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Anne-Marie Jeannet



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# POLITICAL DISTRUST IN EUROPE: THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

Dr. Anne-Marie Jeannet

Bocconi University

Dondena Centre for Social Dynamics and Public Policy

Via Roentgen 1 Milan 20136

Italy

## Abstract

Political disaffection has intensified in democratic societies and European countries have witnessed a slow but steady decline of political trust over the past decades. We argue that this is due to, in part, to sustained immigration and was exacerbated by the onset of the global financial crisis. To test this, we employ a multi-level research design using micro attitudinal data from 17 European countries (2002-14). Our findings show a strong connection between immigration to Europe and the growing distrust that European citizens have for their country's political institutions. This study provides new insight into how trends in immigration and the economic conditions of the last decade have reshaped the relationship between citizens and politics in Europe. Finally, the future implications for sociological theorizing around political trust is discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

The smooth and effective functioning of democratic societies depends on citizens' trust in their government. Trust, both in institutions and among people, reduces social complexity and diminishes uncertainty (Luhmann, 1968, 1979) and is 'the chicken soup of social life' (Uslaner, 2002: 1). Political trust – the belief that the political system serves the public interest - provides the foundation for democratic representation (Sztompka, 2000), political participation (Hooghe and Marien, 2013; Nyćkowiak, 2009; Putnam, 1993), coordination between citizens (Braithwaite and Levi, 1998), and citizen compliance with norms and laws (Levi, 1997).

Recently, democratic societies have experienced a decline of trust in institutions as part of an emerging political malaise (Putnam, 2002). Political disaffection has intensified in democratic societies (Pharr and Putnam, 2000; Torcal and Montero, 2006) and European countries have witnessed a slow but steady decline of political trust over the past decades (Dogan, 2005; Marien, 2011; Norris, 2011). A general long term decline is partly due to a rise in scepticism and value changes (Crozier et al. 1975; Inglehart 1997; Pharr and Putnam 2000), but this has evolved asymmetrically across time and space and the reasons for this have been widely debated (Bovens and Wille, 2008; Hendriks, 2009; Lipset and Schneider, 1987; Marien, 2011; Mishler and Rose, 2001; Norris, 2011).

The rise in political distrust in Europe coincides with the rise of immigration (Pennings, 2017). Putnam (2007)'s claim that diverse societies "hunker down" and are less trusting has raised questions about whether this is caused by decades of sustained immigration. Yet, so far, empirical evidence has focused on the consequences of immigration for social trust (Dinesen and Sønderskov, 2012; Fieldhouse and Cutts, 2010; Hooghe et al., 2009; Hughes et al., 2011; Ivarsflaten and Strømsnes, 2010; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2009; Stolle et al., 2008; Sturgis et al., 2011); while social inquiry into whether or not immigration lowers political trust in host societies is relatively rare.[i]

Europe's economic crisis has also put the socio-political consequences of immigration into sharper relief. The financial meltdown in the United States and its ensuing Euro-crisis have been an important factor in declining political trust in Europe (Armingeon and Ceka, 2013; Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014; Dottisani and Magistro, 2016; Roth et al., 2013). Economic scarcity amplifies native-immigrant competition over resources(Quillian, 1995). Together, immigration and global economic integration are social forces of our global era which, framed as pressing social issues, incite fear and insecurity amongst citizens (Bigo, 2016).

So, is immigration to Europe eroding public trust in political institutions, and has this decline, if any, been exacerbated by the global financial crisis? The aim of this article is two-fold: first, to theoretically develop and empirically test the relationship between immigration and political trust and the moderating role of economic scarcity. In this sense, this study is not interested in individual predispositions, but rather in the top-down, contextual-level conditions in Europe which have led to distinct patterns in distrust across time and space. The asymmetric effects of immigration and the economic crisis across Europe have generated contextual variations which are useful for a comparative study and help avoid the interference of specific events which might occur in a single- country study such as political scandals or terrorist attacks.

