Integration policies and threat perceptions following the European migration crisis: New insights into the policy-threat nexus

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Abstract: The link between integration policies and intergroup attitudes or threat perceptions has received considerable attention. However, no studies so far have been able to explore how this relationship changed following the European migration crisis due to a lack of recent comparative policy data. Using new MIPEX data, this is the first study to examine mechanisms underlying the policy-threat nexus following the European migration crisis, distinguishing between several strands of integration policies, and realistic and symbolic threat. To do so, we combine 2017 Eurobarometer data with 2017 Migrant Integration Policy data, resulting in a sample of 28,080 respondents nested in 28 countries. The analyses also control for economic conditions, outgroup size, and media freedom. Multilevel analyses indicate that respondents living in countries with more inclusive integration policies in general report lower realistic and symbolic threat. When investigating different policy strands, we find that inclusive policies regarding political participation and access to nationality for immigrants are associated with lower realistic and symbolic threat. We compare our findings to those from prior to the European migration crisis and discuss the potential role of this crisis in the policy-threat nexus.

Introduction

As conflicts in the Middle East and Africa intensify, an increasing number of citizens from war-torn countries embark on a risky journey to Europe (Eurostat 2017). European policy makers are under pressure to cope with the large number of incoming refugees, as negative attitudes towards this group and discriminatory behaviours are on the rise (Dovidio et al. 2002; Leeper 2014). Heath and Richards (2019) found that citizens favour more restrictive migration policies in countries where large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees arrived during the crisis. The term "refugee crisis" or "European migration crisis" is used in this study to refer to events starting in the summer of 2014 until late 2016, which saw the largest inflow of asylum seekers in Europe since World War II. We are aware that the term "crisis" is not neutral; it is a political term. However, we use it in this article in order to situate this work in the discourse and literature revolving around this catchphrase in the media, the public, and in academia. Preliminary evidence shows that citizens of several European countries became more negative towards refugees in a short timeframe (between 2014 and 2017), despite other research indicating that public opinion towards outgroups is relatively stable (Heath and Richards 2019). In subsequent years, there have been indications that opinions about migrants rebounded to pre-2014-levels, but no clear trends have emerged (IOM 2019).

Despite some integration policy coordination across Europe, countries vary in the measures they take to integrate immigrants (Huddleston et al. 2017). Recent findings show that integration policies remained relatively stable in EU28 since 2017 (Solano and Huddleston 2020). However, even though a higher number of asylum seekers arrived in EU28-countries with relatively favourable integration policies (e.g. Germany), policies became more favourable in countries with lower numbers of asylum applications (Solano and Huddleston 2020). Immigrant integration policies within a country convey its institutional stance towards the treatment of immigrants and provide normative cues to the public on appropriate ways of

thinking about and interacting with immigrants (Green et al. 2020; Pettigrew et al. 2007). Conversely, it is also possible that threat perceptions among the population affect the policies that governments implement (Schlueter et al. 2013). In any case, the policy contexts in which individuals are embedded, are associated with their attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Green et al. 2020).

A large body of the literature on intergroup relations studies the relationship between intergroup attitudes and threat perceptions towards immigrants, and integration policies, but recent evidence on this is absent due to a lack of data regarding integration policies (Green et al. 2020; Schlueter et al. 2020, Morales et al. 2015). This is a vital gap, especially given the impact that the European migration crisis could have on public opinion in this region (Heath and Richards 2019). The most recent cross-country data on integration policies stem from 2014, and therefore do not allow investigations into how policies during or after the migration crisis are associated with European perceptions of immigrants. To fill this gap in the literature, a first contribution of this study lies in improving our understanding of the role of integration policies in shaping cross-national variation in threat perceptions towards migrants during the period immediately following the migration crisis. To achieve this, we use new Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) data from 2017 (Solano and Huddleston 2020). MIPEX is the only tool that provides an analysis of integration policies in the last five years in all the EU countries (Solano and Huddleston 2021). While Ruedin (2010) highlights that the overall MIPEX score is a highly reliable indicator of integration policies, it is also important to emphasize that integration policies consist of a diverse set of measures that should not necessarily be aggregated into a single index (Niessen and Huddleston 2009). Despite this, Callens and Meuleman (2017, p. 368) observe that "most studies reduce the diversity of integration policies to a single and general policy index, indicating the degree of overall inclusiveness." There are some exceptions (for examples, see Meuleman and Reeskens 2008; Nagayoshi and Hjerm

2015; Callens and Meuleman 2017), and our study will also make an effort to distinguish between different integration policy strands, given that, for example, policies that provide migrants with access to citizenship might trigger different reactions among the population than policies that stimulate labour market integration (Callens and Meuleman 2017).

In addition, we will incorporate other contextual factors that are commonly associated with threat perceptions: outgroup size and economic conditions (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010; Green et al. 2020; Heizmann and Huth 2021; Meuleman et al. 2009). Many studies depart from the idea that a larger minority group size increases perceptions of intergroup competition, which in turn increases perceived realistic threat. To date, several cross-national studies on anti-immigrant attitudes or threat perceptions provide evidence for this assumption (Schlueter and Wagner 2008; Semyonov et al. 2006). However, more recent studies tend to find less support for the presumed nexus between outgroup size and anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g. Schlueter et al. 2013).

