

Partisan Influence on Immigration: The Case of Norway

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Do governments decide the size of immigration? This article analyses partisan impact on refugee immigration to Norway. The first part maps party positions on refugee immigration and demonstrates that the views of Norwegian parties are far from consensual. The second part tests whether the number of refugees admitted has been affected by changes of government by way of a panel analysis covering the period 1985–2005 and 143 sending countries. Controlling for other determinants of immigration both in receiving and sending countries, the analysis suggests that the number of refugees admitted to Norway has been significantly lower during Conservative rule. Among parties with government experience, the Conservative Party also has adopted the most restrictive stand in its manifestoes. No significant differences between Labour Party and centre governments were found, even though the centre parties express more liberal preferences.

The partisan influence on immigration remains uncertain. Scholars come to diverging conclusions, both on the validity of the partisan theory in general (see, e.g., Blais et al. 1993; Imbeau et al. 2001) and on states' capacity to control immigration (see, e.g., Sassen, 1996, 2000; Guiraudon & Lahav 2000). Although some studies reject a partisan effect on national economic indicators, many find strong empirical support for the hypothesis (e.g., Huber & Stephens 2000; Cusack 1997; Reed 2006; Pettersson-Lidbom 2004). Yet what about immigration? Do governments control it, or is it determined entirely by external determinants? Not only scholars, but politicians, too, disagree on their influence on immigration. In a Norwegian television debate, the Progress Party's spokesperson claimed that a recent sharp increase in immigration was caused by the government's liberal stand on the matter.¹ The Christian Democratic Party spokesperson, on the other hand, identified fluctuations in conflicts around the world as the main cause of immigration. This article joins the debate by analysing to what extent parties in government influence refugee immigration to Norway.

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The first part of the study explores the party positions on refugee immigration as expressed in party manifestos. Statements in manifestos may be general and vague, but as will be demonstrated, political parties in Norway have adopted rather different positions with regards to refugee immigration policy. Yet has the number of admitted refugees changed accordingly?

This article adds to the literature in several ways. First, while ignored in most quantitative studies, the inclusion of both sending and receiving country variables is crucial to a valid test of the political influence on immigration. Here, the effect of changes government on refugee immigration is studied using a panel analysis covering the period 1985–2005 and 142 sending countries. The model controls not only for aspects of the receiving country, but also of all sending countries. When either sending country variables or receiving country variables are omitted, the statistical model is underspecified and thus biased. The second contribution of this article is its focus on parties with *government experience*. In comparison to the literature on radical right parties and immigration, the lack of attention given to the governing parties is striking (see Bale 2008). Third, in many countries, poor data quality is an obstacle to reliable quantitative analyses of immigration. For several reasons, the quality of Norwegian data is comparatively high. Statistics Norway keep register data on immigrants, which rather few countries do (United Nations 1998). The high quality and level of detail in these registry data is also unusual (see COMPSTAT: <http://www.compstat.org/Start/index.html>). Illegal immigration has the potential to invalidate official statistics, but although on the increase in recent years, illegal immigration has been comparatively small in Norway (Statistics Norway 2008).

Data quality is one reason to choose Norway as a case for studying immigration. However, when studying whether a link between immigration and party preferences exists, there are additional arguments as to why a case study of Norway could be a fruitful point of departure. Norway's geographical position far away from all major emigration countries provides its governments with a potential for stronger immigration control than in most other industrial countries. The constitutional structure of Norway is also quite favourable for partisan influence. Despite the consensual orientation of Norwegian politics, as well as the frequently occurring coalition and minority governments, the centralised state structure and few majoritarian constraints are likely to boost partisan influence (Schmidt 1996, 170).

The Case for the Partisan Theory

The partisan theory suggests that the party composition of government influences policy outcomes (see, e.g., Hibbs 1992; Schmidt 1996; Garrett 1998). To retain support among their core supporters, parties must stay loyal to their ideological foundation: 'Partisan models therefore imply a political

signal in economic policies and outcomes correlated with shifts in party control of government' (Hibbs 1992, 362). The political ideologies and policy preferences of different political parties can be expected to be reflected in policy outputs.²

Furthermore, the partisan theory assumes that the electorate evaluates the performance of parties and that they vote accordingly. If parties do not deliver, they lose support in the next election. In other words, voters care about whether goals are reached or not. That said, Norwegian voters generally do not rank immigration as important (Aardal & Valen 1989, 1995; Aardal 1999, 2003). It can therefore be argued that as for the issue of immigration, the link between voters and parties does not have to be particularly strong. Still, when applied to immigration, the partisan theory indicates that party preferences actually influence how many immigrants are admitted – that is, when parties win elections, they can be expected to fulfil the goals stated in their party manifestos. Subsequent changes in policy are expected to influence output. Clearly, political parties cannot, or will not, always do what they said they would, and their true intentions may only be expressed behind closed doors. Here, however, we study whether the voters get what they are promised. It is not unlikely, though, that parties try to implement policies in accordance with their party manifestos: 'As an official document, it will be difficult for party members to resile from policies in the party manifesto, while party leaders can be charged with failure to implement published manifesto pledges when given the chance to do so' (Laver & Garry 2000, 620).