This paper also offers a further contribution by reviving a sociological interest in political distrust. Political trust has social foundations (Putnam, 2002) and historically has been a topic of sociological theorizing (Barber, 1983; Lewis and Weigert, 1985; Luhmann, 1979; Sztompka, 2000) although it has not received much sociological attention in recent years. Moreover, distrust is an important dimension of political alienation, which was of interest to sociologists decades ago (Fendrich and [1]Axelson, 1971; House and Mason, 1975; Hunt, 1982; Kahn and Mason, 1987; Macke, 1979; Mason et al., 1985; Neal and Rettig, 1967; Seeman, 1975; Zeller et al., 1980) and was a useful construct for studying the socio-political unrest in the United States during the 1960s and 70s (Benson, 1981; Dean, 1960; Ridley and Dill, 1962). Yet, since political alienation tends to occur in a cyclical manner during "unpopular events or trends" (Macke, 1979) the recent developments of dual crises in Europe – rising immigration on the one hand, diminished resources due to a global economic crisis on the other – and their effect on political distrust beg for renewed sociological attention.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### The Concept of Political Distrust

Political distrust is the complement of political trust (Rose and Mishler, 2011). As an attitude, political trust can be defined as the perception that the government is responsive to the citizenry, producing outcomes consistent with an individual's expectations (Hetherington, 2004: 9). The presence of trust means that citizens feel that "their own interests would be attended to even if the authorities were exposed to little supervision or scrutiny" (Easton, 1957: 447). Easton (1957) conceptualizes political trust as a diffuse support of the political system and its *modus operandi* (Offe, 2006: 30). Diffuse support provides a rationale for why citizens can maintain support for the political system as a

whole although they may not agree with a particular policy of government. This support enables citizens to acknowledge the authority of political regimes that they may not agree with and still have faith that the government will follow fair procedures.

Political distrust[ii] is not simply having low trust (Van De Walle and Six, 2014) but is a violation of trust. Rather, it is driven by a political discontent that leads to criticism of the electoral system or the policy-making process (Gamson, 1968). Political distrust is "an unfavourable evaluation of politics" relative to normative standards "by citizens who see a discrepancy between an ideal and a reality" (Hart, 1978: 28). In sum, a politically distrustful person is characterized by having a negative affect towards political institutions.

In this article, we are interested in the contextual determinants of distrust which takes a top-down approach rather than a bottom-up approach which tends to see distrust as a personality trait of the individual whereby the distrusting persons are seen as "misanthropic individuals with a pessimistic opinion of human nature" (Newton, 2014: 25). Political distrust is usually an indication of alienation from the political system (Miller, 1974), which, in Durkheim's view, was a condition of social structure (Durkheim, 1892). A prevailing sense of political distrust in a society can signal that "a social system is under severe strain and possibly on the verge of fundamental structural change"(Lewis and Weigert, 1985: 974).

Political Trust and Immigration

In the literature, a theoretical link between immigration and political trust has been put forward by Putnam (2007). Putnam (2007) argues that individuals who live in more diverse neighbourhoods "hunker down" and disengage from the collective (Putnam, 2007:149). According to Putnam (2007)'s "constrict theory," diversity not only reduces out-group solidarity but also in-group solidarity. Putnam finds that living in more diverse areas causes people to be less trusting of other people and of government. Given that political trust is thought to be based on the assumption of shared values (Uslaner, 2002), a weakening of the collective identity could reduce trust in political institutions. Putnam (2007)'s work suggests that contextual diversity awakens feelings of disunity which might lead to political alienation and political distrust.

Thus far, empirical tests of constrict theory in Europe have focused on social trust (Gesthuizen et al., 2009; Gijsberts et al., 2011; Hughes et al., 2011; Laurence, 2011; Letki, 2008; Savelkoul et al., 2011) rather than political trust. The existing literature on immigration and political trust focuses on the political trust of immigrants themselves, rather than the trust of the natives (Fennema and Tillie, 1999; Michelson, 2003; Togeby, 2004; Wenzel, 2006).