A recent line of investigation regarding contextual factors also considers the role of media. Many studies show that news media framing of migrants affects out-group attitudes and perceptions at the individual level, but much less is known about how contextual media data are associated with perceptions. Schlueter et al. (2020) provide a recent exception as they included the frequency of immigration- and Muslim-related news at the country level in their analysis. In our analysis, we consider the association of media freedom at the country level with individual threat perceptions. Media freedom can be described as "an environment in which journalists are able to safely criticize political and economic elites at both the national and local levels" (Whitten-Woodring and Van Belle 2015, p. 180). Media freedom is often greater in regions with a strong democracy, and weaker in regions that are characterized by autocratic regimes where media coverage reflects the interests of the state. However, media freedom cannot be conflated with democratization. Norris (2008) indicates that, although

democratization is a key element of media freedom, economic development, ethnic fractionalization, and indicators of good governance (e.g. stable government, government effectiveness) are also strongly linked with it. In regions with more media freedom, migration will be covered more frequently by news media (Allen et al. 2018). For example, the declining visibility of migration in Chinese and Russian media coverage may signal declining levels of emphasis on migration among national and regional elites in these countries. Given that we know that media coverage is associated with individuals' threat perceptions about migration, it is unclear how a lack of media freedom – and the potential decline in coverage about migration – is associated with perceptions about out-groups. No existing research so far has considered the role of media freedom, highlighting another contribution of our study.

Empirically, the current study takes advantage of large-scale survey data from the Eurobarometer combined with new MIPEX data and Eurostat and Reporters without Borders data for the above-mentioned contextual factors, and it applies multilevel modelling techniques for testing predictions. We begin this article by providing an outline of group threat theory, followed by an overview of the role of integration policies and how different strands of integration policies are associated with threat. We then present the data collection and methods. Finally, we present the results of the analysis, and the implications of our findings regarding the relationship between integration policies and threat perceptions.

Theoretical background

Threat perceptions

Group threat theory proposes that the arrival of migrants stimulates feelings of threat among the majority group due to the perceived competition for political and economic power, but also due to the threat to the majority group's physical and material well-being (Jolly and DiGiusto 2014; Stephan et al. 2009). These threats, which can be real or perceived, can occur in virtually

all domains of society (e.g. the labour market, politics) (Callens and Meuleman 2017; Green et al. 2020). According to Stephan et al. (2009), two types of threat are generally identified: realistic (which could be economic or crime-related) and symbolic (which could be cultural or religious) threat. Both realistic and symbolic threats can take place at group and individual levels (De Coninck et al. 2021a).

Perceptions of realistic threats relate to the competition for power, resources and general welfare (Stephan et al. 2009). As groups compete for these resources, they view migrants as competitors, which stimulates negative prejudice. In general, this prejudice is more pronounced among individuals in more precarious socio-economic positions, such as people with fewer skills, less education, and those who are unemployed (Lancee and Pardos-Prado 2013). As highlighted by von Hermanni and Neumann (2019), another dimension of realistic threat is related to physical insecurities like security and crime threat (e.g. national economy, crime rates).

Symbolic threat refers to the fear that migrants will challenge the majority group's religion, values, belief systems, ideology or worldview (Stephan et al. 2009). This threat is seen as real or perceived harm inflicted by immigrants or refugees with differing values, norms, and beliefs, and is more prevalent and enduring than realistic threat (Callens and Meuleman 2017 Green et al. 2020; Riek et al. 2006). Again, a higher socioeconomic status may act as a buffer against symbolic threat perceptions: higher-educated citizens cope better with a culturally diverse society because they hold more cosmopolitan views (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007) and hold more positive attitudes towards ethnic minorities (De Coninck et al. 2021a).

The European migration crisis probably affected both realistic and symbolic threat perceptions of Europeans. In terms of realistic threat, the large number of asylum seekers and refugees entering Europe in a relatively short timeframe sparked uneasiness about the potential economic cost of the accommodation of this group (von Hermanni and Neumann 2019). In this

regard, Hangartner and Sarvimäki (2017) calculated that an inflow of 10,000 asylum seekers and refugees costs approximately €10,000 per asylum seeker in public finances in the short term. However, there are of course long-term economic benefits to receiving and integrating asylum seekers and refugees, but these are less visible and thus less likely to affect realistic threat perceptions in the short term (Hangartner and Sarvimäki 2017). Furthermore, several violent incidents over the past years in Europe attributed to refugees and asylum seekers, ranging from small-scale altercations to large-scale terrorist attacks, were widely discussed in public debates and on news media (von Hermanni and Neumann 2019), which contributed to growing fears about rising crime rates and threats to individuals' well-being due to the refugee presence. Despite this growing fear, Nunziata (2015) shows that immigration has no impact on actual crime rates. The migration crisis also stimulated greater symbolic threats, however. As Pickel (2017, p. 21) states: "in the context of the current refugee crisis, the attitude of rejection has been increasingly directed toward members of one specific religious group – namely, Islam." Because the majority of asylum seekers in Europe are Muslim, nationalist politicians often leverage negative portrayals of Muslim culture to justify restrictive asylum policy agendas. Consequently, it would appear that the symbolic restrictionist argument is at least partly predicated on the belief that many asylum seekers espouse values that somewhat align with Islamic extremism and are incongruent with liberal Western values (e.g. gender equality, freedom of religion).

