN's electoral support rather than with the expansion of levels of

immigration or the agency of mainstream parties. The geographic concentration of LN electoral support in a context of electoral decline seemed the most relevant factor behind its limited impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

Despite the electoral setback at the 2001 general election, Bossi integrated the “northern axis” alongside Berlusconi and Tremonti that dominated the legislative agenda until 2004. The LN agenda setting powers were watered down after the dissolution of the “northern axis” in 2006 due to Bossi’s forced absence and the stronger profile of the AN and the CdU within the cabinet. Against the expected de-radicalisation process from accommodation within the executive, the LN reinforced its cultural and welfare xenophobia between 2001 and 2006. The LN electoral decline evident in 2001 was slowly reversed before the 2006 general election after obtaining positive results at the 2004 EP elections and at the 2005 regional elections. Furthermore, the LN proved its ability to succeed without Bossi’s charismatic leadership and overcome the obstacles posed by accommodation into the national cabinet.

Italian immigration policy during Berlusconi’s second term was marked by a growing gap between the restrictive rhetoric employed through the electoral campaign and the subsequent liberal outcomes both of the 2002 regularisation programme and the quota system from 2004 onwards. The 2002 Bossi-Fini law extended restrictions on all types of immigration flows but labour and especially irregular inflows dominated the political debate. The LN successfully promoted the inclusion of the “contract of residence”, restricted immigrants’ access to welfare and deployed biometric controls on immigration from non-EU countries. The LN frame of immigration under a strict utilitarian approach and its association with criminality legitimised the former policy developments. LN impact on Italian immigration policy then extended to the management of the quota system as a strict guest-worker system until 2004 despite the intense demand for foreign labour and the dissatisfaction of other coalition partners.

This trend supported the high intensity of irregular inflows leading to the development of a covert regularisation programme with the 2006 Flows Decree. Bossi's inability to veto the development of the 2002 regularisation programme and the covert U-turn on the management of the quota system was unsurprising considering the LN position as the weakest party in the government coalition. At the absolute level, the LN had a direct and moderate impact on the development of Italian immigration policy between 2001 and 2006. The LN impact was considered disproportional between 2001 and 2003, in light of its position within the government. LN impact on immigration policy during Berlusconi's term coincided with the behaviour of the four proposed factors. Overall, the agency of mainstream parties seemed the most relevant factor in enhancing this political process as the intra-coalition dynamics helped to understand the LN declining impact on immigration policy during Berlusconi's term.



## Chapter 10 – The LN impact on Italian immigration policy between 2008 and 2009

“Two visions should be made clear. The left and its precedent government opened the doors to everyone from all countries. The left’s idea was of a multi-ethnic society. That is not our idea.”

President of Council of Ministers, Silvio Berlusconi, 2009

This chapter evaluates the LN’s impact on Italian immigration politics and policy between the 2008 general election and the end of 2009. Chapter 9 showed that the LN had significant contagion effects on inter-party competition at the 2001 general election and a moderate impact on the development of Italian immigration during Berlusconi’s term. In contrast, the research indicated that the LN lacked impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2001. This chapter now assesses if the LN had a significant impact on the distinct dimensions of Italian immigration politics and policy between 2008 and 2009.

### **10.1 – The 2008 general elections**

The April 2008 general elections followed the resignation of the centre-left coalition government led by Romano Prodi that had been elected in 2006.<sup>115</sup> Prodi’s term lasted only 618 days after losing a vote of confidence in the Senate on 24 January 2008. Meanwhile, a new party named *Partito Democratico* (PD)<sup>116</sup> was formed under the leadership of Walter Veltroni (the Mayor of Rome) in place of the *Ulivo*. The PD refused to form a coalition with the remaining left-wing parties in 2008 apart from the centrist Antonio Di Pietro’s *Italia dei*

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<sup>115</sup> The electoral system had been changed by Berlusconi in 2005 introducing a majority bonus by region at the Senate. Prodi won the Chamber of Deputies’ ballot only by 24,755 votes whilst Berlusconi won the Senate with 400,000 votes more than the centre-left coalition. However, Prodi obtained a majority of two seats through the majority bonuses at the Senate (Cotta and Verzichelli, 2007).

<sup>116</sup> The PD merged the centre-left parties *Sinistra Democratica* and the *Margherita*.

*Valori*. In response, Berlusconi created a new unified centre-right party – *Partito della Libertá* (PdL) that merged his FI with Fini’s AN. Strong prospects of a PdL victory allowed Berlusconi to remove the CdU from the PdL whilst the LN formed a coalition with the PdL as an autonomous party.<sup>117</sup> The 2008 general election developed under a context dominated by insecurity after the murder of Francesca Reggiani by a Romanian citizen in October 2007. This event received wide media coverage and intra-EU immigration (particularly from Romania) became highly salient in Italian political debate (Baldini and Cento Bull, 2009).<sup>118</sup>

### **10.1.1 – LN impact on inter-party competition**

This research has shown that the LN had significant contagion effects on inter-party competition on immigration at the 2001 general election. Now, did the LN reinforce the restrictive character of mainstream parties’ positions on immigration policy in 2008? Immigration policy was a prominent issue at the 2008 electoral campaign while irregular inflows continued to dominate the Italian political agenda. This first-order-ballot was marked by a “security crisis” closely associated to the intensity of intra-EU inflows, in particular of EU citizens of Roma origin (Pastore, 2007).<sup>119</sup> Like in 2001, the LN had a significant impact on inter-party competition at the 2008 general election. This research will indicate that the agency of mainstream parties was regarded as the most relevant factor behind the LN’s contagion effects on immigration politics in 2008.

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<sup>117</sup> Berlusconi’s coalition also included the *Movimento per l’Autonomia* of Rafael Lombardo in Sicily (Biorcio, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> Romania and Bulgaria were incorporated into the EU in January 2007 and benefited from the right to free movement of EU citizens. The Prodi’s government decision to abolish immigration quotas for citizens of the new member states provided Romanian citizens with free access to the Italian labour market. Romanian citizens became the largest foreign community settled in Italy with 625,278 citizens in 2008, followed by Albania with 401,949 citizens, and Morocco with 365,909 individuals (Istat, 2009).

<sup>119</sup> Criminality became widely associated with Romanian immigration, although the statistics refute the supposed extraordinary growth of crimes committed by Romanians (Barbagli, 2008, p. 153).

### ***10.1.1.1 – The LN’s position on immigration***

Immigration was a paramount theme of the LN’s campaign and this time, Bossi sought to distance the LN from the PdL. As Matteo Salvini<sup>120</sup> pointed out: “FI and the AN are soft on security and immigration. Instead our electoral campaign will hammer these issues” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008a). LN’s opposition to immigration was spearheaded by its mayors in small northern cities. In November 2007, Cittadella (Padova) approved an ordinance demanding previous proof of minimum annual earnings for EU citizens seeking a residence authorisation to capitalise on public hostility towards Romanian inflows (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007a). In Caravaggio (Lombardy), weddings between irregular immigrants and national citizens were refused as the LN’s mayor demanded previous proof of legal residence authorisation to promote security (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007b). These events received wide and noncritical<sup>121</sup> coverage in the media increasing this ERP’s visibility in the media (Itanes, 2008; Ignazi, 2009).

Similar resolutions were later subscribed by the 200 LN’s mayors whilst Maroni demanded the expansion of mayors’ powers to expel nomad camps formed by EU citizens of Roma origin (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007c). The LN’s resolution on immigration approved in March 2008 established that: “the northern regions are affected by an increase in crime caused by a massive, uncontrolled illegal immigration” (LN, 2008b). Insecurity was therefore associated with irregular immigration or the nomad camps, reinforcing the stigmatisation of Romanian immigrants of Roma origin as a deviant population. In December 2007, the LN organised a large march in Milan headed by the LN mayors’ movement against insecurity and irregular immigration. Bossi accused Prodi’s government of opening the borders to foreigners and providing them with social housing to obtain their vote. The relationship between

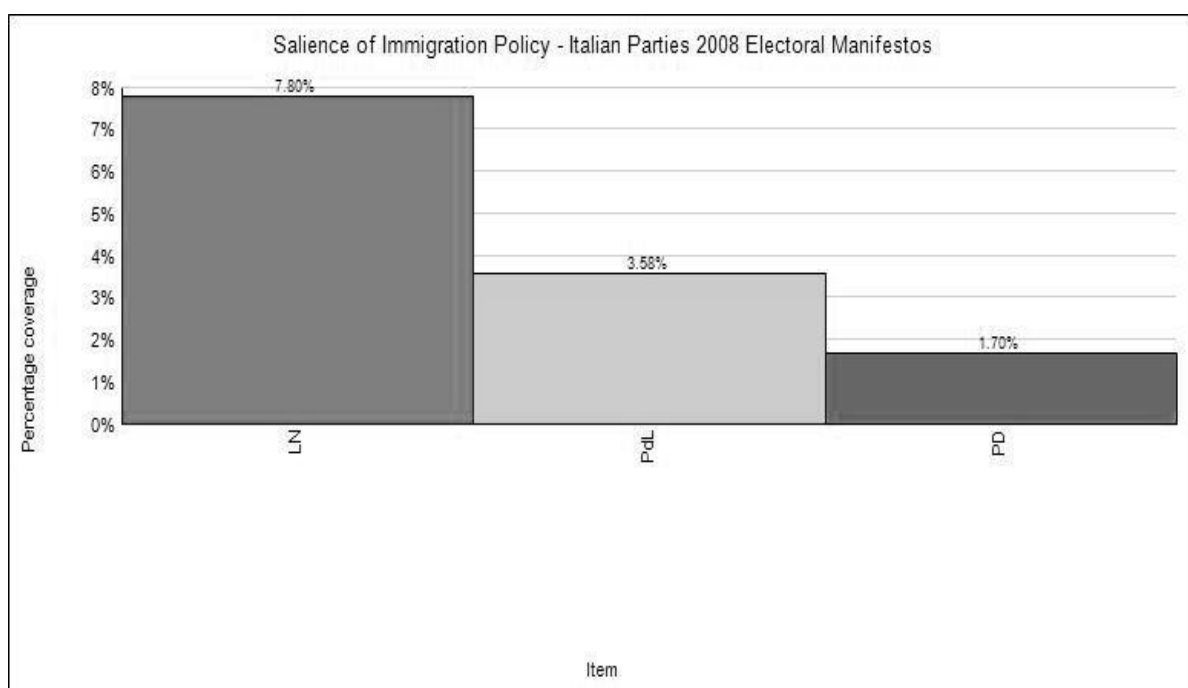
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<sup>120</sup> The LN deputy leader in the Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>121</sup> Ignazi (2009, p.438) questioned how positions considered unacceptable in other European countries were “easily digested” in Italy.

immigration and the economy was not ignored, but Bossi conflated employment of foreign labour with low-productivity economic sectors that faced “unfair Chinese competition” (*La Padania*, 2008). In conformity with the electoral campaign, the LN’s short electoral manifesto devoted high salience to immigration policy and proposed the “reinforcement of mayors’ powers against the illegal and savage immigration” (Figure 10.1; LN, 2008a).

**Figure 10.1** – Salience of immigration policy in Italian party coalitions’ and the LN’s electoral manifestos at the 2008 general election



Source: LN, 2008; PdL, 2008; PD, 2008

### 10.1.1.2 – The PdL’s position on immigration policy

Berlusconi had expressed his personal opposition to Italy’s transformation into a “multicultural, multi-ethnic society” before the 2006 general election (*Corriere della Sera*, 2006c). Once more, Berlusconi’s full cooperation with Bossi granted the LN a chance to co-write the PdL’s electoral manifesto enabling Bossi to hold his coalition partner accountable to the overt compromises (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010). Nonetheless, divisions between

Bossi and Berlusconi resurfaced as the PdL leader complained about the lack of invitation to the LN's march in December 2007. In response, the PdL Milan regional coordinator commented that: "We will not hunt down immigrants as the LN would like" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007d). During the 2008 electoral campaign, Berlusconi continued to associate insecurity with irregular immigration as in 2001 as the Prodi's government had "opened up the borders to irregular immigration decreasing public safety and increasing criminality" (Berlusconi quoted in Altinier, 2008). An interdiscursive relationship occurred between the LN's framing of immigration and Berlusconi's articulation of irregular inflows as a threat to law and order.

Fini had also expressed his strong xenophobia towards EU citizens of Roma origin in mid-2007 when accusing them of: "having no scruples about kidnapping children or using their own children for begging" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007f). The proposal for the criminalisation of "irregular entry" was revived through the AN's campaign in the LN's strongholds (Signore and Trocino, 2008). The PdL's 2008 electoral manifesto granted high salience to immigration, mostly focused on labour and irregular inflows (Figure 10.1). Proposals on immigration policy were framed under the security section providing evidence of the framing of management of inflows as a law and order issue like the LN proposed (PdL, 2008). Therefore, an intense dispute over the issue ownership of opposition to immigration was observed between the PdL and the LN like in 2001.

### ***10.1.1.3 – The PD's position on immigration***

The previous centre-left government presented the Amato-Ferrero proposal for a reform of Italian citizenship and immigration law in March 2007 but the collapse of Prodi's

government prevented its completion (Paolucci and Newell, 2008)<sup>122</sup>. Veltroni failed to explore the merits of the Amato-Ferrero proposal despite his emphasis on the disaster provoked by the Bossi-Fini law as a cause of irregularity amongst immigrants. Veltroni also articulated immigration, in particular by EU citizens of Roma origin, as a threat to law and order in way similar to ERP discourse, after stating as Rome's Mayor that: "before Romania entered the EU, Rome was the safest capital in the world (...). It is necessary to resume deportations" (quoted from Sigona, 2010, p. 145). During the electoral campaign, Veltroni added that:

"we must welcome people who want to work here. But those who come here to do other things, to rob, to exploit prostitution, to sell drugs must be stopped from doing harm and pay what they must pay" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008b).

Therefore, a convergence was observed between the PdL and the PD's approaches to the management of inflows as a law and order issue (Signore and Trocino, 2008). By contrast, Italy's long tradition of emigration was absent in the centre-left discourse on immigration.

The PD's 2008 electoral manifesto devoted less salience to immigration policy than the centre-right parties did and labour immigration was the most prominent type of immigration (Figure 10.1; PD, 2008). Under a title of "governing immigration so as to not endure it", the PD's manifesto proposed the reintroduction of sponsored entry visa and the extension of the duration of residence authorisations, as well as a "Citizenship Pact" based on a system of "rights and duties" (PD, 2008, p.22). The resemblances between the PD's proposals and the French President's immigration policy (see Chapter 8) indicate a stronger realignment of the Italian centre-left's position on immigration policy to the right than at the 2001 general election.

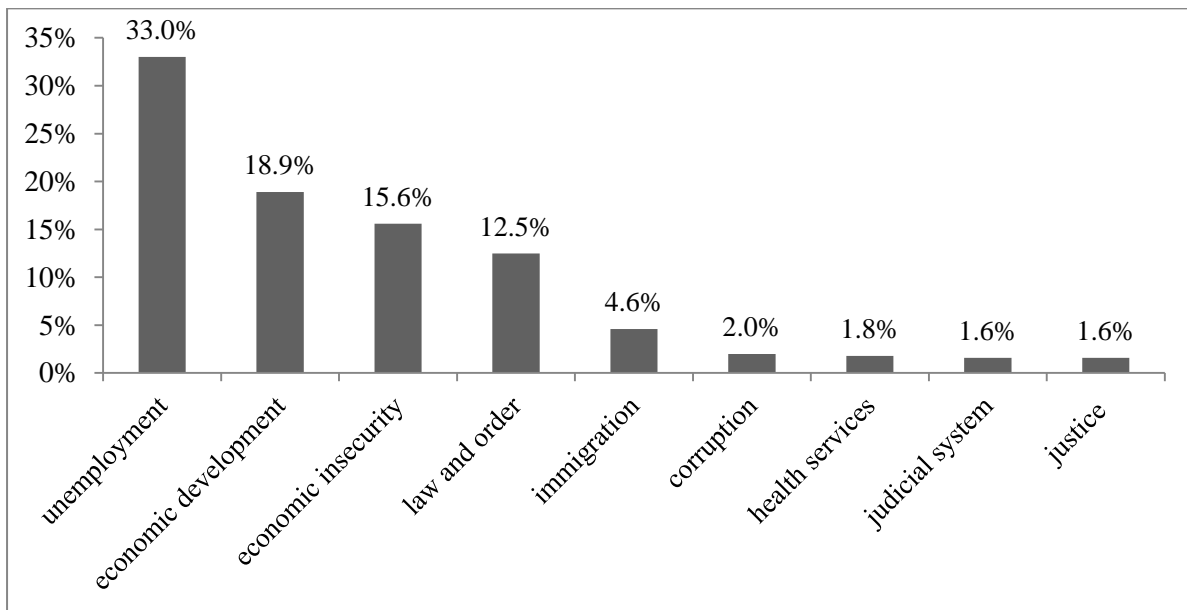
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<sup>122</sup> The re-introduction of sponsored labour permit, introduction of triennial labour quotas and the favouring of skilled immigration were some of the proposals presented (Bigot and Fella, 2008).

Immigration policy was highly prominent during the 2008 electoral campaign and its importance increased in comparison to 2001, but irregular immigration continued to be the most dominant type of inflow. Mainstream inter-party consensus was found on the frame of the management of inflows as a temporary social phenomenon and irregular immigration as a law and order issue providing evidence of the LN's impact on the political debate (Ignazi, 2009). Consequently, the LN had a significant impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2008 general election, especially on centre-right parties. This trend coincided with the expansion of levels of immigration, the LN's significant threat to mainstream parties, and the agency of mainstream parties (Table 2.1).

The available data on the grant of residence authorisations between 2005 and 2008 in Italy suggest that the levels of immigration expanded, supported by the intensification of labour and secondary inflows (Figure 9.10). In contrast to 2001, the salience of immigration across public opinion was low in 2008 and diverged from the LN's significant contagion effects on inter-party competition (Figure 10.2). The LN retained its ability to win a substantial portion of seats under the majoritarian tier in its northern strongholds, especially after overcoming its past electoral decline from 2004 onwards (Tables 9.1; 10.1). Effectively, the LN's results at the 2007 administrative elections reinforced this ERP's electoral threat to mainstream parties. Finally, Berlusconi's full collaboration with Bossi led to the LN's participation in the draft of the PdL's electoral manifesto, providing the chance for the Italian ERP to bind the centre-right coalition to its own agenda on immigration policy. Within the former context, the PdL's formal engagement with the Italian ERP seems the most relevant factor behind the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition in 2008.

**Figure 10.2** – Most important issue at the Italian 2008 general election (N=3,000)



Source: Itanes, 2008

### 10.1.2 – LN impact on public attitudes

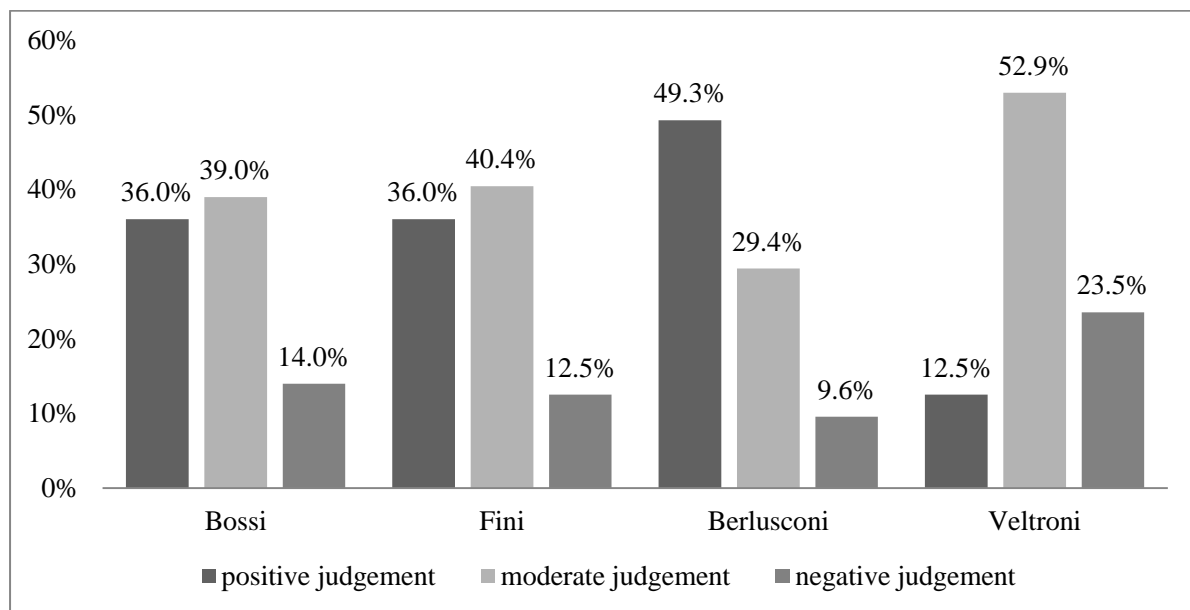
This research has shown that the LN lacked impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2001 general election, despite the intense concern with this issue and its overwhelming association with delinquency. Now did the LN reinforce anxiety and hostility to immigration across the electorate at the 2008 general election? Concern with immigration across Italian voters persisted at the same level in 2008 but was followed by the decline of levels of public hostility to this social phenomenon. In contrast to 2001, the LN had a moderate impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2008, apparently stronger amongst voters most concerned with immigration and its core electorate than amongst the general electorate. The LN's electoral support alongside the agency of mainstream parties was identified as the most relevant factor enhancing the Italian ERP's impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

Economic concerns were at the top of most important issues of Italian voters at the 2008 general election unlike insecurity related with criminality like in 2001 (Figure 10.2; Legnante and Sani, 2002 ). The salience of immigration increased slightly at the overall level in 2008 in



comparison to 2001 but the proportion of voters most concerned with immigration remained unchanged (Figure 10.2).<sup>123</sup> As in 2001, the PdL led by Berlusconi enjoyed a 28-percentage points advantage over the PD as the best party to deal with immigration (Itanes, 2008). Voters most concerned with immigration ranked Berlusconi as their favourite party leader, closely followed by Fini and Bossi (Figure 10.3). The LN's leader improvement among the former group of voters suggests that the LN was now disputing the issue ownership of opposition to immigration but was still far from holding its monopoly notwithstanding Albertazzi and MacDonnell's (2010) contrary suggestion.

