Immigration-related speechmaking in a party-constrained parliament: evidence from the 'refugee crisis' of the 18th German Bundestag (2013-2017)

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The 18th Bundestag term was marked by a high salience of the refugee and asylum issue dominating the political agenda. Taking this context as a case study, this paper asks which factors make legislators talk about immigration on the parliamentary floor. Three different literatures provide different answers to this question. A first literature highlights that immigrant-origin legislators with a visible background may have intrinsic motives to talk about immigration. A second literature raises attention to legislators' personal vote-seeking incentives to talk about immigration when the issue is electorally decisive. Contrary to these first two literatures, a third literature posits that legislative debates do not provide legislators the leeway to follow individual motives on the parliamentary floor, but that parliamentary party groups (PPGs) control access to the parliamentary floor and thus follow own strategies when allocating floor time to speak about the immigration issue. To examine this puzzle of competing expectations, a corpus of more than 10,000 speeches is leveraged, utilising a structural topic model, a novel method of quantitative text analysis. Results suggest that legislators' speech attention to the refugee and asylum issue in the 18th Bundestag was mainly shaped by PPG specific factors rather than by their individual motives.

Keywords: immigration, representation, speechmaking, Bundestag, legislators

Introduction

Over the past few decades, immigration has become a highly salient and electorally decisive policy issue in a number of Western European democracies (Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017). Investigating political attention to the immigration issue is therefore a fundamental topic in contemporary European political science. Our understanding of the phenomenon has benefited from a number of recent contributions analysing the determinants of issue attention to immigration in party manifestos (Kortmann and Stecker 2017; Ruedin and Morales 2017; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017). Less is known, by contrast, about the politics of immigration-related speechmaking (but see

Blätte and Wüst 2017). However, as speeches on the floor provide legislators and their parties a publicly exposed stage to communicate issue priorities and policy positions, they are important tools of political communication and representation (Proksch and Slapin 2015; Bäck and Debus 2016; Bächtiger 2014). By drawing attention to certain policy issues while deemphasising others in their speeches, representatives can publicly demonstrate that they are responsive to current problem pressures and voters' issue priorities (Budge and Farlie 1983; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017). This raises the question of why some legislators draw attention to immigration in their speeches while others do not, despite the overall growing salience of the issue.

The present article pursues this question by focussing on the 18th German Bundestag (2013-17), a legislative term during which the issue of refugees and asylum became a hot topic in the course of the European refugee crisis. Taking this term as a crucial case study, this article attempts to contrast *individual with collective* explanations of legislative behaviour. Two literatures raise attention to *individual motives* as potential drivers of speechmaking. First, *intrinsic motives* flowing from the personal experiences of legislators who themselves or whose parents have a migratory history may lead to more speech attention to the issue of refugees and asylum as compared to other legislators (Searing 1994; Searing 1991; Wüst 2014a; Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Saalfeld 2011; Blätte and Wüst 2017). A second literature argues that, depending on their individual re-election contexts, legislators have *extrinsic motives* to talk about policy issues that dominate the political agenda (Mayhew 1974; Carey and Shugart 1995; Carey 2009; Zittel and Gschwend 2008; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015).

However, insofar as parliamentary democracies are analysed, we need to be careful not to underestimate the role of *collective* parliamentary party groups (PPGs) in

legislative speechmaking. In this regard, a third literature casts doubts as to whether speeches on the floor provide legislators the necessary leeway to express *individual* concerns when highly salient policy issues are debated. In a nutshell, the argument is that in most parliaments PPG leaderships control not just the plenary thematic agenda but decide also who speaks about which topic (Proksch and Slapin 2015; Bäck, Debus, and Müller 2014; Bäck and Debus 2018; Bäck and Debus 2016; Cox 2006). Therefore, legislators may be often constrained in following individual motives, but are rather forced to follow collective motives on the parliamentary floor, regardless of whether they are, as individuals, *intrinsically* or *extrinsically* motivated.

Empirically, the study is based on a novel dataset containing over 10,000 legislative speeches held in the 18th Bundestag. To measure speech attention to the refugee and asylum issue, it utilises a new method of quantitative text analysis: structural topic models (STM) (Roberts et al. 2014). Results indicate that during the most recent German immigration shock, PPGs' organisational capacities and their roles as gatekeepers to the parliamentary floor were far stronger determinants of such speechmaking than legislators' individual motives.

What makes legislators take the parliamentary floor to speak about immigration?

Before the theoretical framework is presented, it is necessary to clarify what immigration-related speechmaking means conceptually for this study. Importantly, this paper is not about the question of representing the interests of long-term citizens of immigrant-origin with full voting rights. Rather, it is about speech attention to the issue of refugees and asylum, referring to a group of people who are widely considered to remain in Germany only for a limited period of time and who, as non-citizens, have no opportunity to partake in the electoral process. Put differently, immigrants and

specifically refugees and asylum seekers are conceptualised in this study to be the *content* of political representation, rather than a social group meant to be politically represented. To be sure, many immigrant-origin citizens may have a specific interest in migration-related issues, including the issue of refugees and asylum. Thus, scholars often look for migration-related content in parliamentary behaviour when examining questions of the substantive representation of immigrant-origin citizens (Blätte and Wüst 2017; Wüst 2014a; Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Saalfeld 2011). However, migration-related policy preferences may differ across different groups of immigrant-origin citizens (Heath et al. 2013, chap. 4). In Germany, for example, Goerres and co-authors show that the group of so-called 'ethnic' Germans expressed to a large extent sceptical stances regarding the influx of refugees and asylum seekers during the 2017 Bundestag election campaign (Goerres, Mayer, and Spies 2018). Therefore, although there may be some overlap between immigrant-origin citizens' interests and attention to the issue of refugee and asylum, it is nevertheless instrumental to refer to these as two different dimensions of immigration politics, with the latter being the focus of this study.

