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Katrine Fangen & Mari Vaage

To cite this article: Katrine Fangen & Mari Vaage (2018) “The Immigration Problem” and Norwegian Right-Wing Politicians, New Political Science, 40:3, 459-476

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/07393148.2018.1487145

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Published online: 03 Aug 2018.

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“The Immigration Problem” and Norwegian Right-Wing Politicians

Katrine Fangen and Mari Vaage

Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

ABSTRACT
In this article, we explore Norwegian Progress Party politicians’ change of their rhetoric of immigration after the party for the first time became part of a coalition government in 2013. Equal to other right-wing populist parties in Europe, immigration has been the main reason for voters to support the Progress Party. How then does their immigration rhetoric change after entering office? This is important, as an intolerant immigration rhetoric has far-reaching consequences for the political climate in Europe. Right-wing populist parties can achieve much regarding migration policies merely because there is broad consensus on a strict migration policy today. However, to succeed remaining in office, they must remain being acceptable to other parties in the parliament and their coalition partner and therefore they need to moderate the way they go about communicating their message. Too much moderation however might lead to a split within the party, or losing core voters.

Introduction

Deep skepticism to immigration is a major reason for the success of right-wing populist parties in Europe. Quantitative research has shown that immigration is the main issue used by all right-wing populist parties in mobilizing voters, although election gains also link to other political issues such as a strong defense, tax cuts, privatization, and rationalization of the public sector. Furthermore, what unites populist politicians in Europe (and in the United States) is that they construct a dichotomy between the people (rarely defined) and the elite. The “people” are seen as threatened by foreigners.

CONTACT Katrine Fangen
katrine.fangen@sosgeo.uio.no
Department of Sociology and Human geography, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway


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who want to enter “their” country.\(^5\) Immigration is presented by right-wing populist politicians as endangering the sustainability of the nation.

How, then, do representations of immigration as a problem change when a right-wing populist party moves from the opposition to becoming part of the government? In this article, we point to the balancing between presenting a more consensus-oriented immigration rhetoric and being true to the core voters. This same balance is seen in other right-wing populist parties entering office,\(^6\) as for example in the Italian Lega Nord’s participation in a coalition at the national level.\(^7\) Similar to the Lega Nord, the Norwegian Progress Party has chosen a “one foot in, one foot out” strategy, as we will describe in more detail in this article.\(^8\)

This article focuses on the case of Norway’s Progress Party, *Fremskrittspartiet* (henceforth: FrP), which, after the national election in 2013, formed a coalition government with the Conservatives, *Høyre* (H). H is a mainstream political party balancing between conservatism and liberalism.\(^9\) The coalition between FrP and H is interesting in light of the H’s earlier attempt to marginalize the FrP.\(^10\) This changed, however, and the Progress Party increasingly became accepted as a cooperation partner, particularly amongst politicians within H.\(^11\) The two-party coalition was reelected in 2017.

The FrP, originally named “Anders Lange’s Party for a Drastic Reduction in Taxes, Fees and Public Intervention,” was founded in 1973.\(^12\) From the beginning, this was a small party receiving a maximum of five percent of the vote in national elections. Initially, the main political issue was anti-tax politics. In 1978, Carl I. Hagen took over as FrP leader (lasting until 2006). When he made anti-immigration the main political issue in 1989, the party, for the first time, received as much as thirteen percent of the vote.\(^13\) In the 2009 elections (with Siv Jensen as the party leader), the FrP received a record twenty-two percent of the vote. After the July 2011 mass-murders perpetrated by avowed right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik, the FrP first experienced a decline in support (11.8 percent of the vote in the local elections), probably because the media linked it with the views held by Behring Breivik. Nevertheless, in 2013 the FrP managed, for the first time in history, with 16.3 percent of the vote, to be elected into office in a coalition with the Conservative Party. In the 2015 local elections, the party did not perform well (10.3 percent of the vote), but in the 2017 national elections it fared better, down only 1.1 percent

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\(^6\)With politicians “in office,” we mean those who have formal positions within the government either as ministers or as state secretaries (junior ministers). According to this definition, politicians who are members of parliament (MPs) will count as “in opposition,” as they have no formal role within the government itself.


\(^11\)Anna-Sophie Heinze, “Strategies of Mainstream Parties toward their Right-Wing populist Challengers: Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland in Comparison,” *West European Politics* 41:2, pp. 287–309.


The main reason for its success in 2017 was the focus on immigration issues during the election campaign. A seminal work on the shift from opposition to government is Ralph Miliband’s analysis of the British Labour party. This party was concerned about parliamentarism as the only legitimate way to political success, but there was disagreement as to whether gaining office was the right goal. In contrast to the Labour Party in the United Kingdom (UK) as well as in Norway, the FrP has traditionally been a so-called “outsider party,” that is, a party “outside the cartel whose appeals, history or size sets them aside from mainstream actors.” Since the early 2000s, that changed. Right-wing parties seem to be adopting strategies similar to those on the left, with the party leadership beginning to “seek office and build alliances” – a trend seen also in other populist parties in Europe.

In a special issue of *Party Politics*, a number of examples of so-called “outsider parties” entering government are analyzed, including the Italian right-wing populist party Lega Nord, which has already had two periods in government. The articles in this issue are important in that they make it possible to see similarities and differences in the process for outsider parties to enter office. For example, an article on radical left parties in coalition governments states that a positive outcome of government participation for these parties may be an altering of the view that these parties are purely for protest. We argue that the same could be said about right-wing populist parties after entering government.