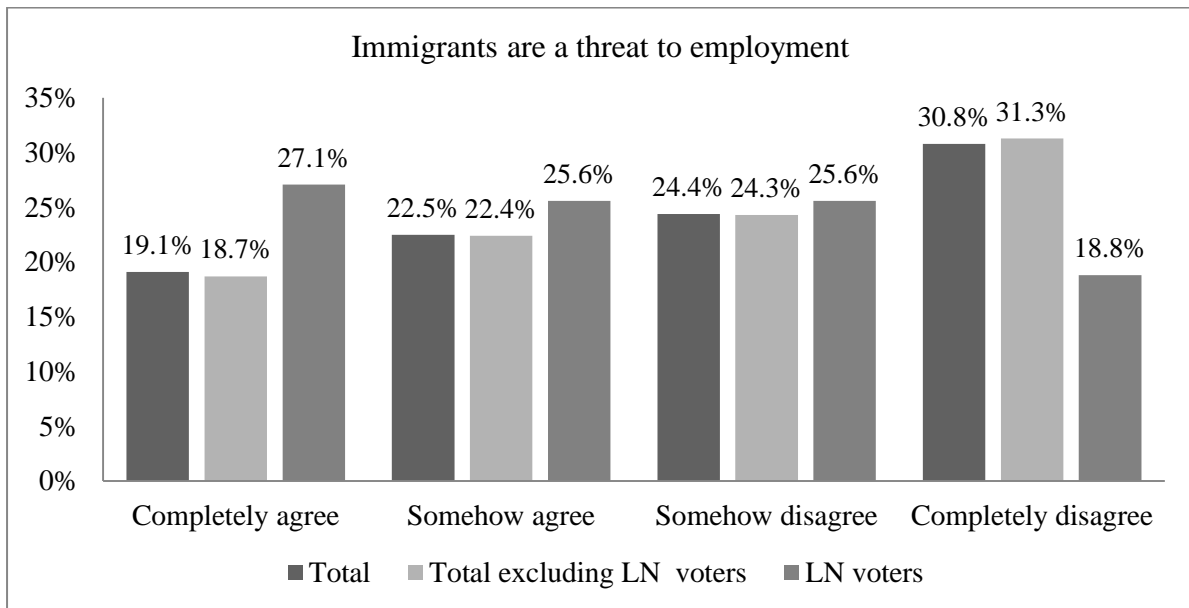
**Figure 10.3** – Evaluation of Bossi, Fini, Berlusconi and Veltroni amongst respondents most concerned with immigration at the Italian 2008 general election (N = 132)



Source – Itanes, 2008

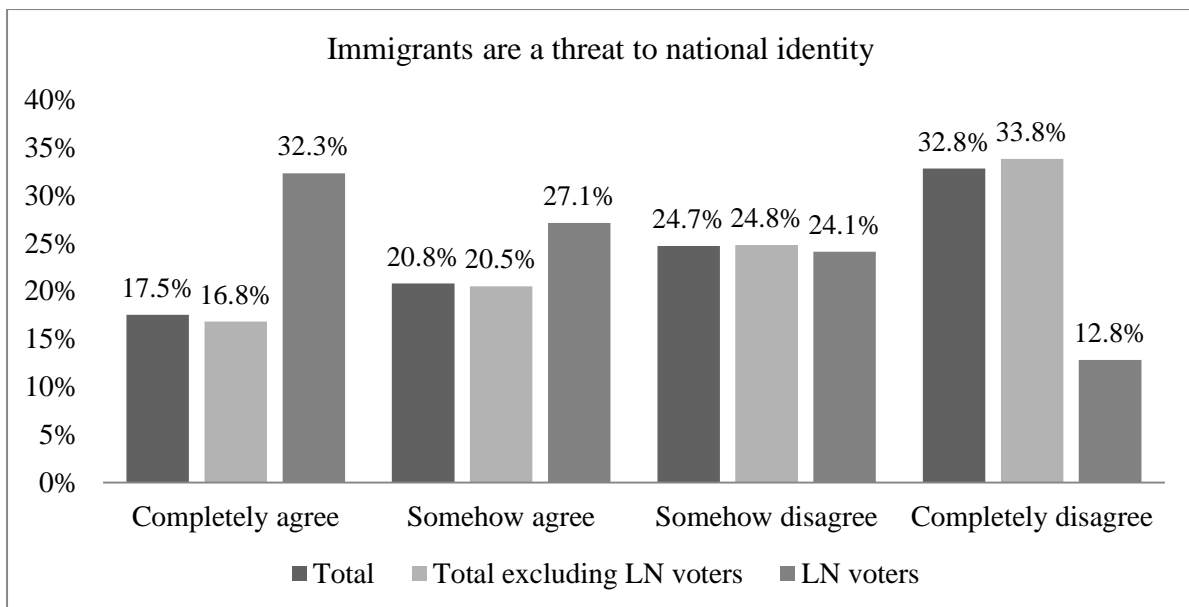
<sup>123</sup> The combination of immigration with delinquency raised this issue to the third most important concern amongst the Italian electorate, still behind economic development and unemployment (Figure 10.2)

**Figure 10.4** – Public perception of immigration and employment at the Italian 2008 general election (N = 3,000; LN Voters = 133)



Source – Itanes, 2008

**Figure 10.5** – Public perception of immigration and national identity at the Italian 2008 general election (N = 3,000; LN Voters = 133)



Source: Itanes, 2008

The preceding observation on the LN's impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2008 concurs with research conducted by Cavazza et al. (2009, p. 164). This study indicated that whereas the LN collected 16.4 per cent of the votes of respondents<sup>124</sup> anxious with "insecurity caused by immigration", the PdL collected 60.8 per cent and the PD 12.3 per cent. Therefore, the LN seemed to have stronger ability to lead the debate on immigration amongst voters most anxious with this topic, yet it did not hold the issue ownership of opposition to immigration.

Furthermore, public hostility to immigration declined at the 2008 general election in comparison to 2001. The majority of Italians rejected the association between immigration and a threat to employment whilst the bulk of the LN's core electorate has the opposite perception (Figure 10.4). Furthermore, general voters continued to disregard immigration as a danger to their culture in contrast to LN's voters (Figure 10.5).<sup>125</sup> The traits of cultural xenophobia increased among the LN's core voters whilst it simultaneously declined across the general electorate. Therefore, the LN's cultural xenophobia was gradually reflected in its voters' attitudes but its contagion effects failed to go beyond its own party constituency.

In short, Bossi improved his image amongst voters most concerned with immigration but the data suggests that the LN was still far from holding issue ownership of opposition to immigration. Moreover, the LN was unable to increase the concern and hostility to immigration across the overall electorate in 2008. Therefore, this thesis suggests that the LN's impact on public attitudes to immigration should be ranked as moderate at the 2008 general election. The Italian ERPs' moderate impact on public attitudes to immigration coincided with the levels of immigration, the dimension of LN's electoral support, and the

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<sup>124</sup> Individuals who verbalised their responses about the issue they considered most important in the Itanes 2008 study.

<sup>125</sup> Unlike the Itanes 2001 study, the 2008 study did not include a question on voters' perception of immigration as a threat to security.

agency of mainstream parties. As mentioned above, the intensity of immigration into Italy increased before 2008, supported by growth of labour immigration and family reunion (Figure 9.10). Against the thesis of “ethnic backlash”, the drop of levels of hostility followed the dramatic expansion of immigration before 2008 challenging linkages between xenophobia and the increasing presence of immigrants in the host societies. Like in France, hostility to immigration seems less contingent on intensity of immigration than on other political factors such as mainstream parties’ discourse on immigration.

The LN’s electoral support expanded from the 2001 general election onwards, and especially after the 2006 general election, whilst its core electorate demonstrated higher levels of xenophobia (Table 10.1; Figure 10.5). Nonetheless, the LN’s party network continued to be concentrated in northern regions. Finally, the PdL’s formal engagement with the LN provided exogenous support to the Italian ERP to overcome its regional character by reinforcing the legitimacy of the LN’s cultural xenophobia whilst the past participation in government expanded its political capital. Summarising, the LN’s electoral support and the PdL’s engagement at a formal level with the LN were considered the most relevant factors behind the LN’s moderate impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2008. However, these factors fail to help to understand the decline of hostility to immigration and further analysis on ERP impact on public attitudes is required to understand general trends across the electorate. Moreover, the LN’s electoral growth throughout the 2000s (Tables 9.1; 10.1) was not followed by widespread contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration at national level in 2008, which were apparently limited to its core electorate and voters most concerned with immigration (Mudde, 2007).

### **10.1.3 – Electoral outcome**

Berlusconi won his third term in office on April 2008 after the PdL collected 37.4 per cent of the vote in the Chamber of Deputies and 38 per cent in the Senate against Veltroni’s 33.2 per

cent and 37.9 per cent respectively (Chiaramonte, 2009). The LN doubled its electoral share and number of seats almost recovering to the levels observed in 1996 with 8.3 per cent at the Chamber of Deputies and 7.9 per cent at the Senate (Table 10.1). Therefore, Berlusconi and the PdL enjoyed a solid majority in both Chambers, including 171 seats in the Senate, which ensured the government's stability. However, the PdL was dependent on the LN's support to maintain the majorities in the assemblies providing stronger agenda setting and veto powers for the Italian ERP in contrast to 2001 (Pasquino, 2008).

Despite its stronger performance in 2008 than in 2001, the LN obtained the same number of ministries but with a stronger political profile. Maroni was appointed Minister of Interior, Bossi was designated Minister of Federal reform, Luca Zaia became Minister of Agriculture, and Roberto Calderoli Minister for Legislative Simplification (Parenzo and Romano, 2008). Moreover, the LN benefited from the exclusion of the CdU from the coalition whilst Berlusconi counted on Bossi's cooperation to confront Fini (Baldini and Cento Bull, 2009). The correlation of forces within the cabinet favoured the LN and Bossi had finally assumed a decisive position within the Italian party system, one of his long-term objectives (Passalacqua, 2009).

**Table 10.1** – Votes for LN in Italian general and EP elections between 2006 and 2009

| Year | Election | Number of Votes | Proportion of total | Seats |
|------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|-------|
| 2006 | general  | 1,747,730       | 4.58%               | 26    |
| 2008 | general  | 3,024,543       | 8.30%               | 60    |
| 2009 | EP       | 3,126,181       | 10.2%               | 9     |

Source: *Ministero dell'Interno*, 2010

## **10.2 – The LN’s development between 2006 and 2009**

During Berlusconi’s second term, the LN successfully advanced its two main electoral themes: immigration and devolution. Accommodation in office had been accompanied by the LN’s radicalisation and electoral recovery, despite Bossi’s enforced post-stroke absence. Now, this research assesses the dimension of the strategic dilemma posed by the LN to mainstream parties between 2006 and 2009. Disappointing results at the 2006 general election were followed by a defeat at the 2006 referendum on devolution. However, the LN’s electoral fortunes improved considerably in 2007 and it obtained its best result in a national ballot at the 2009 EP election. In parallel, this second section examines the LN’s discourse on immigration policy and if the LN’s participation in Berlusconi’s government was accompanied by a de-radicalisation effect (Minkenberg, 2001). This thesis shows that cultural xenophobia continued to be a cornerstone of the LN’s ideology whilst the access to office seats at local level was employed to launch an anti-immigration campaign, as seen below.

### **10.2.1 – The LN at the 2006 general elections and fiscal federalism**

Electoral results at the 2006 general election were unsatisfactory as Bossi publicly recognised (Table 10.1; *Corriere della Sera*, 2006d). Moreover, the LN’s political project was completely shattered after the 2006 referendum on devolution. With a turnout of 52 per cent of the electorate, 61.3 per cent voted against the devolution proposal and the “Yes” campaign only won in the LN’s heartlands as Lombardia and Veneto (Cento Bull, 2009). This event forced Bossi to accept the necessity to involve centre-left parties in constitutional reform instead of alienating their potential support (Passalacqua, 2009). Defeat at the 2006 referendum was followed by a period of intense opposition to Bossi enhancing the risk of internal implosion (Signore and Trocino, 2008). In a speech at Cá San Marco, the LN’s leader was forced to intervene to curb demands for secessionism from the audience. Bossi had to restate his compromise with the Lombardia, Veneto and Piemonte citizens to: “seek all

democratic paths towards the liberation of the north” (Bossi, 2006a). Nonetheless, a new plan was urgently required to mobilise the LN’s core electorate.

In September 2006, Bossi announced a new phase within the LN: federalism involving regional autonomy and fiscal federalism<sup>126</sup> (Bossi, 2006b; Jori, 2009). In a speech in Veneto, the LN announced the new goal: “it is necessary to pass federalism, otherwise we will remain in the old system of ‘Roma ladrona’ ” (Bossi, 2006b). Therefore, federalism was the new venue to obtain the liberation of Padania allowing the LN to continue to explore the Italian north-south cleavage without alienating coalition partners or eventual centre-left support for constitutional reform (Passalacqua, 2009). The LN was now the northern “lobby” in Rome and restated the consensual style adopted in the early 2000s (Diamanti, 2009). Coalition with Berlusconi was justified by a narrative of the necessity of a democratic compromise to attain liberation (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010). Finally, Bossi replied to a possible leadership challenge by stating: “The *Lega* is me, if I fall everybody goes home” (*La Stampa*, 2006).

### **10.2.2 – The new rise of the LN**

In the aftermath of the 2006 referendum, the LN prioritized insecurity in its political agenda and recovered the Padanian guard or the “green shirts” of the 1990s, now named “local vigilantes” to reinforce security in the LN’s localities (Avanza, 2010). Initially deployed in the small town of Chiarano (Treviso), this phenomenon of supposedly peaceful paramilitary groups spread through other localities dominated by the LN and were institutionalised by the 2009 Security law (Passalacqua, 2009). Demands for the employment of “vigilante” groups to control the “nomad camps” established on the Milan outskirts formed mostly of Romanian citizens reinforced the demonization of this immigrant group (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007h).

As Diamanti (2009) noted, the LN transformed itself from a party of “small northern

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<sup>126</sup> An agreement was announced with the CdL President of the Lombardia and Veneto regions to demand the application of the Constitution (the 2001 constitutional reform introduced the principle of “fiscal federalism” in the Constitution).

producers” into the “security party”. At the 2007 provincial elections, the LN registered the greatest electoral growth amongst the centre-right coalition in the context of a centre-left disaster (Mannheimer, 2007). Furthermore, its hegemony in small northern cities was consolidated at the 2007 partial administrative elections (Signore and Trocini, 2008). The electoral growth from 2007 onwards strengthened the significant strategic dilemma posed by the LN to Italian mainstream parties.

At the 2008 general election, the LN benefited from the highest rate of voters’ loyalty across the Italian parties alongside an increasing ability to attract voters from competing parties, particularly across the centre-right (Table 10.1; Carbone and Newell, 2008). Another surprise was the LN’s inroads in the region of Emilia-Romagna, a centre-left stronghold, where it obtained 7 per cent of the vote (Jori, 2009).<sup>127</sup> Unlike 1996, the LN was now expanding its vote beyond its northern heartlands. In government, Bossi pushed for fiscal federalism but Berlusconi prioritised security and judicial reform (Marangoni, 2009). Fiscal federalism was approved on 30 April 2009 and converted into Law no. 42 of 5 May 2009. As in the past, the final proposal was a watered down version of the LN’s initial objectives in the 2008 electoral programme, because they threatened the unity of the Italian state (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010).

However, implementation of fiscal federalism came to a standstill because of a lack of agreement between the coalition partners on the most contentious points (Keating and Wilson, 2010).<sup>128</sup> The LN’s overall strategy in office continued to encompass extremist rhetoric at the public level alongside a consensual approach towards its coalition partners. This tactic also enabled Bossi to position himself as the leader of the opposition to the

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<sup>127</sup> This development was interpreted as an outcome of the PCI integration into the centrist PD and the growth of criminality in this region (Diamanti, 2009b).

<sup>128</sup> The most contentious point was over the mechanism to compensate the regions with less financial resources to maintain a uniform distribution of public services through the territory (Marangoni, 2009).



governmental majority (Jori, 2009). At the May 2008 administrative elections, the LN was the first party in 800 cities, mostly of small population density, but also extended its control over northern cities more densely populated such as Verona, Treviso and Varese (Diamanti, 2008). The LN's electoral insertion in the northern strongholds continued to provide a wide access to local office positions, in contrast to the British and French ERPs.

Opposition to the European Constitution and to Turkey's EU accession dominated the LN's electoral campaign for the 2009 EP election (LN, 2009; Bressanelli et al., 2010). Its electoral manifesto indicated that the LN accepted immigration but with "flows regulated according to a non-economic basis, by taking in account the cultural and social consequences of this phenomenon" (LN, 2009, p. 2) demonstrating its cultural xenophobia. The LN's 10.2 per cent of the vote obtained at the 2009 EP ballot represented its best electoral result ever in Italian national ballots (Table 10.1). Therefore, the LN's strategic dilemma to mainstream parties expanded between 2006 and 2009 and achieved its greatest magnitude in 2009, when the LN was a member of Berlusconi's government. Accommodation in office failed to pose constraints of the LN's electoral performance, as expected of radical parties that hold office positions (Heinisch, 2003).

### **10.2.3 – The LN position on immigration**

In the aftermath of the 2006 referendum, Bossi quickly reasserted opposition to immigration as a cornerstone of LN's ideology. At Cá San Marco in August 2006, Bossi stated that the LN refused to grant citizenship to non-EU citizens because "we want to be masters in our own house" (Bossi, 2006b). Furthermore, Bossi added that:

"I have made an immigration law to curb immigration, to send a clear message to the entire world: we did not want people to come into our house" (Bossi, 2006b)

The centre-left government was accused of opening the borders leading to alienation that “we citizens, feel the country is less ours” (Bossi, 2006b) presupposing that immigration represented a threat to national cohesion and identity. Bossi’s discourse revealed the ambiguity of the LN’s position on the management of inflows, which leaned to zero-immigration policy instead of acknowledging the need for foreign workers. Former minister Calderoli denounced Prodi’s proposal to reform the immigration law as a “crime against the people and its identity” providing further evidence of the LN’s cultural xenophobia (*Corriere della Sera*, 2007i). Hence, the LN organised a new petition for a referendum to repeal the government’s proposal like in 2000 (*Corriere della Sera*, 2006e).

Accommodation in office after 2008 was not followed by the expected ideological de-radicalisation, like during Berlusconi’s second term (Minkenberg, 2001). At the first parliamentary session, Bossi declared that “we must hunt immigrants and develop fiscal federalism with all the available means” (*Radio Canarias*<sup>7</sup>, 2008). Cultural xenophobia also featured prominently in the LN’s electoral campaign for the 2009 EP election with Bossi’s personal commitment:

“as always, to the fight against the invasion by non-EU citizens without rules, supported by those who desire a multi-ethnic society that would cancel our history and future” (LN, 2009, p.1).

Opposition to the EU was blended with the LN’s cultural xenophobia as the EU bureaucrats were accused of preferring “mosques to cathedrals, which opens doors to Islam and removes crucifixes from walls” (LN, 2009, p.1). Curiously, Calderoli welcomed Berlusconi’s friendship treaty with Gaddafi signed in 2008 and expressed regret for his previous racism towards Islam in a demonstration of “realpolitik” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009a). Before the end of 2009, the LN’s mayor of Coccaglio (Lombardia) launched a campaign to purge the city of non-EU immigrants with an irregular status dubbed “white Christmas” (Independent,

2009c). Therefore, the LN's penetration at local level continued to be mobilised to strengthen its image as the "security party".

Summarising, the LN accumulated setbacks throughout 2006: first at the general election, and then at the referendum on devolution. These events prompted an internal crisis and forced Bossi to devise a new plan to liberate "Padania" involving regional autonomy and fiscal federalism. Cultural xenophobia continued to be a cornerstone of the LN's ideology and a de-radicalisation process was not observed, even after this ERP's accommodation in office for Berlusconi's third term. The LN progressively shifted its image of a party of small northern producers to the security party, as was illustrated by the organisation of "vigilante" patrols in northern localities. Its electoral expansion after 2007 posed an increasing strategic dilemma to mainstream parties' objectives at the first-order-ballots, such as at the 2008 general election. Now, the third and final overall section examines the LN's impact on policy developments during the first two years of Berlusconi's term.

### **10.3 – The LN impact on immigration policy between 2008 and 2009**

This research has shown that the LN had a moderate impact on the development of Italian immigration policy between 2001 and 2006. Now, did the LN reinforce the restrictive character of policy developments taking place between 2008 and 2009? The two first years of Berlusconi's term were marked by an increasing policy gap involving the escalation of the repressive approach to the management of inflows and the simultaneous regularisation of irregular immigrants settled in the country. Furthermore, intra-EU inflows became highly controversial in the political debate whilst EU citizens of Roma origin were particularly targeted by the Italian state. This thesis argues that the LN had a significant impact on the development of Italian immigration policy in the selected timeframe but less disproportional than during Berlusconi's second term. The agency of mainstream parties will be identified as the most relevant factor enhancing the LN's impact on immigration policy (Table 2.1).

