The Risks of growing Populism and the European elections:

Which political processes hamper and benefit right populist parties' advances - lessons from the German case 1982-2012

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- Lessons from the German case 1982-2012

Timo Lochocki[1]

Germany is - aside from Ireland and Spain - the last European country freed of an entrenched right populist party. A QCA-analysis on political claims on multiculturalism in Germany from 1982 to 2012 shows why the niche for a right populist party only opened in the late 1980s. While "Die Republikaner" (REP) gathered remarkable vote shares of up to 10% around 1990, the established German parties kept the electoral niche for right populist parties closed since. This paper illustrates the generalizable political processes obstructing and benefitting right populist advances in Western-European countries. Established political players can indeed severely hamper their advances – the German case shows how.

1.   The new rising star in Western European politics: right populist parties

The recent years have been a watershed in Western-European politics: a new party type is about to alter the political competition of Western-European countries fundamentally. Right populist parties are meanwhile gathering similar vote-shares to the two major political forces that dominated post-war Europe – the Social Democrats and the Christian-Democrats/Conservatives. In Switzerland, the Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) has taken the pole position of Swiss parties since 1999. According to recent polls, the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) and the Front National (FN) have decent chances to turn out as the strongest political force in the upcoming elections in the Netherlands and France. In Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Norway, right populist parties are competing on the same level as the two major parties and have secured seats in government a number of times. In most other countries, right populist parties are polling around ten percent (Tab. 1.1)

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Tab. 1.1: Electoral fortunes of right populist parties in Western Europe; source: various country studies (party family based on Mudde 2007)

Country	Significant right populist party at federal level, crossing the electoral threshold	Votes last election, in %	Polls in 2014, in %
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (since 1986) Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (since 2005)**	20.5 (2013) 3.5 (2013)	22-25
Belgium	Vlaams Blok (since 2004)** Vlaams Belang (1986-2004)	7.8 (2010)	7-9
Denmark	Danske Folkeparti (since 1998)** Fremskridtspartiet (1973-1998)	12.3 (2011)	18-22
Germany	*Die Republikaner, at election for the European Parliament, 7.1% (1989)* *Alternative fuer Deutschland (since 2012)*	*0.2 (2013)* *4.7 (2013)*	*0-1* *3-5*
England	UK Independence Party	-	8-13
Finland	Perussuomalaiset (since 2007)*	19.1 (2011)	18-22
France	Front National (since 1986)	17.9 (2012)	19-24
Ireland	-	-	-
Italy	Lega Nord (since 1992)	4.1 (2013)	5-7
Luxembourg	Alternativ Demokratesch Reformpartei (since 1989)	6.7 (2013)	7-9
Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid (since 2006) Lijst Pim Fortuyn (2002 & 2003)	15.4 (2012)	25-28
Norway	Fremskrittspartiet (since 1981)	16.3 (2013)	17-19
Portugal	Centro Democrático e Social (since 1974)*	11.7 (2011)	8-10
Spain	-	-	-
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna (since 2006)	5.7 (2010)	10-12
Switzerland	Schweizerische Volkspartei (since 1986)*	26,6 (2011)	26-28
Ø		**10.5**	**12-14**

* Transformation of established, moderate party; ** Transformation of extreme or populist right party

2.   Institutionalized anti-diversity movements

How to account for these remarkable advances of this new party family that broke the phalanx of established political players that dominated Western Europe for the preceding 60 years? Part of the success of right populist parties can be explained by the highly stable *demand* for their agendas by voters: between 10 and 25 percent of European voters constantly support right populist parties' programs – regardless of time and country (Giugni and Koopmans 2007; Van der Brug and Fennema 2007; Fieschi, Morris et al. 2012). Demand remains so constant on substantial levels that one of the most well-read scholars of right populism – Cas Mudde – states:

> Widespread demand is a given, rather than the main puzzle, in contemporary western democracies. Provocatively stated, the *real* research question should be: why have *so few* [right populist] parties been successful given the generally fertile breeding ground? (Mudde 2010, 1179, own emphasis)

And indeed, given this widespread demand and the substantial advances in most European countries, it is striking to note that the timing of their breakthrough varies fundamentally: while the first major advances occurred in Denmark in the 1970s, it has taken until the 2000s for right populist parties to break through in Finland and Sweden. Even more intriguing, three Western-European countries are still freed of successful right populist parties up to date: Ireland, Germany and Spain (Tab. 1.1, previous page).

But what program are European voters after that right populist parties allegedly cater to so compellingly? According to studies scrutinizing the motivation of their voters (Arzheimer 2009b), as much as campaigns of successful right populist parties (Ivarsflaten 2008), the key factor behind their electoral advances is their firmly conservative position in matters of immigration and integration, primarily indicated by their fierce rejection of any form of multiculturalism. Simon Bornschier summarizes the core of their political program vividly:

> First, (...) [right populist parties] challenge the societal changes brought about by the libertarian left, and question the legitimacy of political decisions that enact universalistic values. Second, and more importantly, the populist right has promoted new issues and developed new discourses, for example concerning immigration. This does not involve ethnic racism, but rather what Betz (2004) and Betz and Johnson (2004) have called 'differentialist nativism' or 'cultural differentialism', which represents a counter-vision to multicultural models of society. (Bornschier 2010, 5)

This departure from ethnic racism – as embraced by right extreme parties – enables right populist parties to appeal to a far larger voter potential than right *extreme* parties (lingering around two percent on average). Their positions are closest to the conservative/traditional-communitarian pole on the cultural axis of political competition, which is at times embraced by established moderate parties, too. Another crucial difference from extreme parties is that right populist parties clearly adhere to parliamentarian decision-making (Bornschier 2010). *Consequently, they hold a firmly conservative position within the democratic spectrum.*

But why are right populist parties best understood as reaction to the increase in diversity in West-European Democracies *because of immigration*? Why, exactly, should this political topic have the largest effect on their electoral fortunes? First, because immigration-issues are the only topics that can be legitimized by established parties, right populist parties can rely on them for enduring mobilization (Alonso and Claro da Fonseca 2011; Green-Pedersen 2012; Muis 2012). Second, since the motivation of right populist parties' voters is primarily rooted in anti-immigration stances, campaigning against multiculturalism as an alleged threat to the allegedly homogenous core of the society is a necessary condition for right populist parties' electoral success (Ivarsflaten 2008; Arzheimer 2009b). Third and finally, because

immigration and especially multiculturalism works as the prime narrative through which to spark and mobilize grievances over the sense of an alleged national community, framed by contingent, socially constructed national boundaries that lie at the heart of right populist parties' agendas (Bornschier 2010; Yilmaz 2012). Rejecting immigration, or, more precisely, multiculturalism, is the key narrative of the aggressive nostalgia of the 'light' nationalism of right populist parties. *Therefore, contemporary right populist parties are best understood as anti-multiculturalism parties.*

Given that the demand for right populist parties' anti-multiculturalism agendas remains stable, but their advances vary substantially, *what seems to vary instead is voters' demand for a new political player.* It appears as if in some countries, in some times, this demand for a new political player remains significantly lower due to the sufficient programmatic supply of established political parties (Rydgren 2007b). Accordingly, the variation in electoral advances of right populist parties could be accounted for in understanding when and why voters' stable demand for right populist parties' agendas is not catered substantially to by established political parties: *when and why is does an electoral niche for a new right populist party open?*