A precondition for partisan influence is that governments have the capacity to control immigration. Several empirical studies conclude that they actually do have that capacity. According to Guiraudon and Lahav (2000, 190), Germany, France and the Netherlands have all used international agreements and intergovernmental cooperation to control immigration. Holzer et al. (2000) find that Swiss government regulations have affected the number of asylum requests considerably. They acknowledge, however, that Switzerland cannot control the inflow of refugees 'all the time and with all policies' (Holzer et al. 2000, 1205). Brekke (2004), in a study of national control policies in Scandinavia, finds that national policies often do matter. For instance, measures aimed at reducing immigration from Somalia to Norway in 2003 did have the desired effects. In fact, *the announcement* of a policy change had an immediate effect on asylum applications. Thielemann (2004) also find that national policies make a difference for asylum applications. Both recognition rates and the right to work while the asylum application is processed appear to influence the number of asylum seekers to European countries.

Clearly, migration policies can also be ineffective, as demonstrated by attempts to reduce immigration by boosting development in sending coun-

tries. Empirical research has repeatedly supported the development hump hypothesis, which states that development *increases* emigration – at least in the short run (Castles & Miller 2003).

The Case against the Partisan Theory

Not all agree that states have the capacity to control immigration. Political economists have argued that economic globalisation has decreased state capacity to steer national economy (see, e.g., Moses 1994; Keohane & Milner 1996). Similar arguments are found in the migration literature. As argued by Sassen (2000), an open economy and strict control of people flows are not always compatible. American agricultural export is a case in point (Sassen 2000, 67). When import goods are preferred to local goods, local farmers become redundant. Agricultural trade may, in other words, transform farmers in import countries into labour migrants. Immigration is driven by ‘a complex, deeply embedded and transnational process’, and state capacity to control immigration is therefore increasingly constrained as the economy is becoming increasingly globalised (Sassen 2000, 73). International human rights norms add to these constraints (see, e.g., Triadafilopoulos & Zaslove 2006, 174–5). Governments are limited by both informal norms and binding conventions that dictate who should be granted a residence permit, and on what grounds.

Another argument against political influence on immigration is the simple fact that it has increased despite the ‘immigration stop’ in the 1970s. Increasing immigration despite restrictive policies has been labelled ‘the gap hypothesis’ (Cornelius et al. 2004, 4). However, the ‘immigration stop’ was not intended to close borders for immigrants in general. Labour immigration became highly restricted, but ‘the stop’ was not aimed at refugee and family immigration. It is primarily the latter two types of immigration that has increased. Yet there *are* gaps between aims and output in the area of immigration, like in all policy areas. Governments depend on the bureaucracy to fulfil their political goals. Many aspects of the implementation process may disturb the link between government intentions and political output. Howlett & Ramesh (2003, 187–93) describe several reasons for an implementation gap. Actors who disagree with policies may seek to influence implementation. These actors could be the bureaucrats themselves, or external activists who call on the bureaucrats as a last point of influence. Also, there are commonly technical or administrative difficulties, both anticipated and not, that make implementation slow, incomplete or even impossible. The situation that policies were intended to address could also change, making policies unsuitable or irrelevant.

Although international cooperation on immigration may have strengthened the capacity to control it, such cooperation may have reduced national,

and thereby partisan, autonomy. Policy convergence has been a common argument against partisan influence in general (Imbeau et al. 2001, 1) and, according to Cornelius et al. (2004, 15–20), a significant immigration policy convergence has occurred between European countries. There may be several reasons for this convergence (Meyers 2002), but the end result is likely to be a constraint on the possibility of influencing unilateral policy measures in each country.

For fear of attracting large numbers of asylum seekers, states may be reluctant to practise more liberal refugee policies than their neighbours. Governments observe changes in other countries, and may feel compelled to change their own policies accordingly (see Noll 2000, 9). Hence, a partisan effect would be wiped out. Noll (2000, 594) argues that ‘non-co-operation among states yields a spiral of restriction’. However, such a process may also happen through formal governmental negotiations. Both Hatton (2005) and Barbou des Places and Deffains (2003) describe how a ‘race to the bottom’ has taken place through the development of asylum legislation within the European Union (EU). On the other hand, recognition rates still vary substantially between European countries (Neumayer 2005, 56; Hatton 2009, 200), suggesting that domestic politics still play a role.

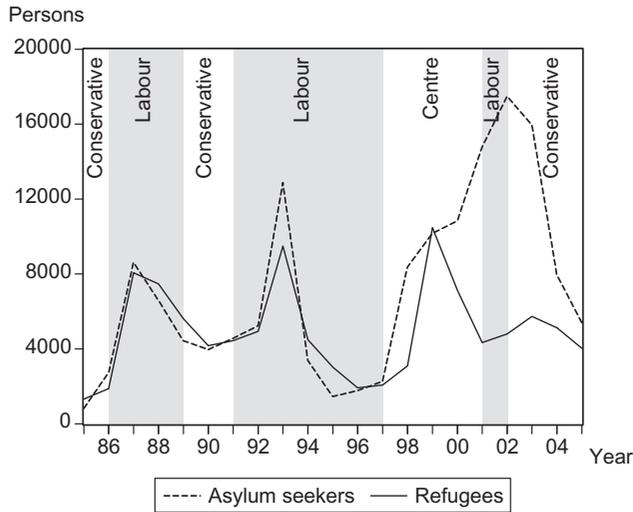
An alternative to partisan influence, it may be argued, is that governments are less guided by ideology and pledges in their manifestoes than by day-to-day challenges to policy making. As pointed out by Hibbs (1992, 363): ‘All governments respond to high and rising inflation with contractive policies, and to prolonged or sharp downturns with expansive ones.’ Likewise, it may be the case that all governments react to sharp changes in immigration with corrective measures – no matter their ideological colour. As well as policies affecting output, output also affects policy. Changing levels of immigration – perhaps primarily determined by external factors – may influence policy more than changing governments.