### 10.3.1 – The 2008 Security decrees and the fingerprinting of Romanian immigrants

Once again, immigration policy was quickly prioritised within the legislative agenda after the 2008 general election. Instead of an overall reform of the 2002 Bossi-Fini law, the government opted to issue legislative decrees in the context of the “security crisis”. Consequently, a security package was presented under the guidance of the Interior Minister, less than a year after the approval of a similar bill by the preceding centre-left government. This accompanied the declaration of state of emergency related to the settlement of nomad camps in three Italian regions.<sup>129</sup> As observed in the UK (Chapter 6), the adoption of a client politics model including the granting of the right to long-term settlement to citizens of A-10 countries failed to prevent the politicisation of this type of immigration, in particular of EU citizens with Roma origin (Table 2.2). The package contained draft decree-laws concerning public security, family reunion, asylum, and the free movement of EU citizens (later withdrawn after the veto of the EU Commission) (Nalleto, 2009).

Effectively, the Interior Minister admitted that the first two priorities were: “the management of the fight against illegal immigration followed by the management of relations with EU countries (in particular Romania) on the basis of the EU directive which allows for the repatriation of EU citizens who have no income or exhibit delinquent behaviour” (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008e). In the context of widespread articulation of immigration as a threat to security, significant attacks against immigrants were observed in Napoli in May 2008, two weeks before the approval of the security package (Independent, 2008). These popular mobilisations and the institutionalisation of legal discrimination of foreign citizens suggest a linkage between these non-discursive events and the hegemony of the LN’s frame of immigration during the April 2008 electoral campaign. Therefore, the interdiscursive

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<sup>129</sup> In 31 October 2007, the Council of Ministers led by Prodi approved the Decree-law 181/2007 that allowed police forces to deport EU citizens and their family members from Italian soil if they were considered to be a danger to public order (Pastore, 2007).

relationship found between mainstream parties' discourse and the LN's frame of immigration at the 2008 electoral campaign through the employment of CDA was related to non-discursive events such as the promulgation of the 2008 security package and anti-immigration mobilisations.

In consequence of the conflation of immigration with law and order, the 2008 security decree contained provisions related with the management of inflows (Table 10.2). The Italian state's initiative to reduce immigrants' rights in the context of general social insecurity directly associated their presence as the cause of instability and presented forced removals as a solution to delinquency (Pastore, 2007; Nalletto, 2009). Nevertheless, the approval of the 2008 security decree reinforced the sense of security amongst the electorate (according to polls) (Ambrosini, 2009).<sup>130</sup> Further restrictions on immigration were introduced through separate legislative decrees on family reunion and asylum.<sup>131</sup> Restrictions on secondary inflows forced members of immigrant families to apply for regularisation through the Flows Decrees that were supposed to channel regular labour immigration (Colombo and Martini, 2007). Finally, provisions were also introduced to limit foreign citizens' access to welfare benefits (Nalletto, 2009, p. 107), providing evidence of the contagion effects of the LN's welfare chauvinism.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Statistics pointed that the number of homicides had reached its lowest level in the last 32 years in 2006 while theft had been increasing since 2002 and progressively over the last 40 years (Colombo, 2009).

<sup>131</sup> Legislative decree no. 160/08 of 3 of October of 2008 made the right to family reunion limited to immigrants' direct dependents and parents over age 65. Candidates may be required to pass a DNA test at their expense. The deadline for examination of requests for family reunion extended from 90 to 180 days. This piece of legislation also changed the asylum system, since it introduced restrictions to the right of free movement for asylum seekers. Asylum seekers issued with an expulsion order could now be detained in identification and expulsion centres for a period up to 18 months.

<sup>132</sup> Law No. 133 of 6 August 2008.

**Table 10.2** – Modifications to Italian immigration policy by the Law no. 125 of 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2008

| Primary inflows | Secondary inflows | Asylum | Irregular inflows  |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------|--|
|                 |                   |        | Status of irregular immigration became an aggravating circumstance of any committed offense. Authorises deportation of non-EU and EU citizens condemned to more than two years imprisonment. Reinforces sanctions on landlords who rent a property to irregular immigrants |

Another security law was drafted by the LN Interior Minister that included a LN’s proposal for the criminalisation of irregular immigration, who could be punished with six months to four years of effective imprisonment. Bossi announced the creation of an “external wall” against irregular immigration even though he had opposed a similar proposal presented by Fini in 2002 (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008c; see p.266). Whereas the efficiency of this measure as a deterrent to further irregular inflows was doubtful, it was of a high symbolic value and reinforced the LN’s image as the security party (Pugliese, 2010). Nevertheless, Berlusconi dropped the LN proposal after meeting French President Sarkozy, just before the approval of the EU directive on irregular immigration (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008d).

Maroni expressed his surprise at Berlusconi’s change of mind (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008d). Shortly after this U-turn, the Interior Minister launched a programme of mapping the “nomads” camps and collecting biometric data from their residents (Sigona, 2010). In parliament, Maroni overtly recognised:

“We will collect fingerprints of children, against the actual norms, to prevent begging. It will not be an ethnic survey but a proper census to guarantee who has the right to live [in Italy] and subsist in decent conditions” (Maroni, 2008)

Initially justified as an exceptional measure to guarantee children's welfare, Maroni clearly articulated immigration, in particular of EU citizens of Roma origin, as a threat to the Italian society. Polls indicated that 67 per cent of respondents agreed with the fingerprinting programme (92 per cent of LN voters, 80 per cent of PdL and 44 per cent of PD voters) (Mannheimer, 2008). The implementation of Maroni's plan was de-railed after the intervention by the EP on 8 July 2008 because it constituted a "discriminatory act based on race and ethnic origin" (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008f). Foreign rather than domestic judicial intervention tamed the LN's initial plans and constrained the fingerprint plan.<sup>133</sup> The stigmatisation of EU citizens of Roma origin had been initially observed in the tabloids and Conservatives' campaign in the UK in 2003 but as a cause of abuse of the welfare system rather than as a source of criminality (see p.145).

### **10.3.2 – Repatriation of irregular immigrants to Libya**

Notwithstanding the government's repressive approach to intra-EU inflows and irregular immigration, the number of irregular immigrants arriving by boat expanded from 20,455 in 2007 to 36,955 in 2008, most of them, landing on the island of Lampedusa (*Ministero dell'Interno*, 2009). The appointment of Calderoli as Minister of Legislative Simplification had been coldly received by the Libyan regime, which consequently halted its cooperation agreement to protect the Italian southern coast from irregular immigration (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008g). In a political context dominated by the strong association between security and immigration, the boat landings received wide coverage in the media. Statistics show that at least a third of the immigrants arrived by sea in 2007 applied for asylum protection and around a fifth obtained some form of protection (Ambrosini, 2009). Moreover, these

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<sup>133</sup> By 22 October 2008, 167 nomad camps had been mapped, 12,346 foreigners has been fingerprinted including 5,436 children (*Ministero dell'Interno*, 2009).

immigrants form only a fraction of the irregular population settled in Italy, which is mostly composed of over-stayers.<sup>134</sup>

In response to the boat landings, Berlusconi and Libya's President Muammar Gaddafi signed a Friendship Pact in August 2008 involving the exchange of Italy's compensation for its colonial past for "less clandestine [irregular] immigrants and more gas" in Berlusconi's own words (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008h). The agreement was implemented from January 2009 onwards when Maroni already faced accusations by local mayors of racism and creating a "Guantanamo" prison for irregular immigrants on Lampedusa (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009b). NGOs complained of the very poor conditions in which 1,300 immigrants were held.<sup>135</sup> Maroni responded that those "who arrived at Lampedusa would remain there until repatriation" demonstrating the Italian state's repressive approach (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009d).

In May 2009, 223 immigrants were rescued on a damaged ship in the Mediterranean Sea and automatically deported to Libya. Maroni celebrated this event as an "historical event in the struggle against irregular immigration" that represented the externalisation of Italian border controls to the Libyan authorities (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009e).<sup>136</sup> However, the behaviour of Italian authorities received wide condemnation from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR), which demanded the rescue of those lost at sea and respect for international conventions on asylum (UNCHR, 2009).<sup>137</sup> Confronting widespread critics, Berlusconi justified the removals to Libya with his rejection of a multi-ethnic society and to "open the door to everyone as the left did" providing evidence of another interdiscursive

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<sup>134</sup> Non-EU citizens who enter in Italy with legal short-term visas, then overstay and thus assume an irregular status.

<sup>135</sup> Berlusconi compared the detention centres to concentration camps in a later visit (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009c).

<sup>136</sup> During 2009, nine operations of automatic repatriation to Libya were reported by the Italian authorities involving 834 immigrants (*Corriere della Sera*, 2010a).

<sup>137</sup> The 1951 Geneva Convention demands that member-states provide a fair and balanced audition to asylum requests made by immigrants at their borders.



relationship between the PdL's leader and the LN's anti-immigration positions (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009f). Berlusconi also emphasised the ownership of Gaddafi's agreement demonstrating his preference to compete with the LN for the issue ownership of opposition to immigration rather than to downgrade the government's repressive approach (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009g).

Due to continuous external pressures, Maroni later proposed to create a structure in Libya to process the asylum requests instead of assessing them in Italy despite the country's poor record on human rights (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009d).<sup>138</sup> The small number of immigrants automatically removed to Libya was considered evidence of a gap between the LN's political rhetoric and outcomes (Cento Bull, 2009). Nevertheless, this judgment is challenged by the 74 per cent decline in the number of irregular immigrants arriving by boat in 2009 in comparison to 2008, while the repatriation programme was suspended in 2010 (*Ministero dell'Interno*, 2009; Paoletti and Pastore, 2010). This trend provided evidence that the LN attained the desired aims notwithstanding the low number of deported irregular immigrants. However, the intensity of irregular immigration into Italy would persist supported by its extensive informal economy and the acute demand for foreign labour (Finotelli and Sciortino, 2009).

### **10.3.3 – The Decree-Law 92/2009**

An amendment to the security bill proposed by the PdL replaced the LN's proposal for the imprisonment of irregular immigrants by a fine or automatic deportation. Additional amendments were presented by the LN including: a residence authorisation based on a points-system; a halt to the publication of Flows Decrees for two years; the inclusion of a provision forcing doctors to denounce irregular immigrants; and a barrier to irregular

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<sup>138</sup> A similar project had been proposed by Blair in 2003 to externalise the reception and analysis of asylum requests to third countries outside the EU.

immigrants' children access to Italian schools (Cento-Bull, 2009). The LN proposals were rejected by the coalition partners and excluded from the 94/2009 law. As Albertazzi and McDonnell (2010) noticed, this strategy enabled the LN to dominate the political agenda on immigration and security. Besides, it maintained its core electorate mobilised in the context of the stalemate on fiscal federalism, while the coalition partners' vetoes reinforced the LN's image of opposition within the government.<sup>139</sup>

The July 2009 security law expanded the repressive components of Italian immigration policy, particularly towards irregular immigration without addressing the ineffective channels for labour migration from non-EU countries (Finotelli and Sciortino, 2009; Table 10.3). The government's frame of immigration as a law and order issue legitimised the criminalisation of irregular immigrants but its legislative proposals faced domestic and international judicial interference. Whereas the Constitutional Court rejected the aggravation of criminal sentences due to irregular immigration in 2010 (*Corriere della Sera*, 2010b), the European Court of Justice later condemned the imprisonment of irregular immigrants in 2011 (*Corriere della Sera*, 2011). A policy gap was therefore identified in the Italian government's approach to immigration as a law and order issue and the subsequent policy developments. Moreover, these events demonstrate that the scope of the LN's impact on policy development was effectively constrained by endogenous and exogenous judicial intervention, in contrast to past negligence of constraints on ERP impact in the political literature.

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<sup>139</sup> This strategy had similarities to Sarkozy's approach to immigration in France, initially employed to distance himself from Chirac. Moreover, Sarkozy also launched unfeasible proposals on immigration policy, such as the quota system.

**Table 10.3** – Modifications to Italian immigration policy by the Law no. 94/2009 of 15<sup>th</sup> of July 2009

| Primary inflows   | Secondary inflows | Asylum | Irregular inflows  |
|---|-------------------|--------|--|
| Access to long-term residence authorisations is made dependent on language test. Introduces an integration contract on access to residence authorisations (whose regulation was postponed). |                   |        | Introduces the crime of irregular immigration punished with a fine or automatic repatriation. Residence authorisation demanded to access public services (except access to urgent health care and public schools). Detainment of irregular immigrants within detention centres extended from 60 to 180 days. |

Cracks also emerged within the coalition government over the shape of Italian immigration policy. After the initial cooperation within the cabinet, Fini commented that the government’s policy was “short-sighted” and “based only on a security approach” whilst the former FI Interior Minister Pisanu pointed to the LN’s excessive profile in the government (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009h, 2009i). The LN’s prominence on immigration policy reflected its stronger position within the cabinet in the face of exclusion of the CdU from the electoral coalition as well as its 2008 electoral performance. Moreover, further divisions between the PdL and the LN were later observed over the development of a regularisation programme for domestic and care workers, which was initially rejected by the Italian ERP (*Corriere della Sera*, 2009j).

### **10.3.4 – The 2008 and 2009 Flows Decrees and the regularisation of domestic and care workers**

In the text of the 2008 Flows Decree, the Italian government acknowledged the intense demand for labour visas as a consequence of the 2007 Flows Decrees, especially from irregular immigrants working in the private assistance sector.<sup>140</sup> Consequently, the 2008 inflows set a cap of 150,000 labour authorisations of which 100,500 were reserved for domestic and care workers (Figure 9.9). As the government acknowledged, the Flows Decrees continued to regularise immigrants already settled in the country, instead of channelling labour immigration through legal means from origin countries (Ambrosini, 2011). This trend indicated the inability of Berlusconi's government to manage labour inflows according to the domestic structural dependence on foreign labour. After intense negotiations between the PdL's Welfare and the LN's Interior Ministers, Maroni presented the government's initiative to regularise domestic and care workers as a measure to tackle the large informal economic sector (Colombo, 2009).

As in 2002, the LN operated a U-turn and bowed to its coalition partners' demands. Adopting an adversarial attitude on this limited regularisation programme could jeopardise relations with the PdL and reduce the LN's chances to advance its project for fiscal federalism. A circular approved by the government in August 2009 set the rigid access criteria<sup>141</sup> to the regularisation programme, leading to the presentation of 295,000 applications by September 2009. This number was low considering that the Interior Minister had expected up to 750,000 requests (Pasquinelli, 2009). The regularisation process ended up being considered a failure

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<sup>140</sup> The 2007 flows decree set by Prodi's government established a cap of 170.000 labour permits to be granted to non-EU workers: 65.000 for domestic and care workers, 14.2000 for construction workers, 500 for transport workers, and 200 for fishermen. However, the government received 741.000 requests for labour visas (Sopemi, 2009).

<sup>141</sup> Italian families that applied for regularisation of domestic or care workers had to pay 500 Euros for each application, provide evidence of holding annual earnings of 20,000 to 25,000 Euros, and meet other criteria (Colombo, 2009).

because of the rigid criteria imposed by the Italian state under Maroni's guidance (Colombo, 2009). In a stronger position within the cabinet in 2008 in comparison to 2002, the LN managed to influence the outcome of the 2009 regularisation programme and limit its scope. Nonetheless, a policy gap was identified between the PdL government's repressive approach to irregular immigration at rhetoric level and the development of regularisation programmes, which reflected the domestic structural dependence on foreign labour.

The non-publication of the 2009 Flows Decrees for non-temporary immigration suggests that Berlusconi sought to appease Bossi for the later regularisation programme providing further evidence of the LN's impact (Figure 9.9).<sup>142</sup> Summarising, the Italian immigration policy under Berlusconi's third term was marked by an expansion of repressive components of the legislation towards intra-EU inflows and irregular immigration, which dominated the Italian political agenda. Restrictions to the development of secondary and asylum inflows were observed alongside restraints to foreign citizens' access to the welfare system. As observed throughout Berlusconi's second term, a policy gap was identified between the government's political objectives to tackle irregular immigration and the development of the 2009 regularisation programme. Another policy gap was previously observed across the adoption of repressive measures towards irregular immigration and the subsequent policy outcomes reflecting the judicial vetoes of the government's proposals.

According to Finotelli and Sciortino (2009, p.136), "the LN had not a very relevant influence on the making of Italian immigration policies at least at the legislative level". However, the campaign against the Roma camps, the extension of restrictions to secondary and asylum inflows, the repressive approach to the boat landings and the failure of the 2009 regularisation process suggest that the LN had a significant impact on policy developments

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<sup>142</sup> In 2008, the LN had demanded the halt of the publication of the Flows Decrees for two years (*Corriere della Sera*, 2008i)

from 2008 to 2009, at a higher level than during Berlusconi's second term. This political process has not provoked a rupture with Italy's past policy, but the LN's political agency has actively contributed for the failure to manage labour inflows according to domestic demand and the intensification of the repressive components of the Italian immigration policy. Considering the LN's stronger position within the Italian executive, its significant impact on policy developments between 2008 and 2009 is considered as less disproportional than during the Berlusconi's second term.

The LN's significant impact on policy developments between 2008 and 2009 coincided with the levels of immigration, the dimension of the LN's electoral threat, and the agency of mainstream parties. Immigration rates expanded in 2007 and 2008, mainly supported by the intensification of labour inflows and family reunion, and coincided with the LN's impact on policy developments (Figure 9.10). In contrast, the overall low salience of immigration in public opinion seemed weakly related (Figure 10.2). The LN's electoral threat to mainstream electoral parties expanded continuously between 2008 and 2009 and the party obtained its best score in a national ballot at the 2009 EP ballot (Table 10.3). Finally, the PdL's formal engagement with the LN and Berlusconi's full collaboration with Bossi between 2008 and 2009 led to the appointment of Maroni as the Interior Minister. In this overall context, the Italian ERP's electoral threat and the agency of mainstream parties was regarded as the most important factor enhancing the LN's significant impact on policy developments, in the context of increasing levels of immigration.

#### **10.4 – Conclusions**

Immigration policy was highly prominent at the 2008 electoral campaign with irregular immigration and intra-EU inflows, particularly from Romania, being the most dominant types of immigration in the political debate. Broad inter-party consensus were found between the Italian ERP and mainstream parties over the frame of management of irregular inflows as a

threat to security and the demonization of EU immigrants of Roma origin. Moreover, mainstream parties failed to acknowledge the domestic structural dependence on foreign labour. The LN's impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at the 2008 general election was considered significant. This political process coincided with the expansion of immigration before 2008, the LN's substantial electoral threat, and the engagement of mainstream parties with the Italian ERP. Within this context, the PdL's engagement with the LN at the formal level was considered the most relevant factor enhancing the LN impact.

Italian voters' concern with immigration remained steady, despite the tenuous increase of its salience at the 2008 general election. Still the levels of hostility to immigration dropped at the overall level (but not among core LN voters). This social phenomenon was weakly associated with employment and with national identity by general voters whilst such perceptions were dominant among the LN's voters. Bossi's improved standing amongst voters most anxious with immigration indicated that the LN was disputing ownership of opposition to immigration with centre-right parties. Nevertheless, the LN proved unable to reverse the decline of hostility to immigration across the general electorate. Overall, the LN's impact on public attitudes was moderate at the 2008 general election whilst its levels of electoral support alongside the engagement strategy of mainstream parties were regarded the most relevant factors enhancing the preceding observation. The significant expansion of the LN's electoral support in 2008 was not accompanied by significant impact on mass attitudes, and the Italian ERP's contagion effects seemed stronger across voters most concerned with immigration and its core electorate than on general attitudes to immigration.

The accumulated setbacks at both the 2006 general election and the referendum on devolution provoked an internal crisis within the LN. Bossi was forced to devise a new plan to liberate "Padania" to mobilise its core electorate that now encompassed regional autonomy

and fiscal federalism. In the meantime, the LN constructed its profile of the 'security party' through the organisation of security patrols in northern regions and employed its insertion at local level to launch a campaign against immigration spearheaded by the LN mayors. Electoral support for the Italian ERP's improved substantially between 2007 and 2009 and the LN achieved its best score at national level at the 2009 EP elections. Hence, the strategic dilemma posed by the LN to mainstream parties was reinforced between 2006 and 2009. Cultural xenophobia and the defence of zero-immigration policy characterised the LN's discourse on immigration. Once again, the expected de-radicalisation process did not follow the LN's accommodation in office after 2008.

Italian immigration policy between 2008 and 2009 was developed under a repressive approach most concerned with tackling intra-EU inflows and irregular immigration than with managing labour inflows in the context of acute demand for foreign labour. The conflation of law and order with the management of inflows was demonstrated by the inclusion of measures on immigration policy in the 2008 security decree and 2009 security law. The PdL's government resistance to accepting immigration could be discerned in the restrictions on secondary and asylum inflows, as well as on immigrants' access to the welfare system. The first two years of Berlusconi's term were particularly dominated by the stigmatisation of EU citizens of Roma origin by the Interior Minister. Domestic and exogenous pressures watered down the Berlusconi government's repressive approach to immigration, including the attempted criminalisation of irregular immigration or automatic deportations to Libya. This created a policy gap between the set objectives and the subsequent policy outcomes.

Finally, the Italian government's management of immigration flows caused divisions within the PdL. The LN was unable to veto its coalition partners' demands for another regularisation programme for domestic workers and carers in 2009, yet the strict criteria instituted by the Interior Minister were responsible for its overall failure. An additional policy gap can be



identified on the highly restrictive aims set by the PdL government on irregular immigration and the development of the 2009 regularisation programme. Therefore, the LN's impact on the development of Italian immigration policy between 2008 and 2009 was considered significant at the absolute level and proportional to its stronger position within the governmental coalition. The preceding trend coincided with the expansion of immigration before 2009, substantial LN electoral threat, and the engagement of mainstream parties with the Italian ERP. Within this context, the PdL's formal engagement with the LN and Berlusconi's full collaboration with Bossi were considered the most relevant factor enhancing the LN's impact on immigration policy.