While Putnam's constrict theory proposes a mechanism through which diversity impacts trust, it focuses on the social dynamics in local neighbourhoods. However, in this study, we are interested in macro-level countries as contextual units of analysis. It may be that Putnam's mechanisms also occur at the national level. Yet, when it comes to the impact of contextual immigration at the national level and its impact on political trust, there is an important distinction. While local neighbourhoods change due to immigration-driven diversity, local governments are not responsible for immigration policy as national governments are.

When it comes to country-level immigration, a high volume may be perceived as being indicative of poor institutional performance: that citizens believe that border protection is an important responsibility for a sovereign nation-state and that admitting large numbers of foreigners is a system failure (Czaika and De Haas, 2013). For instance, in a recent study in the United States, Anglo-Americans living in areas where immigration is less strictly enforced are less trusting in political institutions (Rocha et al., 2015). As the presence of "others" increases in Europe, this may trigger further scepticism about the political system that admitted them. It may be hard for citizens to reconcile the presence of these newcomers with the functioning of their political system, particularly if they feel that immigration is detrimental to their country's economy or culture. If individuals perceive immigration as a threat, "the institutions that govern them are likely to be called into question", making it more likely that citizens blame them "for allowing large-scale migration to take place in the first place" (McLaren, 2017: 319). In fact, McLaren (2012) finds that individuals who are concerned about immigration tend to be less trusting in political institutions.

Based on this existing literature we put forward our first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: Individuals living in countries with high immigration are more likely to be distrustful of political institutions than individuals living in countries with low immigration, all else being equal.*

The Moderating Role of Economic Scarcity

Conditions of economic scarcity amplify competition between groups (Blalock, 1967; Olzak, 1992; Quillian, 1995) and intensify distrust in a society (Barber, 1983). Economic declines are more likely to bring about lower satisfaction with democracy (Clarke et al., 1993). Economic downturns appear to take a toll on political trust and, thus far, this has been supported by recent evidence from the 2008-9 economic crisis (Armingeon and Ceka, 2013; Van Erkel and Van Der Meer, 2016).

This occurs because citizens have come to expect a certain economic stewardship from their governments. Established norms mean that citizens expect their political institutions to foster economic prosperity and hold national political institutions accountable for the economic conditions in the country (Rudolph, 2003) even if their influence is limited in today's globalized economic system. Evidence shows that economic prosperity is an important contributing factor to citizen satisfaction with government and democracy in general (Quaranta and Martini, 2016). The effect seems to be socio-tropic whereby, regardless of a person's own personal economic situation, citizens report higher levels of political trust when the economy as a whole is prospering (Kinder, 1981; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1981).

How might economic scarcity condition the impact of immigration on citizen's political trust? Based on the existing research, we expect economic scarcity to heighten the impact of immigration on political distrust by increasing inter-group. This leads us to our second hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: The positive effect of immigration on political distrust will be greater in countries with less economic resources, all else being equal.*

## DATA AND METHODS

### Data

This study analyses micro-attitudinal data from the seven bi-annual rounds (2002-2014) of the European Social Survey. The ESS is a 26-country repeat cross-sectional survey that is conducted bi-annually since 2002. Our sample consists of 17 Western European countries. These are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, Norway and Switzerland. The countries participated in all bi-annual rounds except for the following country-years: Austria (2002), Greece (2006, 2012), Italy (2006-10, 2014) and Luxembourg (2006-14).

The survey population covers people 15 years and older who are residents in the country, regardless of citizenship or legal status. The sample is selected by strict random probability methods and respondents are interviewed face-to-face. In each round, the minimum effective sample sizes are at least 1,500 (or 800 where the population is less than two million) in each participating country. The minimum target response rate is 70%. Since our dataset is composed of 17 countries and 7 time periods, we have 119 country-year aggregate units with a total of 146,325 individual-level observations, after applying list-wise deletion.