All in all, there are good theoretical arguments both for and against a partisan influence on immigration. Before trying to settle the issue by way of an empirical analysis, some key figures will be presented.

Refugee Immigration and Norwegian Politics

During the last forty years, immigration to Norway has changed substantially, both in composition and size (Figure 1). While about 10,000 non-Norwegian citizens immigrated in 1975, the number increased to 28,000 in 2005. In 1975, immigrants arrived from 95 different countries; in 2005 they arrived from 175 different countries (Statistics Norway 2006). Nordic citizens have always made up a large share of immigrants to Norway, but the number of non-European immigrants has increased considerably. For instance, by 1975 only eight Afghans had immigrated to Norway. Today

Figure 1. Norwegian Refugee Admissions, Asylum Seekers and Government Types, 1985–2005.



Sources: Statistics Norway (2008) and UNHCR (2009)

Afghans are among the ten largest immigrant groups, together with other non-European nationalities such as Iraqis, Somalis, Americans and Pakistanis. Family immigration is the most important type of immigration to Norway. About 35 percent of all non-Nordic immigrants to Norway are family immigrants, while 25 percent have a refugee background.³ Still, this study focuses on refugee immigration. The main reason for this choice is that the positions of the political parties have been more distinct on refugee immigration.⁴

Immigration has been the major political issue only during one Norwegian election: the 1987 *local* election. A dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers put immigration high up on the media agenda. In the general election two years later, an all time high of 9 percent of the electorate considered immigration important for their choice of party.⁵ In the 1997 general election, liberalisation of asylum policy was an important goal of the winning coalition. The three parties all belonged to an informal group of opposition parties in the mid-1990s that demanded liberalisation of refugee policy – ‘the refugee opposition’. They received extensive media attention, but this apparently did not reflect the interest of the electorate as only 6 percent of voters considered immigration to be an important issue (Aardal 1999). Immigration has, however, been more important to the supporters of certain parties. In 1997, for instance, 20 percent of Progress Party voters and 10 percent of Socialist Left Party voters considered it important (Aardal 1999, 24).

A precondition for testing the influence of political parties on immigration is to know their positions. Although party positions on immigration have been described in previous case studies of Norwegian politics (Hagelund 2003; Tjelmeland & Brochmann 2003), they do not sufficiently establish the preferences of each political party. The Manifesto Project has mapped policy positions of European political parties, including Norway, but their data cannot be used for the simple reason that it does not cover immigration.⁶ For that reason, the positions of Norwegian parties must be traced by other means.

Identifying Policy Positions

This study focuses on the relationship between party preferences presented to the voters, and changes in policy output. It is necessary, therefore, to search for party preferences in documents *made available to the public*. The party manifesto is one such document, and will here be the primary source for establishing positions.⁷ As immigration remains a national political issue, only party manifestos for general elections are studied. Immigration was first mentioned in a party manifesto in 1973 by the Centre Party.⁸ After 1985, refugee immigration has been covered in 27 of 35 party manifestos. To get a more complete picture of the political positions on migration, the manifestoes of all seven parties represented in the Norwegian parliament throughout the period, and not just governmental parties, are studied. All statements about refugee immigration, including asylum seekers, in the party manifestos were analysed. A large proportion of what parties write is descriptive rather than prescriptive, but most manifestos also contain statements indicating reasonably clear preferences on immigration policies. These statements are coded 'restrictive' or 'liberal'.

A set of coding rules were developed to ensure that all party manifestos were analysed in a coherent and similar manner. A restrictive party:

- describes its own policy as restrictive/ strict, or
- states that the number of immigrants should be reduced, or
- states that existing laws should be implemented 'efficiently', or
- wants to limit the right to immigrate, or
- states that asylum should only be given on the condition of return, or
- focuses on reducing the abuse of the right to asylum.

A liberal party:

- describes its own policy as liberal or humane, or
- states that the number of immigrants should be increased, or

- states that existing laws should be interpreted liberally or to the benefit of the doubt, or
- states that the right to immigration should be strengthened or extended to new groups.

If none of these apply, the statements were considered neutral. Unsurprisingly, all parties say they somehow want to help refugees. As long as these statements are phrased in general terms, they are not sufficient to qualify as 'liberal'. When a manifesto contained conflicting statements, the dominant direction is chosen.

It turned out to be difficult to establish the positions of three parties on the basis of the manifestos, either because they left out the issue or because they presented only neutral statements. There are at least three likely reasons for parties not taking a clear stand in their manifestoes: there may be internal disagreement, the issue is not considered important to the party or the issue is not thought to be important to the electorate. To help establish whether some of the parties had taken a clear stand, but just did not spell it out in the manifestoes, newspaper articles were also studied.⁹ To reiterate, the focus of this study is on what parties communicate to the electorate, and newspaper articles are considered more appropriate expressions of these goals than other documents, which are less accessible to the electorate.

Quotes from central politicians, speaking on behalf of the party in newspaper articles, were analysed, using the coding rules described earlier. Claims about other parties and initiatives from local politicians were ignored. The number of newspapers that are available electronically increases over time, and the amount of information about parties' stands on immigration is therefore larger for recent years, but the number of articles on the issue from the 1980s is still quite large.