3.   How can right populist parties seize their electoral niche?

Understanding this conundrum has brought a 'minor industry' (Arzheimer 2009a, 259) to the fore. However, no substantial answer can yet been given because the political mechanisms preceding right populists' electoral breakthroughs cannot be explained sufficiently: known studies stress less *that* immigration-related topics are discussed among established political actors to benefit anti-multiculturalism right populist parties, but define the *form* of this very debate as pivotal: quantitative studies argue that a debate with high salience over immigration must show a void on the conservative position so a right populist anti-multiculturalism party can seize its electoral niche (Giugni and Koopmans 2007; Van der Brug and Spanje 2009; Arzheimer 2009a; Arzheimer 2009b). Qualitative studies offer further insights, arguing that there must not only be an opening in the conservative position, but a conservative position must also be offered by an established political actor in the first place—and then dropped over the course of the highly salient debate, before right populist anti-multiculturalism parties can mobilize on that very position (Ellinas 2010; Muis 2012).
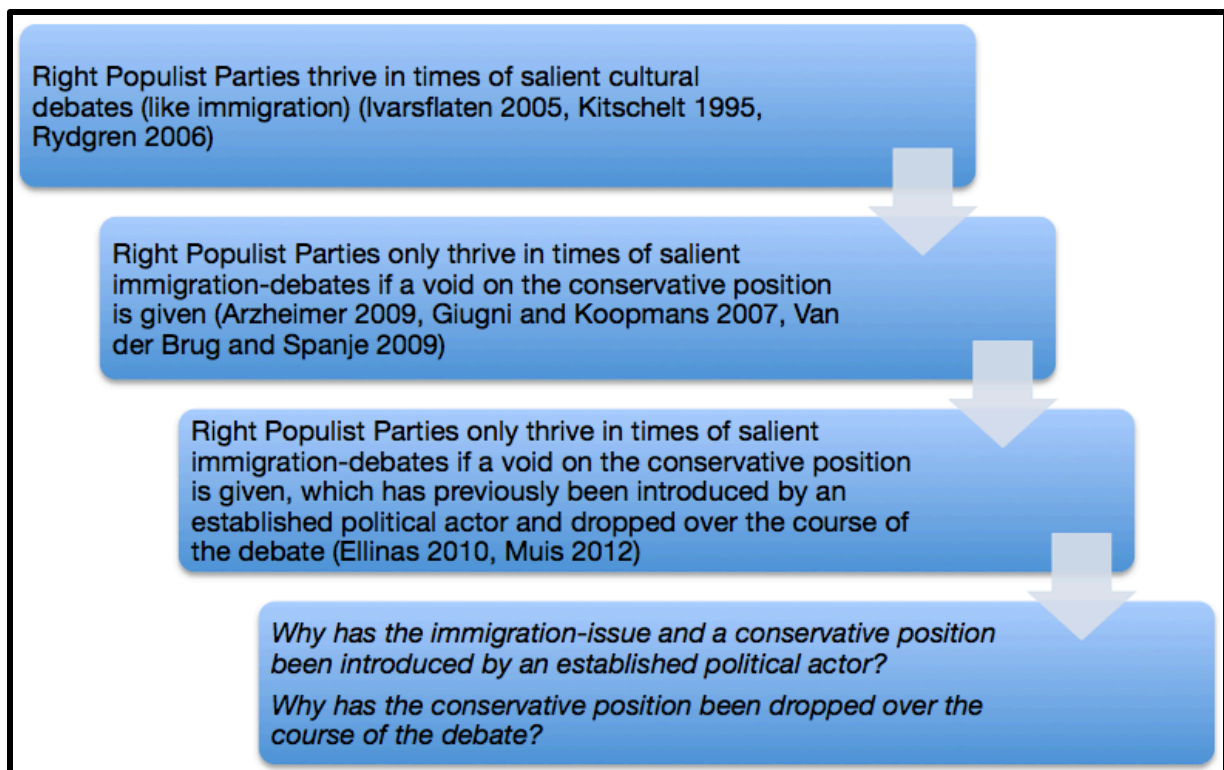
Therefore, topics and positions via which right populist anti-multiculturalism parties mobilize must have previously been legitimized by established parties and not catered to. Hence, the immigration issue needs to be the subject of a highly salient political contestation and a

position of a right-populist anti-multiculturalism party – a strictly conservative position that rejects multiculturalism – must already have been part of the party discourse among established political players. Given that 10-25 percent of the European electorate constantly demand a rejection of multiculturalism, how does one account for the varying party rationale of the established political parties in immigration-debates? Consequently, two questions need to be addressed: (1) given similar scope conditions in European countries experiencing immigration, why are immigration-related topics turning into the subject of salient political contestation, and (2) why does a void on the conservative position, clearly rejecting multiculturalism, become an opening for a new contender, if filled by a moderate political actor beforehand (Fig. 3.1, next page)?

Hence, the puzzle becomes: how does one account for the striking difference between the stable and substantial demand for strictly conservative positions in matters of immigration, and the rejection of multiculturalism, among 10-25 percent of the European electorate, on the one hand; and established political parties' varying rationales for (1) increasing its salience in order to politicize the issue and (2) to open the electoral niche for a right populist anti-multiculturalism party in dropping their conservative profile over the course of the respective debates, on the other?[2]

Fig. 3.1: Explanations for the rise of right populist parties and derived research questions

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[2] Consequently, this research project is concerned with the exact years of the opening of the electoral niche for right populist parties. When the right populist party is established as an entrenched political player – with substantial representation in the federal parliament – a variety of other factors *also* account for their electoral fortunes, which is in contrast to the phase of consolidation after first electoral gains (Mudde 2007, Bornschier 2010). Therefore, this research project focuses on the early phase of right populist parties' electoral advances. To give an example, this project rather focuses on explaining the early advances of the French Front National in the 1980s, and less its electoral fortunes as an established player in the 1990s and 2000s.

Right Populist Parties thrive in times of salient cultural debates (like immigration) (Ivarsflaten 2005, Kitschelt 1995, Rydgren 2006)

Right Populist Parties only thrive in times of salient immigration-debates if a void on the conservative position is given (Arzheimer 2009, Giugni and Koopmans 2007, Van der Brug and Spanje 2009)

Right Populist Parties only thrive in times of salient immigration-debates if a void on the conservative position is given, which has previously been introduced by an established political actor and dropped over the course of the debate (Ellinas 2010, Muis 2012)

Why has the immigration-issue and a conservative position been introduced by an established political actor?

Why has the conservative position been dropped over the course of the debate?

4.   Scrutinizing Right Populists' varying fortunes in Germany: data and methods[3]

The German case offers a perfect possibility to scrutinize the hypothesized political mechanisms accounting for variation with advances of right populist parties. While the right populist Die Republikaner (REP) have gathered remarkable 7.1% at the election for the European Parliament in 1989 and entered various regional parliaments in the early 1990s, they have vanished from the political scenery since. The newly founded Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD) is struggling to gather electoral support despite the heated discussions over European politics in recent years, too: the party received 4.7% at the federal election 2013, thereby failed to enter the federal parliament due to the 5% threshold and is lingering around 3-5% of voter appreciation in 2014. These dire results of right populist parties pose the question if the German parties kept the salience of immigration-issues low, respectively the electoral niche for right populist closed since the early 1990s? And if so, why?