Measures

For our dependent variables, we consider three different measures of a person's political distrust: distrust in parliament, distrust in politicians and distrust in the political parties. Respondents are asked to rate their trust in each institution on a scale of 0 (least distrusting) to 10 (most distrusting). Each of these measures addresses different notions of political distrust. While distrust in parliament is indicative of dissatisfaction in policy-making, trust in politicians measures trust in political actors, and distrust in political parties measures dissatisfaction with the policy positions of political parties. [iii]

The independent variable is the stock of non-European foreign nationals as a proportion of the total population of the country which is from the Eurostat database.[iv] Immigration stock measures are a more convenient and reliable measure across countries rather than inflows. The term 'immigrant' is not uniformly defined and records of migration often represent the legal or immigration policy framework of the country and do not adhere to international standardizations.

Central to this analysis is the notion that economic scarcity moderates the relationship between immigration in a country and a citizen's political trust. For this we use two measures of economic conditions: 1) the country's gross domestic product per capita and 2) the national unemployment rate. Each of these is then interacted with the stock of non-European foreigners and introduced into the model as an interaction term.

We also use a standard series of control variables that affect a person's level of political trust. We control for a person's age, age squared and time spent in education which are coded in years. Dummy variables for females, whether the person is married or not, whether there is a child present in the home, whether the person is unemployed, and whether or not the person is a first or second generation immigrant are also included. Furthermore, the person's orientation on the left-right political scale is included as well.[v] We add a dummy variable for subjective low income, which indicates if the respondent is struggling to live on his or her current income.[vi]

We also introduce a series of country-level controls. We control for political efficacy since aspects of institutional performance are found to positively determine political trust both within and across countries (Bovens and Wille, 2008; Chang and Chu, 2006; Rose and Mishler, 2011; Tom van der Meer and Dekker, 2011). The measures of institutional trustworthiness come from the Worldwide Governance Indicator (WGI) database. The aggregated data is based on the perceptions of various stakeholders, which include

household surveys, private sector experts and NGOs. Each country is then given a score ranging from -2.5 to 2.5 standardized units across various criteria.[vii]

We also control for the stock of European foreigners (from other EU-28 countries), the country's GDP per capita, unemployment rate, and inequality (Gini coefficient). Dummy variables for each bi-annual round of the survey (2002-2012) are also included to adjust for any overall time trend. Data for all four of these control variables comes from the Eurostat database. A table with the descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analysis can be found in the appendix.

## Empirical Strategy

Since political trust is a consequence of both contextual-level and individual-level attributes, multi-level modelling is appropriate. A multi-level approach is justified by the structure of our data, which is clustered at the national level. It helps avoid committing an ecological fallacy which occurs when data is analysed at one level but conclusions are formed at another (Hox, 2010). For these reasons, multi-level approaches are the most commonly used method in comparative attitudinal studies (Gelman and Hill, 2007; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002).

The analysis specifies mixed effect random-intercept multi-level models with maximum likelihood estimators. The model, as shown below, employs a pooled time series where *i* represents individuals and *j* represents countries.

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We proceed in a step-wise fashion, beginning with the estimation of an 'empty' model (Model 0) without explanatory variables in order to establish the general variance of national differences for both dependent variables. The calculations have been performed using the xtmixed command in STATA 14 software.

# RESULTS

## Descriptive Results

Figure A shows the trend of three measures of political distrust in Europe over time. Of the three measures, we observe that Europeans are more distrustful of politicians and political parties than they are of their country's parliament, and this is consistent over time. All three measures show a slow incremental increase in political distrust from 2002 to 2008 but –

more importantly – all increase more sharply from 2008 to 2010, the years of the global financial crisis. After 2010, political distrust begins to decline until, in 2014, it equivalent to the extent of political distrust in 2004.