## Chapter 11 – Comparative synthesis of ERPs’ impact on immigration policy during the first half of the 2000s

This chapter presents a comparative analysis of the selected ERPs’ impact on immigration politics and policy in the UK, France, and Italy during the first half of the 2000s. It contains three main objectives: first, it aims to compare the salience of immigration on inter-party competition, public attitudes to immigration and policy developments in each three cases. Second, it asks whether the three selected ERPs had a relevant impact on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy and compares the intensity of these political processes. Finally, this chapter includes a comparative assessment of the relationships found between the levels of the selected ERPs’ impact on immigration politics and policy and the proposed hypotheses to highlight those factors that seem to increase the likelihood of ERP contagion effects (Table 2.1).

### **11.1 – ERPs’ impact on inter-party competition**

Did the three selected ERPs have a significant impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy at first-order-ballots in the first half of the 2000s? Immigration policy was particularly salient at the 2001 Italian general election, dominated by irregular inflows and extensive associations to insecurity and delinquency. It was moderately salient at the British 2001 general election due to the Conservatives’ populist campaign on asylum (Figures 5.1; 6.1). In contrast, French mainstream parties excluded immigration from their electoral campaigns for the 2002 presidential ballot in opposition to the high salience granted to this issue by the FN (Figure 8.1). The research highlighted that only the LN had a significant impact on this dimension of immigration politics at the Italian 2001 general election whilst the BNP and the FN were deprived of contagion-effects at the 2001 and 2002 first-order-ballots.

The observed trends in inter-party competition on immigration policy in the Italian 2001 ballot were seen as a result of the LN's inclusion within the CdL and the formalisation of an electoral agreement that tied the centre-right coalition to Bossi's priority issues in the context of intense intra-coalition competition for issue ownership of opposition to immigration. In contrast, the BNP lacked any contagion effects on British mainstream parties' positions on immigration in 2001. A similar trend was observed at the French 2002 presidential election, where the "conspiracy of silence" of mainstream parties pre-empted FN impact on inter-party competition.

Consequently, research suggesting that mainstream parties were more likely to adjust their positions to the ERPs in election years in France, Germany and Austria are challenged by the observations made in this thesis concerning inter-party competition on immigration policy in first-order-ballots in the UK, France and Italy (Williams, 2006). This trend suggests that ERP impact on this dimension of immigration politics is more contingent than suggested by past research. Therefore, mainstream parties possess autonomous capacity to select their battles even in the face of a salient ERP's electoral threat at a first-order-ballot, as observed in France. Mainstream inter-party consensus of a restrictive character was observed in party systems with relevant and non-relevant ERPs, such as Italy or the UK.

These trends indicate that the levels of politicisation and the character of mainstream parties' positions towards the different types of inflows are not dependent on the existence of a relevant ERP. Furthermore, the Conservative leader's populist campaign on asylum developed in the context of an insignificant BNP and presaged rather than responded to an ERP electoral breakthrough. The Conservatives' strategy potentially benefited future BNP electoral success. It is thus argued that mainstream inter-party consensus on immigration restriction or the adoption of populist approaches to immigration can be an outcome of political judgements of mainstream elites in the absence of a salient ERP.

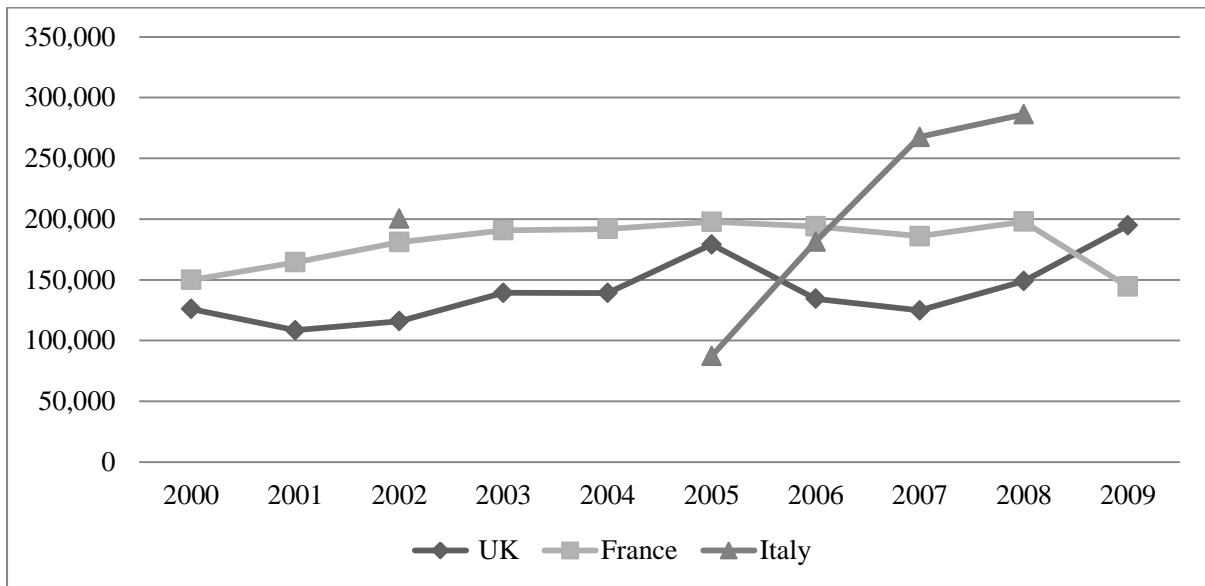
### **11.1.1 – Understanding ERP impact on inter-party competition**

This subsection seeks to understand ERP impact on inter-party competition by comparing the relationships found between the identified levels of the ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration and the behaviour of the proposed factors to understand the occurrence of this political process (Table 2.1).

#### 1) Levels of immigration

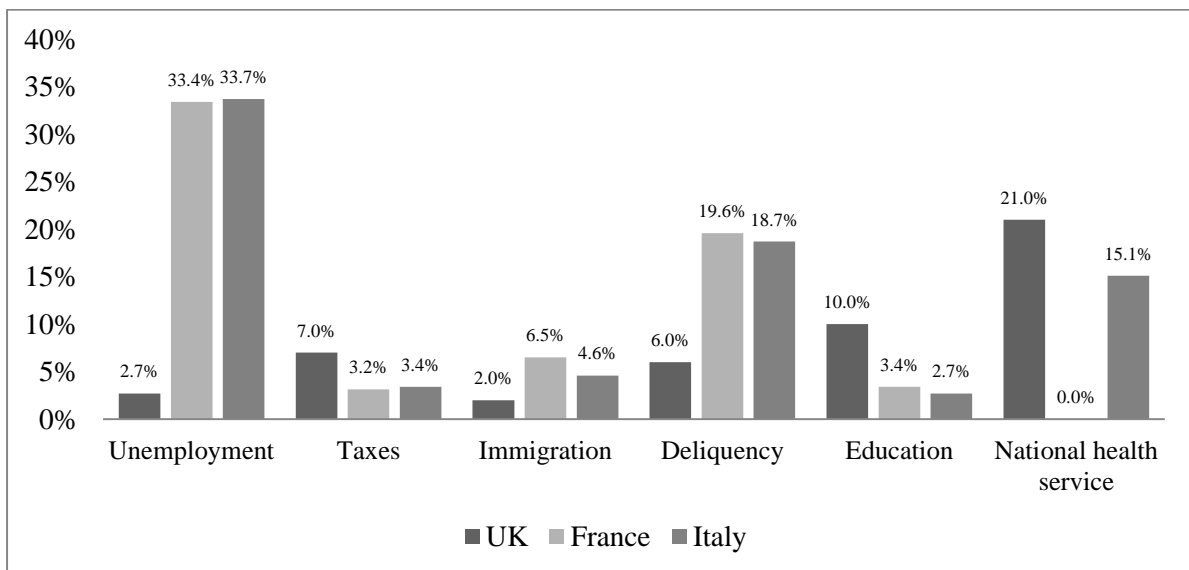
Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy coincide with the growth of levels of immigration? The foreign population legally settled in Italy increased steadily before 2001 and there were intense irregular inflows before 2001 as demonstrated by the 2002 regularisation process (Figures 11.1; 9.2). In contrast, immigration into the UK declined between 2000 and 2001 mostly due to the decrease of asylum seeking (Figures 11.1; 5.2). Immigration into France expanded before the 2002 presidential election supported by the expansion of secondary inflows (Figures 11.1; 7.2). Levels of immigration into Italy and the UK coincided with different levels of impact by the LN and the BNP on inter-party competition on immigration at the 2001 elections, whilst a negative linkage was observed at the French 2002 presidential election. Thus, the relationship between ERP impact on inter-party competition and levels of immigration seems incoherent.

**Figure 11.1** – Annual number of residence authorisations issued in the UK, France and Italy between 2000 and 2009<sup>143</sup>



Source: Home Office, 2010; SGCICI, 2011; ISTAT, 2010

**Figure 11.2** – Ranking of importance of unemployment, taxes, immigration, delinquency, education, and health services among issues at the British and Italian 2001 general elections and at the French 2002 presidential election



Source: BES, 2001; PEF, 2002; ITANES, 2001

<sup>143</sup> There is no available data on the granting of residence authorisations in Italy between 2000 and 2001, as well as between 2003 and 2005.

## 2) Role of public opinion

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on inter-party competition on immigration coincide with intense public concern with immigration? The Italian and French electorates ranked immigration policy among their top electoral priorities at the 2001 general election (note that immigration was closely associated with insecurity in Italy which increased the overall salience of this issue; Legnante and Sani, 2002, p.50) and the 2002 presidential election, whilst British voters overlooked immigration as a salient issue in 2001 (Figure 11.2). Therefore, the LN's significant impact and the BNP's lack of contagion effects coincided with the distinctive levels of concern with immigration across the Italian and British electorates in the 2001 Italian and British general elections. Nonetheless, the FN's lack of impact differed from the intense concern with immigration amongst French voters in 2002. Therefore, the relationship between ERP impact on inter-party competition and the salience of immigration across the electorate is problematic.

## 3) ERPs' electoral challenge

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy coincide with ERPs' electoral challenge to mainstream parties at first-order-ballots? In Italy, the LN posed a serious challenge to Italian mainstream parties' electoral prospects at the 2001 general election, which coincided with its significant impact on this dimension of immigration politics (Table 4.5). The BNP's irrelevance after collecting 1 per cent of the vote at the 1999 EP ballot and contesting 33 constituencies at the 2001 general election also coincided with its lack of impact on inter-party competition (Tables 4.2; 5.1). The FN was the strongest ERP in Western Europe and Le Pen fared well at presidential ballots before 2002 (Table 4.3), yet this trend diverged from the absence of the FN's contagion effects on the position of mainstream parties on immigration at the electoral campaign for the 2002 presidential ballot. Consequently, the positive relationship between the ERPs' electoral

threats to mainstream parties and their impact on inter-party competition in Italy and the UK is undermined by the French case, which diminishes the overall relevance of this factor.

#### 4) Mainstream parties' agency

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on this dimension of immigration politics coincide with the engagement of mainstream parties (formal/informal) with the ERPs? The LN's formal co-option into the CdL following Berlusconi's pact with Bossi coincided with the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition in 2001. In the UK, the British mainstream parties' isolation of the BNP fits with its lack of impact on inter-party competition on immigration in 2001. In contrast to Berlusconi's full cooperation with the LN in Italy, the FN remained highly isolated within the French party system, particularly due to President Chirac's refusal to engage with the FN, and coincided with the FN's lack of contagion effects on this dimension of immigration politics. Consequently, the divergent strategies of mainstream parties towards ERPs coincide with the ERPs' different levels of impact on inter-party competition on immigration.

Overall, the agency of mainstream parties is the only factor whose behaviour coincides with the variable levels of ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration policy in the three cases. Public concern with immigration and the dimension of ERPs' electoral threat to mainstream parties also exhibited salient relationships with the observed levels of the ERPs' impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration, but their relevance were undermined by the French case study. Thus, the agency of mainstream parties appears to be the most relevant factor in understanding the ERPs' contagion effects on inter-party competition at first-order-ballots taking place in the first half of the 2000s. French mainstream parties' exclusion of immigration policy from their electoral campaigns despite intense concern across public opinion and the FN's substantial threat indicates that mainstream political elites

enjoy full autonomy to set their political priorities. This in turn enhances the profile of the mainstream parties' leaderships for the salience of immigration in their electoral strategies.

### **11.2 – ERPs' impact on public attitudes**

Did the BNP, FN and LN intensify concern and hostility towards immigration at the first-order-ballots taking place in the first half of the 2000s? Immigration was ranked amongst the top priority issues of the Italian and French voters in 2001 and in 2002 in contrast to its absence from the British electorate's top priority issues in 2001 (Figure 11.2; see p. 254). Nevertheless, hostility to immigration was still visible in the UK in 2001 particularly towards asylum but still at a lower level than in France in 2002, which was surprising considering the absence of a prominent British ERP (Figures 5.4; 7.5). Salient levels of hostility to immigration have therefore presaged the BNP's electoral breakthrough at local level in 2002.

Additionally, public perceptions of immigration also varied across the three case studies. In Italy unlike in the UK and France, immigration was mostly associated with law and order issues (Figures 9.7, 5.6; Cautrès, 2003). Connections between employment and immigration were higher amongst the British voters than across the Italian electorate in 2001 (Figures 5.5, 9.5). These variations within the three cases suggest that public attitudes to immigration are not a reflection of the idiosyncrasies of immigrants or other structural regularities. Instead, public perceptions should be regarded as an outcome of the interplay between the development of immigration flows and contingent domestic factors. Moreover, the coincidence between the mainstream parties' distinctive frames of HSI and asylum with the British voters' attitudes to these two types of immigration flows highlights the profile of mainstream parties' influence on public opinion.

This research suggested that the FN was the only ERP that had a significant impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2002 presidential election whereas both the LN and the BNP



lacked contagion effects on this dimension of immigration politics at the 2001 general elections. Le Pen monopolised issue ownership of opposition to immigration in 2002 and the “lepenisation” of minds was acute across the electorate, as high levels of concern and hostility to immigration demonstrated (Figures 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7). In contrast, available data for Italy suggests that the LN did not seize ownership over the issue of opposition to immigration, and thus did not drive the debate on immigration in 2001 (Figure 9.4). Public hostility to immigration in Italy was not as widespread as it was among French voters or the FN’s electorate in 2002 (Figures 9.5, 9.6, 9.7).

Analysis of public attitudes at the British 2001 general election suggested that the BNP failed to reinforce concern or hostility to immigration. The Italian and the British ERPs’ inability to reinforce concern and hostility to immigration at the 2001 general elections challenges past observation of ERPs’ significant impact on public attitudes to immigration in France, Germany and Austria during the 1990s (Williams, 2006). Furthermore, salient levels of hostility towards immigration were observed in the UK in 2001, suggesting that those public attitudes to immigration can also be observed in the context of a non-relevant ERP which has yet to breakthrough at national level.

### **11.2.1 – Understanding ERP impact on public attitudes**

This final section seeks to understand the levels of ERP impact on public attitudes by comparing the relationship between the intensity of political processes and the behaviour of the proposed factors on this dimension (Table 2.1).

#### 1) Levels of immigration

Did ERPs’ (lack of) impact on the electorate’s anxiety and hostility to immigration coincide with the growth of immigration before the first-order-ballots? As mentioned earlier, immigration in Italy and France expanded before the 2001 general election and the 2002

presidential elections, supported by the growth of family reunion and irregular immigration (Figure 11.1). In contrast, immigration into the UK declined between 2000 and 2001 following a drop in the number of asylum seekers entering the country (Figure 11.1). Thus, the different levels of immigration into the UK and France coincided with distinctive levels of impact of the FN and the BNP on public attitudes, but the expansion of immigration in Italy diverges from the LN's lack of impact in 2001. Consequently, the linkage between increase of immigration and the ERPs' ability to reinforce anxiety and hostility to immigration is doubtful.

## 2) Levels of the ERPs' electoral support

Did ERPs' (lack of) impact on public attitudes to immigration coincide with their extensive electoral support at national level? The 33 contested constituencies at the 2001 general election demonstrated the BNP's incipient electoral support and party network (Table 4.2). The LN's electoral support and party organisation was geographically concentrated in the northern Italian regions in a period of electoral decline as the 1999 EP ballot indicated (Table 4.5). Furthermore, the LN's electorate did not display the extreme levels of xenophobia observed across the FN's electorate. In contrast to the two latter ERPs, the FN enjoyed consistent electoral support at the national level, as the results during the 1990s demonstrated, while its core electorate was distinctive for its xenophobic attitudes (Table 4.3). Whereas the BNP's and the LN's restricted electoral support and the attitudes of its core voters coincided with their lack of impact on public attitudes to immigration, a positive relationship was observed between the FN's strong electoral support and the ideological uniformity of its core electorate and its significant contagion effects in 2002 (Table 10.2). Thus, this factor is positively related to the three ERPs' levels of impact on public attitudes.

## 3) The agency of mainstream parties

Did ERPs' (lack of) impact on public attitudes to immigration coincide with the mainstream party engagement (both formal and informal) with ERPs? British and French mainstream parties opted for a strategy of non-engagement with the BNP and the FN at the 2001 general elections and 2002 presidential elections. In contrast, the formal co-option of the LN into the CdL enhanced the respectability of Bossi's xenophobic discourse providing exogenous support to the Italian ERP and potentially increasing impact on public attitudes to immigration. Consequently, the behaviour of this factor only holds a salient relationship with the BNP's irrelevant impact on public attitudes whilst a weaker linkage was found towards ERP impact in Italy and France in 2001 and 2002.

Overall, the variable levels of ERPs' electoral support and the ideological characteristics of their core electorate were apparently the most relevant factors behind ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration in the first half of the 2000s (Table 10.2). Therefore, the dimension of FN's electoral support and the subsequent party network, alongside the extreme xenophobia of its core electorate, continued to hold significant contagion effects on the attitudes of the general public to immigration in the early 2000s, as had been observed during the 1990s (Schain, 2006, p. 277). The analysis now provides a comparative synthesis of findings on the development of immigration policy in Italy, the UK and France in the first half of the 2000s.

### **11.3 – ERPs' impact on development of immigration policy**

The third and final overall section compares ERP impact on the development of immigration policies. First, immigration policies in the UK, France and Italy are compared to assess their potential convergence and the relevance of the types of migration policy models (Freeman, 2006; Table 2.2). Secondly, the levels of ERP impact on policy developments are directly compared to assess if the three ERPs had a significant impact on immigration politics during the terms taking place in the first half of the 2000. The third and final section seeks to

understand these political processes by assessing the relationship between the observed levels of ERP impact on policy developments and the proposed factors at cross-national level (Table 2.1).

### **11.3.1 – Comparing policy developments**

Did policies towards the different types of immigration flows converge in the three cases during the terms started in the first half of the 2000s? Policy stability on the management of inflows was stronger in Italy than in the UK and France, where two immigration laws were approved during the Labour government's and President Chirac's terms, reflecting policy shifts in these two cases. The 2002 Bossi-Fini law remained unchanged throughout Berlusconi's term whilst a policy shift occurred in British immigration policy in 2002 and involved the narrative of "managed migration", which emphasised the purported benefits of labour immigration against the supposed costs of asylum. The Labour government intended to appease domestic demand for foreign labour as well as neutralise the Conservatives' challenge on immigration. In France, another policy shift was announced by the UMP leader at the 2005 UMP convention involving the promotion of a stronger balance between selected immigration, such as labour migration, and "endured" inflows, referring to regular types of immigration including family reunion and asylum.

The policy departure in France reflected Sarkozy's plans to project a rupture with President Chirac's unpopular legacy in order to win the UMP presidential nomination and to attract the FN electorate at the 2007 presidential election. Therefore, the two observed policy shifts in the UK and France legitimised a hierarchy on the conditions set for the entry and settlement of immigrants according to utilitarian principles and reinforced the perception of particular categories as illegitimate. Moreover, these policy shifts reflected a common aim by the British Labour government and the French Interior Minister to neutralise a challenge from an opposition centre-right party and an ERP on immigration, such as the Conservatives in the

UK and the FN in France respectively. After this overview of the policy shifts in the UK and France, analysis of the development of immigration policy by types of flows is developed below.

Labour immigration was particularly intense in Italy and the UK and less so in France during the first half of the 2000s (Figure 11.3). Looking at the different types of labour immigration, HSI was irrelevant in the Italian context whilst both the UK and France recognised the right to long-term residence to HSI through the HSMP in 2002 and the CCT in 2006. This trend suggests the presence of a distributive policy and similar client politics models in the two cases' policies towards HSI (Table 2.2). Nonetheless, the common observation of a client politics model is challenged by the distinctive intensity of this type of immigration into the two countries and the convergence was limited to policy inputs. Whereas Blair sought to intensify this type of immigration through a points-system, Sarkozy left the CCT inoperative until the end of 2007. The client politics model was particularly useful to analyse the British policy towards HSI as the Labour government adopted a *laissez-faire* approach to appease domestic demand for foreign labour and support investment in public services. Effectively, Blair framed this type of immigration flow as a cost-free policy and the intensity of HSI confirmed the observation of this type of politics model.

Similar guest-worker programmes were deployed for unskilled labour immigration from non-EU countries across the three cases, suggesting the adoption of similar interest-group politics (Table 2.2). Yet strong variation was found in the overall intensity of labour immigration into the three countries and throughout Berlusconi's term challenging the validity of a common grouping of the three countries. Italy received the largest intake of unskilled immigration from non-EU countries, as the dimension of the 2002 regularisation process and the Flows Decrees after 2004 demonstrated. Moreover, the LN Welfare Minister first managed the Italian quota system under a straight temporary approach and caps were set below

domestic demand for foreign labour, causing dissatisfaction among the government's coalition partners. This approach was watered-down after 2004 when the Flows Decrees was supervised by the FI Interior Minister Pisanu, leading to the expansion of non-temporary quotas for labour immigration (Figure 9.9).