Party Positions on Refugees

The party manifestoes reveal some common patterns in the Norwegian parties' attitudes to immigration in general. The parties are less concerned with family reunion than with labour migration and refugee immigration. This is somewhat of a paradox, considering that family immigration has become the most important type of immigration to Norway. The parties tend to be more liberal towards refugee immigration than towards family and labour immigration. Yet there are also clear differences between the parties – particularly regarding their views on refugee immigration. Table 1 shows that there is a clear dominance of liberal positions on refugee immigration: there were 14 liberal manifestoes, but only six restrictive ones. There are several gaps, meaning that the parties wrote nothing about refugee

Table 1. Policy Positions of Norwegian Parties on Refugee Immigration

	Progress Party	Conservative Party	Liberal Party	Christian Democrats	Centre Party	Labour Party	Socialist Left Party
1985–1989	R	L	–	–	–	–	L
1989–1993	R	R	L	L	–	L	L
1993–1997	R	N	L	L	L	–	–
1997–2001	R	N	–	L	N	N	L
2001–2005	R	N	L	L	N	N	L

Notes: R = restrictive, L = liberal, N = neutral, – = no statement about refugee immigration.

immigration. More and more parties have, however, taken a stand on refugee immigration in recent years. Still, the manifestoes do not reveal a general trend in either a restrictive or liberal direction. Judging by the party manifestoes, four out of seven parties adopted clear and consistent positions on refugee immigration: The Progress Party has been consistently restrictive, while the Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Socialist Left Party have been consistently liberal. The Labour Party and the Centre Party have only taken a clear stand in their manifestoes once, and that was a liberal one. The Conservative Party favoured increased refugee immigration before the first big wave of asylum seekers in 1986. The party then took a clearly restrictive turn. Since then, the manifesto statements have been neutral.

Can newspaper articles help settle the positions of the Conservative, Labour and Centre parties? In the case of the Conservative Party, newspaper articles suggest that the position turned more restrictive during the 1985–1989 electoral period. In the 1989 manifesto, the party called for restrictive policies on both labour and refugee immigration. From 1993, manifesto statements about refugees became less overtly restrictive, but the newspaper articles suggest a continuation of the restrictive position on refugee immigration from the late 1980s throughout the period under scrutiny.

Pearlmutter (1996, 377) argues that disagreement on immigration issues is common for large mass parties because ‘they face cross-cutting cleavages that affect their core constituencies’. He suggests a possible conflict between ‘unions who favour restrictive policies, and liberals and ethnic groups who favour expansionist policies’. This description seems to fit the Norwegian Labour Party quite well. The newspaper articles show that the party has shifted between liberal, restrictive and neutral positions on refugee policy. The lack of attention granted to the issue in the manifestoes appears to be caused by disagreement rather than lack of interest, especially in the 1993 manifesto. From 1993 to 1995, the statements from central Labour Party politicians were largely restrictive, but from 1996 they appear much more

liberal. The position of the 1997 manifesto on refugees can only be interpreted as liberal. The Centre Party has primarily expressed a neutral stand on refugee immigration in their party programmes. However, since the mid-1980s, newspaper articles indicate a liberal stance, which squares well with the few statements in manifestoes that actually have a direction.

Despite many gaps and neutral statements, the analysis of party manifestoes and newspaper articles show that Norwegian parties take quite different positions on refugee immigration. Norwegian parties' also seem to differ somewhat from what is common in other European countries. Duncan & Van Hecke (2008) mapped the immigration positions of manifestoes in European Parliament elections. They found that Christian Democrats, Conservative parties and Socialist parties have similar stands on control policy, while Liberal parties are more liberal.

Governments and Immigration

Even if parties express different policy preferences, this does not mean that government positions differ accordingly. The frequent coalition and minority governments in Norway are one reason why we cannot expect a one-to-one relationship between preferences and policies.¹⁰ In the period studied, five of the above-mentioned parties were in government. There were three single-party Labour governments and three centre-right coalitions dominated by the Conservative Party in terms of ministerial positions. There was also one Centre coalition, where the Christian Democratic Party and the Centre Party had more ministerial posts than the Liberal Party. They all were minority governments.

The process of influence is more complicated in coalition governments (see, e.g., Müller & Strøm 2000, 16). Although the dominant party generally can be expected to influence policies more strongly than minor parties, this is not always so. If an issue is particularly important to a party, it could exert stronger influence regardless of its size. The party may block decisions by, for instance, threatening to leave the government. Judging from the party manifestoes, the three parties in the Centre coalition government seemed to agree on refugee immigration. Their government agreement also stated that they would liberalise refugee immigration. Yet should we expect the centre-right coalitions to be dominated by the more restrictive Conservative Party or the more liberal centre parties on the issue of refugee immigration? While the Centre government declaration covered refugee immigration extensively, it was only mentioned in one sentence in the 2001 centre-right declaration. In this case, the allocation of ministerial positions may be suggestive. In all three centre-right coalition governments, the Conservative Party had the minister responsible for immigration.¹¹

Given the previous discussion, the following hypotheses can be derived about refugee immigration to Norway in the period 1985–2005:

H1: Refugee immigration was *low* when the Conservative Party was in government.

H2: Refugee immigration was *higher* when the Labour Party governed than when the Conservative Party did so.

H3: Refugee immigration was *higher* during the Centre government compared to all other governments.