Studies trying to assess the salience and positions devoted to political topics have, to date, relied on two data sources: the Comparative Party Manifesto Program (CMP) and data obtained via a media analysis before pivotal federal election campaigns. Both data sources are

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[3] The raw data as much as the QCA master- and output-files can be requested from the author.

rather poorly suited to explaining how party-positioning affects the voter, or for assessing reasons for varying party conduct: The CMP-data (used for e.g. by Meguid 2005; Meguid 2008; Alonso and Claro da Fonseca 2011) is based on the evaluation of party programs and allows comparisons over time and across country; in so doing, it is limited by the lack of information regarding party conduct between manifesto publications and the difference between what parties write and the issues around which they actually campaign. Therefore, the *validity* of the data is rather low, if not absent. This leads Marc Helbling and Anke Tresch to conclude that, instead of relying on CMP-data, 'party-voter linkages are best studied with media data' (Helbling and Tresch 2011, 181). Adhering to these remarks, large comparative research projects such as 'West European Politics in the Age of Globalization' (Kriesi, Grande et al. 2008) obtain party positions based on political claims reported in quality media before federal elections in order to obtain data with high *validity*. The prime limitation relevant here is that only snapshots of party-positions are taken (e.g. for Germany the two months before the federal elections of 1974, 1994, 1998 and 2002) – therefore, the *validity* of the party discourse between electoral campaigns is extremely low, if not almost absent; in so doing, neither a precise development of party positions and their salience over time, nor the reasons for their respective changes, can be assessed. *Considering the pros and cons of these two approaches, the strengths of both need to be boosted and their shortcomings avoided; this is achieved by obtaining the party position on immigration-related matters via a political claim analysis of political statements as reported in quality media for each separate year .*

Studies working with this approach limit themselves to one quality medium because comparative studies have shown that neither the salience, nor the reported party positions (save the evaluation of editors) vary significantly between various quality media sources or even tabloids (Koopmans, Statham et al. 2005, 261/2). Consequently, data derived from one quality newspaper can function as proxy mirroring party positions on immigration-related issues and the salience of the issue in party discourse, as long as only political claims of politicians are listed and coded.

The immigration issue entered Germany's political discourse with Helmut Kohl's chancellorship in 1982/83, accompanying the Christian Democrats' call for a moral turn in German politics, termed the 'geistig-moralische Wende' (Thränhardt 1995). Only 1989 saw electoral advances of the right populist Die Republikaner, while no right contender could entrench itself in the political system of Germany. Thus, I rely on the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) to obtain political claims on immigration-related issues in Germany because their online archives cover the entire period under scrutiny (1982 to 2012).

To mirror the discourse as closely as possible, I obtain the salience and position of the two largest parties of the mid-left (SPD and Gruene) and the mid-right spectrum (CDU/CSU and FDP); these together account for 90-95 percent of the entire vote-share. I code every claim in all articles in which any combination of key words and party names or abbreviations occur in the headlines or first paragraph of the politics section of the daily newspaper (see Tab. 4.1).

Tab. 4.1: Search string[4]

FAZ Archiv	(multikult* ODER integr* ODER assimil* ODER einwand* ODER rassis* ODER asyl* ODER zuwander* ODER ausländer* ODER *migr* ODER staatsbürger*) UND (SPD ODER CDU ODER CSU ODER FDP ODER B90 oder grüne ODER sozialdemo* ODER christ* ODER liberal*)

Claims from these articles were coded using the method of 'core sentences.' It is an inductive approach that captures the relationship between the political actor and a political issue that appears in the newspaper article (also used by Kriesi, Grande et al. 2008). Each statement is reduced to its core structure, namely the subject (political actor), the object (political issue) and the evaluation. The evaluation uses a five-point scale, ranging from -10 (clearly conservative) to +10 (clearly liberal). -5 and +5 are given if an understated evaluation is given, e.g. if she/he considers support, or support under certain circumstances. 0 is set for an ambivalent position – see codebook (tab. 4.2) and examples (tab. 4.3, next page) below; this coding technique is close to approaches used in media analysis (Helbling 2012).

Tab. 4.2: Code Book

	Clearly conservative (-10)	Nuanced conservative (-5)	Neutral/ ambivalent (0)	Nuanced liberal (+5)	Clearly liberal (+10)
Immigration	Party rejects immigration and means pertaining to it	Party rejects immigration and means pertaining to it – save exception x or under condition y	Party neither supports nor rejects immigration	Party supports immigration and means pertaining to it – save exception x or under condition y	Party supports immigration and means pertaining to it
Asylum	Party rejects asylum-seekers and wants to take legal	Party rejects asylum-seekers and wants to take	Party neither rejects nor supports asylum-	Party calls for low legal barriers for asylum-	Party calls for low legal barriers for asylum-

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[4] In English: (multiculturalism OR integration OR assimilation OR immigration OR racism OR asylum OR migration OR foreigner OR citizenship) AND (SPD OR CDU OR CSU OR FDP OR B90 OR Greens OR Social Democrats OR Christian Democrats OR Liberals)

	actions to reduce their numbers; party rejects any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society	legal actions to reduce their numbers; party rejects any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society – save exception x or under condition y	seekers; party neither rejects nor supports means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society	seekers; party supports any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society – save exception x or under condition y	seekers; party supports any means to integrate asylum-seekers into the receiving society
Integration	Party conceives the host society's culture as rightfully dominating the integration-process; party supports assimilation; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the migrant	Party conceives the host society's culture as rightfully dominating the integration-process; party supports assimilation; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the migrant – save exception x or under condition y	Party undecided about integration-process; party neither supporting assimilationist - nor multicultural integration; party not perceiving the responsibility of integration to lie only with one side	Party conceives a plurality of cultural strains on equal footing in processes of integration; party supports multiculturalism; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the receiving society – save exception x or under condition y	Party conceives a plurality of cultural strains on equal footing in processes of integration; party supports multiculturalism; party perceives responsibility of integration to lie mainly with the receiving society
Citizenship	Party rejects (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship)	Party rejects (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship) – save exception x or under condition y	Party neither rejects nor supports (easier) access to citizenship for migrants	Party favors (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship) – save exception x or under condition y	Party favors (easier) access to citizenship for migrants (e.g. dual citizenship)

Tab. 4.3: Examples of Political Claims and their coding

Quote	Date	Subject	Object	Evaluation
Der SPD-Abgeordnete Schröer sagte: 'Wir wollen eine multikulturelle Gesellschaft. Kulturelle Vielfalt bedroht uns nicht, sondern sie bereichert.'	2.12.1988	SPD (GER)	Integration	+10
Gerhard (FDP) sagte, diese Jahresquote sei 'ein vernünftiger Kompromiß' zwischen der Aufrechterhaltung des Anwerbestopps (…) und einer gesteuerten Zuwanderung, wie sie die Regierung in ihrer Gesetzesnovelle vorschlägt.	12.03.2003	FDP (GER)	Immigration	+-0

A final question of validity concerns the number of claims that are necessary to validly define the party position each year. The adequate sample size can be determined using the split-half method (Krippendorf 2004, 124). Applying this technique to the period under examination and relying on the coding methods previously outlined, *25-30 claims per year appear necessary* (fig. 4.1).