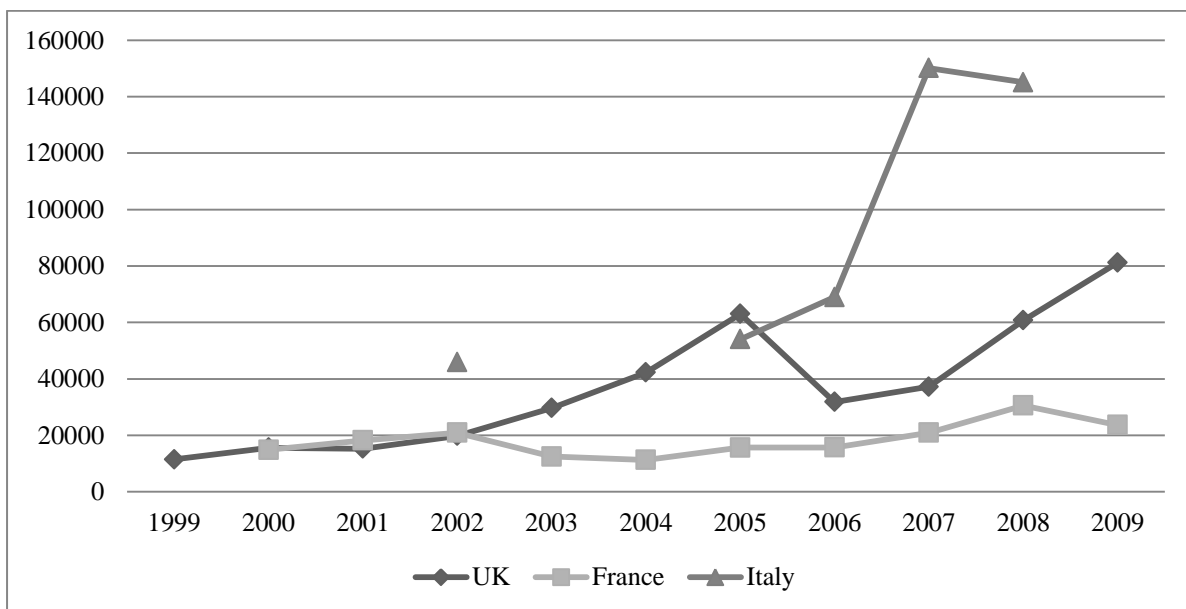
Divergences were also found in the three countries' responses to the accession of the A-8 countries into the EU. The UK opted for the concession of the right to long-term settlement to these immigrants suggesting the observation of another client politics model in the UK (Table 2.2). Immigration from A-8 countries was publicly welcomed by Blair to legitimise the Labour government's *laissez-faire* approach, yet it was coupled with some restriction on these immigrants' access to welfare. The French and Italian governments imposed transitional periods on the right of A-8 citizens to access their labour markets. This common trend suggested the adoption of similar interest groups politics model towards intra-EU inflows. Nevertheless, similar policy inputs were still followed by divergent outcomes on the intensity of this type of immigration into the two countries, as the Italians set independent quotas for A-8 citizens in 2004 whilst the French quota system was only implemented from 2007 onwards. Finally, France was the only case where signature of the CAI was imposed on labour immigrants indicating a fusion between immigration and integration policies.

Secondary inflows had stronger intensity in France than in the UK and Italy during the first half of the 2000s (Figure 11.4). Restrictions on this type of immigration were introduced in Italy by the 2002 Bossi-Fini law and were even stronger in France by the 2003 and 2006 immigration laws. Consequently, secondary inflows into France fell after the promulgation of the 2006 law demonstrating the French state's ability to restrict an undesired inflow and attain its objectives (Figure 11.4). The politicisation of family reunion in France unlike the other two cases reflected Sarkozy's policy shift to promote selected immigration against "endured" inflows mirroring the FN's 2002 campaign demands. Recognition of right to long-

term settlement to family members in the UK indicate the observation of a client politics model, whereas the restrictions imposed on access to family reunion in Italy and particularly in France fit into an entrepreneurial politics model (Table 2.2).

Asylum was particularly prominent during Blair’s second term in contrast to its lower salience in France and Italy. Blair aimed to reduce asylum inflows regardless of potential stresses on human rights, believing it would lead to a decline in public concerns over immigration. Nonetheless, a strong degree of convergence was observed in the extension of restrictions on asylum in the three cases and this enactment of legislation was followed by substantial reductions of asylum in the UK and France. The increase of regulations on asylum suggests a common presence of entrepreneurial politics models (Table 2.2). Nevertheless, whereas the salience of this type of immigration decreased in the French political debate from

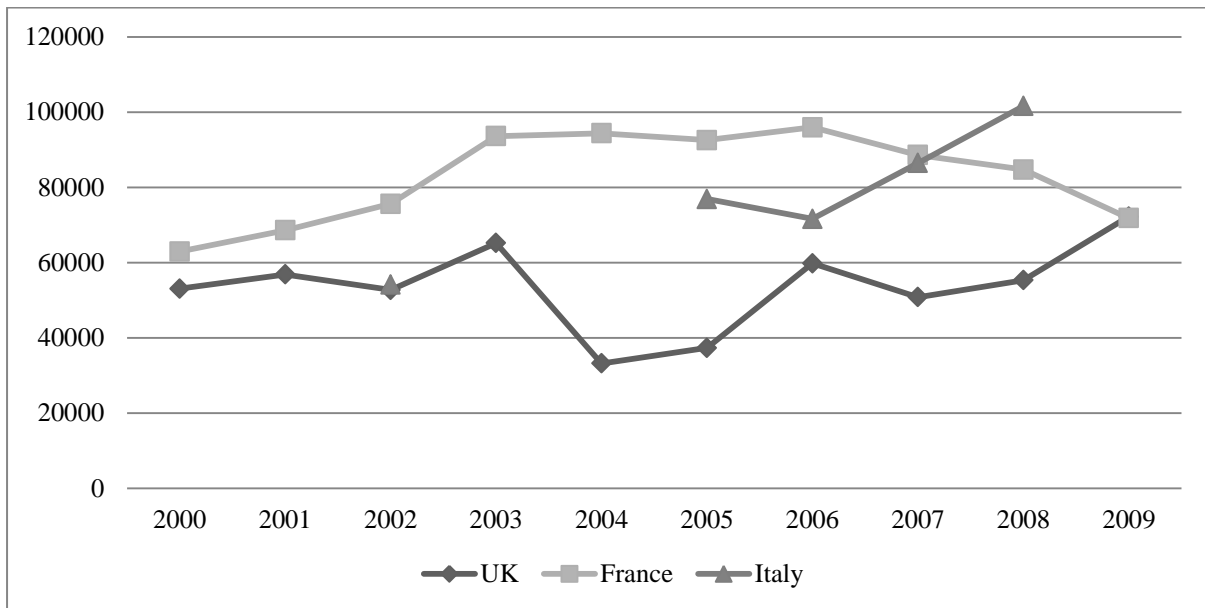
**Figure 11.3** – Residence authorisations issued for labour purposes in the UK, France and Italy between 2000 and 2009<sup>144</sup>



Sources: Home Office, 2010; SGCICI, 2011; ISTAT, 2010

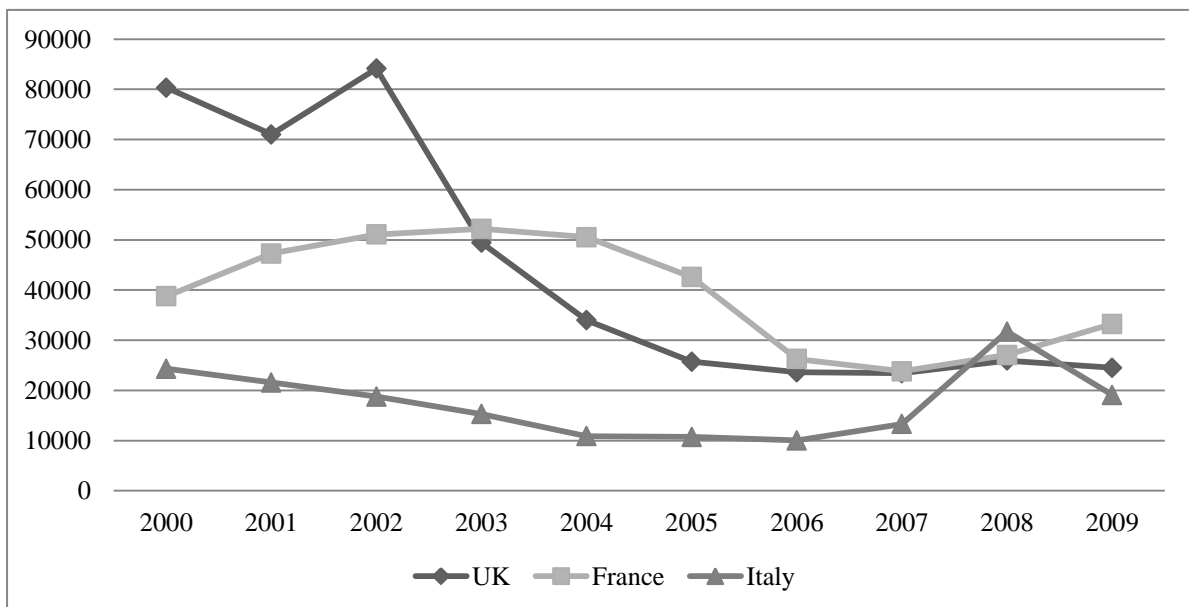
<sup>144</sup> There is no available data on the granting of residence authorisations in Italy between 2000 and 2001, as well as between 2003 and 2005.

**Figure 11.4** - Residence authorisations issued for family reunion purposes in the UK, France and Italy between 2000 and 2009



Source: Home Office, 2010; SGCICI, 2011; ISTAT, 2010

**Figure 11.5** – Asylum requests in the UK, France and Italy between 2000 and 2009



Sources: Home Office, 2010; SGCICI, 2007, 2011; *Ministero Dell'Interno*, 2010.



2003 onwards, asylum continued to be highly contentious in the UK despite a similar drop in asylum requests (Figure 11.5).

Expansions of restrictions to the development of irregular immigration were also apparent across the three cases, but this type of inflow was particularly politicised in Italy. This country was distinctive for the intensity of irregular immigration and the subsequent development of the 2002 regularisation process. This particularity was driven by the Italian state's inability to manage regular labour inflows, domestic structural dependence on foreign labour and the existence of a large informal economic sector. A policy gap was identified in Italy over the restrictive objectives set at the 2001 electoral campaign and the liberal outcome arising from the 2002 regularisation programme. Another policy gap was identified over the Sarkozy's deployment of a repressive approach against irregular immigration in 2005 and subsequent policy outcomes. Furthermore, the French state continued to regularise irregular immigrants between 2005 and 2007 under the regularisation mechanism left intact by the 2003 law.

The expected convergence amongst the immigration policies of Italy, the UK and France was stronger on the deployment of restriction on asylum and irregular inflows than on labour immigration and family reunion throughout the first half of the 2000s (Cornelius et al., 2004). Furthermore, the similar distribution of costs and benefits presupposed by the different types of migration policy across the three cases also failed to result in stronger levels of convergence amongst the three cases' immigration policies. The proposed categories of migration policy exhibited a strong degree of internal variation on the intensity of the subsequent types of immigration flows or their different levels of politicisation within the British, French and Italian political systems.

Therefore, this research indicates that immigration studies should not presuppose that policy inputs must necessarily lead to predetermined policy outputs, as seen in the case of HSI in

France. By contrast, the tracing of immigration policy as a political process that reflects the interplay between structure and agency enhances the understanding of policy inputs and outputs. Whereas there was significant structural demand for foreign labour in the British and Italian labour markets, this trend was weaker in France. In the context of intense domestic demand for foreign labour and the government's vested interest in promoting HSI, the British Labour government liberalised the criteria to access the HSMP to intensify labour immigration. The extensive restrictions on asylum reflected Blair's political strategy for the 2005 general election.

In France, Sarkozy subordinated immigration policy to his political strategy for the 2007 presidential election with his emphasis on promoting labour immigration against "endured" inflows as the FN proposed in 2002, notwithstanding the low recruitment difficulties observed in the French labour market. In Italy, the CdL government's response to the structural demand for foreign labour was incoherent reflecting the coalition dynamics within the government. This analysis suggests that policy outcomes, particularly on labour inflows, reflected the interplay between structural factors of the domestic labour markets and the political objectives of the national governments or the parties within the coalition. Therefore, the thesis has demonstrated how political factors such as: inter-party competition between Labour and the Conservatives or the UMP and the FN, intra-party conflicts within the UMP for the presidential nomination, and the intra-coalition dynamics within the CdL government, have influenced subsequent policy developments observed during the first half of the 2000s.

The employment of CDA allowed the identification of interdiscursive relationships between the discourse of mainstream parties and the frame of immigration by ERPs and the thesis explored how the identified linkages have legitimated non-discursive practices with a restrictive character. In the UK, the Home Secretary David Blunkett articulated the ERP's frame of immigration to legitimise the detainment of asylum seekers' children in 2002 whilst

the Conservative and tabloids' campaign on gypsy "benefit tourists" and the subsequent articulation of immigration as a threat to the welfare system in 2003 were followed by restrictions on A-8 citizens' access to welfare benefits. Furthermore, these events were observed in the context of an insignificant ERP and might have supported the BNP's short-term electoral expansion.

In France, the FN's frame of immigrant integration as a threat to the French society was observed in Sarkozy's justification of the experimental introduction of CAI in the 2003 immigration law, whose application was generalised by the 2006 law that destabilised immigrants' legal long-term settlement. A further interdiscursive linkage was identified between the Interior Minister's policy shift to attain a better balance between selected immigration and "endured" inflows and the FN's frame of immigration at the 2002 presidential election. The transposition of this paradigm for the 2006 immigration law was followed by a decline in the intensity of family reunion reflecting the obstacles placed on immigrants' right to conduct a normal family life, although President Chirac vetoed the quota system.

In Italy, the LN's frame of immigration under straight utilitarian principles and as a threat to security helped to legitimise the introduction of the "residence contract" that destabilised immigrants' long-term regular settlement, and the initial management of the quota system under a strict utilitarian approach until 2004. Hence, this analysis has found salient interdiscursive relationships between the ERPs' frame of immigration and mainstream parties' discourse across the three cases and even in the context of a non-relevant ERP, as was the case in the UK. The articulation by mainstream political elites of immigration as a threat can therefore be seen as a reflection of their agency and employed in order to legitimise restrictive policy developments instead of being a necessary repercussion of ERP impact.

### **11.3.2 – ERP impact on immigration policy**

Did the BNP, FN and LN reinforce the restrictive character of immigration policies during the first half of the 2000s? The FN was the ERP with the strongest level of impact on the development of immigration policy between 2002 and 2007 followed by the LN's moderate impact during Berlusconi's second term. In contrast, the BNP lacked any relevant contagion effects on British immigration policy throughout the Labour government's second term. After the 2002 presidential election, immigration policy was quickly prioritised in President Chirac's legislative agenda despite its irrelevance during the mainstream parties' electoral campaigns. Consequently, the 2003 immigration and asylum laws expanded restrictions on family reunion, asylum and irregular immigration flows whilst the experimental introduction of CAI provided evidence of the post-2002 integration consensus. The FN's impact increased to a significant level after a policy shift to a selective immigration policy against "endured" inflows announced by Sarkozy in 2005. This was transposed into the 2006 immigration law with substantial restrictions on family reunion and with the generalisation of the CAI to all newcomers in the context of an integration crisis.

In Italy, the introduction of a "contract of residence", restrictions on immigrants' access to the welfare system and deployment of biometric controls on immigration in the 2002 Bossi-Fini law provided evidence of the LN impact on policy developments. Moreover, the LN's impact extended to the management of the quota system on labour inflows according to a strict guest-worker system despite the intense domestic demand for unskilled workers until 2004. Unlike the FN and LN, the BNP lacked relevant impact on the development of the British immigration policy during Blair's second term. Its electoral breakthrough at the local level in 2002 was incorrectly associated by British political scientists with the Labour government's repressive approach to asylum (Shuster and Solomos, 2004; Sales, 2005; Copey, 2009). Whereas this policy shift reflected Blair's strategy of neutralising the

Conservative challenge on asylum, the BNP's electoral breakthrough coincided with that political process but had no influence on it.

Observations from the British case suggests that ERPs' electoral breakthroughs at the local level might not always have the consequences past research on ERP impact suggested (Schain, 2002). By contrast, the politicisation of immigration and introduction of restrictive policy developments might expand the ERPs' structure of political opportunities, as happened in the UK. The preceding analysis of the selected ERPs' impact on immigration policy during the first half of the 2000s challenges the perception of ERP ability to reinforce the restrictive character of their national immigration policies, which had been previously observed in Austria, Germany and France during the 1990s (Williams, 2006).

This thesis also identified substantial variations in the content of ERP impact on policy developments beside the promotion of common restrictions on family reunion and asylum. The FN's impact in France led to a fusion of immigration and integration policies whilst LN contagion effects in Italy were observed on the management of the quota system. The FN's and the LN's levels of impact were considered disproportional in light of the French ERP isolation within the party system and the Italian ERP's position as the weakest coalition partner within the CdL government. Furthermore, the LN's participation in Berlusconi's government was still accompanied by a lower level of impact than the FN had in France. This trend indicates that the intensity of ERPs' impact on policy development is not contingent on the ERPs' number of seats in the executive.

### **11.3.3 – Understanding ERPs' impact on immigration policy**

This final subsection seeks to understand ERP impact on development of immigration policy by comparing the relationships found between the selected ERPs' levels of contagion effects on this dimension of immigration policy and the proposed hypotheses (Table 2.1).

### 1) Intensity of levels of immigration

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on policy developments coincide with the expansion of levels of immigration during the periods analysed? Immigration into Italy intensified during the CdL's term, supported by labour and irregular inflows in virtue of the 2002 regularisation programme (Figure 11.1). Levels of immigration into the UK also expanded during Labour's second term driven by the intensification of labour inflows (Figure 11.1). Immigration rates into France decreased from 2004 onwards, due to a decrease in secondary and asylum inflows (Figure 11.1). Whereas the LN's significant impact coincided with the expansion of immigration into Italy, the BNP's and the FN's opposite levels of impact on policy developments in the UK and France suggest a weak relationship between the ERPs' impact on policy developments and the intensity of immigration.

### 2) Role of public opinion

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on policy developments coincide with the high salience of this issue amongst the electorate? Immigration was a top priority issue for the Italian and French electorates at the 2001 general election and at the 2002 presidential elections, while British voters overlooked this issue as a priority in 2001 (Figure 11.2). Therefore, the salience of immigration across the Italian, British and French electorates coincided with the distinct levels of the ERPs' impact on the development of their national immigration policies.

### 3) ERPs' electoral challenge

Did the ERPs' (lack of) reinforcement of the restrictive character of immigration policy coincide with the ERPs' substantial electoral threat to mainstream parties? The LN continued to pose a serious challenge to Italian mainstream parties at the 2006 general election, after its electoral recovery from the 2001 setback whilst its territorial dimension enhanced its advantage in the plurality tier (Table 9.1). In contrast, the BNP failed to make an electoral

breakthrough at the national level before the 2005 general election and failed to pose a serious challenge to established parties (Table 5.1). The FN maintained its electoral resilience throughout the elections before the 2007 presidential election despite its diminishing political opportunities, and continued to pose a substantial challenge to French mainstream parties (Table 7.1). Hence, the LN's and the FN's prominent electoral challenges to mainstream parties at the first-order-ballots were positively related to their significant impact on the development of immigration policy whilst the opposite linkage was observed in the UK.

#### 4) Role of mainstream parties' agency

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on immigration policy coincide with mainstream parties' engagement (both formal and informal) with the ERPs? In Italy, the CdL's formal engagement with the LN and its inclusion in the government coincided with its moderate impact. In contrast, the British mainstream parties' isolation of the BNP was followed by this ERP's lack of impact on policy developments. Finally, whereas Chirac opted to ostracise the FN, Sarkozy engaged with the FN through the informal co-option of Le Pen's agenda on immigration from 2005 onwards. Thus, the strategies of mainstream parties towards the ERPs also related strongly to the ERPs' impact on immigration policy in the three cases. Furthermore, the agency of mainstream parties had a salient relationship with the LN's and the FN's opposite levels of impact on policy developments since the intra-coalition dynamics within Berlusconi's government coincided with the LN's lessening impact while Sarkozy's reinstatement as Interior Minister in 2005 was followed by increasing impact of the FN.

In short, the ERPs' significant levels of impact on policy developments coincided with several factors: salience of immigration at first-order-ballots, the ERPs' substantial electoral challenges to mainstream parties, and the engagement strategies of mainstream parties towards the ERPs. This research also highlights that the last factor had a consistent relationship with the LN's declining and the FN's increasing impact on policy development

during the selected timeframes, which enhances the importance of the strategies of mainstream parties in affecting the intensity of the ERPs' impact on policy developments. Furthermore, the thesis suggests that ERP impact on policy developments is highly contingent on the reaction of mainstream parties, which also enhances the responsibility of mainstream political elites for ERPs' contagion effects.

#### **11.4 – Conclusions**

This research suggests that the LN was the only ERP that had a significant impact on inter-party competition in the area of immigration during the first-order-ballots taking place in the UK, France and Italy in the first half of the 2000s. The Conservatives' adoption of a populist approach to asylum in the UK presaged the BNP's electoral breakthrough at local level in 2002 and was not a repercussion of BNP impact. The observed trends challenge the previous observation of ERPs' ability to hold significant contagion effects on mainstream proposals throughout the 1990s (Williams, 2006). Whereas the LN impact on inter-party competition in Italy was positively related to the four proposed factors, the only difference found in comparison to France was the non-engagement of mainstream parties with the FN. Within this overall context, the political agency of mainstream parties was considered as the most relevant factor affecting ERP impact on inter-party competition. The French mainstream parties disregard towards immigration in their electoral campaigns demonstrated their full autonomy to set their political priorities. Furthermore, the British case demonstrated that mainstream parties can adopt populist frames on immigration in the context of a non-relevant ERP.