[Figure A here]

Multi-level Regression Results

We begin by estimating three null models for each dependent variables. In Table 1, the intraclass correlation coefficients tell us that a considerable portion of the variance in political distrust between European citizens is attributable to country-level variance. 11% of the variance in European distrust in their national parliament is due to country-level variable while this is 15% of the variation in distrust in politicians and 18% of variation in distrust in political parties. The intraclass correlation coefficients also confirm that we have selected an appropriate empirical strategy for the data at hand: the rule of thumb is that variation should be at least 5% at the higher contextual level to justify a multi-level approach. For each measure, the intercept is significant, indicating that it is statistically different across European countries. The number of observations in Model 3 is lower since that survey item (trust in political parties) was not asked in the 2002 round of the European Social Survey.

[Table 1 here]

As expected, the results show that individuals living in countries with high stocks of non-European foreigners are more likely to report higher levels of political distrust. We find that this is consistent across all three measures of political distrust. In Table 2 we observe that the coefficient for *non-European foreigners* is positive and significant in all three models. This means that individuals who live in high immigration countries are significantly more likely to be distrusting of their country's parliament, politicians and political parties. Although it is not the focus of our analysis, it is interesting to note that, unlike non-European foreigners, within-European foreigners do not appear to influence political distrust in any consistent way. This may because grievances for within European migration, if any, are directed toward European institutions rather than domestic ones.

In substantive terms, the sizes of the coefficients indicate that non-European immigration has a larger impact on distrust in parliament in Model 1 and a somewhat smaller impact on distrust in political parties in Model 3. The coefficients can be interpreted as follows: if the percentage of non-European foreigners in the population increases by 1, distrust in parliament is expected to increase by 0.16 on a scale of 0 to 10. Likewise, distrust in

politicians would be expected to increase by 0.14 and distrust in political parties would be expected to increase by 0.006, on a scale of 0 to 10.

[Table 2 here]

Next, we also find that poor economic conditions amplify the relationship between immigration and citizens' political distrust. Table 3 shows the results when introducing interaction terms into the models. Two measures of economic conditions are interacted with *non-European foreigners*: GDP per capita and the unemployment rate. We observe that the results are consistent with our theoretical expectations: poorer economic conditions positively moderate the relationship. The results show that when non-EU foreigners is interacted with GDP per capita, the interaction term is negative and significant for all three measures of political trust in Models 4, 6, and 8. Or, put another way, living in a poorer social context positively moderates the effect of immigration on political distrust. Similarly, when the percentage of non-EU foreigners is interacted with the country's unemployment rate, the interaction term is positive and significant. This means that living in a country with a high unemployment rate strengthens the positive impact of immigration on political distrust.

[Table 3 here]

We conducted a series of robustness checks to test the sensitivity of these results. Firstly, we need to confirm that these results are not driven by events or trends, such as a political scandal, in a particular European country. In order to confirm this, we replicate the analysis for each dependent variable 17 times, each time dropping a single country at a time from the analysis. We find that the results are consistent with those presented here and that the relationship between non-European foreigners and political distrust also remains positive and significant.[viii]

We have considered the possibility of reverse causality but argue that it is unlikely since we are unaware of a theoretical mechanism which would explain why immigrants might migrate to European countries that have higher levels of political distrust. Still, we test for Granger-causality whereby if variable (X) causes variable (Y), then a previous value of X should predict a subsequent value of Y (Granger 1969). We do so by testing a model with independent variable that is lagged by one year and find that the results are similar: the coefficient for *non-European foreigners* is positive (in fact, the coefficient is even larger) and remains statistically significant. While Granger-causality tests are not "proof" of causality - this is not possible with the data at hand - it does suggest "a temporal ordering that is consistent with a causal narrative"(Freeman 1983; Hall 2016, 8) (Freeman 1983;

Hall 2016, p.8). Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that the results are influenced by unobservable factors such as a country's culture or historical experience with immigration which might be endogenous to citizen sentiments of distrust.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Using the benefits of a multi-level research design, our study provides new insight into how sustained immigration, punctuated by the onset of a global financial crisis, has reshaped European citizens' relationship with politics. Our findings show a strong positive connection between Europe's immigration and the multiple measures of political distrust. Importantly, our results demonstrate that distrust in national political institutions is influenced by immigration to Europe from outside the region and that, all else being equal, levels of distrust are higher in countries with larger foreign populations.