Fig. 4.1: Assessing the necessary number of claims per year
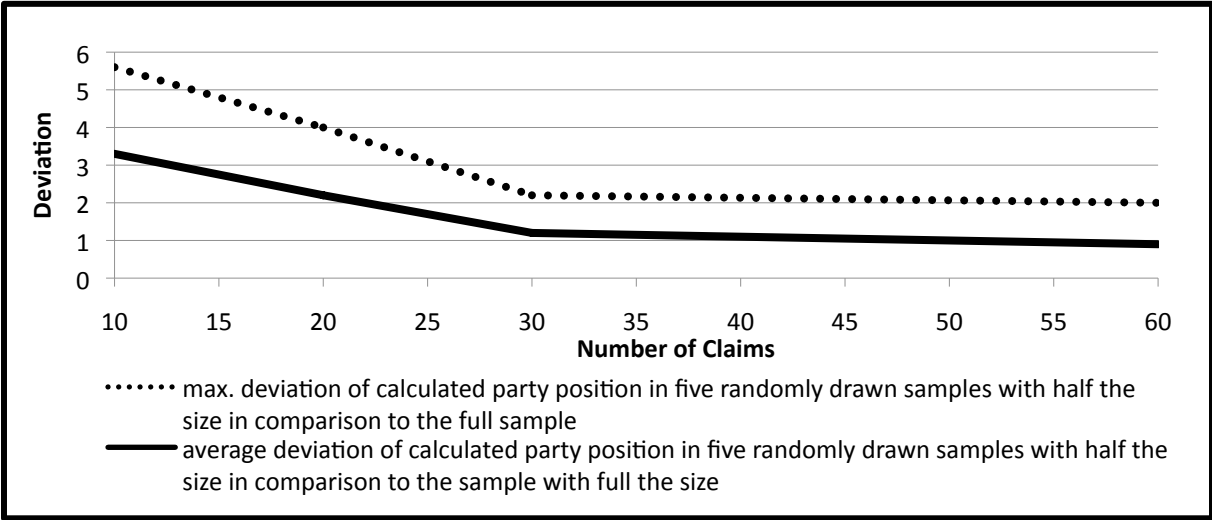
The party position in all years with fewer than 25 observable claims will be coded according to the last year with more than 25 claims. For example, if the year 2007 hypothetically shows only 13 claims of a party, while the year 2006 has 42, the score of the year 2006 will be used for the year 2007 as well. This is for both methodological and logical reasons. First, because a valid assessment of party position is not possible for years with fewer than 25 claims, and second, if a party wants to visibly change its public position, it will consciously make more claims on the issue so that voters will hear and understand the position change. *The yearly party position consists of the average of combined individual claims.*

If party positions are obtained using qualitative data in order to ensure a high degree of validity, the question of how to ensure that the codebook is used to analyze the data with a high degree of *reliability* – independent of personal political preferences of the coder – arises. In order to ensure the sufficiency of coding rules and a high level of *reliability*, the author conducted tests of inter-coder-reliability. As the author retrieved claims from the newspapers, as he was in charge of the evaluation, randomly drawn samples were used to identify the

reliability of the prime coder's assessment by comparing his answers to those of two scholars of political science from the three countries under scrutiny.

Reliability measures widely used in media studies call for re-evaluating at least 50 randomly selected units; to do so, I use Cohen's Kappa – a very conservative index defining values of > 0.8 as extremely reliable and values of > 0.6 as sufficiently reliable, and values of < 0.4 as poor (Lombard, Snyder-Duch et al. 2002, 593). A randomly drawn sample of 10 articles with about 200 possible claims is used to test the agreement of the salience-indicator between two scholars of German politics and the author of the study. The party positioning is checked by re-evaluating 50 randomly drawn claims. Save the precise evaluation of the party position, all indicators score close and above 0.8, and can, therefore, be treated as highly reliable (tab. 4.4).

Tab. 4.4: Results of inter-coder-reliability-tests

	GER 1/2	GER 2/2
Detection of Claims	0.85	0.84
Detection of Parties	0.92	0.92
Detection of Topic	0.83	0.87
Evaluation of Position, tri-polar	0.82	0.84
Evaluation of Position, precise	0.67	0.71

The information on salience and party position was recoded for a QCA-analysis in order to assess the causal chain of mechanisms allegedly preceding right populist parties' advances. I draw on the particular strength of QCA in checking whether a combination of various conditions is necessary and/or sufficient for the occurrence of a certain outcome, e.g. the varying positioning of an established party on immigration-related matters or electoral advances of a right populist party (Ragin 2008; Schneider and Wagemann 2010; Wagemann and Schneider 2010; Schneider and Wagemann 2012). QCA works according a Boolean logic and defines social phenomena in terms of set-theory (Ragin 1987, Ragin 2006). In doing so, its explanatory logic is rather *deterministic* and must not be confused with the *probabilistic* reasoning of classic algebra and quantitative research methods. Consequently, instead of measuring the strength of a relation between independent and dependent variables, set-theoretic approaches are concerned with revealing if and to what extent a set of conditions can be seen as a necessary and/or sufficient conditions for an outcome. It is crucial to distinguish

between necessary and sufficient conditions; the differences between the two can be neatly illustrated using Venn diagrams (Fig. 4.2).

Fig. 4.2: Venn diagrams on necessary and sufficient conditions
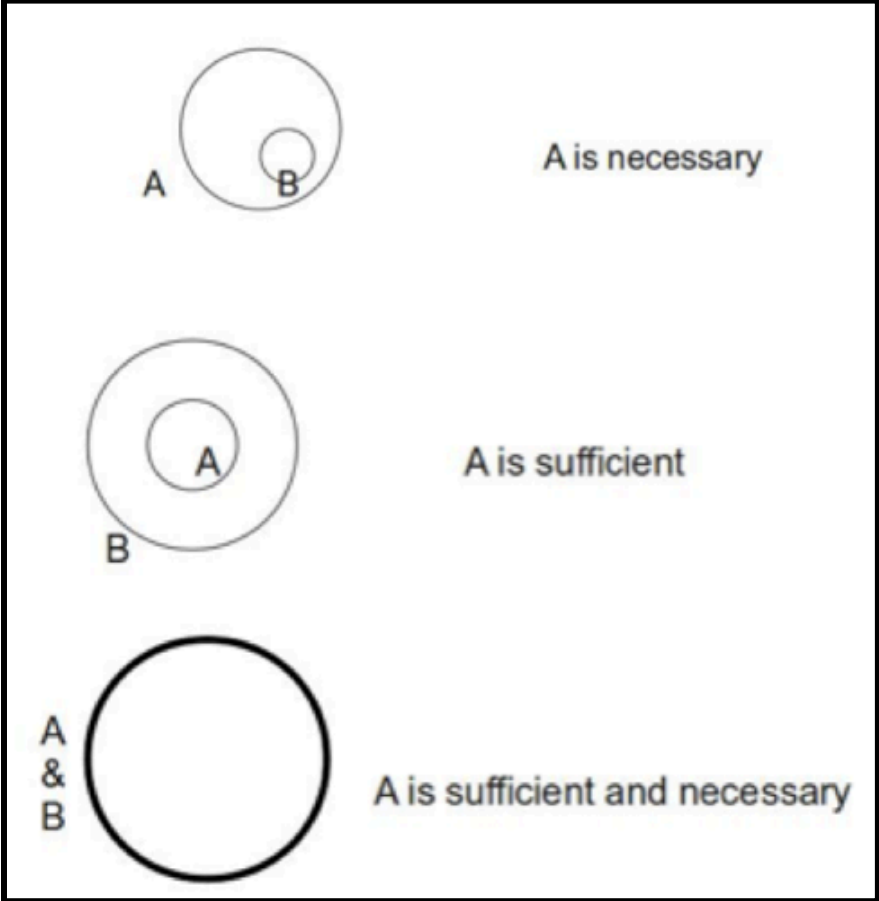
According to standard logic, the assumption that condition A is *necessary* for outcome B to occur is the same as stating that 'B cannot be true unless A is true', or 'if A is false then B is false.' By contraposition, this is the same as saying that 'whenever B is true, so is A.' A good example is the age-constraint in electing the German Bundespräsident: the candidate has to be at least 40 years old in order to become Bundespräsident (Art. 54, Abs. 1, GG). In turn, the person who is Bundespräsident is at least 40 years old. Being at least 40 years old is a *necessary* condition for being elected German Bundespräsident. Using the Venn-Diagrams, one can say that all Bundespräsidents are part of the group of German citizens above 40. However, this is not a sufficient condition because being 40 years old does not automatically make you German Bundespräsident. The group of above 40 year olds lists ca. 75.000.000 German citizens with different jobs.

To say that C is a *sufficient* condition for D is to say that whenever D is present, C is also present. In contrast, D being absent does not imply the absence of C as well; D can be present despite the absence of C.