Central to our analysis is the perspective described by Reinhard Heinisch: that the strengths of right-wing populist parties in opposition become weaknesses when these parties enter government. According to Heinisch, this is especially true if they tone down their radical agenda and adapt too quickly, thereby resembling everyone else, including former government parties. This “filtering effect” is the inevitable result of being forced into political coalitions with more “mainstream” parties. This leads to several dilemmas. On the one hand, the natural aversion to adapting to political conventions and compromises may lead to difficulties in working with other parties in government. On the other hand, if they adapt too much, they risk alienating core voters who are unable to distinguish the anti-system party in opposition from the political establishment. Latent internal conflicts may come to the fore, even leading to a crisis of party identity.

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15 Aardal and Berg, “2017 Norwegian Election.”
22 Heinisch, “Success in Opposition.”
This applies also to other types of parties when they join coalition governments. For example, a study of Scandinavia’s Christian democratic parties finds that they share a wider dilemma: whether to remain value-based parties, or to shift toward catch-all (consensus-building) strategies. Whether to focus on policy or on office is a dilemma inherent in any coalition government. In this article, we examine how this has played out since the FrP became part of government, in contrast to before entering office – as seen through the lens of immigration. With this analysis, we contribute to the growing literature on right-wing populist parties entering coalition government, but in contrast to earlier literature, we include a specific angle, namely to focus on the immigration rhetoric, as this is the main issue that makes voters choose a right-wing populist party.

So, even though we analyze one singular case, namely the FrP in Norway, we would argue that our analysis is relevant for the future study of similar parties gaining office elsewhere in Europe, and in the United States (US), where the immigration cause is of particular importance.

An important new angle in our article is the detailed analysis of the role of the immigration rhetoric. This is particularly interesting in Norway, as the country first became a net immigration country in the late 1960s. Even so, it is not until recently that migrants made up a significant share of the population.

To highlight the distinction between FrP in government and FrP in opposition, we draw on contributions to parliamentary debates, party manifestos, internal party reports, and statements in the media and at seminars. The data was collected for the project Negotiating the Nation. We have used NVivo as a tool for data analysis. The selection was derived by reading a range of media texts and official documents from 2007 to 2016, accessed through the media archive Retriever/A-text using the search query “FrP” in combination with “immigration.” In addition, we searched the official websites of the Norwegian government and of the Norwegian parliament for relevant documents containing statements made by FrP officeholders. We omitted documents for which entire ministries or the government as a whole are responsible.

Our approach is inspired by Carol Bacchi’s “What’s the problem represented to be.” The main twist that this method implies is that instead of analyzing how governments deal with problems, the analytical gaze is directed more to how politicians understand the problem, and how they, by the way they talk, contribute to a specific construction of the problem. The method therefore consists of investigating politicians’ assumptions about what the problem consists of, what causes it, and consequently, what solutions are perceived as desirable and legitimate. This also entails critical examination of what alternative understandings are excluded and, in effect, silenced. The method is appropriate for studying political rhetoric, as it focuses on the understandings that underlie politicians’ statements and the solutions and measures proposed.

25 Today, fourteen percent of the population are immigrants, but the majority of the immigration population are labor migrants from the East European countries (after the EU enlargement in 1994). The most recent statistics are available online at: https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/14-prosent-av-befolkningen-er-innvandrere.
26 See, for example, regjeringen.no and stortinget.no.
Bacchi’s method is operationalized through some specific questions that are meant to guide the analysis. We have adapted these questions for our research purpose, by applying the following questions that guide our analysis of the FrP outside and inside office: (1) What is the problem as defined in FrP politicians’ statements about immigration? (2) What implicit assumptions underpin the understanding of the problem? (3) Who is made responsible for the problem in the statements by FrP politicians? (4) What appears unproblematic in this representation of the problem? (5) What solutions emerge as legitimate on the basis of such an understanding of the problem, and what are the consequences? According to Bacchi, the model may by followed by systematically asking one of these questions after each other, or by a more integrated approach, with specific questions asked where the analysis occasions their use. We follow the latter approach, marking the questions with Q1, Q2, and so on where they are applied.

Norway’s FrP in Opposition

Much has been written about the FrP in opposition – after all, that has been the status of the party since it was created in 1973 and until the change of government in 2013. From the late 1980s and onward, the FrP has, similar to many other right-wing populist parties across Europe, marked itself as a party that sees immigration in itself as a problem (Q1). When the populist right entered the immigration debate in Europe in the late 1980s, this involved a rhetorical shift from talking about “labor migrants” to talking about “the Muslim immigrant.” Indeed, the populist right contributed to this shift, by their success in framing media debates by creating moral panics around Muslim immigrants’ “cultural behavior.”

Muslim immigrants were portrayed as a specific threat because their culture and values were considered incompatible with Western and European cultures. The FrP shared with other populist parties in Europe the construction of a dichotomy between “the people” as opposed to specific threatening outgroups, including immigrants in general or the cosmopolitan elite that allow Muslim immigrants to flood the country, with the use of cultural stereotypes and biological metaphors, and deep opposition to the “politically correct.”

The FrP has developed considerable ownership of Norway’s immigration and integration policy since the 1980s. Every year the question “which party has the best immigration policy?” has been asked, the FrP has scored the highest. It has focused on the problem of Muslim immigration, defined as Muslims becoming “too numerous” and gaining too much power in Norway. In 2009, FrP leader Siv Jensen warned against this threat, using the term “Islamization by stealth,” inspired by Robert Spencer’s *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America*

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31Yilmaz, “Right-Wing Hegemony.”

32Ibid.

33Heinisch, “Success in Opposition – Failure in Government.”

34Simonnes, “I stjålne klær?”
without Guns or Bombs. This term indicates that society is slowly but surely becoming "Islamized," behind the backs of the Norwegian population, and that the Muslims involved are hiding their true intentions. In line with the Eurabia theory, Islam constitutes the implicit "they" group that stands for lies and deception, whereas Christianity constitutes a cultural community that includes "us." The fact that many religions are represented in Norwegian society, some with lengthy histories, is simply ignored.