Other Determinants of Refugee Immigration

To trace possible partisan effects on immigration, it is necessary also to consider other determinants of refugee immigration. The most important control variable is expected to be the number of asylum seekers from each sending country.¹² Although asylum-flows may consist of asylum seekers who do not satisfy the criteria for residence permit, it is likely that a rise in such residence permits should follow a rise in the number of asylum applications. The effect of this control variable is expected to be very strong.¹³ Furthermore, we expect that a larger number of people are accepted as refugees from countries where people are subject to repression and persecution. However, authoritarian regimes in the sending countries may have contradicting effects on emigration. In such regimes, people may be motivated to emigrate, and if the emigrants fear repression and persecution they also have the right to asylum. At the same time, emigration is more likely to be restricted in authoritarian regimes, which makes the exit option less likely. War in the sending country is also expected to increase the number of accepted refugees. Although refugees from wars do not always satisfy the criteria for asylum, they may be granted a residence permit on other protection grounds. We therefore expect that war in a country increases the number of refugees granted a residence permit in Norway.

Migratory flows have their own dynamics (see, e.g., Arango 2000, 291). Formal and informal networks between migrants and their home countries develop and reduce migration barriers for new migrants. Previous migration has an influence on current migration, both on the number of migrants as well as the characteristics of the group of migrants that arrive. The stage at which the refugee flow from a sending country to Norway is at could therefore matter for the number of refugees that are admitted.

As discussed previously, national governments tend to keep a close eye on immigration policy changes in neighbouring countries. Restrictive changes in one country may lead the flow of asylum seekers to other countries. It is therefore expected that when other Northern European countries tighten the asylum criteria notably, Norway will, at least to some extent, follow.

Employment in Norway may have an impact on refugee immigration in two ways. First, it may influence the supply of refugees because good employment opportunities may increase the attractiveness of Norway relative to alternative destination countries. And second, immigration could be liberalised, regardless of who is in government, if there is an increased demand for labour. Neumayer (2005) finds some support for this hypothesis as recognition rates are lower in times of high European unemployment.

Several studies have found a connection between migration and economic development (Martin & Taylor 2001; Vogler & Rotte 2000; Hatton & Williamson 2003). Resources, both economic and social, are necessary for all types of migration. According to the migration hump theory (Martin & Taylor 2001), more people emigrate from countries at the middle level of economic development. They both have the necessary means for emigration, as well as something to gain from it. On the other hand, economic development probably has its primary influence on the number of asylum seekers, and as this certainly is not among the criteria for getting a residence permit it should not have a direct influence on the number of permits granted. That said, many of those granted a residence permit have fled their country not because the state posed a threat, but because the state did not protect them from other threats. As state capacity is usually weaker in countries at low levels of economic development, it is expected that the level of economic development has a negative effect on refugee immigration to Norway.

Sample and Data

The statistical analysis encompasses 143 countries, including those that have never sent refugees to Norway. Refugee data is available from 1967, but due to lack of data on the independent variables, the time period is set from 1985 to 2005. The panel is unbalanced. About 70 percent of the countries are represented for at least 17 of the 19 years. The main reason for attrition is countries that ceased to exist or were not yet established. Some countries could not be included at all due to missing values on the independent variables. These are all very small states.

For measuring the dependent variable, registry data from Statistics Norway are used.¹⁴ Refugee immigration is operationalised as the number of refugees granted residence permits in Norway from each country (of citizenship) per year.¹⁵ The variable includes data on every single registered immigrant to Norway during the period, and is therefore not a source of selection bias. However, the category 'persons with refugee background' includes several groups of immigrants. First, it includes resettlement refugees from the UNHCR. Second, it includes all immigrants granted a resi-

dence permit after filing an asylum application to Norway. This includes those who were granted asylum, as well as those whose asylum applications were rejected, but who were still given a residence permit either on other protection grounds or on humanitarian grounds. It may be argued that not all of these should be called refugees, and that a more narrow definition should be applied. There are two reasons, however, for using data that include more than just those granted asylum. First, the legal criteria for asylum are very specific.¹⁶ As pointed out by the Norwegian Immigration Appeals Court in 2003, the popular and the legal definitions of the term 'refugee' are different. Many of those who fail to meet the judicial criteria for asylum would, by the popular meaning of the term, be considered refugees. However, the second, and more important, reason for using a broader definition of 'refugee' is that the number of residence permits granted on humanitarian or protection grounds is indeed subject to political influence.

Partisan influence on refugee immigration is measured by dummy variables indicating which parties were in government each year. In years when a new government was formed, the parties that ruled for most of the year were given the code 1. As all but two of the government shifts occurred in the autumn, most governments had been in position for a few months before they were actually measured. Thus, a few months' time lag is incorporated into the analysis.

Repression and persecution is measured by two variables. The first (the Political Terror Scale) 'measures levels of political violence and terror that a country experiences in a particular year' (Gibney et al. 2008). The average value of the scores from Amnesty International and the United States State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices are recoded into a dummy variable where the three worst of the five categories are given the value 1. The second variable is the Polity score (Marshall & Jaggers 2007), which measures the level of democracy and autocracy.¹⁷ The scale goes from -10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic). A dummy variable indicating whether more than 1,000 people died in battle that year measures the occurrence of a war in sending countries. The data come from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (<http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/>).