I will stay with the German Bundespräsident to provide an example. Given that the German President must hold German citizenship (Art. 54, Abs. 1, GG) and one acquires German citizenship by having German parents, having German parents is a sufficient condition for acquiring German citizenship, and thus, in turn, for running for office as Bundespräsident. Therefore, all German Bundespräsidents have German citizenship. To recall the Venn diagrams, the group of all people that can become German Bundespräsident, are part of the group with German citizenship. It is important to note that one can also obtain German citizenship without having German parents, however (Art. 10, Art. 11, Art. 12, StaG). Thus, having German parents is not a necessary condition for becoming Bundespräsident, nor is being Bundespräsident a sufficient condition for having German parents. The group of German Bundespräsidents does not have to be part of the group of people with German parents (even though, that is the case up to know).

The stronger set-relations between (sets of) conditions, because of their more restrictive nature, are those that are both *necessary and sufficient* conditions for an outcome. This means: if A than B; conversely, if not A, then not B either. Revisiting the example of the German Bundespräsident, it is both a necessary and sufficient condition to be the German Bundespräsident in order to propose a new German Chancellor after a federal election is cast (Art. 63, GG). Only the German Bundespräesident can do so, therefore it is a necessary condition; if the federal election is cast, the Bundespräsident will propose a German chancellor – a sufficient condition. Revisiting the Venn diagrams, the group of people who can and will propose a new German Chancellor after a federal election is cast is (the very small group) of the (one) German Bundespräesident.

This leads to the question of how to assess the 'usefulness' of an approximated sufficient or necessary condition. Charles Ragin proposes two central descriptive measures to evaluate set-theoretic relationships in this vein: consistency and coverage. Consistency shows the degree to which a subset-relation has been approximated, coverage indicates the empirical relevance of the subset. To quote Ragin once more,

> *Set-theoretic consistency* assesses the degree to which the cases sharing a given condition or combination of conditions (e.g., democratic dyad) agree in displaying the outcome in question (e.g., nonwarring). That is, consistency indicates how closely the subset relation is approximated. *Set-theoretic coverage*, by contrast, assesses the degree to which a cause or causal combination ''accounts for'' instances of an outcome (Ragin 2006, 292).

Highly simplified, consistency could be defined simply as the sum of consistent membership scores in a causal condition divided by the sum of all membership scores in a cause or a causal combination; as the causal conditions in fuzzy sets usually do not embrace a value of 1, the consistency drops accordingly. For example, if three children who like to play football score 100 percent correct answers in a math test – coded as 1 – but a fourth kid who also likes to play football scores 60 percent - coded as 0.6 – the consistency of the set-relation between 'like to play football' and 'good in math' drops to (3x1+1x0.6)/4= 0.9; to make this term more precise, in order to ameliorate penalties for causal memberships of *sufficient* conditions that *exceed* their mark – meaning the outcome membership score.

For a detailed discussion of the calculation of scores of consistency and coverage, see Charles Ragin's detailed article (Ragin 2006). For this project, coverage values are only calculated for *sufficient* conditions scoring close to or above consistency values of => .75; *necessary* conditions are those with consistency values of => .90, as this guarantees a desirable liability of the set-relation examined (Schneider and Wagemann 2010, 406).

QCA analysis calls for recoding the data according to a binary logic. The data must be recoded according to a membership in a fuzzy set; 0 implying no membership, 1 implying full membership in the group or to the concept. For the concepts previously introduced, this requires recoding data, for example, as constituting an economic threat (yes/no), indicating a liberal position of the mid-left (yes/no) or whether the mid-left spectrum is leading in the polls (yes/no). The data is recoded according to an established procedure: extreme outliers are excluded from the recoding, given a 0 or a 1, respectively, while the rest is recoded using the following formula. The data is recoded by excluding extreme outliers. I define extreme outliers as those that score higher or lower than one standard deviation from the mean, and code them accordingly – with the same value as one standard deviation from the mean (as listed and explained in tab. 4.5, next page).

The following formula is used for the data-transforming (Verkuilen 2005, 479-489):

Membership in fuzzy set = (data point – goalpost low) / (goalpost high – goalpost low)

Tab. 4.5: Data sources and recoding of variables/conditions

Concept	Condition/Variable	Operationalization, Data Source
Real and Perceived Threat Potential	Real cultural threat potential	Inflows of foreign born per year per Capita, OECD

	Real economic threat potential	Internationally standardized unemployment rate, International Labour Office
	Perceived cultural threat potential	Percentage of voters (very) concerned with immigration / integration / asylum seekers (Politbarometer)
	Perceived economic threat potential	Percentage of voters (very) concerned with economic situation (Politbarometer)
Party Descriptive	Salience attributed by CDU/CSU	Number of claims each year
	Salience attributed by SPD	Number of claims each year
	Salience attributed by CDU/CSU and SPD	Number of claims each year
	Conservative Position of CDU/CSU (yes/no)	Party position based on tab. 4.2 and 4.3
	Liberal Position Position of SPD (yes/no)	Party position based on 4.2 and 4.3
	Liberal Discourse (yes/no)	Combined party positions based on 4.2 and 4.3
Party Interaction	Polling of right populist anti-multiculturalism party Die Republikaner REP	Polling based on Politbarometer
	Crisis of conservative agenda setter	Polling based on Politbarometer (given that the CDU/CSU and the SPD compete for chancellorship, a CDU/CSU crisis is calculated based on the polling difference between both parties)
	Which political camp is leading in the polls? Mid-left (SPD and Gruene) or mid-right (CDU/CSU and FDP)?	Polling based on Politbarometer

## 5. Scrutinizing Right Populists' varying fortunes in Germany: results

The shared assumption of previous studies, namely that right populist anti-multiculturalism parties' successful polling is dependent on the conduct of established political actors (e.g. Meguid 2005; Ellinas 2010; Muis 2012) is confirmed. They gather electoral support during *salient debates* on immigration-related matters in which established political actors embrace a *liberal discourse, in turn opening the electoral niche for a conservative position that rejects multiculturalism* (tab 5.1 and fig. 5.1). This very constellation only occurred in Germany in the late 1980s and led to the electoral advances of Die Republikaner (REP). Since then, either the salience of related issues amongst established parties is extremely low, or the CDU/CSU

can keep its conservative profile in salient debates, in turn keeping the electoral niche for a right populist party closed.

Tab. 5.1: Conditions accounting for vote gains of Die Republikaner (REP), 1982-2012

	Polling Right Populist Party			No Polling Right Populist Party		
	Term	Cover age	Consis tency	Term	Cover age	Consis tency
Necessary Conditions	Salience AND Liberal Discourse	0.47	0.89	No Salience AND No Liberal Discourse	0.84	0.91
	Substantial Inflow of Migrants	0.41	1.000			
Sufficient Conditions	-	-	-	No Salience OR No Liberal Discourse	0.91	0.83