Legislators' immigrant backgrounds and speech attention to immigration
The first individual factor considered to affect legislative speechmaking relates to legislators' intrinsic motives shaped by their personal backgrounds. 'Motivational' parliamentary role theory assumes that legislators are purposive actors who pursue their exogenously (career-related) and endogenously (emotionally) conditioned individual goals in parliament (Blomgren and Rozenberg 2012, 21–27; Searing 1991). Unless they have the institutional responsibility to fulfil a 'leadership role' like whip, legislators are thought to be relatively free to choose from different pre-defined 'preference roles' (Searing 1991, 1249–50). Among those are 'policy advocates' who mainly seek to

influence government policy, 'constituency members' who choose to concentrate their legislative activities on redressing grievances of constituents, 'parliament men' who monitor the institutional structures ,and 'ministerial aspirants' who seek promotion to the government ranks (Searing 1994, 16; Searing 1991, 1253). While such roles may be chosen by legislators depending on situational contexts (Blomgren and Rozenberg 2012, 9), any of these, however, allow for considerable scope to translate intrinsic motives into actual legislative behaviour (Searing 1991, 1253). As Searing notes, '(e)motional incentives are the principal energizing forces in all parliamentary roles' (Searing 1994, 19). Plausibly, intrinsic motives are shaped to an extent by social group membership and the personal experiences legislators have had during their life, which may make them 'refer, consciously or unconsciously, to their biography when developing their preferences' (Bäck and Debus 2016, 34; Bäck, Debus, and Müller 2014, 507).

With regard to immigration-related legislative behaviour, attention is often raised to legislators' own migratory backgrounds (Wüst 2014a; Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Blätte and Wüst 2017; Saalfeld 2011). The assumption is that experiences of migration and the obstacles of integrating oneself into society create a special awareness of, and interest in, the challenges and problems of the '*Einwanderungsgesellschaft'*. Especially immigrant-origin politicians with visible traits, such as foreign-sounding names and/or non-Caucasian appearance, may have been constantly reminded in their lives to be 'distinct' from the majority society, creating an intrinsic motivation or, in Searing words, 'emotional incentive' to focus their parliamentary activities on immigration-related issues. Indeed, a number of empirical studies, for example in Germany (Blätte and Wüst 2017; Wüst 2014a) and in the UK (Saalfeld and Bischof 2013; Saalfeld 2011), suggest that immigrant-origin legislators focus more strongly on migration-specific issues, especially those with a 'visible' background.

Based on the reviewed theoretical and empirical literature, visible immigrant-origin legislators may be thus more intrinsically motivated to speak about the refugee and asylum issue than other legislators.

Legislators' incentives to cultivate a personal vote and speech attention to immigration

A second literature adheres to the logic of principal-agent theory, according to which legislators are assumed to act as agents who are electorally accountable to voters, thus responding to the demands of this principal, providing for a vertical representation link between ruled and rulers (Mitchell 2000; Carey 2009). Re-election is assumed to be the central motivation for legislators' responsiveness to voters, because re-election is a necessary precondition for any other career-related goal, whether policy influence or prestigious offices in parliament (Strøm 1997). Thus, if their re-election is uncertain, legislators may use their legislative repertoire to take positions, claim credit and/or advertise their personal qualities for the purpose of attracting *personal* votes (Mayhew 1974).

Aligning their own issue priorities with those of voters is intimately related to legislators' personal vote-seeking strategies. Indeed, commonly considered an important feature of (collective) party responsiveness (Budge and Farlie 1983; Spoon and Klüver 2014; Green-Pedersen and Otjes 2017), issue attention considerations should also rank high in legislators' individual strategies to cater to voters. Similarly to the argument that parties have vote-seeking incentives to align own issue priorities with that of voters (Spoon and Klüver 2014), legislators should seek to prioritise issues that are important to voters as an expression of catering to their political demands. Taking policy positions presumes that political actors dedicate a minimum of attention to the policy issue on which positions are taken (Budge and Farlie 1983). Why would a voter feel attracted to

a legislator who takes a similar policy position on an issue but who does not convincingly show that s/he considers the issue important? Therefore, individual legislators seeking personal votes should see reasons to align their own issue priorities with that of their voters. If the refugee and asylum issue becomes more salient on the general political agenda and in the minds of voters, individual legislators may thus seek to increase attention to this issue in their speeches as well.

Commonly, legislators' personal vote-seeking incentives are said to be shaped by the way electoral rules transfer votes into seats (Carey and Shugart 1995; Carey 2009; Mitchell 2000). Only under electoral rules which provide voters the possibility to influence directly the electoral fate of individual legislators, for example under conditions of single-member plurality elections (SMD) rather than under conditions of closed-list proportional representation (PR), should legislative behaviour be tailored to appeal to local voters (Carey and Shugart 1995; Mitchell 2000). Conversely, under conditions of closed-list PR in districts of high magnitude, voters are typically provided with long lists of candidates, which they can only approve or defect as a whole. Here, legislators' electoral fate depends mainly on the list position allocated by their parties, such that they have fewer incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Carey and Shugart 1995; Carey 2009). Therefore, legislators should have stronger incentives to align their own issue priorities with that of voters under SMD, while closed-list PR should provide stronger incentives to be loyal to the party.

However, recent scholarship suggests that the effect of electoral rules is not universal in the sense that all legislators face the same personal vote-seeking incentives just because they are elected under the same set of electoral rules. These works take into account that the personal vote-seeking behaviour of legislators elected in SMDs are conditional on their individual levels of electoral vulnerability (Zittel and Gschwend

2008; André, Depauw, and Martin 2015). When SMD legislators' districts are 'safe' seats, because they won it in the previous election with a comfortable vote margin, they may not be too concerned about reaching their re-election goals, attenuating their personal vote-seeking incentives. Conversely, if the previous constituency election was a close race, they should be more concerned about potential vote losses, which should create stronger incentives to align their own issue attention to that of voters.

The constraining influence of parliamentary party groups on individual speechmaking

The two theoretical perspectives outlined so far share the assumption that legislators' *individual motives* are underlying their speech attention to the refugee and asylum issue. However, relying on this assumption disregards that PPGs are important contexts for legislative behaviour in general, and for speechmaking in particular.

As Cox (Cox 2006, 142–49) puts it, PPGs are essential to parliamentary decision-making, because they help solving the problem of a 'plenary bottleneck'. That is, without hierarchically organised PPGs controlling the plenary agenda and thus creating inequalities in legislators' access to the plenary, it would be impossible to coordinate which subset of all proposed bills can make it through the bottleneck, given the hard budget constraint on time and the fact that each individual member has motive to consume plenary time. As rulers over the parliamentary floor, PPG leaders may be thus conceptualised as utilising legislators as a resource to reach two types of party goals, that is, policy and votes (Müller 2000). Therefore, we may refer here again to the *principal-agent conception*, describing a vertical hierarchical link between PPG leaders and legislators, with the latter supposed to act upon the instructions of the former.