As a proxy for neighbouring governments' policy behaviour, the number of accepted refugees in Sweden is included as a control variable. The variable is expected to have a positive effect. The data are registry data from Statistics Sweden (2009). Economic development in the sending country is measured by GDP per capita from the *Penn World Tables* (Heston et al. 2006). Unemployment is measured in share of the labour force (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation 2005). To account for the dynamics of migratory movements from each sending country to Norway, a variable

indicating the number of years since the first refugee was admitted to Norway is included.

Diagnostic analyses indicate that two observations have a significant impact on the regression results: the 5,940 refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993 and the 6,241 refugees from Serbia-Montenegro in 1999. These two immigration booms are exceptional in Norwegian immigration history. It is certainly worth asking whether the two refugee flows would have been dealt with differently if other parties had been in government at the time.¹⁸ Be that as it may, the answer will not be found through this statistical analysis. Two dummy variables are therefore included to control for their effects.

Statistical Analysis

The partisan influence on immigration is analysed in a panel model, using fixed effects regression.¹⁹ The strength of the fixed effects model is that all time-invariant factors are controlled.²⁰ The problem of omitted variable bias is therefore reduced.²¹ However, such model cannot estimate the effects of variables that are constant within the sending countries. Distance and historical ties to Norway are two such variables. Since the between country standard deviation of the dependent variable (332.1) exceeds the within country standard deviation (175.1), the variation in refugee immigration to Norway is larger between countries than within countries over time. Still, in this study it is the time dimension that is of main concern since the variable of interest – Norwegian government composition – only varies over time, and not between sending countries. As both panel-heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation may bias the statistical tests, standard errors are corrected to adjust for this.²²

Table 2 provides some descriptive statistics. We see that the average number of refugees admitted varies between governments. Conservative governments appear to be more restrictive than Labour governments, and the Centre government seems to be the most liberal. This is as expected given the previous analyses of party manifestoes and newspaper articles. However, realising that refugee immigration is determined by a number of other variables, a multivariate analysis is required before concluding on this issue.

Model I in Table 3 includes all control variables. As expected, the number of asylum seekers from each sending country has a strong and significant effect on refugee admissions. The higher the number of asylum seekers from each country per year, generally higher also is the number of people granted a refugee residence permit. Unemployment in Norway also reduces the number of refugee admissions significantly: when unemployment increases by one percentage point, the average number of refugees admitted from

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum	N
Refugees, overall	33.3	210.8	0	6241	3,043
Refugees, conservative government	27.6	112.1	0	1048	867
Refugees, labour government	32.9	224.8	0	6241	1,872
Refugees, centre government	44.5	361.3	0	5940	304
Asylum seekers	43.9	236.0	0	7051	3,404
GDP per capita	7872.5	8012.7	170.56	36100.40	3,239
Unemployment Norway	3.7	1.2	1.50	5.50	3,862
Political terror	0.4	0.5	0	1	3,359
Democracy scale	2.7	6.9	-10	10	3,042
War	0.1	0.3	0	1	3,862

each country per year is reduced by 6.7. The effect of the age of the refugee flow between the sending country and Norway, however, is far from an acceptable significance level.²³ Likewise, refugee admissions in Sweden do not influence admissions in Norway significantly. This suggests that governments in the two countries are less dependent on the issue on refugee immigration than could perhaps be anticipated.

As expected, economic development in the sending country has a non-linear effect on refugee admissions to Norway, but it is not entirely in accordance with the migration hump theory. The effect GDP per capita is negative, meaning that the number of refugee admissions is reduced as the level of economic development in poor countries improves. The effect of the squared variable (GDP per capita²) is positive, but very weak. This indicates that the effect that economic development has on refugee admissions in Norway is weakened at a certain level of development. A democratic sending country reduces refugee immigration by almost two immigrants per country per year, but with a *t* value of -1.4 the political regime type must be considered irrelevant for refugee admissions in Norway. Political violence, on the other hand, which is a variable that more directly measures the level of repression and threats of violence in sending countries, seems to have a stronger impact. On average, there are 10.7 more refugee immigrants admitted every year from countries where the level of political violence is high, compared to other countries. As the average number of refugees admitted from each country a year is 33, this effect must be considered rather strong. The *t* value of 1.8 is somewhat high.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the variable measuring war in the sending country is clearly insignificant. One reason could be that the effect is captured by other variables, such as the number of asylum seekers. Although their dependent variables are not exactly comparable, finding is in accordance with previous studies. Moore and Shellman (2004) find that war

Table 3. Panel Regression on Refugee Immigration to Norway, 1985–2005

	Model I		Model II		Model III	
	Coefficients	T values	Coefficients	T values	Coefficients	T values
Conservative government					-14.95	-2.28
Centre government					-4.70	-0.96
Asylum seekers	0.41	4.08	0.44	7.22	0.44	7.12
Unemployment	-6.66	-2.29	-5.23	-1.93	-6.03	-2.08
Flow age	-0.86	-1.12				
Refugees to Sweden	0.01	1.27				
GDP per capita	-0.02	-2.19	-0.03	-2.65	-0.02	-2.41
GDP per capita ²	0.00	2.36	0.00	2.57	0.00	2.45
Democracy	-1.72	-1.40				
Political violence	10.70	1.80	14.98	1.83	15.38	1.90
War	-16	-0.68				
Kosovo	5552.57	317.05	5544.71	1563.63	5543.04	1056.35
Bosnia	5480.07	22.37	5860.57	129.97	5862.06	127.62
Constant	130.13	2.89	135.08	2.95	149.55	2.74
Total N		2,199		2,330		2,330
N of countries		136		143		143
Average N years		16		16		16
R ²				0.67		0.70
AIC				27601.56		27595.61

Notes: Standard errors adjusted for heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation. All independent variables are lagged one year, apart from government variables and Bosnia and Kosovo dummies.

produces fewer refugee migrants than government violence – a variable that corresponds to the political violence variable included here. Hatton (2009, 195) similarly finds that the effect of war on asylum seekers disappears when the political terror scale is added. Both Bosnia and Kosovo dummy variables, included to avoid the two exceptional refugee flows in 1993 and 1999 leading us to draw wrong conclusions about the general effect of governments on immigration, are significant.