Fig. 5.1: Positions of German parties on matters of immigration and electoral advances of right populist Die Republikaner (REP), 1982-2012
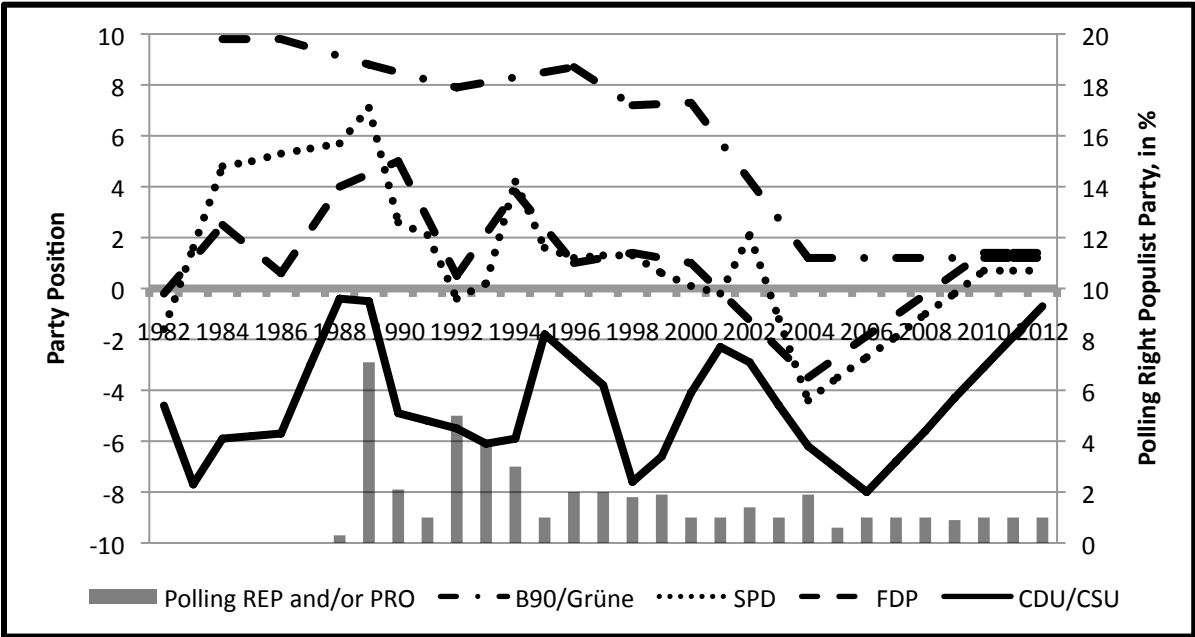
It is important to stress that the salience and the liberal discourse are necessary conditions for the advancement of right populist parties; however, they are not sufficient. This suggests that other factors also come into play – be it at the organizational level (Ivarsflaten and Gudbrandsen 2011) or the new party's media access (Ellinas 2007; Muis 2012). Still, right populist parties are dependent on the *necessary conditions* regarding the conduct of established political actors; this confirms Cas Mudde's argument that:
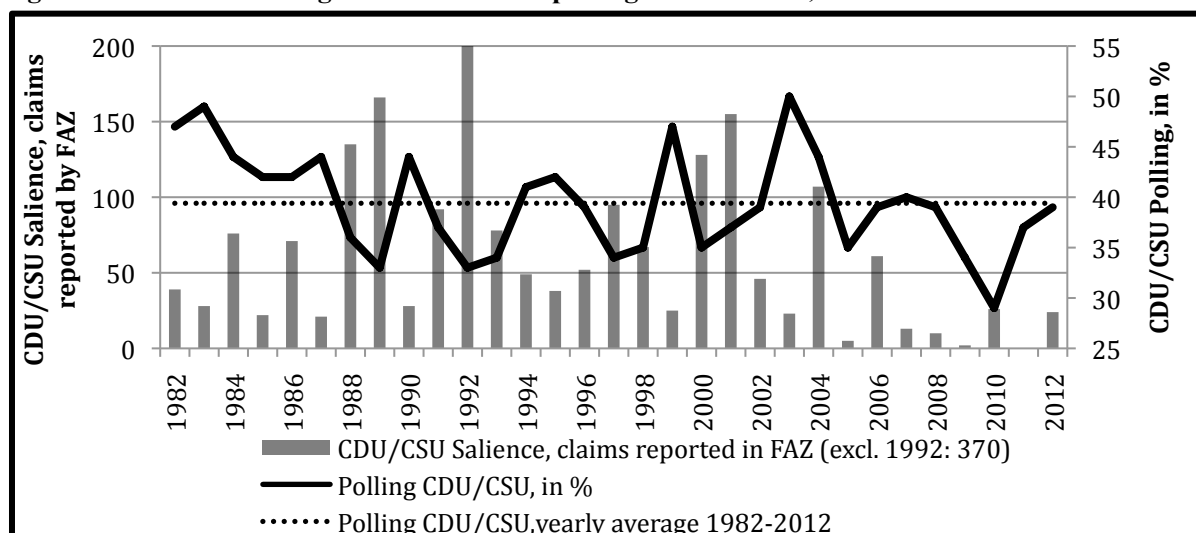
during the phase of electoral breakthrough, the populist radical right party does not play a particularly important role as an independent variable. Having a charismatic leader, professional propaganda, and a strong organization will help, but are not necessary to achieve electoral breakthrough (Mudde 2007, 301).

Therefore, the main contribution of this study lies less in the confirmation of these findings. Instead, because this study is the first to rely on highly valid and reliable data, it can consequently reveal reasons behind varying party conduct – i.e. the 'causes of the causes' in a two-level theory (Goertz and Mahoney 2006, 241). The high salience of immigration-related debates (1) occurs due to crisis of conservative parties (1.1.) in times of high immigration (1.2) during which the CDU/CSU aims at mobilizing conservative voters to regain support. Thus, the subsequent question reads how to account for high salience and the liberal discourse? Even though the substantial inflow of migrants is a necessary condition for high salience, the low coverage value and the sufficient conditions indicate that the polling of the CDU/CSU is by far the most decisive factor (Tab 5.2 and Fig. 5.2).

Tab. 5.2: Conditions accounting for high salience of immigration-issues in Germany, 1982-2012

	High Salience			No High Salience		
	Term	Cover age	Consis tency	Term	Cover age	Consis tency
Necessary Conditions	Substantial Inflow of Migrants	0.50	0.92	CDU/CSU Leading in the Polls	0.77	0.89
Sufficient Conditions	Crisis CDU/CSU	0.68	0.71	No Crisis CDU/CSU	0.86	0.84

Fig. 5.2: Salience of immigration-issues and polling of CDU/CSU, 1982-2012

CDU/CSU Salience, claims reported in FAZ (excl. 1992: 370)
Polling CDU/CSU, in %
Polling CDU/CSU, yearly average 1982-2012

But high salience periods alone are not sufficient in order to enable electoral advances of right populist parties, they must be accompanied with a liberal discourse of all major parties. This liberal discourse, embracing the CDU/CSU dropping its conservative profile for the liberal positions of the Social Democrats, is measurable if the Social Democrats are leading in the polls (2.1.) and if the voters' perception of the economic outlook is good (2.2) – see tab. 5.3 and fig. 5.3.

Tab. 5.3: Conditions accounting for a liberal discourse on immigration in Germany, 1982-2012

	Liberal Discourse			No Liberal Discourse		
	Term	Cover age	Consist ency	Term	Cover age	Consist ency
Necessary Conditions	SPD+Greens leading in the polls AND positive economic climate	0.53	0.92	SPD+Greens not leading in the polls AND Negative economic climate	0.80	0.90
				SPD+Greens not leading in the polls AND High Unemployment	0.75	0.95
Sufficient Conditions	SPD+Greens leading in the polls AND Public concerns over cultural issues			SPD+Greens not leading in the polls OR High Unemployment	0.95	0.75