First, in order to reach their policy-seeking goals, PPG leaders must take into account that policy-making takes place in various (sub-) policy areas. Therefore, an

internal division of labour is a necessary feature of PPGs, whereby legislators are supposed to serve their PPGs as experts in different (sub-) policy areas. Policy-specialised committee structures help PPGs ensuring such horizontal coordination (Saalfeld and Strøm 2014). Moreover, due to the tight vertical organisation of PPGs in most parliamentary democracies, vertical and horizontal coordination interact. That is, the vertical grip of PPG leaders over legislators reach down into their horizontally differentiated policy/committee specialisation (Damgaard 1995). Thus, PPG leaders should be more likely to delegate plenary time to legislators on topics that fall into the area of their policy specialisation.

Arguably, when choosing legislators to become policy experts in certain policy areas/committees, it should make sense for PPGs to take into account their personal skills and experiences. As immigrant-origin legislators have often distinct experiences of immigration and societal and cultural integration, they may be more likely to be perceived by PPG leaderships as experts on immigration. Moreover, if their immigrant background is visible, parties can utilise this trait for signalling expertise on the parliamentary floor to voters. This bias is also suggested by Nergiz' (2014) interview-based qualitative research on immigrant-origin legislators in Germany. Assigning immigrant-origin legislators for expert positions on migration is supposed to create an impression of what Nergiz dubs 'authenticity'. As one interviewee puts is: '(i)t is important how well spokespersons can present the message of our party, regardless of whether the person has migratory experience or not. […] However, when people see a migrant-origin person, then it is more convincing – people realise that I know what I am talking about' (Nergiz 2014, 255). Thus, an alternative explanation for the finding that legislators with a visible immigrant background are more likely to talk about migrant-related issues in the plenary may be their ascribed policy expertise on that matter,

serving the need for a distinct division of labour within PPGs. It follows that, if policy specialisation is the driving mechanism, immigrant-origin legislators with a visible background should talk more about the refugee and asylum issue than other legislators, conditional on their assignment to committees more likely to deal with matters of immigration and integration policy.

In addition to that, it can be argued that the impact of visible immigrant-origin legislators should be further conditional on the *size of their PPGs*. The intuition is that larger PPGs provide better conditions for an efficient division of labour. To the contrary, in smaller PPGs there is less personnel available to be assigned to an equally large number of (sub-)policy areas. This challenge is reflected in legislators' membership in policy-specialised committees. In Germany, for example, legislators from larger PPGs can normally concentrate on one committee membership, while legislators from smaller PPGs have to split their parliamentary work across several committees (Ismayr 2012, 168; Ismayr 1992, 189–91). Since legislators in smaller PPGs are supposed to develop an expertise in more areas than legislators in larger PPGs, legislators' individual areas of expertise are more diverse and are thus more blurred across legislators in smaller PPGs, while they are more distinct and delineated in larger PPGs. Accordingly, legislators from larger PPGs may speak overall about fewer issue areas on the parliamentary floor, while the lack of personnel in smaller PPGs makes it necessary that legislators have to speak not just about one, but about several issues, blurring the issue areas which they focus upon in their speeches altogether. Therefore, differences in speech attention to immigration between visible immigrant-origin and other legislators should be less pronounced in smaller than in larger PPGs.

Second, speeches provide parties a public platform to communicate their policy positions, to claim credit and to advertise the party label as an electoral strategy to

attract voters (Bächtiger 2014). For this purpose, PPG leaders should value a unified party message, which they should seek to protect from deviant behaviour of legislators from within their own ranks (Proksch and Slapin 2015; Bäck and Debus 2018; Bäck and Debus 2016). Proksch and Slapin describe the potentially tense relationship between PPG leaders and legislators in a formal model of a delegation game (Proksch and Slapin 2015). The extent to which PPG leaders place importance on a unified party position depends in this model on the extent to which the electoral system provides for party-based voting cues. Where legislators' individual reputation is an important source for gaining seats, for example in the British SMD system, PPG leaderships are more at ease with legislators deviating from the party line in their speeches. To the contrary, in closed-list PR systems, where citizens cast votes for a party label rather than for individual candidates, PPGs should try to circumvent deviant voices from within their own ranks. Similarly, in political systems like the German mixed-member proportional (MMP) system, where party-based voting cues are of utmost importance to parties' electoral performance, PPG leaderships have strong incentives to maintain control over who speaks about what.

Therefore, under MMP rules, PPG leaderships should seek to deny legislator access to the parliamentary floor if these follow own personal vote-seeking strategies (see also Bäck and Debus 2018). Especially if debates are about salient issues that have the potential to damage the party label, PPG leaders should be wary of this type of legislator. For this reason, contrary to the expectation made in the previous subchapter, SMD legislators from marginal seats may speak less, and not more, about such issues in their speeches than SMD legislators from 'safe' seats.

Empirical context and hypotheses

To examine this theoretical framework empirically, the present study focuses on the 18th German Bundestag for a number of reasons. First, the number of legislators of immigrant-origin has steadily grown over the past two decades, reaching an unprecedented high in the 18th Bundestag, in which 37 immigrant-origin legislators were elected, making up for 5.9% of the entire parliament (Wüst 2014b).

Second, Germany employs an MMP system, which provides for within-country variation of electoral rules. There are 299 MPs elected in SMDs and a slightly larger number of MPs elected in 16 multi-member districts under closed-list PR. However, since mainly the two largest parties, the Christian and the Social Democrats, have realistic chances of winning SMD seats, almost all SMD legislators are affiliated with these two parties. The electoral system is further compensatory, such that parties' overall seat shares are determined by their vote shares in the PR tier (Saalfeld 2005). Therefore, while (government) legislators elected in SMDs should desire re-election in local constituencies, PPG leaderships should be mainly interested in maximising their PR votes (Proksch and Slapin 2015).

Third, the Bundestag is a paradigmatic case of a party-controlled *Arbeitsparlament* ('working parliament'), based on hierarchically organised PPGs cutting across a system of policy-specialised committees, ensuring a strongly party-controlled division of labour among legislators (Miller and Stecker 2008). Since it is in the discretion of PPG leaderships to assign and withdraw legislators to committees, they decide implicitly which policy areas legislators specialise in (Miller and Stecker 2008; Damgaard 1995). As policy experts, legislators are supposed to represent the official position of the party, enforced by the thread of sanctions from the PPG leadership, which range from subtle persuasion and threats, to the withdrawal of the committee seat, to the ultimate denial of upward promotion within the hierarchy of the PPG (Miller

and Stecker 2008; Ismayr 2012, 169). Similarly, PPG leaderships control access to the parliamentary floor in the Bundestag. Ismayr describes the process of speaker selection in the German Bundestag as being decided by chairpersons of PPGs' working groups who are also members of the PPG leadership (Ismayr, 2012, p. 305).