The only ERP to hold salient contagion effects on public attitudes to immigration was the FN whilst both the LN and the BNP lacked a significant impact at the national level in the first half of the 2000s. Consequently, the research challenges the previous observation of ERPs' reinforcement of xenophobia across their national electorates throughout the 1990s



(Williams, 2006). Le Pen's issue ownership of opposition to immigration and widespread levels of hostility to this social phenomenon demonstrated the FN's impact on the national electorate. The FN's strong electoral support at the national level, its subsequent party network, and the xenophobia of its core voters were identified as the most relevant factors behind this ERP's impact on public attitudes. So far, the research seems to confirm Schain's (2002, 2006) observation that the FN's electoral support and the subsequent dimension of its party organisation provided strong leverage to influence public attitudes on immigration at the national level.

The FN and the LN had, respectively, significant and moderate levels of impact on the development of French and Italian immigration policies during the terms started in the selected timeframe. Nevertheless, the BNP lacked relevant contagion effects on policy developments in the UK questioning the common ERPs' capability to push for more restrictive immigration policies identified during the 1990s (Williams, 2006). Both the French and Italian ERPs had disproportional levels of impact considering their positions within their domestic party systems. Nonetheless, the higher indirect impact of the FN in comparison to the LN's direct contagion effects on policy developments suggest that its intensity is not contingent on access to office seats. The ERPs' significant impact in France and moderate impact in Italy coincided with intense public concern with immigration, the substantial dimension of the FN's and LN's electoral threats, and the strategies of mainstream parties. Within this overall context, the consistent relationship found between the agency of the French and Italian mainstream parties and the ascending impact of the FN and the descending impact of the LN raises the importance of this last factor in comparison to salience of immigration and the ERPs' electoral threat.

## Chapter 12 – Comparative synthesis of ERPs’ impact on immigration policy during the second half of the 2000s

This chapter provides a cross-national synthesis of observations extracted from each case throughout the second half of the 2000s and contains three aims. First, it compares the salience of immigration in terms of inter-party competition, public attitudes to immigration and policy developments observed across the three cases. Second, the levels of ERPs’ impact on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy during the selected timeframe are compared. Third, this cross-national analysis seeks to understand the occurrence of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy by examining the relationships found between the proposed hypotheses and the different degrees of the selected ERPs’ contagion effects in the UK, France and Italy (Table 2.1).

### **12.1 – ERPs’ impact on inter-party competition**

Did the three selected ERPs reinforce the restrictive character of mainstream parties’ positions on immigration policy? This research indicates that the salience of immigration policy expanded in the selected first-order-ballots taking place in the second half of the 2000s (Figures 7.1, 8.1, 9.1). Asylum was the most dominant type of immigration flow discussed in the electoral campaigns for the British 2005 general election, whilst irregular immigration dominated the French and Italian political agendas at the 2007 presidential election and the 2008 general election, respectively. This thesis suggested that both the FN and the LN had a significant impact on the mainstream parties’ positions on immigration policy at the first-order-ballots taking place during the second half of the 2000s. In contrast, the BNP lacked relevant contagion effects on inter-party competition in immigration policy in 2005.

Besides the high salience of immigration at the electoral campaign for the 2007 presidential election, the inter-party consensus on the fusion of immigration and integration policies provided evidence of French mainstream parties’ shift to extreme-right grounds at a time

when the FN was moving into centre-right grounds. Nonetheless, the FN's impact was strengthened by the UMP candidate's informal co-option of Le Pen's agenda on immigration and his identity politics. In Italy, the hegemonic frame of immigration as a law and order issue and the high salience of this issue across mainstream parties' electoral campaigns were considered an outcome of the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition at the 2008 general election. In the UK, the Conservative leader adopted a populist approach to immigration, reflecting a valence politics strategy at the 2005 general election, which derailed into ERPs' grounds in the face of Blair's occupation of the centre-right. British mainstream parties' shift of their positions to the right and the high salience of immigration were considered an outcome of the intense inter-party competition between Labour and the Conservatives rather than a repercussion of the BNP's political agency.

Despite the significant levels of ERPs' impact in two cases, the BNP's lack of impact on inter-party competition at the British 2005 general election challenges the past observation that mainstream parties' adjust their positions closer to the ERPs in electoral periods because of their political agency (Williams, 2006). Effectively, the British 2005 election demonstrates that mainstream parties such as the Conservatives can adopt positions on immigration policy bordering the extreme-right as a consequence of their own agency and in the context of a non-relevant ERP. Furthermore, ERPs' electoral expansion, such as the BNP's inroads at the local level before 2005, may coincide with potential political shifts of mainstream parties on immigration policy without causing the shift. Ultimately, the mainstream parties' positions on immigration at first-order-ballots, even if bordering the extreme-right, should also be conceived as a potential outcome of their own political agency, devoid of ERPs' contagion effects, to not overstate the occurrence of this political process.

### **12.1.1 – Understanding ERP impact on inter-party competition**

This subsection seeks to understand ERP impact on inter-party competition on immigration during the second half of the 2000s by comparing the relationship between the preceding observations and the behaviour of the proposed factors across the three cases (Table 2.1).

#### 1) Levels of immigration

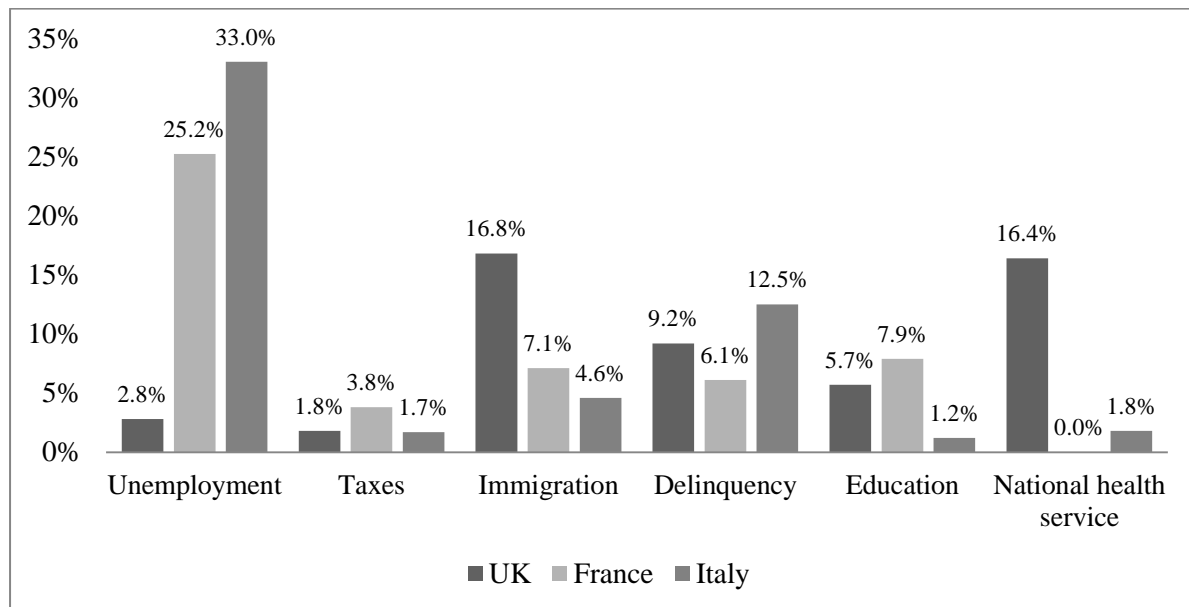
Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration coincide with the expansion of immigration before the first-order-ballots? Immigration into the UK and Italy increased considerably before the 2005 and 2008 general elections, mainly because of labour and intra-EU inflows (Figure 11.1). In opposition, immigration into France declined before the 2007 presidential election, reflecting the deceleration of family reunion (Figure 11.1). Therefore, the expansion of levels of immigration coincided with the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition at the Italian 2008 general election, but not with the BNP's and the FN's opposite levels of impact at the 2005 and 2007 ballots. Thus, the relationship between intensity of immigration and ERP impact on inter-party competition seems weak.

#### 2) Saliency of immigration amongst public opinion

Did the ERPs' (lack of) reinforcement of mainstream parties' restrictive positions on immigration coincide with intense public concern with immigration? This issue was the top priority of the British electorate at the 2005 general election while the overall saliency of immigration decreased at the French 2007 presidential election (Figure 12.1). Unlike in France, the saliency of immigration among the Italian voters with immigration increased slightly at the 2008 general election (Figure 12.1). Whereas the LN significant impact on inter-party competition was linked to the tenuous increase of the saliency of immigration, the FN and the BNP's opposite levels of contagion effects on inter-party competition on immigration differed from the opposite trends observed over the saliency of immigration in

their national electorates. Thus, this factor also seems to hold a fragile relationship with the ERPs' impact on inter-party competition on immigration.

**Figure 12.1** – Ranking of unemployment, taxes, immigration, delinquency, education, and health system in the UK, France and Italy amongst most important issues at the British 2005 general elections, the French 2007 presidential election and the Italian 2008 general election



Sources: BES, 2005; PEF, 2007, ITANES, 2008

### 3) ERP electoral challenge

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration policy coincide with the ERPs' electoral challenge at first-order-ballots? The BNP failed to pose a strategic dilemma to British mainstream parties at the 2005 general election after the lack of an electoral breakthrough at the national level in 2004 ballots (Table 5.1). In contrast, the FN posed a very significant challenge to French mainstream parties at the 2007 presidential election, as the 2002 ballot and the FN's electoral resilience before 2007 demonstrated (Table 7.1). Lastly, the LN's electoral recovery from 2001 onwards, alongside its ability to expand its support at the expense of its coalition partners before the 2008 general election, confirmed

the significant dimension of the Italian ERP's electoral threat to mainstream parties (Table 9.1). Whereas the BNP's irrelevant strategic dilemma to British mainstream parties coincided with its irrelevant impact on inter-party competition, the FN's and the LN's extensive electoral threats fit with their significant levels of impact in France and Italy. Thus, a consistent relationship can be found between the dimension of the selected ERPs' electoral threat to mainstream parties and their impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

#### 4) Agency of mainstream parties

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on inter-party competition in immigration coincide with the mainstream parties' engagement with the ERPs? The British mainstream parties continued to ostracise the BNP at the 2005 general elections, whilst Howard's direct attacks reinforced its pariah status. Whereas Chirac had employed a similar strategy at the 2002 presidential election, Sarkozy opted to engage with the FN by informally co-opting Le Pen's agenda on immigration and identity politics in 2007. Berlusconi and the PdL also engaged with the LN but at a formal level through its co-option into the electoral coalition celebrated with the signature of an electoral pact that bound the PdL to the LN's priority issues. Whereas French and Italian mainstream parties' engagement with the ERPs coincided with the FN's and the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition at the 2007 presidential elections and the 2008 general elections, the non-engagement strategy in the UK was followed by the opposite outcome. Therefore, a consistent relationship between the levels of ERPs' impact and the agency of mainstream parties was also found.

In short, the dimension of ERPs' electoral threats to mainstream parties and the agency of mainstream parties were the two factors that were positively related with both the FN's and the LN's significant impact on inter-party competition at the 2007 presidential election and 2008 general election. In contrast, the levels of immigration before the first-order-ballots and this issue's salience exhibited a weaker relationship with the observed level of ERP impact, undermining their relevance in understanding ERP impact on mainstream parties' positions on immigration. Comparing these observations with the relationships identified in Chapter 11, the distinct strategies of Sarkozy and Chirac towards the FN in France were the most relevant variations on the behaviour of the proposed factors. Therefore, the agency of mainstream parties was considered the most relevant factor enhancing ERPs' impact on inter-party competition, within the context of their broad electoral challenge to mainstream parties. This trend suggests that ERP contagion effects are ultimately contingent on the agency of mainstream parties.

## **12.2 – ERPs' impact on public attitudes to immigration**

Did the BNP, the FN and the LN intensify anxiety and hostility to immigration across their national electorates? Whereas immigration became the top priority issue of British voters at the 2005 general election, the salience of immigration across the French electorate declined in the 2007 presidential election despite the tenuous increase of the proportion of voters most concerned with this issue (Figure 12.1). In contrast, the ranking of immigration increased slightly in Italy despite the stability observed on the proportion of respondents that highlighted this issue at their top priority in the 2008 general election (Figure 12.1). Likewise, hostility to immigration dropped considerably in France and on a lower level in Italy, whilst such attitudes remained stable across the British electorate. These variations suggest that concern with immigration fluctuates across different countries or within countries independently of the relevance of ERPs. This research indicated that the FN had a

significant impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2007, followed by moderate impact of the LN in 2008. In contrast, the BNP lacked impact on this dimension of immigration politics in 2005.

Nevertheless, the FN had a lower level of impact on public attitudes in 2007 than in 2002. Sarkozy disputed the issue ownership of opposition to immigration from Le Pen in 2007, whilst the FN proved unable to reverse the substantial decline of hostility to immigration across the general electorate (Figures 8.3, 8.4, 8.5). The LN exhibited a moderate impact on public attitudes in 2008 in opposition to 2001 and this time disputed the issue ownership of opposition to immigration with the Italian centre-right coalition parties, yet it was unable to intensify hostility to immigration across the overall electorate (Figures 10.3, 10.4, 10.5). Despite the higher levels of ERP impact on this dimension of immigration politics, the BNP's failure to hold contagion effects on public attitudes in 2005 deviates from the past observation of ERPs' common ability to increase levels of xenophobia in Austria, Germany and France throughout the 1990s (Williams, 2006).

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that the expansion of concern and hostility to immigration can develop in the context of a non-relevant ERP as observed in the UK. Secondly, anxiety and resentment to this social phenomenon can decline in the context of relevant ERPs, as was the case in France. Past suggestions that ERP electoral success can be accompanied by a significant impact on mass attitudes is challenged by the LN's electoral success in 2008 and its inability to counter the decline of Italian voters' anxiety and hostility to immigration (Mudde, 2007). Nonetheless, the improvement of Bossi's ranking among voters most concerned with immigration and the expansion of xenophobic traits across the LN's core electorate provides evidence of the LN moderate impact. This trend suggests that ERP impact on public attitudes might be more intense across the former cluster of voters and the ERP's core electorate than on mass attitudes.



Thirdly, the analysis points to a gap between the increasing salience of immigration across the mainstream parties' electoral campaigns in 2007 and 2008 and diminishing concern and hostility to immigration among French and Italian voters. If the observed trends across the French and Italian public attitudes to immigration are interpreted as an outcome of the higher salience of immigration at the level of inter-party competition or restrictive immigration policies, the problem is to understand public behaviour in the UK. Notwithstanding the acute mainstream inter-party competition on immigration since 2001 alongside the drop in asylum seeking before the 2005 general election, public concern with immigration expanded dramatically whilst the levels of hostility to this social phenomenon remained stable in comparison to 2001. Therefore, ERP literature must acknowledge that growth of anxiety and hostility to immigration can coincide with an electoral breakthrough of an ERP at local level without being a response to the latter political process. This statement prevents the potential overstatement of ERP impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

### **12.2.1 – Understanding ERP impact on public attitudes**

This final subsection compares the relationships identified between the levels of ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration and the behaviour of the proposed factors to seek to understand the occurrence of the former political processes (Table 2.1).

#### 1) Levels of immigration

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on public attitudes to immigration coincide with the expansion of levels of immigration before the first-order-ballots? Immigration increased into the UK before 2005, supported by intensification of labour and intra-EU inflows from A-8 countries (Figure 11.1). Immigration into Italy expanded continuously up to the 2008 general election, supported by the growth of secondary inflows (Figure 11.1). In contrast, the rate of inflows into France declined before 2007 due to the reduction of family reunion (Figures

11.1). Whereas the growth of immigration coincided with the LN's moderate impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2008, opposite levels of immigration into the UK and France differed from the FN's and the BNP's distinctive levels of impact. The thesis that increased presence of immigrants fosters xenophobic attitudes might be helpful to understand the trends across British public opinion but not across the French and Italian electorates. Despite the continuous annual intake of large number of immigrants into Italy and France, the decline of hostility to immigration suggests that public attitudes to immigration are less contingent on the intensity of inflows than the proponents of the ethnic backlash thesis presuppose it is.

## 2) ERPs' electoral support

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on public concern and hostility to immigration coincide with the ERPs' levels of electoral support? The BNP's nationwide electoral support was still negligible as demonstrated by the failure to obtain an electoral breakthrough at national level before 2005 (Tables 5.1). In contrast, the FN demonstrated high electoral resilience between the 2002 and 2007 presidential elections in a context of diminishing political opportunities (Table 7.1). Finally, the LN performed a steady electoral recovery from 2001 onwards and benefited from considerable electoral expansion in the 2007 administrative elections, but its party network and core electorate were still concentrated in northern regions (Table 9.1). Consequently, the BNP's lack of impact coincided with its lack of widespread electoral support, whilst the levels of the FN's and the LN's impact on public attitudes coincided with these ERPs' different levels of electoral support before 2007 and 2008. Nevertheless, these factors were unable to halt the substantial decline of overall concern with and hostility to immigration in France and Italy, raising doubts over this factor's relevance.

## 3) The agency of mainstream parties

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on public attitudes to immigration coincide with the engagement of mainstream parties with the ERPs? British mainstream parties continued to ostracise the BNP whilst the Conservative leader's direct attacks reinforced its pariah status. In France, the UMP's strategy for engagement with the FN by informally co-opting Le Pen's agenda on immigration might have enhanced the legitimacy of the FN's xenophobic discourse, as well as challenge FN issue ownership of opposition to immigration. The LN benefited from the legitimacy provided by formal engagement with the PdL and the political capital accumulated while in office to overcome its geographically concentrated electoral support. Therefore, the engagement of mainstream parties with the ERPs at formal or informal levels coincided with the LN's and the FN's salient levels of impact, whilst the BNP's lack of contagion effects coincided with its ostracism in the British party system. This factor seems to hold a consistent relationship with the ERPs' impact on public attitudes to immigration throughout the second half of the 2000s.

Overall, ERP levels of electoral support and the agency of mainstream parties coincided with different levels of ERP impact on this dimension of immigration politics in the second half of the 2000s, unlike the levels of immigration. Comparing the observations extracted through the first and second half of the 2000s, the most salient differences concerned the LN's moderate impact and different strategies of the French mainstream parties (Tables 11.2; 12.2). Nevertheless, the UMP's informal co-option of the FN's agenda on immigration failed to intensify the French ERP's impact on immigration policy, which enhances the relevance of the ERP's electoral support and the subsequent dimension of party networks alongside the attitudes of the ERPs' core electorates.

Nevertheless, the FN's electoral resilience between 2002 and 2007 and the LN's electoral expansion before 2008 was still unable to reverse the substantial decline of overall concern with and hostility to immigration across French and Italian public opinion. Therefore, the

ERPs' electoral organisation and the attitudes of its core voters were unable to influence the overall electorate as had been observed at the French 2002 presidential elections and throughout the 1990s (Schain, 2002, 2006). This trend suggests that the role of this factor might have lost its overall relevance in enhancing ERP impact on public attitudes, or was overstated in previous research. Consequently, further analysis is recommended to understand the shifts amongst public attitudes to immigration, in particular the expansion of public concern in the UK despite the BNP's non-relevance and the decline of anxiety and hostility in France and Italy in the context of relevant ERPs' impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

### **12.3 – ERPs' impact on the development of immigration policy**

The third and final section compares ERP impact on the development of immigration policy during the second half of the 2000s and contains three aims. First, this section compares policy developments observed across the three cases to assess possible convergence amongst the British, French and Italian immigration policies. Secondly, the section compares ERPs' impact on the development of immigration policy to evaluate if the three selected ERPs had significant contagion effects on policy developments. Thirdly, the section seeks to understand the development of the latter political processes by comparing the relationships between the levels of ERPs' impact on immigration policy with the behaviour of the proposed factors in at a cross-national level (Table 2.1).

#### **12.3.1 – Comparing policy developments**

Did policies towards the distinct types of immigration flows converge in the three cases at an overall level during the second half of the 2000s? The enactment of the British 2006 immigration and asylum act and the French 2007 immigration law – in contrast to the stability evidenced by the 2002 Bossi-Fini law in Italy – suggests that policy stability was

higher in Italy than in the UK and France. A policy shift was observed in the UK, as the narrative of “managed immigration” was dropped after the 2005 general election in favour of framing immigration under a security-related approach that emphasised the deployment of biometric controls on immigrants and reinforcement of border controls to tackle abuse of the immigration system. In France, President Sarkozy implemented his new paradigm for selected immigration whilst the Italian centre-right coalition continued to frame the management of labour immigration as a temporary social phenomenon and irregular immigration as a law and order issue.

Labour immigration was particularly intense in Italy, followed by the UK and less in France (Figure 11.3). HSI continued to be irrelevant in the Italian context whilst its low intensity into France reflected President Sarkozy’s ambiguous intentions and weak recruitment difficulties of highly skilled workers in the labour market. In contrast, the UK continued to receive intense levels of HSI despite its deceleration after the enactment of employment package aimed to provide “British jobs for British workers” by the Labour government in 2007. The three cases adopted guest-worker systems to manage unskilled labour immigration from non-EU countries but Italy continued to receive the largest intake of these immigrants whilst the UK and France adopted restrictive regulations on these immigrants’ access to their labour markets.

Finally, substantial variations were also observed in the policies in the three cases towards immigration from new EU member-states. The British *laissez-faire* approach to intra-EU immigration was now justified by the Labour government with the aim to halt unskilled labour immigration from non-EU countries. Reflecting the intense politicisation of intra-EU immigration and a more restrictive approach, the Labour government deferred the right for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens to access the British labour market in 2006. In consequence of the centre-left government’s decision, Italy adopted a client politics model to immigration

from all the new EU member-states in 2006 and received large intakes of these immigrants. Nevertheless, this type of immigration also became highly politicised in Italy and the centre-right government led a repressive approach towards EU citizens of Roma origin.