In 2010, former leader of Oslo FrP, MP Christian Tybring-Gjedde, and Kent Andersen, a deputy member of the Oslo City Council, wrote an op-ed "Dream from Disneyland," on the threat posed by immigrants from "cultures and lack of cultures" that cannot be reconciled with the Norwegian majority culture. Because of this threat, they wrote, "cultural Norwegians are fleeing several Oslo neighborhoods and leaving enclaves where Muslim naiveté, dogmatism and intolerance find increasingly fertile ground." This narrative continued in 2011 when Tybring-Gjedde declared at an FrP meeting: "Islam cannot stand the values of freedom, and Islamic power increases from day to day." He emphasized that all new immigrants should be required to avow unconditional love for Norway and "our" Christian cultural heritage. Again, Islam was represented as the opposite of the liberal values for which "we" stand. Kent Andersen went further, asking if "moderate Muslims" actually exist, setting the stage for allowing all means to be used in fighting the alleged Islamization of Europe.

In the aftermath of Behring Breivik’s right-wing extremist terror attack on July 22, 2011, and despite Tybring-Gjedde’s apologies for some of his phrasing in "Dream from Disneyland," the latter still argued that the political message of his original article remained "rock solid." That he did not moderate his political convictions about immigration and Islam became evident also after the FrP entered government in 2013, when, at a seminar arranged by a local FrP branch in April 2014, Tybring-Gjedde used rhetorical elements featured in the Eurabia theory. There he maintained that Israel’s conduct toward the Palestinians must be understood as an existential struggle against Islam, and that a similar battle must be waged in Norway: "Do we have any defensive wall against that which we see coming into our country? No. We do not [...] It’s almost as if we are digging our own graves [...] I am simply terrified."  

35 Robert Spencer, Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2008). Spencer is a leading member of the Alt-Right in the US and was an organizer at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, North Carolina in August 2017.
36 The Eurabia theory is a conspiracy theory about Muslim designs for swift world domination. The term "Eurabia" was originally developed by Bat Ye’or in Eurabia: The Euro–Arab Axis (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005). Ye’or argues that Europe is about to change from a Judeo-Christian civilization to one where "subjugated, non-Muslim individuals or peoples... accept the restrictive and humiliating subordination to an ascendant Islamic power to avoid enslavement or death" (p. 1). Although most FrP politicians do not support the Eurabia theory in its entirety, there are several who endorse certain parts of it and even refer to it.
37 Andersen and Tybring-Gjedde, "Drem fra Disneyland" [Dream from Disneyland], Aftenposten (August 26, 2010), available online at: https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikk/fi/kaxkv/Drom-fra-Disneyland.
38 Andersen and Tybring-Gjedde, "Drom fra Disneyland."
42 Christian Tybring-Gjedde, "Israels kamp er eksistensiel" [Israel’s Struggle is Existential], YouTube (April 8, 2014), available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYU3aLRqk1E.
In these examples, Islam is defined as a threat, and negative statements generalize Islam as a whole or all Muslims as a powerful threat against which “we” must protect “ourselves.” The implicit assumptions are that Muslims are by definition “different” (patriarchal and/or violent), that they cannot be integrated into Norwegian society, and, sometimes, that they disguise their real goal: to take over power in Europe. Consistent with Eurabia rhetoric (and the Islamization-by-stealth concept), there is the assumption that Muslims are hiding their true, long-term intentions of establishing Islamic cultural hegemony.

The implicit assumption in these ideas (Q2) is a cultural argument: immigration from certain cultures will lead to destructive conflict in Norwegian society. Cultural arguments have only occasionally been used by politicians from other parties, and they are generally deemed less legitimate than economic arguments against immigration.\(^{43}\) However, comparative studies of right-wing populist parties in Europe show that cultural arguments against immigration are more important for the voting public than are economic ones.\(^{44}\)

Moreover, there is also an underlying economic assumption (Q2): immigration constitutes a burden for taxpayers and the welfare system. This was the basis for FrP politician Øystein Hedstrøm’s (MP from 1989–2005) demand for an “immigrant account” (innvandrerregnskap) in 1995.\(^{45}\) On this point, other parties are said to have drawn closer to the FrP’s argumentation over the last decade, when demands for keeping records of the economic advantages and disadvantages of immigration have been forth by parties other than the FrP.\(^{46}\) That the coalition headed by the Norwegian Labor Party Arbeiderpartiet (Ap) (2005–2013) commissioned such a report shows that support for such thinking is not confined to the right.\(^{47}\) In fact, regarding the immigration issue, it has also been argued that the difference between the FrP and Ap is not that huge,\(^{48}\) and furthermore that it was the Ap that first set restrictive migration policy on the agenda.

However, the FrP typically combines the economic and cultural argument against immigration, as in the internal report *Measures for an Economically and Culturally Sustainable Immigration*,\(^{49}\) by The Progress Party’s Sustainability Committee\(^{50}\) issued during the 2013 election campaign – before the party became part of the government. In this report, economic arguments link to arguments about reserving welfare benefits for “our own.”\(^{51}\) Additionally, the report employs cultural arguments for a more restrictive immigration and asylum policy. By using

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\(^{47}\)The committee was appointed by MP Audun Lysbakken (Socialist Left Party) and was headed by Grete Brochmann, professor in sociology, NOU, *Velferd og migrasjon: Den norske modellens framtid* [Welfare and Immigration: The Future of the Norwegian Model], Norges offentlige utredninger/Official Norwegian Report (2011), p. 7.

\(^{48}\)Simonnes, “I stjåle klær?”