Fourth, the political context of the 18th Bundestag was one of a serious immigration shock, which has turned the issue of refugees and asylum into a hot one of German politics. Since 2013, immigration to Germany has steadily increased until late 2015. Official numbers report an influx of overall 1.1, 1.3 and 2 million immigrants in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. The peak in 2015 was fuelled by an estimated influx of 890,000 asylum seekers, mainly in the second half-year (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2016). This immigration shock has also been a consequence of the federal government's decision to suspend the Dublin Agreement in 2015, a decision that opened the border for a high number of refugees, who were stuck in Budapest/Hungary hoping to continue their journey mainly from war-torn Syria to Germany and other Northern and Western European Countries.

(Figure 1 near here)

Given the huge logistic, administrative and, indeed, political challenges that the intake of such high numbers of immigrants caused, nationwide opinion polls testified soon that the issue of immigration, asylum and the integration of refugees became the 'most important political problem' for German citizens, as shown in Figure 1. The figure shows data from the *Politbarometer*, a monthly repeated opinion survey, which asks in open-ended questions what respondents consider the most important current problem (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2018). The graph relates to the percentage of respondents referring to immigration in their answers between 2000 and 2018. As seen, the percentage of respondents doing so increased steadily since 2013 to reach a high of

almost 90% in the second half of 2015. Taking advantage of the increased saliency of the refugee and asylum issue, a new right-wing populist party, the 'Alternative für Deutschland' (AfD), entered the electoral stage to capitalise on votes by the use of anti-immigrant rhetoric and position taking. Consequently, due to the high salience of the immigration issue the AfD posed an electoral threat to the established parties, in particular to the government parties responsible for immigration policy, the Social Democrats (SPD) and the two Christian Democratic sister parties (CDU/CSU).

Against the political and institutional context of the 18th Bundestag, and based on the theoretical framework outlined in the theory section, two sets of competing hypotheses are derived.

First, the context of the sudden refugee crisis of the 18th Bundestag provides for a critical test of a direct effect of intrinsic motives encoded in the visibility of immigrant-origin legislators on immigration-related speechmaking. Consequently, a first hypothesis reads that *visible legislators of immigrant-origin were more likely to speak about the refugee and asylum issue than other legislators (H1).* Alternatively, two competing hypotheses aim at testing whether these legislators talk more about the issue, because they are more likely to be selected as policy experts serving the need for an efficient division of labour within their PPGs rather than out of intrinsic motives. As policy expertise can be plausibly assumed to be reflected in legislators' committee memberships to a certain extent, visible immigrant-origin legislators should be more likely to speak about immigration issues as policy experts, if they sit on committees that are more likely to deal with immigration-related issues (for example the social affairs and interior committee rather than the environment or defence committee). Thus, a first competing hypothesis is that *the positive effect of visible legislators of immigrant-*

minority origin on speech attention to the refugee and asylum issue is mainly driven by their assignment to immigration-related committees (H2.1).

Additionally, if policy expertise ascribed by the PPG leadership is the driving mechanism, the organisational capacities of the PPG should condition the extent to which visible immigrant-origin legislators have a stronger focus on immigration issues than other legislators. Since conditions for an efficient division of labour are better in larger than in smaller PPGs, legislators' policy specialisations tend to be more blurred in smaller PPGs, as described the previous section. In the 18th Bundestag, the CDU/CSU and the SPD provide for cases of larger PPGs (311 and 192 seats respectively), and the Greens and the Left for cases of smaller PPGs (63 and 64 seats respectively). This provides for a test of yet another hypothesis competing with H1: *legislators of immigrant-minority origin speak more about the refugee and asylum issue than other legislators, conditional on the size of their PPGs (H2.2).*

The second set of competing hypotheses contrasts individual against collective electoral motives. On one hand, with the refugee and asylum issue dominating the political agenda, SMD legislators should have had incentives to raise attention to this issue in their speeches to align their own issue attention with that of voters. However, this incentive should become stronger as a function of their individual level of electoral vulnerability. A third hypothesis is thus that *SMD legislators were more likely to speak about the refugee and asylum issue the higher their electoral vulnerability (H3).*

On the other, as the refugee crisis posed a serious electoral threat to the two government parties (SPD and CDU/CSU), which were increasingly under siege against the general perception that the government was not able to handle the crisis, further fuelled by the tireless attacks of the AfD criticising the government's immigration policy, the PPG leaderships of the CDU/CSU and SPD should have had strong

incentives to 'close their own ranks' in order to protect the party label from taking further damage. Thus, PPG leaders of the government parties should have been especially wary of providing access to debates on immigration to legislators who followed own electoral strategies in relation to the the refugee and asylum issue. Consequently, a fourth hypothesis reads that *SMD legislators were less likely to speak about the refugee and asylum issue in the 18th Bundestag the higher their electoral vulnerability (H4).*

Data and methods

In order to examine these hypotheses, this study relies on a dataset containing a corpus of all oral contributions in the plenary during the 18th German Bundestag. The data is provided by OffenesParlament.de, an NGO website committed to making parliamentary processes transparent (OffenesParlament.de 2018). Additionally, a second dataset was collected containing legislator-level variables to be described in due course. Since both datasets contain information on the same legislators, it was possible to merge the two into one dataset.

Using structural topic models to measure speech attention to immigration

In order to measure speech attention to the issue of immigration, this paper relies on a recently developed automated method for textual analysis: structural topic models (STM) (Roberts et al. 2014). STM belongs to the family of unsupervised 'topic models', which rely on clustering algorithms to code a collection of texts (a corpus) into several topics based on patterns of word co-occurrence in the texts (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). For the purpose of this paper, the assumption is that these topics can be interpreted as latent issue attention of speeches. For technical details, a description of

the text pre-processing as well as additional validation analyses, please see section A1 in the online appendix.

Based on an STM with k=13 topics, Table 1 gives an overview over the six most discriminating terms in each topic, so-called FREX terms, that is, words which are highly likely to appear in a topic (frequent) while also being less likely to appear in other topics (exclusive) (Roberts et al. 2014). The first topic clearly identifies speech attention to immigration with a strong bias towards refugee and asylum issues, indicated by the most discriminating words 'flüchtlingen' (refugees), 'flüchtling' (refugee), 'asylbewerb' (asylum seeker), 'integr' (integration), 'asyl' (asylum) and 'migrat' (migration).