The effects of immigration should not be discussed independently from a country's economic conditions. A country's prosperity, or lack thereof, are of particular importance for the relationship between immigration and political distrust. Our results confirm that social contexts with reduced economic resources – such as a low GDP per capita or a high unemployment rate – amplify the corrosive effect of immigration on political trust.

While our findings do not refute Putnam (2002), we argue that, when examining immigration and political trust at the national level rather than the local level, other mechanisms may also be at play. Sustained immigration, which continued through a period of economic recession, as it occurred in many European countries, is likely to have reflected poorly on the perceived performance of domestic political institutions. Some might say that these outcomes are beyond the control the national institutions: international immigration and susceptibility to the risks of global markets are features of liberal democracies today. Whether or not national governments should, in fact, be blamed for immigration and the consequences of economic globalization is besides the point. Rather, based on our findings, we speculate that citizens may be perceiving these as domestic system failures because they still cling to the normative expectations that it is the responsibility of their national political institutions to control immigration and foster a prosperous economy. The discrepancy between these democratic ideals and the realities of politics is precisely what gives rise to political distrust (Hart, 1978: 28).

Why should we be concerned if immigration – particularly during economic downturns – is breeding political distrust among European citizens? Firstly, because being distrustful of politics influences a person's political behaviour such as their electoral choices (Chanley et al., 2000; Hetherington, 1999). Recent evidence shows that decreased trust is a positive

predictor for voting for a radical right wing party (Ziller and Schübel, 2015). Moreover, if political discontent is sustained for a long period and becomes pervasive amongst citizens, it can invade the political culture which leads to a "generalized climate of suspicion leading to alienation and passivism" (Sztompka 1998: 22).

Looking ahead, we advocate for a renewed sociological interest in political trust – and sentiments of political disaffection in general - which will help answer some pressing social questions of our times. Decades ago, sociological research on political alienation "catalysed the scholarly interest in political trust" (Levi and Stoker, 2000: 447) but in recent years this has been mostly studied by political scientists. Still, the relationship between the citizen and politics is at the core of political sociology. Much is still to be learned about the citizens' norms and expectations of democracy and the way in which the conditions of our global system translate into social and political grievances.

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CHARTS AND TABLES

Chart A. Mean Political Distrust in Europe, 2002-2014

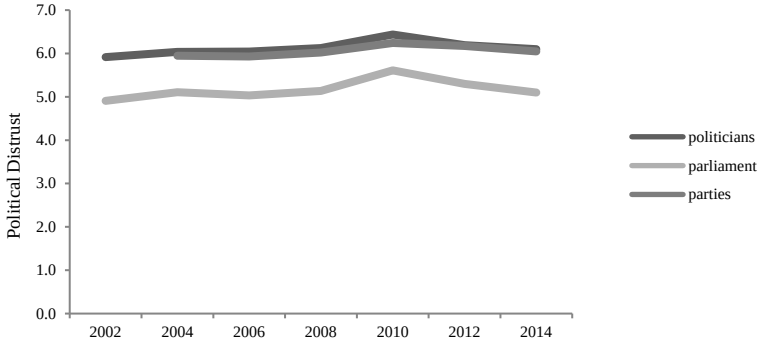


Table 1. Multi-level regressions showing the null models for three measures of political distrust

| | parliament | politicians | parties |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 0a | Model 0b | Model 0c |
| Explained Variance | | | |
| country variation | 0.796 | 0.881 | 0.975 |
| | (0.137) | (0.151) | (0.167) |
| residual variation | 2.269 | 2.131 | 2.077 |
| | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| intraclass correlation coefficient | 0.11 | 0.15 | 0.18 |
| Constant | 4.96 | 6.000 | 6.075 |
| | (0.193) | (0.214) | (0.237) |
| *N (individuals, countries)* | 146325, 17 | 146325, 17 | 122762, 17 |