\(^{50}\)The committee consisted of Per Sandberg (MP since 1997 and Minister of Fisheries from 2015), Per-Willy Amundsen (MP from 2005 to 2013 and Minister of Justice 2016–2017), and Christian Tybring-Gjedde (MP since 2005, leader of FrP Oslo 2010–2014).

the term “cultural sustainability,” the FrP report directs attention not only toward the economic survival of the welfare state when confronted with greater immigration, but also toward the survival of national culture in the face of immigration from (primarily) “non-Western” countries. With the cultural argument connected to an economic one, the restrictive immigration policy advocated by the FrP was made more palatable to most people, as economic arguments enjoy broader support.

When in opposition, FrP politicians tend to hold politicians from the Norwegian Labor Party (Ap) responsible for the problem of immigration (Q3). In the 2010 op-ed “Dream from Disneyland,” Ap was criticized for destroying Norwegian culture through its well-intentioned but naïve, unrestricted immigration policy, resulting in loss of identity, the marginalization of Norwegian culture, and the dominance of multiculturalism, which together “will tear our country apart.”\(^{52}\) In this representation, Ap politicians are made the scapegoats, branded as “culture traitors” willing “to stab our own culture in the back.”\(^{53}\)

In the representation of the “too many (especially Muslims) immigrants” problem, what is defined as “unproblematic”(Q4) is denying immigrants entry to Norway and the ensuing forced deportation of unsuccessful asylum-seekers, including children. What is left unspoken (Q4) is the solidarity argument regarding the obligation to protect persons fleeing from war and persecution. If, for example, the policy suggested in the “sustainability report” was implemented, that would be a clear violation of international conventions such as the Geneva Conventions to which Norway, like most other countries in Europe, is a party. The authors of the FrP report were obviously aware of this and argued for comprehensive changes to be made to international conventions, including the 1951 Refugee Convention, by allowing for temporary residence and encouraging refugees to stay in countries “similar in culture” (Q5): “The principle regarding residence of a temporary nature and in an area of close proximity is especially significant because both temporary residence and similar culture and religion reduce the chances of conflicts with the local population and country of residence.”\(^{54}\)

Evident in many of the statements by FrP politicians in opposition is that the solution to the problem (Q5) is an immigration policy highly restrictive toward Muslims, including deportation of those who already have arrived in Norway. According to the sustainability report, the problem of immigration as a burden to the welfare state can be solved by sharply limiting immigration from non-Western countries. In the report, FrP politicians argue that Norway should allow only resource-strong immigrants who can contribute to society, not disadvantaged groups. This highlights the significance of the country and immigrants having a similar culture; otherwise, conflicts arise. The authors emphasize national “self-determination” with regard to international conventions – indicating aversion to the idea that international conventions should define national policy. Otherwise, the sustainability report departs from the previous government’s use of the concept of “sustainable immigration,” by stressing the protection of cultural identity as an argument against immigration. FrP politicians are basically alone in espousing such

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\(^{52}\) Andersen and Tybring-Gjedde, “Drøm fra Disneyland.”

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Fremskrittsparties bærekraftutvalg, Tiltak for en økonomisk og kulturell bærekraftig innvandring, p. 21.
cultural arguments against immigration. By contrast, the economic argument is shared with several Norwegian parties and has been a main argument after FrP became part of the government.

We argue that this cultural argument against immigration is the most telling characteristic of FrP in opposition, which also makes it significantly different from politicians from other parties in how they argue against immigration. Furthermore, this characteristic is something FrP politicians in opposition have in common with their political counterparts in other countries of Europe and in the US. Those FrP politicians who go furthest in this kind of argumentation are clearly racist in their statements that people from different cultures cannot live together and that multiculturalism threatens to destroy “our” national culture.

The FrP in Government

How, then, has the issue of immigration been defined by FrP politicians who gained ministerial posts in the coalition government from 2013 and onward? When FrP entered government, the main depiction of immigration as a problem (Q1) was maintained, but rhetorically framed in more moderate wording. For example, some of the FrP politicians who joined the government in 2013 toned down cultural arguments against immigration, so as to become more palatable to other parties. However, those FrP politicians who did not have positions in the government continued to represent Islam as a threat, viewing all Muslims as representatives of undemocratic and patriarchal practices. While some FrP politicians within government endorsed this discourse, they often stressed how their opposition was related to radical Islam, not Islam in general.

One example here is party leader Siv Jensen. She had been sharply critical of Islam – but took a more moderate tone when becoming Minister of Finance in 2013. All the same, in 2014 she refused to distance herself when the FrP’s justice policy spokesman Ulf Leirstein “liked” several posts on his personal Facebook page, where it was alleged that the head of the parliamentary standing committee on justice, Hadia Tajik (Ap), had a Pro-Muslim agenda. One of the posts that Leirstein “liked” claimed that it was “unfortunate Muslim dominance” to have Tajik on the justice committee, as well as a YouTube clip that gave the impression that Tajik supported ISIS in its call for beheading and murder. Leirstein finally issued an apology, stating that “sometimes things get a bit hasty on Facebook, and this time I liked a video without having gone through its content; I apologize for that.” In a debate with Ap party leader Jonas Gahr Store on the national broadcast program “Political Quarter,” FrP party leader Siv Jensen refused to apologize for the incident. Further, she claimed that the attention around Leirstein was side-tracking the discussion from what constituted the real problem: radical Islam.

In this way, Jensen trivialized the problem of one of her party colleagues who was helping spread and legitimize conspiracy theories, by setting it up against something far

55 Simonnes, “I stjâne klær?”
more serious: ISIS advances in Syria and Iraq. While stressing that she still considered Islam a threat, instead of talking about Islam and Islamization in general, as she had done earlier, she now declared explicitly that the problem was radical Islam – an argument that would find resonance amongst many other politicians, also from other parties.\textsuperscript{58} Yet Jensen reiterated in the same debate that “stealth Islamization” was still a good expression, in response to criticism of the concept in a recently published book about hate speech.\textsuperscript{59} In other words, Jensen was not moderate in this debate, as she continued the support for the concept of Islamization by stealth, but the more moderate step was to change the rhetoric of talking about Muslims in general as a threat, to talking about radical Islam as a threat.