(Table 1 near here)

Although it cannot completely be ruled out that other aspects of immigration politics may be covered to some extent in the topic, validation analyses presented in the appendix section A1 provide evidence that the found immigration topic corresponds mainly to the refugee and asylum issue. This interpretation is further substantiated by an assessment of what Grimmer and Stewart dub the 'predictive validity' of a topic, that is, an assessment of how well variation in topic usage corresponds over time with expected events (Grimmer and Stewart 2013) . For this purpose, Figure 2 visualises how the temporal development of the immigration topic in the 18th Bundestag (2013-2017) corresponds to the issue attention of citizens expressed in the 'most important problem' question of the monthly waves of the *Politbarometer* survey (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 2018), already utilised in Figure 1. As seen, not only peaked citizens' issue

attention at the climax of the European refugee crisis in the second half of 2015, but also the found topic as measured by the k=13 STM (with 95% confidence intervals).

(Figure 2 near here)

Dataset

While the dependent variable, *speech attention to the refugee and asylum issue*, is measured at the level of 10,379 speeches utilising the k=13 STM, a number of legislator-specific variables extend the dataset further. Descriptive statistics of all variables are shown in section A2 of the appendix file.

Main independent variables include the following. *Visible immigrant-origin legislator* takes a value of one if a speech is given by such a legislator, and zero otherwise. This group of legislators is defined and coded according to two criterions. First, the criterion *immigrant-origin* applies to all legislators born either (a) abroad or in Germany with foreign nationality at birth, or (b) born with German nationality and at least one parent of foreign nationality at birth. In coding practice, however, Wüst's (2014b) list of 37 immigrant-origin legislators was taken as a point for departure. Second these legislators were coded based on whether or not they have visible traits that make them *objectively* identifiable as having an immigrant background. Although defining oneself as belonging to an immigrant minority group is essentially a question of subjective self-perception, in practice, however, it is often unfeasible for social researchers to capture this subjectivity (Blätte and Wüst 2017, 210–11; Heath et al. 2013, 15–17). For this reason, scholars commonly rely on objective concepts, such as the Canadian definition of visible minorities, which can be applied to immigrant-origin legislators who are identifiable as 'non-Caucasian or non-white' (Wüst 2014a, 102; Heath et al. 2013, 17). However, since the present paper has a central interest in the immigration expertise and/or signalling purpose of immigrant-origin legislators ascribed

by PPG leaderships (i.e. the 'authenticity' of the spokesperson [Nergiz 2014, 254]), visibility refers here also to immigrant backgrounds that can be objectively inferred from the name of the speaker.

Moreover, a set of dummy variables distinguishes speakers' *PPG affiliations*. *Migration-related committee* is a dichotomous variable measuring whether speech givers sit on committees more likely to deal with immigration based on a modified categorisation scheme proposed by Wüst (Wüst 2011)[1]. *Election mode* distinguishes whether a speaker was elected from a party list (=0) or in an SMD (=1). In addition, *vote margin* measures the difference in votes between the SMD winner and the second best loser in the SMD race, in which the speaker was running as a candidate in the 2013 Bundestag election. Since most list legislators ran as double candidates in party lists and in SMDs simultaneously, this variable takes also values for most list legislators except those who did not run in an SMD race simultaneously.

A set of control variables is supposed to account for other variation influencing speech attention to immigration. To account for the dynamic evolution of the refugee and asylum issue over time, *days till election* measures the date of a speech in days until the 2017 election. By including also the squared term of days till election, it is intended to better control for non-linear effects of time. *Megaseat* distinguishes backbencher legislators from those who occupy a parliamentary position of influence, defined as committee chairs and members of the PPG leaderships including the chairpersons of working groups. *Seniority* approximates the career stage by counting the years legislators have been serving in the Bundestag prior to the 2013 election. *Female* takes values of one for female legislators and zero otherwise. Moreover, key sociodemographic features at the SMD level are accounted for, with the local *foreigner*

share, the *population share of residents older than 60* and the *unemployment rate*. And finally, *East* is a dichotomous variable distinguishing legislators elected in the territory of the former GDR, to account for the fact that the Eastern German population was, on average, more critical of the governments' immigration policy than the rest of the German population, indicated by a higher support for the AfD and frequent anti-immigrant protests (PEGIDA).

Analysing speech attention to immigration in the 18th Bundestag

Table 3 presents the results of fractional response logit models estimating speech attention to immigration in the 18th Bundestag. Fractional response models are appropriate here because the dependent variable is bound to the zero-one interval. Under such conditions, standard OLS regression models cannot guarantee that the predicted values of the dependent variable are restricted to the unit interval and would thus yield biased predictions for extreme values of the independent variables (Papke and Wooldridge 1996).[2] The regression models take speeches as the units of analysis, estimating robust standard errors clustered at the level of legislators to account for the fact that speeches delivered by the same legislator are interdependent.

(Table 3 near here)

Models 1 to 3 are supposed to evaluate the first set of competing hypotheses, that is, whether visible immigrant-origin legislators are universally more likely to speak about immigration, or whether this effect is conditional on their committee specialisation and the size of their PPGs. While Model 1 estimates the effects of the independent variables without any interactions, Model 2 includes an interaction between these legislators and migration-related committee. Model 3 includes the interaction with the party variable.

(Figure 3 near here)

Model 1 suggests a positive and statistically significant effect of visible immigrant-origin legislators. However, Models 2 and 3 suggest that this effect is strongly dependent on legislators' committee specialisation and on PPG size. Figure 3 visualises these findings in the form of predicted immigration topic proportions with 95% confidence intervals. The left-hand panel is based on Model 2 and shows that both types of legislators are significantly more likely to speak about immigration when they sit on migration-related committees. Although visible immigrant-origin legislators who sit on migration-related committees are estimated to talk slightly more about immigration than other legislators who also sit on such committees, this difference is not statistical significant. This is, in line with hypothesis 2.1, first evidence that legislators' policy specialisation drives speech attention to immigration more strongly than immigrant-origin legislators' intrinsic motives.

