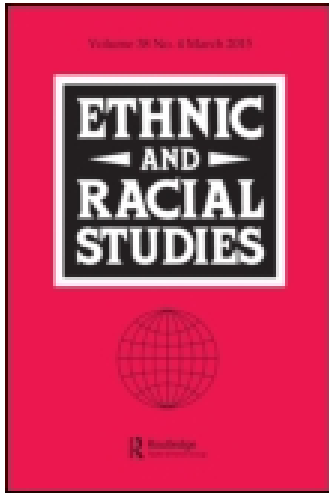


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### Rejoinder

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## Rejoinder

João Carvalho

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This text represents an important personal milestone. I am very pleased for having the book reviewed by the authors who laid the foundations that allowed me to develop my own investigation. The reviews provide the joyful perception that the book was taken seriously by the discipline, while the compliments suggest that the research enhanced knowledge on a political phenomenon of which we know as little about as we do about ‘black holes in outer space’ (Williams 2015).

Moreover, the critiques highlight new venues for future research and provide the unique opportunity to engage with prominent scholars regarding one’s own ideas. I am very grateful for the reviews provided by Art, Messina, Perlmutter and Williams and I seek to provide satisfactory answers to their critiques of my book, *Impact of Extreme Right Parties on Immigration Policy: Comparing Britain, France and Italy* (Carvalho 2013). Drawing on the points raised by the reviewers, this essay is structured according to four main analytical topics: the use of the extreme right party (ERP) label; measurement of ERP impact; identified levels of ERP impact; and explanations of this political phenomenon.

### Employment of the ERP label

Considering the widespread debate over the appropriate terminology to describe the ERP family, it is unsurprising that one of the main critiques refers to ‘the usefulness of adopting, ... the extreme-right or far-right label instead of an anti-immigrant one’ (Messina 2015). The employment of the ERP label in preference to the anti-immigrant label is done with the intention of highlighting the distinctiveness of this party family on the basis of an ideological idiosyncrasy. Notwithstanding the diversity of ERPs, these parties are considered unique for their deep belief in natural inequality (either in the form of cultural xenophobia or biological racism) or in their embrace of the fascist legacy (Carter 2005). In light of the disappearance of neo-fascist parties from the political landscape in Western Europe, right-wing extremism increasingly refers to a denial of the principle of human equality and the appraisal of inequality as rational and desirable. Consequently, ERPs continue to pose a direct challenge to the foundations of liberal democracy in actuality, as they did in the past, without necessarily being a mere copycat of past fascist parties.

In my perspective, the alternative use of the anti-immigration or anti-immigrant labels contains two shortcomings. First, definition of party families should draw on their ideology rather than be policy-driven. Anti-immigration politics can be an electoral strategy of mainstream parties in a particular period, as was the case with the valence strategy of the British Conservative party at the 2005 general election

(Carvalho 2013, 75–76). Second, other mainstream parties that can be classified as anti-immigration, such as the UK Independence Party in Britain for their employment of xenophobic rhetoric, have not yet professed a belief in human inequality as their core ideology (Kaufmann 2014). Thus, these right-wing parties should not be ranked alongside ERPs. Consequently, this label and the proposed definition of this party family enhance a clear distinction from other mainstream parties according to the core ideological properties of its members.

### **Measurement of ERP impact**

As mentioned by the reviewers, the measurement of ERP impact on immigration politics, particularly that of indirect impact, is a difficult task (Art 2015; Perlmutter 2015). Furthermore, Williams (2015) considers the extent to which ‘the conclusion that after decades radical right parties have produced no real impacts reflects deficiencies with present tools of empirical observation’. Notwithstanding the omission in the book, the investigation is supported by a qualitative research strategy denominated process tracing (George and Bennett 2005). This tool seeks to trace the links between possible causes and outcomes through the in-depth examination of empirical evidence, either of qualitative or quantitative character. I believe that the wider dissemination of this research tool within small-*N* comparative strategies can contribute to overcome past methodological shortcoming because this research strategy is most appropriate to capture the ‘inherent messiness of the subject matter’ (Art 2015).

Specific doubts were also raised about ‘the ability to draw cogent conclusions’ on ERP impact on immigration policy according to types of policy and politics (Williams 2015). Effectively, the book’s conclusions challenge the value of employing a structural typology of migration policy and, perhaps, should have been removed from the final text to improve clarity (Carvalho 2013, 189). By contrast, the book emphasized that evaluations on ERP impact should acknowledge the different types of immigration to enhance the identification of specific policy intentions, as well as the identification of variations in this political phenomenon at a cross-national level or in the long-term. Furthermore, analysis of ERP impact should employ a typology of the policy process disentangled according to different stages (the book adopted a three-stage framework, but I now consider that a four-stage approach is more appropriate, see Czaika and Haas 2013).

This approach is most suited to analyse the mediation of domestic institutional constraints observed over potential ERP impact on immigration policy and identify this political phenomenon beyond the stage of formulation of policies on paper. Further research on the French case study supported by this typology confirmed Art’s (2015) suggestion that ‘the EU itself acts as a check on populism’, like it was observed in Italy in 2008 (Carvalho 2013, 165). This was the case of the failed implementation of the large-scale deportation of EU citizens of a Roma background by President Nicolas Sarkozy in France in 2010, which was driven by the objective to mobilize the Front National’s electorate (Carvalho 2015a). The employment of this framework also enhanced the identification of Lega Nord’s impact over the supervision of the implementation of the Italian quota system for labour immigration in the early 2000s and the 2009 regularization programme (Carvalho 2013, 149, 169).

Therefore, ERPs with representation in coalition governments can diminish the effectiveness of undesired policy outputs, suggesting that ERPs' direct impact is not restricted to policy outputs on immigration control.