Some FrP politicians have, to an even greater degree than Jensen, changed their rhetoric to more moderate after joining the government. One example is the former spokesperson for FrP on immigration policy, Per Willy Amundsen.\textsuperscript{60} In 2009, he stated that in twenty years Muslims would have become a majority in Norway.\textsuperscript{61} After Behring Breivik’s terror attack of July 22, Amundsen stated on his Facebook profile that he feared that “a new crusade” was necessary – a statement that was extraordinary, as the July 22 terror attack had been a crusade in real life, in which seventy-seven people were killed. Amundsen had also previously announced being inspired by the publications of Eurabia theorist Bruce Bawer,\textsuperscript{62} and defined Islam and liberal immigration policies as a threat. However, a search for his name and “Islam” returned almost no hits in the period after the shift in government, although he spoke favorably of the nationalist political party Sweden Democrats and maintained his focus on immigration, including a proposal to deny social security and welfare benefits to unemployed immigrants from countries outside the European Union (EU).\textsuperscript{63} These statements, as previously discussed, were in accordance with the principle of sustainable immigration. In contrast to FrP politicians in opposition, his argument against immigrants from outside the EU was not cultural, but rather economic arguments, which as we saw in the previous section is supported by politicians from other parties, including the Ap.

After the FrP entered government, Solveig Horne was appointed Minister of Children and Equality on October 16, 2013, and went from being relatively unknown to one of the most prominent FrP politicians during the FrP’s first period in government ever. Although supporting traditional family values, Solveig Horne could be seen as a new and more moderate voice of FrP policies. The following excerpt shows how she responded to questions from an Ap politician in the parliamentary question hour regarding what the government would do to fight racism. She began by mentioning some positive aspects of immigration (which is quite unusual for an FrP politician):

\textsuperscript{59}Anne Birgitta Nilsen, Hatprat [Hate Speech] (Oslo, NO: Cappelen, 2014).
\textsuperscript{60}He was State Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization from 2013 to 2016 and served as Minister of Justice from December 2016 until January 2018, when he was replaced by Sylvi Listhaug.
\textsuperscript{61}See “Frp tror på islamsk flertall i 2029” [Progress Party Believes there will be an Islamic Majority in 2029], VG (February 26, 2009), available online at: http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/frp/frp-tror-paa-islamsk-flertall-i-2029/a/547572/.
\textsuperscript{63}Mats Løvstad, “Å stille krav er integrering” [Making Demands is Integration], Arbeidsmiljøsenteret (2010), available online at: http://www.arbeidsmiljo.no/a-stille-krav-er-integrering/.
Cabinet Minister Solveig Horne [11:36:24]

While immigration has contributed to economic growth in Norway and made us a more diverse nation, this government sees challenges related to immigration and integration. It is therefore necessary to regulate immigration, and that is something that both this government and the previous government have worked on. […] I would like to remind you that there is broad consensus about regulating immigration. Thus, it is important to combat hate speech and discrimination with good legislation and enforcement.\(^{64}\)

We note several key argumentative moves in this statement. First, Horne emphasizes that immigration has contributed to economic growth and diversity, but notes that there are also problems related to immigration. In sharp contrast to FrP politicians in opposition, Horne realizes that the call for stricter immigration policy was also shared by the former Ap-led coalition government. Here, her reasoning stands in stark contrast to that of other FrP politicians who define Ap immigration policy as irresponsible.

As the next excerpt shows, Horne notes that many immigrants experience discrimination and that this is something the government, with its new discrimination act (The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act), will work to combat. However, she also points out that there are many immigrants who do not experience discrimination, and says that this is the case with those who “manage to become well integrated”:


[…] But not all immigrants are subjected to discrimination – on the contrary. There are very many who manage to become well integrated in the local community and are not discriminated against or on the receiving end of hate speech in daily life.

Interestingly, Horne here claims that there are “very many” immigrants who manage to become well integrated, in contrast to what other FrP politicians have stressed. Similar to former FrP politicians in opposition, however, there is an underlying assumption (Q2) that some immigrants simply do not want to integrate. In other words, immigrants who do not want to integrate are responsible for the problems that they face (Q3). Furthermore, the apparent solution to the problem (Q5) of discrimination is for the immigrants to be better at integrating. In this way, the problem becomes individualized, and the responsibility is placed on the “victims” themselves. This is similar to arguments used by party leader Siv Jensen in 2008, long before FrP became part of government.\(^{65}\)

However, Horne confirms the importance and shared responsibility of combating hate speech and discrimination, a position that appears moderated and formalized compared with traditional FrP rhetoric, and more similar to the view of the preceding Ap government. Although Horne is clearly more moderate than her colleagues in opposition, she too argues strongly for a strict immigration policy (Q5). She expresses her willingness to take action when it comes to Norwegian Somali parents who are sending their children to Somalia to attend Islamic schools.\(^{66}\)

\(^{64}\) Parliamentary Question Hour (January 8, 2014), available online at: https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Sporretimesporsmal/et-sporretimesporsmal/?qid = 58548.

\(^{65}\) Siv Jensen, “Motebegrepet rasisme” [The Fashion Term Racism], Aftenposten (May 28, 2008), available online at: https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/debatt/i/5nO1E/Motebegrepet-rasisme.