The right-hand panel of Figure 3 corroborates this interpretation with additional empirical evidence. Based on the interaction of Model 3, the figure shows how speech attention to immigration varies depending on the visible immigrant-origin status of legislators and the size of their PPGs . As seen, in the two larger PPGs (CDU/CSU and SPD), which should allow for a more efficient division of labour, visible immigrant-origin legislators are estimated to talk significantly more about immigration than their PPG colleagues do. By contrast, the difference between the two types of legislators in the two smaller PPGs (Greens and The Left) is not only substantially negligible, but the wide overlap of confidence intervals suggests that their estimated speech attention to immigration is also statistically indistinguishable, as suspected by hypothesis 2.2. Taken together, these results support hypotheses 2.1 and 2.2 rather than hypothesis 1.

Models 4 and 5 engage with the second set of competing hypotheses, which dispute over whether SMD legislators should talk more or less about immigration as

their individual level of electoral vulnerability increases. Model 4 and 5 extend Model 1 by variables measured at the SMD level. As this kind of information can only be assigned to legislators who ran as SMD candidates in the 2013 election, missing values apply to 479 speeches delivered by PR legislators who did not run as double candidates. In order to evaluate whether and how this effect is contingent on legislators' election mode, three groups of legislators are distinguished in Models 4 and 5, that is, *government SMD legislators*, consisting of government legislators elected in SMDs, *government PR legislators,* consisting of government legislators elected in party lists, and *opposition legislators*. Differences in election modes among opposition legislators are not considered, because it is mainly the two larger parties that won SMD races in the 2013 election. In Model 5, this variable is interacted with the local vote margin. Figure 4 visualises the conditionality of the vote margin effect on legislators' election mode. As can be seen, government legislators elected in SMDs tend to speak less about immigration as their local electoral vulnerability increases (higher vote margins indicate lower electoral vulnerability). To the contrary, there is no relationship whatsoever between speech attention to immigration and the local vote margin for list legislators, regardless of whether these belong to the government or to the opposition. This evidence favours hypothesis 4 over hypothesis 3.

(Figure 4 near here)

Conclusion

This paper was motivated by an interest in understanding speech attention to immigration in a party-constrained parliament at times when the issue dominates the political agenda. Two literatures suggest that legislators' individual motives may be underlying legislators' speech attention to immigration. On one hand, immigrant-minority legislators may speak more about immigration than other legislators, due to

intrinsic motives. On the other, legislators may speak more about immigration out of extrinsic motives to cultivate a personal vote with local constituents. However, a more realistic approach takes into account that PPG leaderships control speechmaking. Thus, the effects of variables measuring legislators' individual motives, here their immigrant-minority origin and personal vote-seeking incentives, should be conditional on the organisational capacities and gatekeeping role of PPG leaderships. Based on an STM analysis of more than 10,000 speeches held in the 18th Bundestag, a legislative period in which Germany was hit by the refugee crisis, results indicate that legislator' speech attention to immigration is more strongly shaped by PPG specific factors than by their individual motives.

Thus, this paper bridges and contributes to the literatures on the presence of immigrant-origin legislators, issue attention to immigration and parliamentary speechmaking. First, while a link between immigrant-origin legislators with a visible background and migration-specific speechmaking has been previously reported for Germany (Blätte and Wüst 2017), the present paper proposes to outline the limits of this link. Findings suggest that in the Bundestag, a prime example of a party-controlled parliament, the effect of visible legislators of immigrant-origin on speech attention to immigration is contingent on the level of labour division within PPGs. These legislators seem to focus on the refugee and asylum issue in their speeches due to their role as policy experts, serving the need for an efficient division of labour within PPGs, rather than out of intrinsic motives. This interpretation is also supported by the interview-based research of Nergiz (2014, 253-263). Several interviewees explained that they took an expert position on immigration and integration within their parties out of career-related motives or because they were imposed to do so, rather than out of own interest. . Similarly, Wüst and Saalfelds' comparative research in Germany, France, Sweden and

the UK suggests that immigrant-origin legislators' behaviour is shaped by the parliamentary opportunity structure rather than caused by their personal ethnic origin or migration experiences (Wüst and Saalfeld 2010, 331). The finding of the present paper complements these works by suggesting that ascribed policy expertise, rather than intrinsic motives, shapes a concrete legislative behaviour at the heart of parliamentary life: legislative speechmaking.

Second, the present study makes a contribution as the results indicate that legislators' incentives to cultivate a personal vote may shape their speech attention to immigration in a context in which the immigration issue is highly salient. Drawing on the burgeoning literature on parliamentary speechmaking (Proksch and Slapin 2015; Bäck, Debus, and Müller 2014; Bäck and Debus 2018; Bäck and Debus 2016), it is shown that in such a context government legislators elected in SMDs talk less about immigration as their individual level of electoral vulnerability increases. Refugees and asylum was clearly one of the most salient issues during the 18th Bundestag term. In this context, the two PPGs in government (CDU/CSU and SPD) are likely to have incentives to circumvent criticism on the government's immigration policy from within the party in order to maintain a unified party position. Therefore, it may have been a strategic decision to prevent legislators from talking about immigration if these had own personal vote-seeking incentives to disobey the party line to improve individual electoral prospects.

This study calls for future research in at least two respects. First, while this paper had a focus on *speech attention*, future research may shed more light on the specific policy positions that legislators communicate in their speeches. These may be inferred directly from legislators' speeches by the use of scaling methods of textual analysis (e.g. Bäck and Debus 2016, 48–74).

Second, a natural extension would be a comparative study in order to examine how the moderating influence of PPG contexts can differ depending on the level of party control. Future research should increase variation with regard to how strongly PPGs control floor access and legislators' policy specialisations. Legislative debates in more legislator-centred parliaments, like the UK House of Commons or the US House of Representatives, may provide legislators a more open stage to express their individual immigration-related concerns. As a corollary, while dissenting voices may remain widely unheard in party-centred parliaments like the Bundestag, legislator-centred parliaments may produce more polarisation in legislative debates on immigration, especially at times when the issue dominates the political agenda.

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Table 1: FREX terms and topic labels of STM with 13 topics.