Fig. 5.3: Party Position SPD and economic concerns of the German electorate, 1982-2012
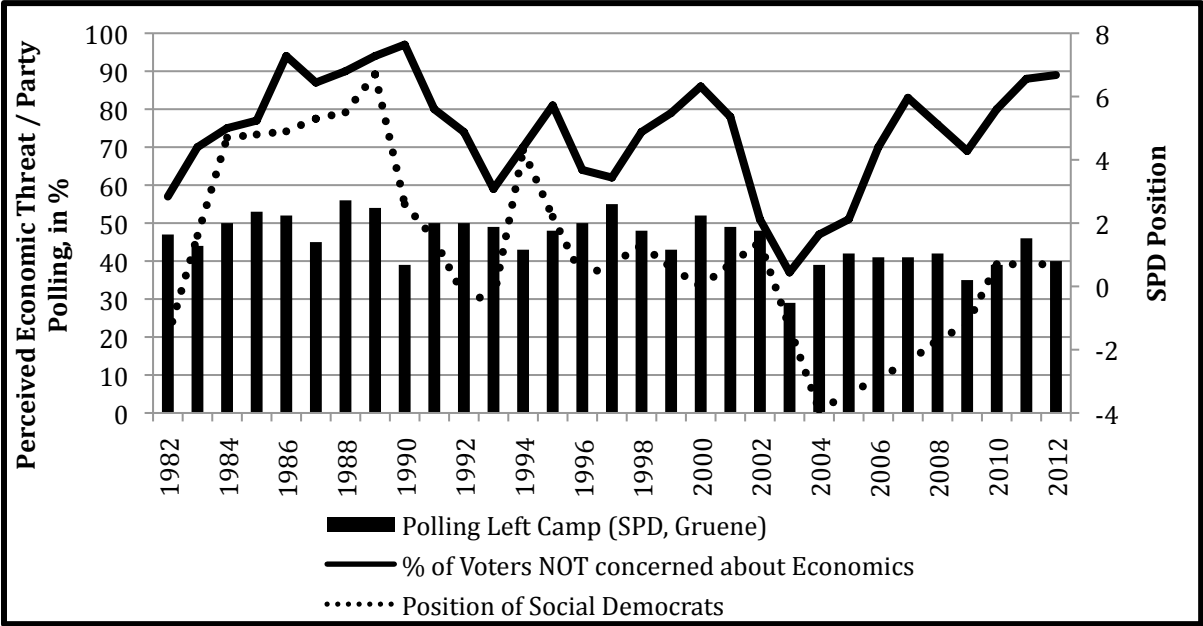
Thus, the results of the German case can be summarized: the CDU/CSU politicizes immigration-related topics whenever they are significantly behind in the polls and need a topic to mobilize conservative voters. The CDU/CSU will only moderate its conservative profile in a salient debate, in turn opening an electoral niche on the right by joining the liberal party discourse, if it conceives of it as an incentive to gain votes. This incentive was visible only in 1988 and 1989, when the German Social Democrats (SPD) polled far ahead of the CDU/CSU while embracing a clearly multicultural agenda regarding matters of integration and immigration. The CDU/CSU adopted substantial parts of this multicultural agenda in 1988 and 1989 and thereby opened the niche on the right; this left the conservative voters, who the CDU/CSU had mobilized over the 1980s, to vote for the sole political party that had clearly rejected multiculturalism during the 1989 election for European Parliament: the right-populist anti-multiculturalism party 'Die Republikaner' (REP).

The CDU/CSU could regain its conservative voters by leading German reunification and through the total lack of multicultural agendas from 1990 on. Because the SPD also stopped campaigning on multicultural positions after 1990, the CDU/CSU was not in danger of losing centrist voters to the SPD if it reclaimed the conservative position. In doing so, the CDU/CSU (and also the SPD) ousted the right-populist anti-multiculturalism party 'Die Republikaner' (REP). This mechanism has still largely characterized salient integration debates in the Berlin Republic since 1990: the German Conservatives can keep the electoral niche on the far right closed whenever they decide to heat up the topic in order to mobilize conservative voters.

The reason for the German Social Democrats to drop their multicultural agenda almost entirely after 1990 can be found in the high economic threat potential to which the German voter conceives of having been exposed to since 1990 and the weakness of the left camp (SPD and Gruene). Unlike in the 1980s, the SPD has therefore refrained from openly campaigning on liberal, multicultural positions in matters of migration and integration.

Whether the political space for a right populist anti-multiculturalism party opens after a mid-right party has politicized the immigration issue thus depends on the economic conditions in which the Conservatives' crisis occurs and the polling of the left camp; both define the position of their main competitor, the Social Democrats. In cases where the Social Democrats and the mid-left camp steadily poll ahead of the Conservatives and the mid-right camp while the mid-left is embracing a liberal agenda, the Conservatives will eventually level their conservative standpoints in salient debates, trying to capture voters of the political center. At this moment, the electoral niche for a right populist anti-multiculturalism party opens.

## 6.   An attempt to generalize from the German Case: understanding the advances of right populist parties

The concept outlined for the German case can be extended to France and England, as they were exposed to salient immigration topics before a right populist party could gather electoral support (Alonso and Fonseca 2011). However, *if the immigration issue is conceived as a proxy for a salient cultural conflict*, speculations about a further extension of the concept to all Western European societies and the respective variation in electoral advances of right populist parties might warrant further attention. Other salient conflicts defining the role of the national community – be it debating the European Union, coming to terms with national history, defining features of national belonging or managing boundary conflicts with neighboring states – could replace immigration as a proxy to account for variation in electoral advances of right populist parties in Western Europe before the late 1980s as the cultural axis of political competition begun to focus on matters of immigration and integration mainly (Bornschier 2010).

The main point worth emphasizing is the expected similarity of the pattern of political processes: the two-level theory portrays conservative parties as (1) relying on mobilizing on the cultural dimension in times of severe crisis and with the possibility of politicizing cultural issues; in turn, they (2) withdraw from their conservative position on the matter – joining the liberal position of the Social Democrats – if the left camp is leading in the polls and the country is facing a benign economic situation.

Focusing on the necessary conditions of the basic level with the highest coverage values and hint on two necessary conditions to further enhance the extension: the advances of right populist parties before the late 1980s seem to been preceded by both (1) a crisis of conservative parties and (2) benign economic conditions, be it in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, or Norway. The breakthroughs of right populist parties in each of these countries followed periods of crisis of the moderate conservative parties in times of economic prosperity, be it Austria in the early 1980s, Belgium in the late 1980s, Denmark in the late 1960s or Norway in the late 1970s. The two-step theory seems to allow extension to most Western European democracies. The necessary conditions for the advances of right populist parties are a (1) successful left camp, and most notably successful Social Democrats, who put the Conservatives in a crisis in the first place and (2) benign economics. This crisis leads to the politicization of cultural topics by established conservative parties, but they soon lose their conservative electorate to a new right populist party, because the Conservatives drop their

conservative profile when facing a successful Social Democratic contender with a liberal agenda in a society free of economic concerns (fig. 6.1).