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 2. Multi-level regressions showing the relationship between non-European foreigners and political distrust

| | distrust in parliament | distrust in politicians | distrust in parties |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Non-European foreigners | 0.16*** | 0.14*** | 0.06*** |
| | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.02 |
| Contextual Controls | | | |
| European foreigners | 0.01 | 0.02* | 0.02 |
| | 0.01 | 0.01 | 0.01 |
| gov effective | 0.27*** | 0.22*** | 0.07 |
| | 0.06 | 0.06 | 0.07 |
| inequality | 0.01** | 0.04*** | 0.03*** |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.01 |
| gdp per capita | -0.05*** | -0.04*** | -0.05*** |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| unemployment | 0.08*** | 0.07*** | 0.08*** |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Explained Variance | | | |
| country variation | 0.63 | 0.60 | 0.57 |
| | 0.11 | 0.11 | 0.1 |
| residual variation | 2.21 | 2.09 | 2.03 |
| | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Log pseudolikelihood | -323788.93 | -315648.46 | -261657.16 |
| Constant | 4.02*** | 4.29*** | 5.23*** |
| | 0.28 | 0.26 | 0.33 |
| year dummies | yes | yes | yes |
| invidual controls | yes | yes | yes |
| *N (individuals, country-year)* | 146325, 119 | 146325, 119 | 122762, 119 |

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Standard errors in parentheses. All regressions include individual controls and year dummies.

Table 3. Multi-level regressions showing the relationship between non-European foreigners and political distrust and the moderating role of economic conditions

| | distrust in parliament | | distrust in politicians | | distrust in parties | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 6 | Model 7 | Model 8 | Model 9 |
| Non-European foreigners | 0.257*** | 0.189*** | 0.220*** | 0.084*** | 0.211*** | -0.003 |
| | (0.032) | (0.02) | (0.036) | (0.019) | (0.037) | (0.022) |
| Contextual Controls | | | | | | |
| European foreigners | 0.036** | 0.018 | -0.137 | 0.012 | 0.050*** | 0.013 |
| | (0.014) | (0.012) | (0.007) | (0.011) | (0.014) | (0.012) |
| gov effective | 0.253*** | 0.265*** | -0.506*** | 0.222*** | 0.069 | -0.002 |
| | (0.060) | (0.060) | (0.041) | (0.056) | 0.068 | (0.070) |
| inequality | 0.023*** | 0.016** | 0.070*** | 0.033*** | 0.040*** | 0.028*** |
| | (0.005) | (0.004) | (0.007) | (0.005) | (0.006) | (0.006) |
| gdp per capita | -0.034*** | -0.045*** | 0.067*** | -0.039*** | -0.029*** | -0.048*** |
| | (0.005) | (0.003) | (0.005) | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.004) |
| unemployment | 0.078*** | 0.981*** | 0.026*** | 0.006*** | 0.074*** | 0.034** |
| | (0.004) | (0.010) | (0.006) | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.011) |
| Non-European foreigners*gdp | -0.003** | | -0.005*** | | -0.004** | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | (0.001) | | (0.001) | | (0.001) | |
| Non-European foreigners*unemployment | | -0.003 | | 0.006*** | | 0.008*** |
| | | (0.002) | | (0.002) | | (0.002) |
| Explained Variance | | | | | | |
| country variation | 0.601 | 0.629 | 1.04 | 0.571 | 0.582 | 0.573 |
| | (0.106) | (0.110) | (0.101) | (0.109) | (0.107) | (0.101) |
| residual variation | 2.211 | 2.211 | 2.09 | 2.093 | 2.038 | 2.038 |
| | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) | (0.004) |
| Log pseudolikelihood | -325164.15 | -325168.20 | -319433.43 | -319499.26 | -261646.87 | -261648.27 |
| Constant | 3.395*** | 3.779*** | 2.221*** | 4.814*** | 4.325*** | 6.028*** |
| | (0.329) | (0.305) | (0.371) | (0.285) | (0.387) | (0.380) |
| *N (individuals, countries)* | 146325, 119 | | 146325, 119 | | 122762, 17 | |

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. Standard errors in parentheses. All regressions include individual controls and year dummies.