Topic no.	FREX terms	Topic label
1	flüchtlingen, flüchtling, asylbewerb, integr, asyl, migrat	Refugees and Asylum
2	bundeswehr, soldaten, soldatinnen, mali, mandat, afghanistan	Defense
3	bahn, dobrindt, fahren, link, schien, auto	Transportation and Infrastructure
4	eltern, kind, jugendlichen, kindern, kinder, jugendlich	Family
5	russland, türkei, ukrain, erdogan, saudi-arabien, demokrati	Foreign affairs
6	somalia, afrika, humanitär, entwicklungszusammenarbeit, menschenrecht, entwicklungspolitik	Development aid
7	hochschulen, haushalt, bafög, bundeshaushalt, wohnungen, mietpreisbrems	Housing and construction
8	rent, mindestlohn, rentenversicherung, arbeitnehm, männern, arbeitnehmerinnen	Social
9	energien, energiewend, erneuerbaren, banken, klimaschutz, ceta	Energy
10	patienten, pflege, arzt, versicherten, pflegeversicherung, versorgung	Health
11	landwirtschaft, sport, digital, digitalisierung, ländlichen, produkt	Development of rural areas
12	daten, untersuchungsausschuss, gericht, informationen, täter, gesetzgeb	Justice
13	parlament, argument, ausschuss, ehe, fraktionen, bisschen	Procedural

Table 3: Determinants of speech attention to refugees and asylum

	Model 1 b/se	Model 2 b/se	Model 3 b/se	Model 4 b/se	Model 5 b/se
Independent variables:					
PPG: SPD [a]	-0.21	-0.21	-0.27		
	(0.17)	(0.17)	(0.17)		
PPG: Greens [a]	-0.36	-0.36	-0.25		
	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.25)		
PPG: The Left [a]	-0.46	-0.45	-0.38		
	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.29)		
Visible immigrant-origin legislator	0.61*	-0.06	1.13***	0.53	0.58*
	(0.25)	(0.18)	(0.24)	(0.29)	(0.28)
Migration-related committee	0.59***	0.56***	0.59***	0.65***	0.66***
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Visible immigrant-origin legislator * migration-related committee		0.77**			
		(0.28)			
Visible immigrant-origin legislator * SPD			0.25		
			(0.46)		
Visible immigrant-origin legislator * Greens			-0.99***		
			(0.30)		
Visible immigrant-origin legislator * The Left			-0.87*		
			(0.39)		
Vote margin				1.71*	3.58**
				(0.83)	(1.17)
Government PR legislator [b]				-0.03	0.47
				(0.19)	(0.24)
Opposition legislator [b]				-0.25	0.23
				(0.19)	(0.25)
Government PR legislator * vote margin					-3.24*
					(1.42)
Opposition legislator * vote margin					-3.51**
					(1.33)
Speech/legislator-level controls:					
Days_till_election	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***	0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Days_till_election^2	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***	-0.00***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Megaseat	0.15	0.15	0.13	0.17	0.22
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Seniority	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Female	0.32	0.32*	0.34*	0.24	0.28

	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.17)	(0.17)
Election mode: SMD	-0.07	-0.06	-0.04		
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)		
East	-0.08	-0.07	-0.11	-0.21	-0.22
	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.23)
District-level controls:					
Foreigner share in constituency				-0.72	-0.68
				(1.30)	(1.34)
Population share older than 60				-0.77	-1.15
in constituency				(2.99)	(2.93)
Unemployment rate in				3.72	4.63
constituency				(3.34)	(3.44)
INTERCEPT	-4.27***	-4.25***	-4.28***	-4.60***	-4.92***
	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.21)	(0.90)	(0.89)
N	10379	10379	10379	9900	9900
Log pseudolikelihood	-1799.539	-1798.464	-1856.194	-1674.074	-1667.686
AIC	3625.077	3624.929	3619.489	3378.148	3369.372

Note: Fractional response logit regression models: Table entries show unstandardised coefficients with robust standard errors, clustered on legislators, in parentheses; [a] reference category is CDU/CSU; [b] reference category is Government SMD legislator; * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
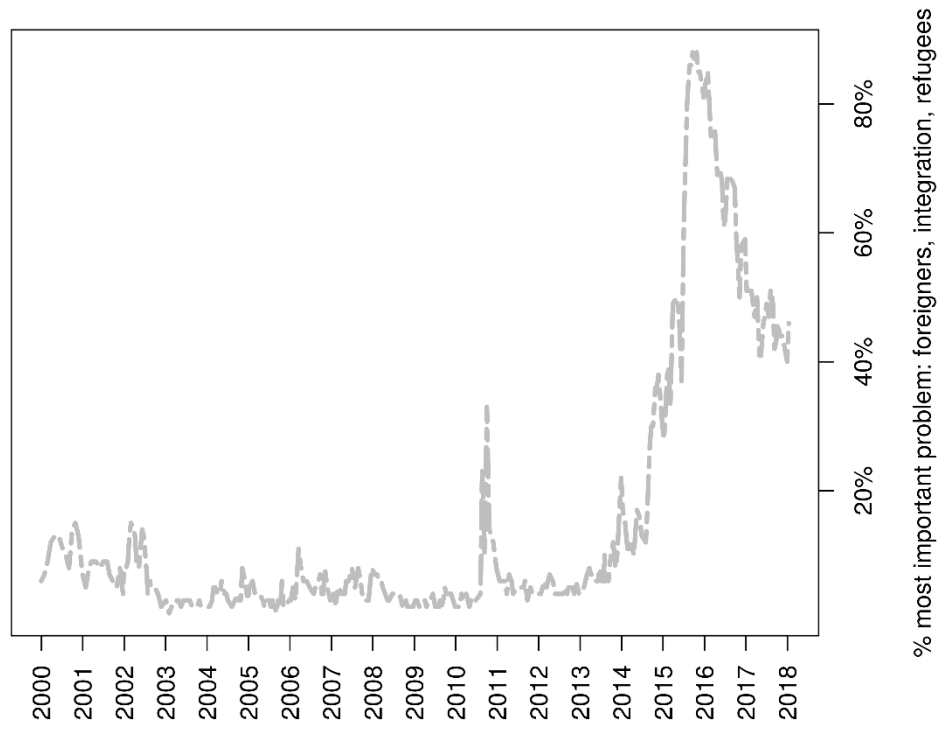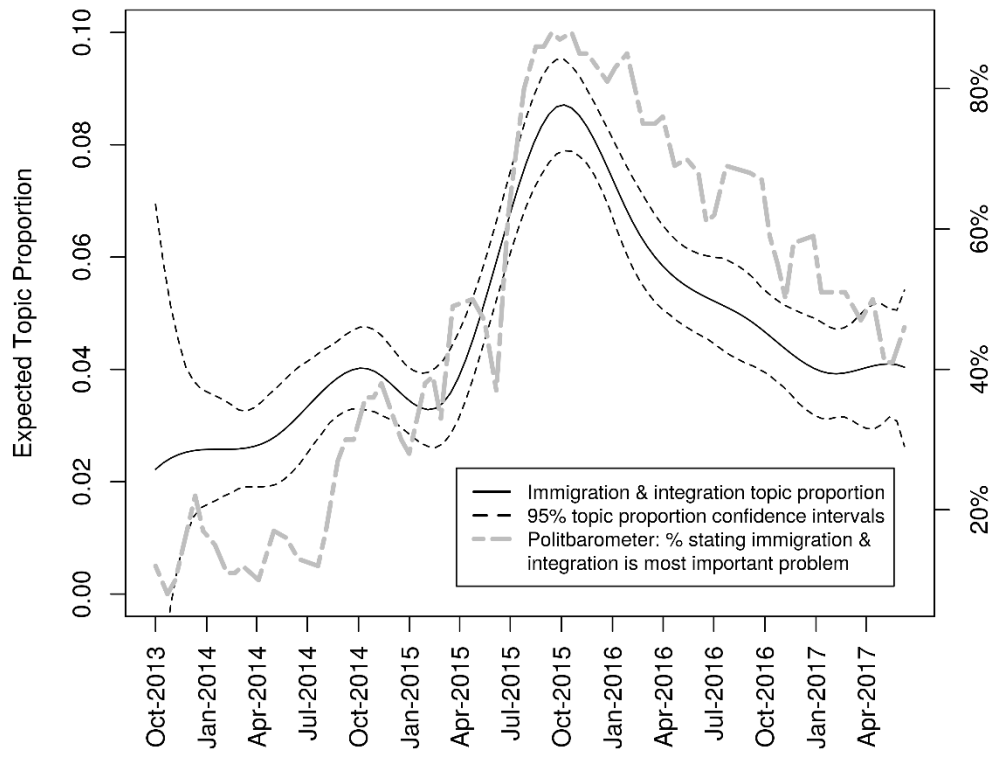
Figure 1