### **Identified levels of ERP impact**

The trade-off of employing the research strategy proposed by the book is that 'even the most motivated reader will need to pay careful attention if they want to be in a position to summarize the book's finding in the end' (Art 2015). The book sought to attain a 'middle ground' between the 'containment' perspective in counterpoint to the 'contagion frame'. Whereas most critiques grasped the intention of avoiding the overstatement of ERP impact, I sense an implicit risk of understating the scope of this political phenomenon in France and Italy considering the domestic constraints. The book suggests that both the French Front National and the Italian Lega Nord succeeded in seeing specific policy preferences adopted by other mainstream parties and materialized into policy outcomes in the selected time frame. Thus, the book only highlights a decline in ERP contagion effects on public opinion in the selected time frame, a trend that has been restated in other studies (Dunn and Singh 2011). Emphasis was given to the perception that this conclusion presented a direct challenge to the widespread supposition that the agency of ERPs will always stir public concern and hostility towards immigration.

The last remark on the conception of ERP impact concerns Messina's (2015) following comment: 'does not influencing public opinion and/or inter-party competition more or less inevitably lead to policy influence?'. The book warns that ERP impact in one dimension of immigration politics and policy does not necessarily lead to a similar effect on the remaining dimensions (Carvalho 2013, 199). First, electoral pledges are not always transposed into policy outcomes, because immigration policies are often the outcome of a compromise between multiple competing interests (Bale 2012; Czaika and Haas 2013). Second, ERP impact on public attitudes towards immigration does not necessarily mean that this issue will be ranked as the top electoral priority or that governments will inevitably respond to public concern. Therefore, only in-depth research can assess the potential casual interrelationship between the analytical dimensions, while necessary correlations should not be supposed a priori by the researcher.

### **Explanations of ERP impact**

This last section seeks to address the reviewers' comments regarding the explanations explored by the book. The most serious concern was raised by Messina (2015): 'it is unreasonable to assume, as the book implicitly does, that the variable of political longevity ... is inconsequential in assessing their overall political and policy impacts (Schain 2006)'. Nonetheless, the selection of ERPs was based on the observation of these parties' electoral breakthroughs into mainstream politics in order to challenge a widespread supposition that this political phenomenon would have an impact on immigration politics and policy, drawing on the same source employed by Messina (Schain 2006, 271; Bale 2012, 266). Furthermore, the book probed the role of the 'staying power' of ERPs when developing the assessment of ERP impact on public

opinion, as the diminished ability of the British National Party (BNP) and the Lega Nord to hold a nationwide party network were highlighted as causes behind their lack of impact on public attitudes towards immigration (Carvalho 2013, 182–183).

Moreover, the Front National's longer 'staying power' also failed to enhance levels of concern and hostility towards this social phenomenon in France during the 2000s, raising some doubts over the relevance of this explanatory factor regarding public attitudes towards immigration (Carvalho 2013, 183). From this perspective, the levels of Lega Nord's impact on Italian immigration politics and policy can be considered more impressive than the Front National in France due to the Italian ERP's lower levels of 'staying power' in Italian mainstream politics. Notwithstanding the fragility of the BNP's electoral breakthrough, this event was still erroneously associated with the development of restrictive immigration politics and policy in the UK. A forthcoming publication on the BNP's electoral fortunes in the 2000s also points to severe endogenous faults of this ERP, but, alternatively, highlights the Labour Party's return to opposition as the main exogenous factor fostering the BNP's electoral downturn in the early 2010s (Carvalho 2015b).

Finally, the last reservation addressed in this text concerns the book's 'neglect of the possible effects of ERPs on partisan alignments and domestic party systems' (Messina 2015). However, the book completely underwrites that 'the role of ERPs in contributing to partisan and party system dealignment, whenever and wherever it occurs, is undoubtedly central to the questions of whether and when ERPs influence public policy'. Therefore, the book presents an analysis of the electoral threat of ERPs to mainstream parties during the selected time frame, especially to centre-right parties (Carvalho 2013, 14). This analysis focused on the evaluation of the selected far-right parties' electoral development according to their domestic structure of political opportunities to evaluate their potential ability to divide the centre-right electorate. As Williams (2015) pointed out, the overall conclusions of the book emphasize that ERP impact on inter-party competition and policy developments in France and Italy was contingent upon the electoral threat of the ERPs and mainstream party agency.

## Conclusions

I hope to have addressed the main critiques presented by Williams, Perlmutter, Messina and Art. There are important limitations to the book, but the reviews suggest that it can constitute a consistent springboard to inspire future research. Regarding Art's (2015) suggestion to extend investigations to the radical right's impact in the USA (application of the ERP definition seems fruitless in the USA), there are obvious methodological difficulties. However, the lack of a proper radical-right party in this political system can be overcome by focusing the comparative analysis (hypothetically across the American and the British case studies) on the impact of radical-right factions within centre-right parties. From an outsider's perspective, the radical right's impact on American immigration policy might be envisaged more in terms of promoting policy inertia than in terms of the transposition of its policy preferences into legislation.

Lastly, I agree with Perlmutter's (2015) comment that Italy is currently in the process of adopting a coherent immigration paradigm. However, this trend cannot be

disassociated from the remarkable shift in the centre-right parties' positions on immigration, including the leader of the centre-right Forza Italia – Silvio Berlusconi himself. In contrast to its past opposition to a multiethnic society, Berlusconi endorsed a recent proposal to reform the nationality law, which included the principle of *ius solis* (La Repubblica 2014). Further research should assess the potential relationship between this development and the Lega Nord's electoral collapse in the early 2010s. It will be also interesting to evaluate the stance on immigration adopted by the populist party Movimento Cinque Stelle, led by Beppe Grillo, and whether this party will refrain from filling the vacant anti-immigration space in Italian politics.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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