In Model II, only control variables with an acceptable significance level are included. All effects remain about the same. We see that the numbers of country units increases from 136 to 143, as there were some missing values on some of the excluded variables. In Model III, the government dummies are added to Model II. Labour Party governments (the most common type of government in Norway) are left out as the reference group. Immigration during Centre governments is not significantly different from immigration during Labour governments. In other words, although the party manifestoes suggested that the Centre government would be more liberal than Labour governments, this has not been reflected in higher refugee immigration. According to the regression results, Conservative governments have had a negative and significant effect on refugee immigration: Fewer refugees were admitted under Conservative governments than under Labour Party governments. The effect must be considered substantial as Conservative governments admitted, on average, 15 fewer refugees from each country per year than Labour Party governments. Considering the number of countries in the analysis, this adds up to a considerable difference in refugee immigration under these two types of government.

So did Labour and Centre governments pursue similar policies, while Conservative governments caused restrictive policy shifts? The Centre coalition partners that went into government in 1997 stated very clearly before the elections what their intentions were regarding refugee immigration. Not only did they criticise the three successive Labour governments for restrictive policies, they also expressed their intention to liberalise refugee policy if they won the election. According to Christensen et al. (2006, 48) a policy shift did take place when the Centre parties entered office in 1997 as the asylum criteria were liberalised substantially (see, e.g., Heiberg 1998, 20). However, this was probably more a question of changing definitions than opening up to more residence permits. The main change was that a larger share of those granted a residence permit were given refugee status rather than a residence permit on humanitarian grounds (Borgen 1998, 85–6). Given that the pre-election expressions of all three parties in the Centre government were unmistakably liberal, it is somewhat surprising that this government did not accept more refugees when given the chance. That said, the Centre government only lasted for 2.5 years, which may have been too short a time to implement major policy changes.

Did the Conservative governments pursue more restrictive policies, as the regression results indicate? In the party manifestoes, the Conservative Party was only overtly restrictive once – in 1989 – but newspaper articles suggest that this was not a temporary position. They continued to express restrictive statements in the media throughout the period studied here. Even if the debate on immigration between the Labour and Conservative parties cannot be described as polarised, it has nonetheless been non-consensual. When the Conservatives were in government in the 1980s, they were criticised by Labour for being too restrictive in refugee cases (Kvåle 1989, 69). Likewise, the Conservative Party criticised Labour for liberalising policy, and claimed that their soft policies caused a rise in asylum applications. Yet even if parties matter, policies have not been independent of exogenous asylum flows: After the dramatic increase in the number of asylum applications in 1986 and 1987, the Labour government also tightened immigration control (Ministry of Local Government and Labour 1987, 39). It therefore appears that the most distinct policy shift between a Labour and a Conservative government came with the 2001–2005 government. The Conservative minister responsible for immigration, Erna Solberg, was given the name ‘Iron Erna’ for allegedly being tough on asylum issues. No matter whether that name was appropriate or not, during this government, laws and regulations were changed in several ways to reduce the right to a resident permit on ‘other protection grounds’. For instance, the right to a residence permit if the asylum application process exceeded a certain time period was severely restricted in 2002, and the government decided that temporary, rather than permanent, residence permits should be the norm in health cases. In 2004, the Conservative minister also presented a list of restrictive measures that had been implemented during the Conservatives time in government, such as age-testing of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers (Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development 2004). From this perspective, the regression results indicating that the Conservative Party has reduced refugee immigration more than other parties do make sense. Indeed, other studies also have identified a restrictive policy shift after the Centre–Conservative coalition took over in 2001 (Christensen et al. 2006, 49–50).

Conclusion

Neither the literature on partisan theory nor the immigration literature provide clear indication as to whether a partisan effect on refugee immigration to Norway should be expected. However, the findings suggest that the partisan theory is indeed relevant for explaining variation in refugee immigration. Not only do Norwegian parties take distinct positions on refugee immigration, but these positions are reflected in the numbers of accepted refugees. The effects are not big, but they are discernible.

Norwegian party manifestoes from 1985 to 2005 show consistent and clear positions on refugee immigration for four parties. Three parties either ignored immigration in manifestoes, or presented statements too ambiguous to be classified. What was unclear in party manifestoes, however, became much clearer in newspaper articles. The statistical analysis support the hypothesis of more restrictive Conservative governments compared to both Labour and Centre governments. However, although party manifestoes may have us believe that a Centre government would be more liberal than a Labour government the difference in refugees admitted is insignificant.