APPENDIX

Table A. Descriptive Statistics for 17 Western European Countries 2002-2014 (individual n= 146,325, country-year n=119)

| | Min | Max | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| non European foreigners per 100 | 1.33 | 9.57 | 4.23 | 1.98 |
| European foreigners per 100 | 0.11 | 40.28 | 4.32 | 5.16 |
| gdp per capita (thousands) | 19.33 | 94.13 | 37.46 | 8.66 |
| unemployment rate | 2.50 | 24.80 | 7.73 | 3.85 |
| government effectiveness | 0.29 | 2.34 | 1.65 | 0.42 |
| inequality (gini) | 22.00 | 37.80 | 28.88 | 3.68 |
| distrust in country's parliament | 0 | 10 | 5.16 | 2.46 |
| distrust in country's politicians | 0 | 10 | 6.11 | 2.34 |
| distrust in country's political parties | 0 | 10 | 6.15 | 2.32 |
| female (1=yes) | 0 | 1 | 0.53 | 0.50 |
| age | 15 | 105 | 48.12 | 18.54 |
| age squared | 225 | 11025 | 2660.00 | 1867.66 |
| married (1=yes) | 0 | 1 | 0.50 | 0.50 |
| no children living in home (1=no) | 0 | 1 | 0.60 | 0.48 |
| urban area (1=yes) | 0 | 1 | 0.32 | 0.47 |
| migrant background (1=yes) | 0 | 1 | 0.17 | 0.37 |
| education (years) | 0 | 56 | 12.41 | 5.30 |
| relative income | 1 | 10 | 5.93 | 2.64 |
| unemployed (1=yes) | 0 | 1 | 0.04 | 0.20 |
| political orientation (10=very right winged) | 0 | 10 | 5.04 | 2.07 |

[i] Some work has been done on this topic in political science, namely by Lauren McLaren (L McLaren, 2012; LM McLaren, 2012; McLaren, 2017).

[ii] Political trust is also referred to using the following terms: political cynicism, disenchantment, dysphoria, incivility, normlessness and skepticism (Hart, 1978: 3).

[iii] Since these three measurements do vary together (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89), we also create a dependent variable, political distrust, which is an index of the three. As a sensitivity check, we use the index of all three items as a dependent variable and the results are consistent with those presented here. The results are not shown but are available upon request.

[iv] Our measure of foreigners does not include immigrants living in their host country who have been nationalized. A possible way to address this would have been to use the size of the foreign-born population instead, but is not possible since data is not available for several countries and would limit our data too severely across time and space.

[v] We also tested the model including a control for the person's religiosity but it was not statistically significant and including it did not change the results.

[vi] This measure is used instead of reported income deciles. We have done so because income deciles in the European Social Survey have a high proportion of missing values (28%) which are unlikely to be missing at random. Regrettably, the comparability of income decile responses is not possible across years and countries in the survey. Income deciles are different for each country making cross-comparability tricky. Moreover, the European Social Survey changed its method for measuring of income deciles a(?) in 2004 which also makes it not possible to compare responses across all rounds of the survey. However, as a robustness check we reran the analysis using the income deciles as a control and list-wise deletion and the results are consistent with those presented here.

[vii] Further methodological information is available at: http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/resources.htm.

[viii] The only exception is the relationship between non-European foreigners and distrust in political parties: the coefficient was not significant when Greece was dropped from the analysis. Results are not shown but are available upon request.