Fig. 6.1: A two-level theory on right populist parties' electoral support in Western Europe
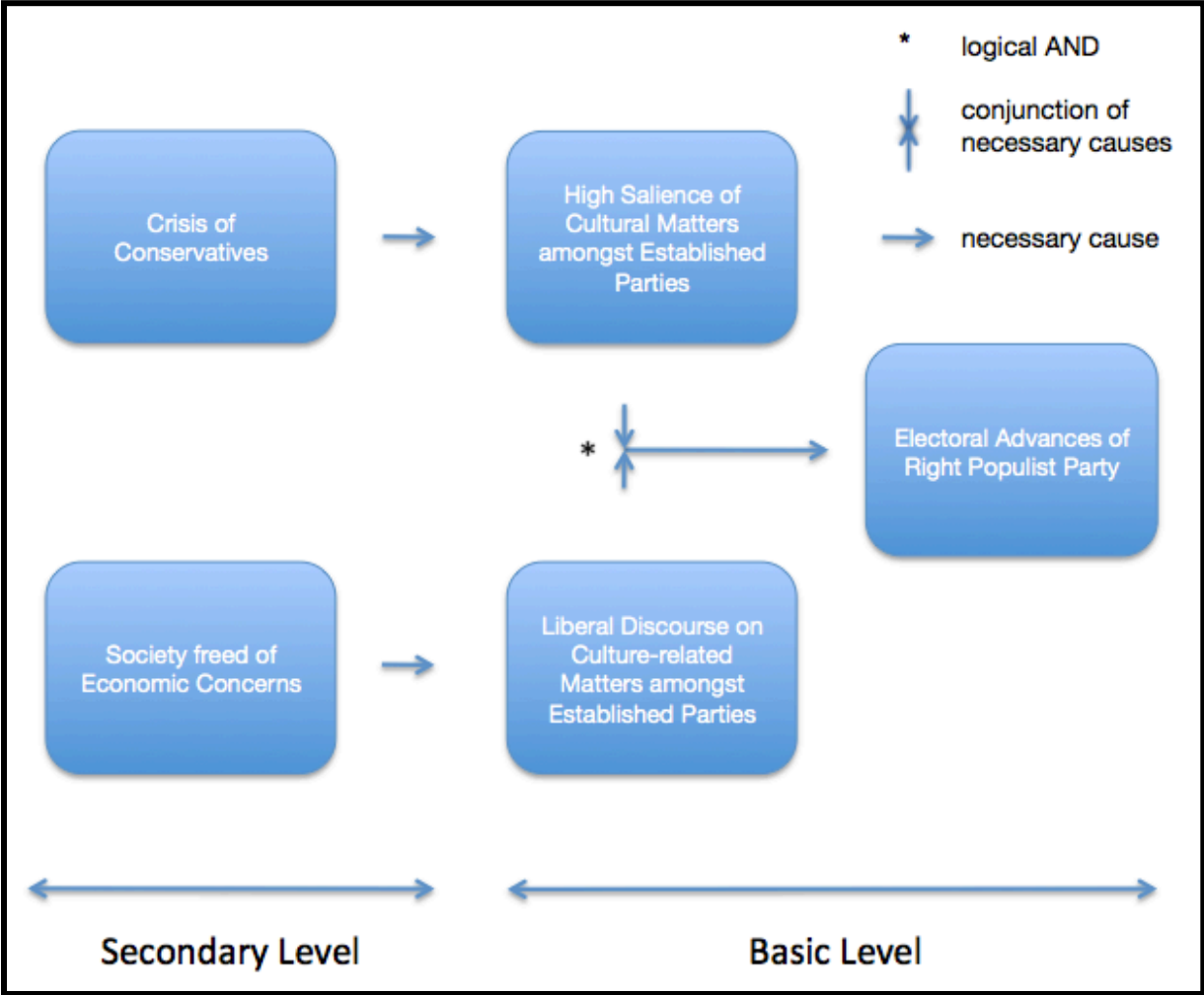
7. On the prospects of the new player in German politics: the Alternative fuer Deutschland (AfD)

Given these elaborations, the question of if, and if so, how, the two-level theory can be applied to explain the first initial electoral advances of the most recent new political player in contemporary Germany – the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – remains.

In the federal election in September 2013, the AfD gathered 4.7 percent of the votes, just under the 5 percent threshold that is the gateway to representation in the German Bundestag. German political scientists are divided over the question whether the AfD should be understood as a right populist party or its functional equivalent (Haeusler 2013). If the AfD is, however, conceived as the functional equivalent of a right populist party, it is striking that the

immigration issue is neither part of their election campaigns, nor has an salience among the established parties preceded its first advances. Instead, the AfD is rallying – so far – solely on opposing the current management of the German government regarding affairs concerning the European Union, and first and foremost concerning financial transactions with countries of the Euro Zone.

The two-level theory of political mechanisms outlined in the previous chapter functions in a large part here, too: the electoral niche for the AfD was opened by the CDU/CSU, who (briefly) campaigned with nationalist statements – primarily targeting Greece – in recent years in order to mobilize voters for regional elections in Germany and withdrew them shortly after. This was an unprecedented breach of the solidly pro-European stance of the CDU/CSU in the last decades. The CDU/CSU soon dropped these very brief nationalist campaigns primarily targeting Greece, however, as *all other* German parties stressed their pro-European agendas; a conservative profile on EU matters would most likely have resulted in significant vote losses for a party aiming at the political center. The salience of the EU topics and the nationalist campaigns of the CDU/CSU, were both very brief, but could have proven sufficient to mobilize a conservative electorate to consider a party change; the reasons lies with the increasingly moderate position of the CDU/CSU in the past years, which has disappointed substantial parts of their conservative electorate. These conservative voters, however, stayed with the CDU/CSU since no cultural issue had been passionately discussed in the last years that could have substantially mobilized (and alienated) conservative voters. For them, the topic of the European Union could, therefore, symbolize a policy area laden with enough narratives of alleged German identity to inspire them to aim for a 'new conservative party', offering a clearly conservative profile on cultural matters. If the CDU/CSU opened this electoral niche, it can also reclaim conservative voters by successfully campaigning on a conservative position in a symbol-laden policy area – as matters of the European Union and/or matters of immigration/integration. Recalling the two-level theory and given Germany's bright economic prospects, the crucial determinant in this respect will be the strength of the mid-left political parties: the mid-left camp, and first and foremost the Social Democrats (SPD), will continue to campaign on liberal pro-European agendas if the economic climate remains as benign as in 2013. If the mid-left camp turns out to take over the majority in the polls, the CDU/CSU will have an incentive to drop their conservative agenda to reach centrist voters. This, in turn, would keep the electoral niche for the AfD open. Consequently, if the mid-right camp of German politics polls better than the mid-left, the CDU/CSU will most likely keep its conservative agenda, closing the electoral niche for the AfD.

8.   Conclusion: How to stop right populist parties in Western Europe

The lessons from the German case are clear: in order to hamper electoral advances of right populist parties, the salience of topics on the cultural dimension either ought to remain very low or the conservative parties should not be challenged to drop their respective conservative position. Instead, the mid-left parties should refrain from multicultural campaigns in salient debates while attention should be directed to the economic axis of political competition.

Still, three limitations prevent a simple generalization of the German case: at first, external pressures are dominating national debates on European topics largely meanwhile – in fact, the only country that can frame the national discourse on European affairs rather based on domestic considerations is Germany; thus, conservative parties in other European countries have far fewer options at their strategic disposal to downplay debates on the cultural dimension – as debates over the European Union – as the powerful German CDU/CSU does; secondly, given that current European affairs lead to assume a stronger European integration in the future, conservative parties campaigning on national agendas are bound to disappoint their conservative electorate sooner or later; thirdly, the right populist AfD in Germany is still deprived of parliamentary representation – this ensure an advantage in legitimacy and media access of the established German parties concerning their capacities of agenda-setting; only the established parties of Ireland and Spain embrace this strategic advances still, too.

In the light of these limitations, this leaves the following three strategies for established, moderate European political players to hamper the electoral advances of right populist parties:

1) To limit the salience of debates on the cultural dimension as often as possible – it is hereby of equal importance that both the Conservatives and the Social Democrats do so likewise: instead of politicizing theses issues, established parties should aim for a national compromise to keep the salience of cultural issues low.

2) If salience is dependent on external pressure – as with European affairs – conservative parties should refrain from nationalist campaigns: since a deeper European integration seems to be expected and be supported by the moderate parties eventually, voters mobilized by nationalist campaigns are prone to join right populist parties.

3) The best way to hamper right populists' advances in keeping the salience of cultural issues low and to bind the conservative electorate to established parties, seem to be passionate, polarized debates over economics: this ensures a high salience of economic over cultural issues – the worst that can happen to right populists.

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