The findings are in line with Neumayer (2005), who finds some support for his assumption that left-wing-dominated governments in Western Europe are more 'friendly' towards asylum seekers. He finds that recognition rates are higher in countries with left-wing-dominated governments, although the effect is 'marginally insignificant' (Neumayer 2004, 171). The results are also somewhat in line with a study of legislative changes in France, Germany and the United Kingdom (Givens & Luedke 2005), where right-wing governments are found to be more restrictive than their left-wing counterparts on the issue of integration of immigrants. However, on the issue of control policy, which has been the concern of this article, they find no partisan effect. This indicates that the political divide on immigration policy is more distinct in Norway. There are several related studies on the impact of asylum policies on asylum applications (see, e.g., Hatton 2009; Thielemann 2004; Holzer et al. 2000), which all conclude that national policies are among the key determinants of asylum flows to European countries. On a more general level, their conclusions point in the same direction as this study: national politics are decisive for immigration.

Even though previous studies have argued that national governments' are too constrained to influence the macro-economy (Keohane & Milner 1996; Moses 1994), a number of recent analyses of partisan theory find that Conservative governments pursue different policies from Labour governments, and that they produce different policy outputs (see, e.g., Boix 2000; Oatley 1999). This article suggests that the same may be the case in other policy areas as well: Conservative parties in the government are decisive for changes in policy output when it comes to immigration. Consequently, a shift of focus, from radical right parties back to mainstream parties, could be fruitful. As pointed out by Bale (2008, 317), it is after all primarily these parties that have had direct influence on the issue. External factors certainly influence immigration, but so do national parties.

NOTES

1. In the television show *Holmgang* on TV2 on 31 May 2006, Per Willy Amundsen (Progress Party) and Bjørg Tørresdal (Christian Democrats) made these comments.

2. Stimson (1995) draws attention to the possible direct effect of public opinion on policies as politicians are sensitive to public opinion also between elections. However, lack of time-series data on public attitudes to immigration still makes it difficult to test this empirically.
3. Between 1967 and 2005, Norway admitted 111,819 persons with a refugee background (Statistics Norway 2006).
4. A second and less important reason for the choice is statistical data availability. While Statistics Norway has registered refugee immigration since 1967, it has only kept reliable and detailed statistics on other categories since about 1990.
5. Before 1989, less than 1 percent regarded immigration as important (Aardal & Valen 1995, 166; Aardal 1999, 20–1).
6. The Euromanifestos Project, which maps the positions from EP manifestos, does cover immigration, but that does not help as long as Norway is not a part of the EU.
7. Norwegian Social Science Data Services has made all Norwegian party manifestos available on a searchable CD-Rom.
8. I.e., the Centre Party opposed immigration in the 1921 manifesto, and the fascist-oriented party ‘National Unity’ covered the issue before and during the Second World War.
9. The search was done through the electronic news archive Atekst (<http://www.atekst.no>) on six national (*VG, Dagbladet, Aftenposten, DN, NTB, Klassekampen*) and five regional newspapers (*Adresseavisen, BT, Fædrelandsvennen, Stavanger Aftenblad, Nordlys*). The keywords for the searches were each party name with all of the following: ‘refugees’, ‘refugee policy’, ‘asylum’, ‘asylum seekers’, ‘asylum policy’, ‘refugee policy’, ‘immigration’, ‘immigrant’, ‘immigration policy’. There were 1,236 hits, of which about half were relevant.
10. However, as Green Pedersen (2001) shows by pointing to the Danish example, minority governments can be very efficient.
11. Until 2001, the Minister of Justice was responsible for immigration. Between 2001 and 2005 the Minister of Regions and Municipalities was the responsible minister, and since then it is the Minister of Work and Integration.
12. It was considered whether a lagged depended variable should be added to account for the fact that past migration tends to influence current migration. Both lagged refugee immigration and lagged total immigration (all types of immigration) were tested but found to be insignificant as long as the number of asylum seekers was kept in the model.
13. The number of asylum seekers may capture the effect of other sending country conditions that would otherwise have influenced the number of residence permits (e.g., war). When including asylum seekers in the model, the effect of war and other sending country variables may be difficult to single out.
14. The data was obtained from Statistics Norway, following an application to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration. Immigration statistics on the level of detail used here are not generally available to the public due to privacy protection laws.
15. The recognition rate could be an alternative way of measuring political influence on immigration. However, as this would complicate the model specification but not provide a better way of measuring political influence on immigration, this option was rejected.
16. ‘To obtain asylum/refugee status, you must have a reason to fear persecution (as defined by the Refugee Convention) due to political opinion, race, nationality, religion or membership of a social group. If your fear of persecution is based on other grounds than these so-called convention reasons, you are not entitled to asylum/refugee status’ (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration 2008).
17. The transformed version of the Polity score, Polity II, is used as this fits better in time-series analyses.
18. In 1993, refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina were granted collective, temporary protection in Norway. Their temporary status caused a heated political debate, and they were in the end given permanent residence permits. The refugees fleeing Kosovo in 1999 were also granted collective temporary protection. After the war, about half of the refugees returned to Kosovo with economic support from the Norwegian government.

19. The characteristics of the group of asylum seekers may change over time. If these changes happen simultaneously across countries, their influence on refugee admissions can be captured by a set of year dummy variables. However, the joint effect of the dummy variables was insignificant.
20. An alternative would be the random effects model, which assumes that individual time invariant errors are random. This can only be assumed when the sample has been randomly drawn from a larger population. This is not the case here.
21. The omission of relevant time variant variables, on the other hand, leaves the model underspecified and gives biased results.
22. An LM test showed that autocorrelation was not present after standard errors were corrected.
23. The effect of this variable could well be non-linear, and a square version of the variable was also included in preliminary analyses. However, the significance level was not improved.

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