France published a limited number of jobs available for A-8 citizens, leading to an overall policy gap between President Sarkozy's overt aim to increase the proportion of labour immigration and subsequent policy outcomes between 2007 and 2009 (Figures 11.3). This political process reflected the French state's inability to expand labour immigration because of President Sarkozy's unwillingness to open the French labour market to immigration and the restrictive channels deployed for labour immigration, even for economic sectors with acute recruitment difficulties.

Family reunion was particularly intense in the Italian and the French contexts, more so than in the UK (Figure 11.4). Despite the expansion of this type of immigration into the three countries, restrictions on the development of secondary inflows were observed in Italy, and particularly in France. The acute politicisation of this type of inflow in France was an outcome of President Sarkozy's overt aim to curb "endured" immigration, effectively attained between 2007 and 2009. Furthermore, France was the only country wherein access to family reunion visas and residence authorisations was dependent on previous proof of integration into French society, reflecting the fusion between immigration and integration policies promoted by President Sarkozy.

Asylum inflows continued to decline in the UK for most of the second half of the 2000s, but were still highly prominent on the British political agenda, as the 2006 act demonstrated, unlike in France and Italy. The salience of asylum increased in Italy towards the end of the 2000s, in the context of boat landings and the centre-right government's resistance in respecting those immigrants' right to apply for humanitarian protection. The growth of asylum in France from 2007 onwards was not followed by an intensification of the political

salience of this type of immigration in contrast to the trend observed after the 2002 presidential election (Figure 11.5). Nevertheless, the common detainment of asylum seekers across the three cases reinforced the perception of this type of immigrants as illegitimate and a potential threat to the host societies.

Finally, irregular inflows were highly prominent in Italy and to a lesser extent in France (more so than in the UK) and restrictions on their development were commonly observed across the selected cases. Paradoxically, the settlement of a large contingent of irregular immigrants in the UK by 2008 did not spark the intense politicisation of this type of immigration, in contrast to France and Italy. The Italian centre-right executive adopted a particularly repressive approach to irregular inflows, illustrated by the attempted criminalisation of irregular immigration, which was subsequently vetoed due to judicial intervention. Alongside this policy gap, a second gap was found between the Italian government's overt aim to halt irregular inflows and the development of a regularisation programme for domestic and care workers in 2009. Nevertheless, direct or indirect regularisation of irregular immigrants was observed in both the UK and France during the second half of the 2000s, suggesting that Italy is not an exceptional case, even if regularisations in Italy were more widespread.

Once more, convergence between the British, French and Italian immigration policies in the second half of the 2000s was stronger on the common deployment of restrictive measures on irregular inflows than on labour immigration, family reunion and even asylum (Cornelius et al., 2004). Moreover, the expected convergence presupposed by the similar distribution of costs and benefits from the different types of migration policy was not observed during the second half of the 2000s (Table 2.2). Like in the first half of the 2000s, policy gaps were observed across the French and Italian immigration policies. The proposed categories for

policy models contained acute variation in terms of politicisation of each type of immigration flow and their intensity into the three cases (Table 2.2).

For example, the observation of a common client politics model with reference to the British and French policies towards HSI was followed by acute variations in its intensity, whilst the identification of this policy model with reference to the British and Italian policies towards intra-EU inflows failed to prevent the politicisation of this type of immigration in the two countries. The variations in the politicisation of particular types of inflows across the three cases highlight the contingency of these political processes. Asylum was particularly prominent in the UK in contrast to its low salience in the other two cases; family reunion was prominent in France unlike the UK and Italy; and irregular inflows were common in Italy and France but were irrelevant in the UK. These divergent trends suggest that the levels of politicisation of each type of inflow should not be a mere reflection of structural regularities.

The understanding of immigration policy during the second half of the 2000s is enhanced by probing the relationship between structure and agency in each country. Significant demand for foreign labour was observed in the UK and in Italy during the 2000s while recruitment difficulties were lower in France. The restrictive channels deployed for labour immigration and its low intensity into France suggested that the French government opted to curb “endured” inflows rather than intensify labour migration, reflecting Sarkozy’s informal co-option of the FN’s agenda. In the UK, the politicisation of the “laissez-faire” approach to A-8 immigration after the 2005 general election led to the closure of channels for unskilled immigration from non-EU countries and the A-2 countries in 2006. Decline of economic growth and Brown’s association of immigration with employment were accompanied by the introduction of restrictive amendments in the HSMP.

The inconsistent management of Italian immigration policy by the PdL government, in the context of acute demand for unskilled foreign workers, reflected the coalition parties’



different political interests alongside the overall attempt to acknowledge the structural dependence on labour immigration. As observed in Chapter 11, this research has highlighted that comprehensive understanding of the immigration policies in the three cases cannot be disentangled from immigration politics at the domestic level and political factors such as inter-party competition in the UK and France or intra-coalition dynamics in Italy. Consequently, the research challenges that “the entry of highly qualified workers, either temporarily or for settlement, has generally been decided administratively, by decision-makers who are relatively insulated from the political process” in the UK and France (Schain, 2008, p. 282). By contrast, the two countries’ policies towards HSI during the 2000s reflected the national political contexts and the distinct political objectives of the Labour and UMP governments in different economic backgrounds.

This research has also pointed out that the gap between the LN’s political aims and subsequent policy outcomes during Berlusconi’s third term, a political strategy named as “simulative politics” (Cento Bull, 2009), was a political process also observed in France. The gaps between President Sarkozy’s overt objectives to escalate the rate of forced removals of irregular immigrants, intensify labour immigration, and proposal of a quota system, and the subsequent policy outcomes demonstrate that “simulative politics” were not exclusively observed in Italy. This thesis identified salient interdiscursive relationships between the national governments’ discourse on immigration and the ERPs’ framing of this social phenomenon in the three cases. Furthermore, the research explored how those linkages legitimised non-discursive developments through the introduction of particular illiberal measures or anti-immigration mobilisations.

Whereas Blair’s discourse on immigration was marked by the absence of ERP contagion effects at the discourse level, his successor government’s framing of immigration derailed into ERP grounds in 2007 with an emphasis on providing “British jobs for British workers,”

implicitly suggesting that immigrants took jobs away from natives. Besides the restrictions on the criteria to access the HSMP in 2007, Brown's articulation of immigration as a threat to employment was used to legitimise the anti-immigration rallies of industrial workers in 2009. This trend suggested that mainstream political elites' frame of immigration effectively affects particular groups' perceptions of immigration and can be employed to justify hostility to immigration by sectors of the public.

In France, Sarkozy's informal co-option of the FN's identity politics and framing of immigration as a threat to national identity was employed to legitimise the legislative developments that restricted immigrants' access to family reunion and their legal long-term settlement in France. The widespread articulation of immigration as a threat to law and order in Italy legitimised the attempted criminalisation of irregular immigration, the Interior Minister's campaign against the nomad camps, and the curtailment of immigrants' human rights in the context of the boat landings on the southern shores. The approval of the security decrees in a period of intense salience of immigration and the subsequent official association of immigration with law and order was also followed by important anti-immigration demonstrations in Italy.

Moreover, the research pointed to similar processes of stigmatisation of EU citizens of Roma origin with different levels of intensity in the UK and Italy (later observed in France in 2010), involving the frame of these immigrants as a threat to the British welfare system and Italian security. The observed variation suggests that the development of this political process in each case reflects the interaction between immigration flows and the grievances found in the host societies, which can be explored either by ERPs or by mainstream political elites. Thus, the thesis has concluded that mainstream parties' articulation of ERP's framing of immigration may not be exclusively observed in party systems with relevant ERPs. The next

section compares the ERPs' impact on policy developments during the second half of the 2000s.

### **12.3.2 – ERP impact on policy developments**

Did the BNP, the FN and the LN reinforce the restrictive character of national immigration policies during the second half of the 2000s? The FN had a significant impact on the development of French immigration policy from 2007 to 2009, followed by the LN's similar level of impact in Italy between 2008 and 2009. In contrast, the BNP lacked salient contagion effects on the development of immigration policy in the UK despite the BNP's aforementioned impact on Brown's discourse on immigration. The creation of MIINC and the institutionalisation of association between immigration and national identity provided initial evidence of the transposition of the FN's agenda into national legislation. The deepening of the policy for selected immigration against "endured" inflows in the 2007 immigration law as Le Pen proposed in 2002, as well as the fusion between immigration and integration policies, strengthened the FN's significant impact up to 2009. President Sarkozy rejected a proposal for a quota system based on geography, which provided further evidence of the deep anti-egalitarianism that the UMP President shared closely with the French ERP before the 2007 ballot.

In Italy, the LN's significant contagion effects were evident in the attempted criminalisation of irregular immigration, restrictions on asylum and secondary inflows, the Interior Minister's campaign against "nomad" camps and the repressive approach to the boat landings. Once again, the LN failed to veto the regularisation programme for domestic and care workers demanded by its coalition partners in 2009, yet the Interior Minister limited the success of this programme in contrast to 2002. The research has demonstrated that the restrictive policy shift observed in the UK was an outcome of intense mainstream inter-party competition on immigration rather than a response to the BNP's electoral inroads at the local

level. The BNP's breakthrough at the national level in 2009 coincided with the intense salience of immigration on the British political agenda, which suggests that this political trend might have enhanced the British ERP's electoral accomplishment.

The BNP's lack of impact on policy developments during Labour's third term challenges the identified common ability of ERPs' to push for more restrictive immigration policies in Austria, Germany and France during the 1990s (Williams, 2006). Hence, restrictive policy shifts can coincide with ERPs' electoral breakthroughs at the national level without being a response to such a political process. Whereas the FN's significant impact on French immigration policy between 2007 and 2009 was considered highly disproportional to its position in the French party system, the LN's significant contagion effects on policy developments were more proportional to its position within the Berlusconi government. The similar levels of ERP impact on immigration policy in France and Italy during the second half of the 2000s suggest that the intensity of this political process is not contingent on ERP participation in coalition governments.

This research suggests that ERP impact on policy developments in France and Italy had the common outline of pushing for policies that are more restrictive but there were substantial divergences in terms of its outcomes. Effectively, the FN's contagion effects were followed by the overall decline of immigration whilst the LN's substantial impact was still unable to reverse the high intensity of immigration. Whereas the LN impact was demonstrated by the stigmatisation of a particular type of immigration and a repressive approach to irregular inflows, the FN contagion effects were most salient on the institutionalisation of association between immigration and national identity and the fusion of immigration and integration policies. Therefore, studies on ERP impact should examine its contingency and complexity of this political process rather than expect similar outcomes across different countries.

### **12.3.3 – Understanding ERP impact on immigration policy**

This final subsection seeks to understand the development of these political processes by comparing the relationships found between the levels of the ERPs' impact on policy developments during the second half of the 2000s and the proposed hypotheses (Table 2.1).

#### 1) Levels of immigration

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on the development of immigration policy coincide with expansion of levels of immigration? The grants of settlement for non-EU citizens in the UK expanded from 2007 onwards alongside the high intensity of intra-EU inflows since 2004 (Figure 11.1). Immigration into Italy also expanded in 2008 mainly due to the growth of labour inflows from both EU member-states and non-EU countries (Figure 11.1). Immigration into France decreased at an overall level between 2007 and 2009 because of a drop in family reunion (Figure 11.1). Therefore, the expansion of immigration coincided with the LN's significant impact on policy developments in Italy but the overall relevance of this factor is diminished by the weak relationships established in the UK and France.

#### 2) Salience of immigration amongst public opinion

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on policy developments coincide with high concern with immigration amongst the electorate? Immigration was the top priority issue for the British electorate in the 2005 general election, moderately salient in the Italian 2008 general election whilst its salience dropped for French voters in the 2007 presidential election (Figure 12.1). Thus, the extreme salience of immigration across the British electorate was weakly related to the BNP's impact on policy developments and a similar weak relationship was found in France, unlike in Italy. Therefore, the relevance of this factor in understanding ERP impact on policy developments seems doubtful.

#### 3) ERP electoral challenge

Did the ERPs' (lack of) impact on immigration policy coincide with the ERPs' substantial electoral threat to mainstream parties? In the UK, the BNP only had a major electoral breakthrough at the national level in the 2009 EP election (Table 6.1). Despite this accomplishment, the BNP failed to pose a significant challenge at the 2010 general election because of the electoral constraints imposed by the first-past-the-post system. In France, the FN's electoral support decreased between the 2007 presidential elections and the 2009 EP ballot, which fostered expectations of the FN's terminal decline (Table 8.1), but its menace was still substantial at an overall level and recovered to past levels after 2011. In contrast, the LN's electoral threat to mainstream parties expanded from 2008 to the 2009 EP ballot, when it obtained its best result at the national level (Table 10.1). Therefore, the dimension of the ERPs' electoral challenges coincided with the BNP's lack of impact on policy developments in the UK and with the FN's and LN's opposite effects in France and Italy.

#### 4) Mainstream parties' strategies

Did the ERPs' (lack of) reinforcement of the restrictive character of immigration policy coincide with mainstream parties' (formal or informal) engagement towards the ERPs? The British mainstream parties continued to ostracise the BNP up to 2009, while the Conservative leader's direct attacks on the BNP in 2006 reinforced its pariah status. In France, the UMP leader and candidate opted for engagement with the FN by informally co-opting the FN's agenda on immigration and Le Pen's identity politics. Berlusconi's rapport with Bossi and the PdL's engagement with the LN led to the integration of the Italian ERP into the coalition government and the appointment of Maroni as the Interior Minister. Consequently, the different engagement strategies of the French and Italian mainstream parties coincided with the FN's and LN's significant impact on policy developments whilst the opposite linkage was observed in the UK, enhancing the relevance of this factor.

In summary, the levels of immigration in the three cases had a weak relationship with the variable levels of ERP impact on policy developments during the second half of the 2000s. Likewise, public concern with immigration in the UK, France and Italy also diverged with the identified levels of ERP impact on immigration policy, unlike the linkages observed during the first half of the 2000s. By contrast, the different dimensions of the ERPs' electoral threat to mainstream parties and these parties' different strategies with the ERPs continued to have a high level of coincidence with the FN's and LN's significant impact on immigration policy and the absence of a similar political process in the UK. Thus, the latter two factors are considered the most relevant factors in enhancing the ERPs' impact on the development of immigration policies in the three cases.

#### **12.4 – Conclusions**

This research indicates that both the FN and the LN had significant levels of impact on inter-party competition at the 2007 presidential elections and the 2008 general elections, unlike the BNP at the 2005 general elections. Unlike the 1990s, this thesis failed to observe a common ability of ERPs to push mainstream parties' positions closer to their own in the selected first-order-ballots under study (Williams, 2006). As the British case demonstrates, mainstream parties' shift towards restrictions on immigration presaged the BNP's breakthrough at the national level. Sarkozy's informal co-option of the FN's agenda on immigration and its identity politics proved successful at the ballot. He collected a significant share of Le Pen's 2002 voters at the 2007 presidential election, and benefited from his strong image as a statesman. The dimension of the ERPs' electoral challenges alongside the engagement strategies of mainstream parties towards ERPs were considered the most relevant factors in enhancing the FN's and the LN's impact on this dimension of immigration politics.

This research suggests that the FN had a significant impact on public attitudes to immigration at the 2007 presidential elections, followed by the LN's moderate contagion effects at the

2008 general elections, in contrast to the BNP's lack of impact at the 2005 general elections. Therefore, there is little evidence to support the idea that ERPs have an unconditional capability to expand xenophobia across their national electorates in contrast to past observations within ERP literature (Williams, 2006). Simultaneously, the research highlights the fact that concern with immigration expanded dramatically across British voters in 2005 in the context of non-relevant ERPs raising the profile of mainstream parties for the observed trends in this case.

The levels of ERP electoral support, alongside the attitudes of its core voters and the agency of mainstream parties, coincided with the FN's and the LN's salient levels of impact during the second half of the 2000s. Nevertheless, these factors were unable to account for the decline of hostility towards immigration in France and Italy. This trend suggests that the ERP's electoral support and party network were no longer able to influence the overall French electorate as was observed in the past, or that ERP impact on public attitudes might have been overstated and the relevance of other potential factors should be further explored. Furthermore, the LN's significant electoral expansion at the 2008 general election failed to have an impact on mass attitudes and was most salient for voters most concerned with immigration and its core voters. This thesis suggests that ERP direct impact on public attitudes to immigration might be more concentrated among the ERPs' core electorate and voters most concerned with immigration rather than on the general electorate.

As observed in inter-party competition, both the FN and the LN had a significant impact on the development of their national immigration policies between 2007 and 2009 in France as well as in Italy from 2008 to 2009. Notwithstanding the derailment of Brown's discourse on immigration and the restrictive character of policy developments, the BNP lacked contagion effects on policy-making or its implementation during Labour government's third term. This trend challenges past observation of a common ERP ability to push for immigration policies



that were more restrictive throughout the 1990s whilst the British case indicates that this policy outcome might be observed without being a repercussion of an ERP's agency. This research highlights the salient variations on the contents of ERPs' impact in France and Italy, suggesting that the observation of this political process in different political contexts should not presuppose uniform outcomes. The FN's indirect impact on policy development was regarded as more disproportional than the LN direct impact in Italy. ERPs' significant impact on policy developments in France and Italy coincided with the dimension of the ERPs' electoral threats and the engagement strategies of mainstream parties rather than with the intensity and salience of immigration.

## Chapter 13 – Conclusions

This research focused on a political process, the study of which has been routinely neglected by political scientists: the formal or informal co-option of ERPs by mainstream parties. This political process was frequently associated with immigration policy and has been identified in the past in the UK and France. Co-option was interpreted as a bi-dimensional political phenomenon: primarily, as a demonstration of a challenger party's impact on a political system, and secondly, as a strategic option employed by mainstream parties' to neutralise the challenger party. Consequently, the research sought to identify the ERPs' impact on immigration politics and policy and to understand the latter political processes by comparing the relevance of the proposed hypotheses (Table 2.1).

This final chapter summarises the empirical observations, the analytical inferences and their implications. It is shown that ERP impact on any of the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy is more contingent than presupposed by previous comparative research. ERP impact on interparty competition and policy developments in the three cases was apparently dependent on the dimension of ERPs' electoral threats and particularly, on the agency of mainstream parties. The findings from the analysis on ERP impact on public attitudes to immigration suggested that this political process might have been overstated in the past and further analysis is advised to understand trends across public opinion.

### **13.1 – ERPs' impact on inter-party competition**

This research has highlighted the increasing salience of immigration on inter-party competition at the first-order-ballots throughout the second half of the 2000s in the context of relevant and non-relevant ERPs. Therefore, immigration has become increasingly important in the political debate in the three cases. Variations were found on the levels of politicisation of the different types of immigration flows across the three countries, as asylum was highly prominent in the UK, unlike in France and Italy, whilst irregular inflows were most dominant

on the French and Italian political agendas. These fluctuations suggest that the salience of the different types of immigration is a contingent political process and an outcome of the interaction between the development of immigration and contingent factors in the host societies, such as immigration politics, rather than a reflection of structural regularities inherent to immigrants or types of immigration.

Whereas the BNP lacked relevant impact on inter-party competition in immigration policy during the 2000s, the LN exhibited significant impact on this dimension of immigration politics in the Italian 2001 and 2008 general elections. The LN evidenced a consistent ability to push for the hegemonic framing of immigration as a temporary social phenomenon and irregular immigration as a law and order issue throughout the 2000s. The Italian ERP's contagion effects were not restricted to the centre-right coalition, as demonstrated by the PD's positions on immigration in the 2008 general election. Unlike the LN, the FN only had a significant impact on inter-party competition in the French 2007 presidential elections unlike in 2002. The exclusion of immigration from mainstream parties' electoral campaigns for the 2002 presidential election prevented the FN from having contagion effects on immigration politics.

Nonetheless, the French ERP's impact expanded dramatically at the 2007 presidential election with the fusion of immigration and integration policies across mainstream parties' proposals and the UMP's informal co-option of the FN's identity politics and agenda on immigration. Effectively, Sarkozy's electoral strategy paid off at the first round of the 2007 presidential election when he captured a large share of Le Pen's 2002 voters, enabling him to achieve the best result of a centre-right candidate since the late 1970s. This accomplishment mirrored the UMP's presentation of a similar agenda to the FN and Sarkozy's enjoyment of far deeper political capital than Le Pen, which led former FN voters to choose the most effective candidate to implement similar plans on immigration. Consequently, this research

has pointed out that the success of informal co-option of ERPs reflects the established parties' appropriation of the ERP's political agenda, alongside the higher credibility of the mainstream candidate to execute such agenda in comparison to the ERP competitor. The success of "clothes stealing" is therefore contingent on the levels of credibility and the proximity of the agendas proposed by the mainstream parties' and ERPs' candidates.

In contrast, the British case revealed that mainstream parties' adoption of populist approaches to a particular type of immigration flow can presage rather than respond to an ERP electoral breakthrough. This was the case with Hague's strategy on asylum at the 2001 general election. British mainstream parties' general shift to increasingly restrictive positions on immigration and the Conservative leader's valence politics on immigration, which approached far-right grounds in 2005, were an outcome of intense mainstream inter-party competition on this issue. Consequently, the general realignment of the position of mainstream parties for more restrictive immigration policies or particular derailments into far-right grounds can be observed in party systems with non-relevant ERPs and may not be a necessary consequence of ERP agency, like the BNP's. Mainstream parties can distance themselves from the ERPs and simultaneously adopt positions close to the anti-immigration proposals of ERPs, like the Conservatives under Michael Howard's leadership. It must therefore be acknowledged that mainstream parties can adopt increasingly restrictive or extremist positions as a result of their own political agency to downgrade the potential risk of overstating the levels of ERP impact on this analytical dimension.