\(^{66}\) See Progress Party webpage (April 8, 2014), available online at: http://www.frp.no/Aktuelt/Skader-integreringen.
government have generally taken a clear stance regarding immigrants from Somalia. Political advisor Himanshu Gulati (FrP) in the Ministry of Justice spoke positively of the government’s “information project about the risks of traveling from Somalia to Norway as an asylum seeker,” although this was similar to a statement by Ap politician Libe Rieber-Mohn who in 2008 stated that “it only takes a few hours from Norway has tightened its asylum policy until this is known in the streets of Mogadishu.” Hence, this in itself does not necessarily imply a departure from the rhetoric of the previous Ap coalition government (2005–2013).

FrP politician Anders Anundsen, who was Minister of Justice (2013–2016), did not receive support for a stricter asylum policy, but favored a faster processing of asylum applications and more rapid placement into the return centers, as well as fewer commutation petitions (Q5). Nevertheless, there was a difference between FrP politicians within and outside the government, as became evident when Anundsen, when, in a parliamentary question hour in 2014, was confronted with statements by FrP MP Per Sandberg that Norway, like Switzerland, should hold a referendum on immigration. In his response, Anundsen drew a distinction between FrP and government policy, with Sandberg’s statement representing FrP policy. One year later, however, criticism was raised against Anundsen regarding his deportation of long-term asylum-seeking children, even though the government had promised that these children should not be prioritized for deportation. This case almost led to a motion of no confidence in parliament.

The rhetoric sharpened when Sylvi Listhaug took over responsibility for immigration policy as Minister of Immigration and Integration (December 2015–January 2018), a newly created ministerial post. It also meant that Solveig Horne, the more moderate FrP voice in government, lost responsibility for immigration policies, although Horne continued as Minister of Children, Families and Inclusion. After January 2018, responsibility for immigration politics was further moved to the Ministry of Justice when Listhaug took over as Minister of Justice, Security, and Immigration. At the same time, Horne was removed from her ministerial post.

Listhaug became well-known for her unyielding attitude in asylum politics. After a year in this position, she argued that Norway had become the strictest amongst all European countries in returning asylum seekers whose applications had been rejected. Increasingly, the FrP has grown from a position in government with an impact on immigration policy not so different from the previous Ap-led coalition government (in other words, not significantly changing immigration policies) to having a major influence on this policy – which has been shown to be the most important issue for its voters. However, there is a worry amongst the liberal left that right-wing populists in government will imply a harsher climate in Europe. 
today, in particular for immigrants. We certainly see some tendencies of this in Norway, especially during the period Listhaug was responsible for immigration policies. Nevertheless, in March 2018, she resigned from her post, and the rhetoric has again become more moderate than was the case before FrP entered office.

To sum up, we can say that the FrP in position risked being too moderate, and party leader Jensen (and Prime Minister Solberg, H) saw the need to open the space for the more radical voice of Listhaug. Support for the party increased after Listhaug got the minister post for immigration and integration, and then after a while, she received one of the most honorable Minister posts, as Minister of Justice and Migration (which was also a renewed focus for the Minister of Justice post). After several instances of provocation, there was an incident (to which we will return in the concluding section) that made Listhaug have to resign from her post. It is supposed that the next Minister of Justice, Tor Mikkel Wara, will use a more moderate rhetoric, although remain loyal to the line of restrictive immigration policy. Thus, the recent story of FrP in opposition clearly shows the difficulty of the balancing act between being true to the core voters and being moderate enough to retain power.

Conclusion

This article has focused on the rhetoric on immigration issues in FrP as it moved from opposition to government. The analysis finds significant differences between the rhetoric of FrP politicians who hold ministerial positions in a coalition government, as compared with those who remain “on the outside.” Except for the period when Listhaug was responsible for immigration policies, those in government tend to moderate their rhetoric, and that generates tension within the party. When, on the other hand, they do not moderate their rhetoric, despite holding ministerial posts (as with Listhaug), there will potentially be conflict between coalition parties, but also with other parties in the parliament (which was the main reason why Listhaug had to resign). Therefore, it is a difficult balancing act to retain power, while not leading to a split within the party, not losing core voters, and not losing support in the parliament from other parties (which is necessary taking into account that this is a minority government).

During the first phase after Norway’s Progress Party (FrP) entered a coalition government with the Conservative Party in 2013, a discussion on the parameters of the party platform took place internally within the party and amongst political commentators. And, after the shift in government, phrases such as “politically correct” were used to discredit the rhetorical shift of the FrP politicians in office.⁷² Head of FrP Oslo, Christian Tybring-Gjedde, expressed fears that the FrP/H government would continue an unsustainable immigration policy, with the result that “our own culture […] will be watered down within a few generations.”⁷³ FrP Vice Chairman, Ketil Solvik-Olsen, replied that he thought it was sad that Tybring-Gjedde continued to use this rhetoric after the FrP had

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FrP parliamentary leader, Harald Tom Nesvik, also replied by stating that “[w]e do not view people’s beliefs as a threat.” Other key FrP politicians have been silent on questions about the use of the concept Islamization by stealth and whether they fear that the FrP’s immigration profile will be weakened in government. However, party veteran Arne Sortevik criticized his own party on his personal Facebook page: “The soul of the Progressive Party seems to have been put on sale! Is the legacy of Anders Lange entirely forgotten?” and “It is becoming increasingly difficult to be a faithful FrP voter when the party is continuously becoming less recognizable!”

It is possibly in this context that Tybring-Gjedde won support in some FrP constituencies as a “real” and “true” FrP politician. However, he did not receive any position in the FrP/H government, and in March 2014, he asked to be released from his position as leader of Oslo FrP and as spokesperson on immigration matters, because he did not want to be forced to restrain himself: “On the basis of feedback from the Central Committee, I find it hardly appropriate to continue my major involvement in issues of immigration policy.”