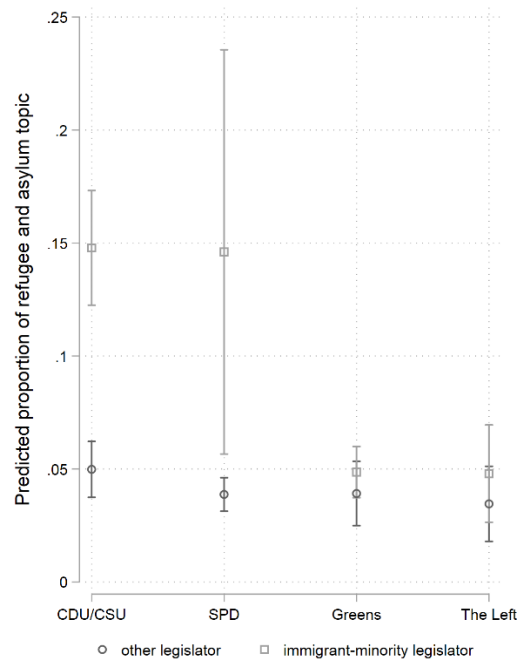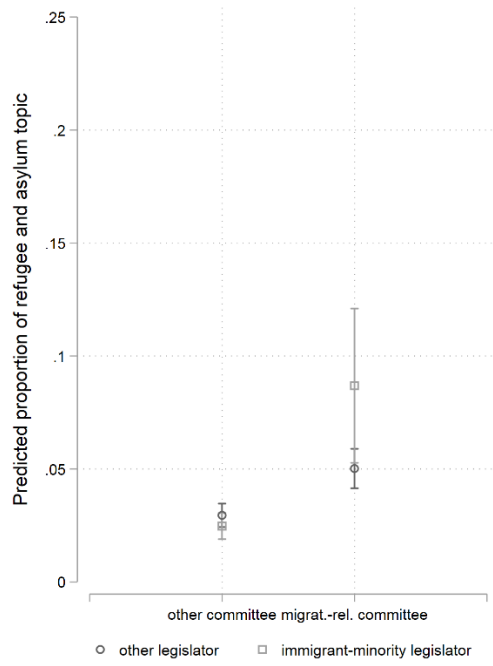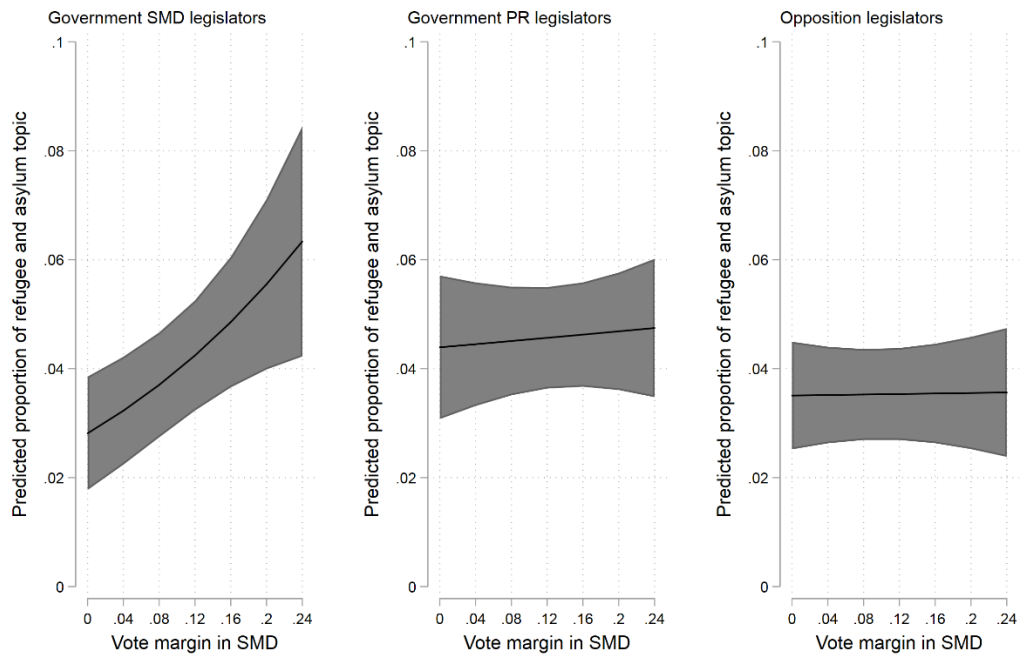% most important problem: foreigners, integration, refugees

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Notes

1 Migration-related committees are labour and social affairs; education and research; family, elderly and women; domestic affairs; culture and media; human rights; foreign affairs; European Union affairs; economic development aid; petitions.
2 The main results remain when using OLS with clustered standard errors or a multilevel random intercepts model.