The identified levels of ERPs' impact on inter-party competition in the three cases during the 2000s challenge the supposed common ERP ability to push mainstream parties' positions closer to their own in critical electoral periods, which had been observed throughout the 1990s (Williams, 2006). Hence, the contagion effects of ERPs on inter-party competition are more contingent than previously supposed by the ERP literature. Moreover, salient disparities

across the content of the LN's and the FN's impact on inter-party competition were found in France and Italy during the second half of the 2000s, as the LN pushed for the framing of irregular immigration as a law and order issue, whilst the FN promoted the hegemony of identity politics across the French UMP. These variations provide further indication of the inherent contingency of this political process, and the use of qualitative research methods have proved to be the most suitable to grasp its complexity.

Comparative analysis between the levels of ERP impact on inter-party competition suggested that this political process should be conceived as an outcome of the interaction between factors: the electoral challenge of ERPs and the agency of mainstream parties. First, the ERPs must pose a substantial electoral threat to established parties in order to potentially force the mainstream parties to react to their challenge. Nevertheless, the observation of this factor might not lead to salient ERP contagion effects on inter-party competition. Mainstream parties continue to exhibit full autonomy in determining their electoral strategies and can decide to exclude immigration from their electoral campaigns, as observed in the French 2002 presidential election. Consequently, the ERPs' electoral challenge is a salient but not determinant factor behind their contagion effects on this dimension of immigration politics.

Furthermore, the significant impact of the ERPs on inter-party competition in immigration was observed in the context of mainstream parties' engagement with the ERPs at formal and informal levels in Italy in 2001 and 2008 and in France in 2007. This trend and the observations extracted from the French 2002 presidential elections suggest that the intensity of ERP impact on this dimension is more contingent on the agency of mainstream parties than on their dimension of their electoral threat. The responsibility of mainstream parties for the ERPs' contagion effects on immigration politics at critical electoral periods is therefore enhanced. Mainstream parties mediate the impact of ERPs on their positions on immigration policy and these parties' elites ultimately decide the intensity of this political process.

Moreover, the research also suggested that the proposals of mainstream parties on this topic can derail into extremist grounds in the context of a non-relevant ERP, which enhances the profile of mainstream political elites for the salience granted to immigration and the content of their proposals.

### **13.2 – ERPs' impact on public attitudes**

Salience of immigration and hostility to his social phenomenon were particularly intense in the French and Italian first-order-ballots taking place in the first half of the 2000s unlike the low apprehension observed across the British electorate in the 2001 general election. By contrast, salience of immigration increased dramatically in the UK in the 2005 general election and tenuously in Italy in the 2008 general election. The opposite trend was observed in France in the 2007 presidential elections despite the stronger dimension of the French ERP than the BNP in the UK or the LN in Italy. Consequently, studies on ERP impact on public attitudes must recognise that salience of immigration can expand dramatically or to decline independently of the ERPs' levels of electoral support to prevent the potential overstatement of ERP impact on public attitudes.

Fluctuations in public perceptions of immigration across the three cases were also highlighted by this thesis. Whereas Italian voters overwhelmingly associated immigration with criminality in Italy in 2001, this perception of immigration was low amongst the British and French electorates in 2001 and 2002. By contrast, association between immigration and employment were stronger amongst British voters than amongst Italian voters in the first half of the 2000s. These oscillations in public perceptions of immigration suggest that this political process is an outcome of the interplay between the development of immigration and contingent factors in host societies rather than a reflection of structural regularities inherent to the types of immigration flows. Additionally, the linkages found between British public attitudes to HSI and asylum prior to the 2001 general election and mainstream inter-party

consensuses enhance the profile of mainstream parties in the public perception of the different types of immigration flows.

Moreover, decline of hostility to immigration was observed in the two latter countries unlike the stability observed across British public attitudes to immigration in the second half of the 2000s. Decline in the salience of immigration and absolute levels of hostility to immigration in France in the second half of the 2000s differs from the increasing salience of this issue in the mainstream parties' electoral campaigns for the first-order-ballots. If the trends across the French electorate were considered an outcome of the restrictive immigration policies of the UMP government before 2007 or the intense salience of this issue at inter-party competition level in 2007, the problem was to understand the dramatic expansion of concern with immigration in the UK in 2005.

This research demonstrated that the BNP lacked impact on public attitudes to immigration during the 2000s despite the aforementioned trends amongst British voters. By contrast, the FN exhibited significant levels of impact on public attitudes to immigration in 2002 and 2007 despite its declining intensity demonstrated by the reduction of overall concern with immigration and the substantial drop of absolute values of hostility to immigration. In Italy, the LN improved its level of contagion effects from a non-relevant to a moderate level from the 2001 to the 2008 general elections but was still far from holding the issue ownership of opposition to immigration notwithstanding opposite statements within ERP literature. Hence, the analysis failed to observe a common ability of ERPs to intensify xenophobia across the British, French and Italian electorates throughout the 2000s like in the 1990s across Austria, Germany and France (Williams, 2006). The cross-national analysis of the levels of the ERPs' impact on public attitudes and the proposed hypotheses highlighted the dimension of the ERPs' electoral support alongside the ideological characteristics of their core electorates as the most important factors enhancing the occurrence of this political process.

Nevertheless, the decline of hostility to immigration across public opinion in France and Italy diverged from the FN's robust electoral resilience up to 2007 and the LN's electoral expansion in 2008 or the expansion of the foreign population in these two cases. The past ability of the FN's electoral organisation and the attitudes of its core electorate to influence the French electorate at an extraordinary level during the 1990s failed to be observed during the second half of the 2000s (Schain, 2002; 2006). The research suggests that the ERP's party network and the ideological characteristics of its core electorate were no longer able to influence overall public attitudes to immigration as they has in the past, or there might have been an overstatement of its overall impact in the past.

Furthermore, the growth of the LN's electoral support between 2001 and 2008 was unable to halt the decline on the levels of public resentment to immigration in Italy. The content of the Italian ERP's impact in 2008 was most visible amongst voters most concerned with immigration than amongst the general electorate. Likewise the FN's impact at the 2007 presidential election seemed stronger on voters that ranked immigration as their top priority and the party's own core voters. These two cases suggest that ERP impact on public attitudes might not extent to the mass public and might be more restrained than previously presupposed by ERP literature. Finally, the continuous development of immigration into France and Italy before 2007 and 2008 also differed from the trends observed on public attitudes questioning the validity of the "ethnic backlash" thesis. This trend suggests that public attitudes to immigration are less contingent on the number of immigrants than on other political factors. Therefore, the research suggests that other factors should be explored to understand public attitudes to immigration, in particular the discourse of mainstream parties on this topic.



### **13.3 – ERPs’ impact on development of immigration policy**

Policy stability was higher across Italian immigration policy than in the UK and France during the 2000s, where it was possible to observe general policy shifts. The adoption of a narrative of “managed immigration” in 2002 was dropped after the 2005 general election in favour of a security related approach focused on tackling abuse of immigration system. In France, the UMP leader and Interior Minister announced a policy shift to attain a better balance between selected immigration and “endured” inflows that was then transposed into the 2006 and 2007 immigration laws. The analysis of the British, French and Italian immigration policies throughout the 2000s suggest that the UK adopted the most liberal approach towards labour inflows followed by Italy. Consequently, both the UK and Italy received the largest intakes of labour migration in contrast to its low intensity into France.

Intense immigration flows of HSI were observed into the UK rather than into France and Italy during the 2000s. The second half of this decade was marked by the intense politicisation of intra-EU inflows in opposition to the past political consensus on this type of immigration in the UK and Italy, after intense levels of immigration from the new EU member-states. Unskilled labour immigration from non-EU countries was also highly intense into the Southern European country in contrast to the two other cases. Family reunion was extremely politicised in France unlike the two other cases whilst asylum was more dominant in the British political agenda than in France and Italy. Finally, irregular inflows were particularly important in Italy and less in France than in the UK, where there was also a large contingent of irregular immigrants settled in the country.

Convergence between the three cases’ immigration policies was stronger on the scope of restrictive measures deployed to limit the development of irregular and asylum than on labour immigration and family reunion. Policy gaps were identified in France and Italy regarding Sarkozy’s escalation of the repressive approach to irregular inflows, the aimed expansion of

the proportion of labour immigration and its low intensity between 2007 and 2009, and the deployment of a quota system vetoed by the Mazeaud Commission. In Italy, a recurrent policy gap was observed on the restrictive objectives set on irregular immigration and the posterior development of regularisation programmes. By contrast, the UK exhibited a stronger ability to match the proposed objectives with the subsequent policy outputs. These policy gaps suggest that policy outcomes must be examined alongside the policy inputs rather than induced from the objectives set by the national governments at rhetoric level, which can lead to distorted judgments. The analysis of the British, French and Italian immigration policies challenged the validity of the proposed typology of migration policies despite the particular usefulness of the client politics model to understand the British policy towards HSI. The proposed categories based on the distribution of costs and benefits presupposed by each type of migration policy contained acute variations both in the intensity of the immigration flows and their corresponding levels of politicisation throughout the 2000s in the UK, France and Italy (Table 2.2). Alternatively, probing the relationship between structure and agency in each case helped to understand the variations across the policy developments in a single country and at a cross-national level. In the context of low unemployment and massive investment on public services, the British Labour government had a stake in promoting labour inflows to support its political objectives and economic growth. In contrast, the reduction of family reunion instead of the overall intensification of labour inflows reflected the low recruitment difficulties in France alongside Sarkozy's informal co-optation of the FN at the 2007 presidential election. Finally, the incoherent management of immigration flows in Italy reflected the different aims of the members of the Italian coalition government in the context of domestic structural dependence on foreign labour.

Therefore, this thesis has showed how the development of immigration policy cannot be disentangled from the immigration politics in each domestic context. Effectively, the three

countries' immigration policies were influenced by political factors such as national governments' political objectives (the Labour government's modernisation of public services); inter-party competition (between both Labour and the Conservatives, as well as the UMP and the FN); intra-coalition dynamics (amongst the coalition partners in the Italian government); or intra-party politics (within the UMP for the nomination as presidential candidate). In opposition to the growing irrelevance of political parties within immigration studies, this research has shown that immigration politics has a key role behind the politicisation of particular types of immigration policy and the subsequent shape of national immigration policies. Furthermore, the thesis related the patterns of domestic immigration politics with subsequent developments at the EU level during President Sarkozy's term and the French EU presidency in 2008. This trend suggests that developments on immigration policy at the EU level are also intertwined with domestic politics.

Finally, the employment of CDA allowed the identification of interdiscursive relationships between the ERP's frame of immigration and mainstream parties' discourse during the analysis of ERP impact at the inter-party competition level and on policy developments. These linkages were identified both in party systems with relevant and non-relevant ERPs suggesting that this political process is not exclusively observed in the former countries. Furthermore, the identified interdiscursive relationships were linked to specific non-discursive events such as anti-immigration mobilisations in the UK and Italy or the adoption of particular highly restrictive measures that destabilised immigrants' regular settlement in the host countries and potentially damaged their human rights across the three cases.

The common development of stigmatisation of EU citizens of Roman origin was identified both in the UK and Italy. The observed variation across the processes of stigmatisation of this type of immigrants in different countries reflects the interplay between development of immigration flows and contingent factors in host societies, like the agency of mainstream

parties. Hence, immigration politics seems more important in explaining the aforementioned fluctuations than the idiosyncrasies of immigrants. Once again, the stigmatisation of EU citizens of Roma origin was observed in party systems with relevant and non-relevant ERPs suggesting that these political processes can be observed independently of ERP's agency raising the profile of mainstream political elites for the discourse on immigration.

Regarding ERP impact on policy developments, the FN was the ERP with strongest levels of impact on policy developments during the 2000s, followed by the LN in Italy. The LN enjoyed a moderate impact on the development of Italian immigration policy during Berlusconi's second term that increased to a significant level between 2008 and 2009. Lastly, the BNP lacked relevant impact on policy developments in the UK during the 2000s despite the contagion effects on the Labour government's discourse on immigration in the second half of this decade. Therefore, the conclusions from the research on ERP impact during the 2000s challenge the past observation that ERPs pushed for more restrictive immigration policies in Austria, Germany and France during the 1990s (Williams, 2006). The FN had a more disproportional impact on the policy developments than the LN suggesting that the intensity of the ERP impact on immigration policy is not contingent on access to executive positions.

Moreover, the BNP's electoral breakthrough at local level was incorrectly associated with the Labour government's repressive approach to asylum inflows in 2002 in immigration and ERP studies, when it was an outcome of the intense inter-party competition between Labour and the Conservatives and the government's strategy to neutralise the opposition party. Thus, it must be acknowledged that ERPs' electoral accomplishments may coincide without causing the preceding political processes. This possibility must complement past observation that ERPs' electoral breakthroughs influenced the political agenda to prevent potential

overstatements of ERP impact on policy developments, as observed in the UK in the early 2000s.

Beside the common extension of restrictions to particular types of immigration, such as family reunion or asylum, the thesis has also highlighted important variations in the contents of the selected ERPs' impact on policy developments in France and Italy. Whereas the FN pushed for the fusion of immigration and integration policies alongside the institutionalisation of its identity politics with the creation of MIIINC, the LN forced the introduction of the "residence contract", the initial management of labour flows under a temporary approach or the attempted criminalisation of irregular immigrants. Moreover, the informal co-option of the FN's agenda on immigration in the 1990s differed from the outline of this political process at the 2007 presidential election. Whereas the former Interior Minister Charles Pasqua informally co-opted the FN's "zero-immigration policy", Sarkozy adopted the FN's frame of particular types of immigration flows as "endured" and Le Pen's identity politics in 2007. Consequently, it must be acknowledged that ERP impact has a contingent character within a single country and across different countries. Like the ERP impact on inter-party competition, qualitative methods of analysis are most suited to grasp the idiosyncrasies of ERP contagion effects on policy developments.

As expected, ERP impact on policy developments in France and Italy met important constraints that restrained the intensity of this political policy. The adoption of the quota system was vetoed twice in the 2000s by the domestic political constraints in France. In Italy, the management of immigration as a strictly temporary social phenomenon was undermined by the macro-economic domestic context while the fingerprinting programme or the criminalisation of irregular immigrants were vetoed by domestic and exogenous judicial powers. Effectively, ERP direct or indirect contagion effects on the development of immigration policy met the same level of constraints than the scope of options on the

management of inflows available to national governments, which prevent the implementation of “zero-immigration policies”. This trend points to the necessary moderation of expectations on ERP impact on policy developments to prevent potential underestimations of its occurrence in liberal democracies.

The comparative analysis of relationships between the levels of ERPs’ impact on immigration policy and the proposed factors highlighted the weak relevance of expansion of immigration and high public concern with immigration to understand the occurrence of this political process. By contrast, the dimension of ERPs’ electoral challenge and the agency of mainstream parties were positively related to the observed levels of ERP impact on policy developments in France and Italy. Like the ERP impact on inter-party competition, ERPs must first pose a substantial electoral threat to mainstream parties to force the national governments to react to their demands. Secondly, the agency of mainstream parties mediated the intensity of ERP impact on policy developments in France and Italy, particularly during the terms started during the first half of the 2000s.

Whereas Chirac had refused to engage with the FN, Sarkozy’s informal co-option of the Le Pen’s agenda from 2005 onwards was accompanied by the FN’s ascendant impact on French immigration policy. The intra-coalition dynamics also moderated the LN’s impact on policy developments during Berlusconi’s second term and were associated with the Italian ERP’s descendant impact on this dimension between 2001 and 2006. Hence, the ERPs’ impact on immigration policy is dependent on two factors but the intensity of this political process is intertwined with the agency of mainstream parties. Until the day comes when ERPs obtain single-party majorities on first-order-ballots, mainstream political elites must mediate their impact on immigration policy according to their own strategic calculations.

The thesis has demonstrated that both the FN and the LN achieved consistent levels of impact on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy in contrast to the first half of the

2000s. Nonetheless, the research has pointed out that holding impact on one of those dimensions of immigration does not necessarily imply holding contagion effects on the other two categories. Overall, the ERPs' impact on immigration politics and policy is a more contingent political process than previously presupposed. ERP contagion effects on the three dimensions of immigration politics and policy superseded the mere impact on cultural level or discourse level that had been previously admitted by ERP literature (Minkenberg, 2002; Mudde, 2007).

ERP impact on policy developments was observed beyond the mere tightening of the conditions set for the entry and settlement of foreign citizens. Effectively the French and Italian ERPs provided an original contribution to the observed policy developments, like the creation of the MIINC in France or the "residence contract" in Italy. The thesis sought to develop a balanced evaluation of the ERP impact on the three selected analytical dimensions to overcome past zero-sum evaluations of these political processes. Previous overstatements of the BNP's impact on immigration policy in the UK and the LN's contagion effects on public attitudes in Italy were also challenged by this research.

Similar to the observation of common interdiscursive relationships between ERP's frame of immigration and mainstream parties' discourse, the adoption of repressive approaches to particular types of immigration was commonly observed either in the UK or in Italy. At the inter-party competition level, the British 2005 general election showed how mainstream parties can shift their positions in favour of further restrictions on the management of immigration and even derail into extremist grounds in the absence of a relevant ERP. Dramatic expansion of public concern with immigration in the UK contrasted with the overall decline in France and Italy.

These observations do not water-down the levels of ERP impact in France and Italy but highlight that similar general outcomes can be observed in party systems deprived of a

relevant ERP. The acknowledgement of this potential trend is essential to develop an accurate evaluation of ERP impact to prevent overstatements of this political process. Potential inclinations to lay the responsibility for the highly restrictive observations on immigration politics and policy onto the ERPs and subsequently exonerate mainstream parties of their blame necessarily leads to erroneous analysis of ERP impact. Furthermore, this research showed that ERP impact on inter-party competition and policy developments was closely intertwined with the agency of mainstream parties preventing potential detachments between extremist parties and established parties from their responsibility for the levels of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy.

Finally, the overall differences between the selected cases (see Chapter 4) had some degree of relevance behind the variable levels of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy. In particular, the different electoral systems had a direct influence on the dimension of the ERPs' electoral threats to the mainstream parties and subsequently on the intensity of ERPs' impact on immigration politics and policy. In the UK, the first-past-the-post system tamed the BNP's electoral threat even after its electoral breakthrough at national level in the 2009 EP elections. In France, the dual ballot system prevented the FN from holding access to the office seats but its electoral challenge to French mainstream parties was still substantial, particularly towards the centre-right parties. Finally, the Italian *scorporo* provided the LN with a strong leverage to exploit its territorial dimension, unlike the British and French ERPs, and extract concessions from its centre-right coalition partners.

The immigration paradigms of the selected cases also had a moderating effect on the ERPs' levels of impact on immigration politics and policy, in particular on the FN's contagion effects on policy developments. The intensity of this political process was curtailed by the vetoes on Sarkozy's successive proposals for a quota system, which were indirectly legitimised by the French Republican tradition. By contrast, the different immigration



experiences of the UK, France and Italy did not have an effect on ERP impact. Regularisation of irregular immigrants was observed across the three cases with different levels of intensity, especially in Italy. Therefore, the supposed “exceptionalism” of Italy was questioned by this research apart from Italy’s inability to channel regular labour migration according to domestic demand. Now, topics that merit further analysis are explored in further depth in the next final section.

### **13.4 – Future research**

This thesis developed an analytical framework to evaluate ERP impact on immigration politics and policy that can travel to different political contexts with salient ERPs and levels of immigration like the Netherlands or Denmark. Some of the conclusions extracted from the UK, France and Italy should be subjected to additional analysis to examine their validity beyond the selected cases. Further research can examine whether the success of the informal co-option of ERPs is dependent on the appropriation of the far-right political agenda by the established parties and the higher credibility of the mainstream party’s candidate to implement their plans. The analysis also suggested that ERP impact on public attitudes might be constrained to the voters most concerned with immigration and their core voters rather than on mass attitudes. This should be assessed by supplementary research on public behaviour.

Salient paradoxes have been identified in the three countries that merit further analysis. Forthcoming research should explore the dramatic rise in concern with immigration in the UK in contrast to the drop in public concern in France in the context of a relevant ERP. Moreover, investigations should be developed to understand the overall decline of hostility to immigration in France unlike the UK. The increasing importance of immigration on inter-party competition at the selected first-order-ballots taking place in the 2000s differed from the drop in public concern with this issue in France. Consequently, further analysis should

assess whether the gap between the salience of immigration in political agendas and public attitudes persisted in France or if it can be observed across other Western European countries.

A potential factor that might help to understand the expanding importance of immigration is the development of the Europeanisation process, which has been weakly observed in this area of public policy in comparison to other fields such as the macro-economic policies of EU member-states. Mair (2008) argues that the development of this political process at the inter-governmental level has led to the de-politicisation of important areas of public policy and the subsequent contraction of the sphere for political conflict between member-states. Thus, whether the increasing politicisation of immigration in European party systems is a potential collateral consequence of the EU integration process is an issue that deserves supplementary analysis.

The intense levels of ERP impact on immigration politics and policy were regarded as closely intertwined with the agency of mainstream parties. One potential line of research is to explore why some mainstream political leaders have a stronger propensity to engage with the ERPs than others do. In parallel, future research should also analyse whether it is possible to identify more cases where mainstream parties' positions on immigration de-rail to the far-right grounds in the context of non-relevant ERPs and to evaluate the potential causes behind this political process. The second half of the 2000s was marked by the common expansion of restrictions to most types of immigration flows in the three selected cases despite the declining concern with this issue in France and Italy. Whether this gap will increase or decrease in the future is also an interesting topic for future analysis. Finally, the research argued for the evaluation of immigration policy from a structure and agency perspective that emphasises the interplay between structural regularities and the agency of the actors involved in the policy-making process, especially political parties. This method of analysis should be employed to understand the development of immigration policy in other political contexts.

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