Before FrP entered government (in May 2013), Solveig Horne voted for the FrP’s proposal to prohibit visible religious or political symbols to be worn as part of the uniforms of the armed forces. After becoming minister, Horne bestowed the Diversity Award to the Norwegian Armed Forces on December 2, 2013, on the grounds of religious tolerance toward members of the armed services. Tybring-Gjedde was critical and responded: “I do not think the Armed Forces or other public bodies ought to adapt our society to different religions.” To clear up the confusion surrounding the award, the FrP’s parliamentary leader Harald Tom Nesvik underlined that the party did not support the use of the hijab in the armed forces.

The strife evident within FrP led representatives of other parties to request clarification about whether statements from FrP politicians in opposition were consistent with the party’s official line. For example, Ap politician Jette Christiansen accepted that the FrP denied that a speech given by Tybring-Gjedde at a local FrP seminar represented the party’s official policy, but called for clarification as to which FrP politicians did represent the party.

Anyway, it is not entirely certain that the input from those most critical toward immigration was a problem for the FrP during its first phase in government. On the

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74ibid.
76Arne Sortevik’s Facebook-page (May 3, 2014) available online at: https://www.facebook.com/arne.sortevik.
77Arne Sortevik’s Facebook-page (January 30, 2014) available online at: https://www.facebook.com/arne.sortevik.
78“Tybring-Gjedde trekker seg” [Tybring-Gjedde withdraws], NRK, available online at: https://www.nrk.no/nyheter/tybring-gjedde-trekker-seg-1.11453118.
81See FrP, Progress Party webpage (January 16, 2014), available online at: http://www.frp.no/nor/Aktuelt/FrP-er-mot-hijab-i-Forsvaret.
82Christian Tybring-Gjedde, “Christian Tybring-Gjedde: Israelis kamp er eksistensiel l” [Christian Tybring-Gjedde: Israel’s Fight is Existential], Medisraelforfred Youtube Channel (April 8, 2014), available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iiYu3alRgk1E.
contrary, it might have served as a way to retain this voter segment. Party representatives outside the government still maintain the image of “speaking their minds” and being critical toward both immigration and Islam.

Several FrP politicians in office have tried to rectify the impression that the party has been wavering back and forth, and have countered allegations that it has become “house-broken” and “politically correct” in government. On the FrP’s website, Minister of Justice (2013–2016) Anders Anundsen emphasized that the party increased the number of forced returns of rejected asylum seekers by over fifty-five percent in the first quarter of 2014, and used this to argue that there could be “no doubt that it is significant that the FrP is in government.”

FrP spokesman on immigration policy, Mazyar Keshvari, also emphasized what the party had achieved thus far in government, and stated that “The FrP is happy to have gained considerable support for our immigration policy in the government platform. […] We have already achieved the forced return of an additional 2500 criminal foreigners and refugees with a final rejection […]. A strong FrP is the guarantor of a responsible immigration policy.” The message from the FrP spokesman was apparently that, despite the apparent rift between FrP politicians in office and opposition, the main content of immigration policy remained unchanged.

When Sylvi Listhaug became Minister of Immigration and Integration in December 2015, this was a move that could be seen as aimed at calming down internal party strife, but also at accommodating voters who felt that the FrP party had let them down in terms of immigration policies. This was the first time Norway had a specifically designated minister for the sphere of immigration. Listhaug’s responsibility for immigration policies clearly moved the immigration rhetoric (and actual policy) in a more radical direction, but as already mentioned, this also contributed to her defeat. It remains to be seen whether the newly appointed Minister of Justice and Public Security, Wara, will change the rhetoric until more moderate again, in line with how the previous Minister of Children and Equality, Solveig Horne, and Minister of Justice Anders Anundsen filled this role.

By using Bacchi’s approach to the FrP’s political rhetoric, we identify several significant differences between FrP politicians in office and in opposition. First, whereas FrP politicians in opposition tend to define “too many Muslims” in general as a problem (Q1) because they have a different cultural belonging, FrP politicians in government see radical Islam as the problem. Furthermore, the implicit assumptions (Q2) that underpin the understanding of the problem amongst some politicians in opposition is that Muslims aim at taking over power, whereas for FrP politicians in government, the implicit assumption is more that immigrants from developing countries represent a cost to the welfare state system and a security threat. The ones responsible for the problem (Q3) are, for FrP politicians in opposition, Ap politicians – whereas FrP politicians in position mainly see responsibility as lying with those immigrants who deliberately do not want to integrate.

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84 Despite this, the general picture in public was that the FrP only made marginal gains in immigration policy during this period. Jupskås, “The Taming of the Shrew.”
85 Mazyar Keshvari, “Ansvarlig innvandringspolitikk” (Responsible Immigration Policy), Fremskrittspartiet (February 21, 2014), available online at: http://www.frp.no/no/Aktuelt/Ansvarlig-innvandringspolitikk.
87 An exception is Listhaug, who had to resign from her post after accusing Ap politicians for being more concerned about the rights for terrorists than for the security of Norway.
of the problem (Q4) is discrimination, as it is the immigrants themselves who are responsible for the problem of racism. The solutions that emerge as legitimate (Q5) are to help immigrants where they come from, rather than admitting more of them to Norway – the possible consequence being that immigrants might be stuck in refugee camps instead of being able to start a new life. Global social inequalities will be maintained along with the stereotype of the West versus the rest.

FrP politicians in opposition focus on what they see as Norway’s too-liberal immigration policy as the cause of “Islamization by stealth,” whereas some FrP politicians in office stress the inability of immigrants to integrate. Some FrP opposition politicians blame the immigration policy of the previous government (particularly Ap), whereas some FrP politicians in office are keen to show that the Ap coalition government also favored a restrictive immigration policy. The same difference is found in how the category of “immigrant” is mentioned: certain FrP politicians in opposition apply culturalizing and devaluing generalizations, whereas FrP politicians in office are consistently more nuanced and also occasionally make positive references to immigrants.

Moreover, the point for so-called outsider parties, which the FrP was an example of, in winning office and joining the government is to make politics instead of merely being against the politics of the establishment. The risk, however, is that they make rhetorical (and actual political) changes that are not in line with what the core voters want. What is evident is that such outsider parties have an ability and willingness to learn and adapt. This is seen particularly with the few of these parties that have had two separate periods in government, like the Italian Lega Nord.88 Yet, we see similar tendencies with the FrP: the party did not perform well in the local September 2015 election, but then received almost the same voter support in 2017 as in 2013. The increase in support started already when Listhaug was appointed Minister of Integration and Immigration in December 2015. Already two weeks later, she presented a consultation draft on changes in the Immigration Act, which implied restrictions in several areas.89

So, is Reinhard Heinisch’s analysis correct as a description of FrP after it entered office? The answer is not ambiguous. The party has sought to balance between adjusting to its more moderate coalition partner in government on the one hand and the party’s core voters and politicians on the other. During the first period in office, the FrP did tone down its radical agenda. Then, in the second period in office, the party focused more on meeting the voters’ desires by tightening asylum policy, and also Listhaug’s entrance meant a stark shift in a more radical direction. This did, however, almost lead to a confidence motion, and Listhaug decided to leave her ministerial post.

All in all, we see tendencies toward adapting and tendencies toward real efforts to stand by previous policies. During the FrP’s first year in government, party leader Jensen said very little about immigration issues, whereas in late 2014 and early 2015, she was increasingly outspoken on the matter – perhaps an expression of the party leader’s desire to demonstrate loyalty to the FrP’s more radical representatives. Yet, during the first period in office, the party struggled with internal conflicts, particularly because the

media and other politicians wanted FrP politicians in office to distance themselves from extremist statements made by FrP politicians not in ministerial positions.

After the less-successful local elections in 2015, FrP politicians in office had to tackle the problem of declining support. This decline was due to several factors that in various ways may have indicated that FrP voters did not feel that the party was faithful to its earlier pledges. Putting the immigration issue at the forefront was probably a way to seek renewed support – and that was exactly what happened when Listhaug was appointed as Minister of Immigration and Integration (in 2018 she received the important post as Minister of Justice). That step was obviously successful, for in 2017, the government received renewed support and started a new period in office.

However, in 2018 Listhaug almost contributed to the end of this government when she published a picture of ISIS terrorists on her Facebook page, accompanied by text stating that the Ap thought that the rights of terrorists were more important than the security of Norway. This led to a crisis between the government and the parliament, as the Facebook posting was seen as fueling the hatred against Ap, which had been a central tenet of the ideology that led Behring Breivik to bombing the government headquarters in Oslo, killing eight, and not much more than an hour later killing sixty-nine Ap youth at the Utøya summer camp in 2011.

Most of the other parties wanted Listhaug to resign after the Facebook posting became known, and a vote of no confidence was proposed. However, on the same day that the government was to vote on this issue, Listhaug announced her resignation. After heavy criticism, she finally apologized for the Facebook post. She held a press meeting where she seemed unaware of the background of the accusations, and announced that she would continue her struggle in parliament. Interestingly, the FrP experienced a steep increase in support after this incident.\(^90\)

Moreover, Prime Minister Erna Solberg (H) had not wanted to dismiss Listhaug, and was officially willing to take the risk of the coalition government having to step out of office. We believe this illustrates how useful FrP has been for H. In addition, although the immigration rhetoric of the FrP is not palatable to H, the parties are really not so different in their political aims concerning immigration policies. Furthermore, this might illustrate a more general point: the moderate center-right parties have come to realize that, in order to get enough support, collaboration with right-wing populist parties may be the recipe for future success. Moreover, leaders of right-wing populist parties realized that much can actually be achieved by joining coalition governments, in terms of actual policy, particularly in the area of immigration politics, which is the main interest of their voters. They just have to learn to tone down the radical rhetoric and argue in more moderate ways. The same is seen with the French Front National, where Marine le Pen consciously has chosen to tone down the radical agenda in order to be more legitimate as a party of power.\(^91\)

The “what’s the problem represented to be” perspective can give an interesting angle to this analysis in the sense that right-wing populists often have an interest in continuing representing migration as a problem. In the moment the problem is

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\(^90\)“Frp kraftig frem på ny meningsmåling” [Strong increase in support for FrP in new poll], Aftenposten (March 20, 2018), available online at: https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/i/8w7e9r/Frp-kraftig-frem-pa-ny-meningsmaling.

solved, they risk losing voters. The dilemma then, when being part of government, is how to at the same time continue saying that the migration problem must be solved and arguing that they actually managed to solve it. Future research is needed in order to see how right-wing populist parties in government over time will solve this dilemma.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Norges Forskningsråd [222757].

Notes on contributors

Dr. Polit. Mag. Art. Katrine Fangen is professor in sociology at the University of Oslo, Department of Sociology and Human Geography. She has published many books and journal articles, mainly within the fields of migration research, youth research, and studies of nationalism and right-wing extremism. Furthermore, she has published books and articles on qualitative methods in general and comparative qualitative research and participant observation in particular. During recent years, her main focus has been on young migrant’s experiences of exclusion and inclusion in Europe; on identity navigation, political involvement and citizenship amongst Norwegian Somalis; as well as on negotiations of the nation amongst Norwegian politicians and bureaucrats.

Mari Nielsen Vaage has worked as a scientific assistant for Katrine Fangen on the project Negotiating the NATION (funded by the research council of Norway, and led by Marta Bivand Erdal).