Integration policies

Migration has become a highly contested and politicised topic in societal discourse, which contributes to the polarisation of public opinion on migration and an upsurge of anti-immigration parties (Bansak et al. 2017; Green et al. 2020). In the literature, there are two dominant theoretical perspectives that make opposing assumptions about the causality of the

relationship between policy and threat perceptions or outgroup attitudes: policy feedback theory (Mettler and Soss 2004) and policy responsiveness theory (Callens and Meuleman 2017). From the *policy feedback* perspective, policies are considered to structure society by identifying, framing, and defining social problems and the status of different groups in society. Integration policies represent society's view on immigration and integration, institutionalized through laws and policies, which in turn influence the perceptions of the population (Schlueter et al. 2013). Members of society internalize these norms through processes of socialization, which in turn shapes the attitudes or threat perceptions of the majority population towards immigrants (Callens and Meuleman 2017; Mettler and Soss 2004). According to *policy responsiveness* theory, policy makers consider public attitudes when designing integration policies in order to reduce the risk of losing votes and to avoid the likelihood of reprisals in the form of protests or public disobedience (Bansak et al. 2017; Callens and Meuleman 2017). Although public opinion is believed to have an impact on integration policies' restrictiveness, this is more likely to happen when public opinion is activated by far-right parties (Morales et al. 2015). In such cases, policy makers face strong incentives to reform migration and integration policies in accordance with public opinion. High levels of public anxiety about immigration across different EU member states are one of the main explanations of the unwillingness of EU leaders to take more ambitious and coherent measures during the refugee crisis (Berry et al. 2015).

Many recent studies that examined the association between migration and integration policy, on the one hand and public attitudes, on the other found, that in countries with migrant-friendly national policies, citizens hold more welcoming public attitudes towards migrants. Countries with more inclusive integration policies enjoy higher levels of public support for immigrants (Just and Anderson 2014; Karpiński and Wysieńska-Di Carlo 2018). These countries also experience lower levels of anti-immigrant attitudes (Hooghe and de Vroome

2015), anti-Muslim attitudes (Schlueter et al. 2020), and perceptions of immigrant threats (Callens and Meuleman 2017; Schlueter et al. 2013), particularly in terms of economic threats (Callens and Meuleman 2017; Heizmann and Ziller 2020; Hooghe and de Vroome 2015). In line with the above literature, *we expect that more inclusive general integration policies will be related to lower perceptions of symbolic and realistic threat (Hypothesis 1).*

However, integration policies generally consist of a diverse set of measures and should not be considered as a single index or unit (Huddleston et al. 2017). In this regard, Penninx and Garcés-Mascarenas (2016) distinguish between three dimensions within integration policies: the legal-political dimension (legal recognition, such as permanent residence, obtaining citizenship, political participation and anti-discrimination laws), the socioeconomic dimension (access to the labour market and to housing) and the cultural-religious dimension (the possibility to maintain cultural values and have ethnic communities). In each of these dimensions, policies can range from exclusive to inclusive (Callens and Meuleman 2017; Huddleston et al. 2017). In this article, we assess these dimensions using MIPEX data from 2017 (Solano and Huddleston 2020). The MIPEX operationalised integration policies by defining six different strands that capture two of the three integration policy dimensions: the legal-political dimension (the strands of political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality and anti-discrimination) and the socioeconomic dimension (the strand of labour market mobility). However, MIPEX does not capture the cultural-religious dimension, and therefore this dimension will not be investigated here.

Integration policies and threat perceptions following the European migration crisis

The legal-political dimension of integration policies holds a highly symbolic value, as it defines who has access to citizenship, political power, permanent residence, etc. (Callens and Meuleman 2017). This has been the subject of intense debate in the European public discourse

and on news media since the start of the migration crisis (De Coninck et al. 2021b). When such elements of integration policies are inclusive, it sends a message (in line with the policy feedback perspective) that these newcomers are members of society and that they are allowed to or deserve to stay in the country permanently and participate in society. Ariely (2012) found that in countries where access to citizenship is rather generous, natives are less xenophobic. However, in studies that compare integration policies before and after the migration crisis in Scandinavian and Central European countries, Hagelund (2020), Hernes (2018), and Hangartner and Sarvimäki (2017) found that many countries increasingly restricted access to permanent residence and citizenship, while at the same time improving their border control to stop asylum seekers from entering, which may signal a turning point in public opinion towards migrants. To add to this, several countries introduced new integration policies that included the signing of so-called integration contracts in which those granted asylum pledge to achieve certain goals (e.g. learning the country's language) within a specific timeframe (Hangartner and Sarvimäki 2017).

The hypothesis that inclusive legal-political integration policy elements are associated with lower threat perceptions could work for both symbolic and realistic threat, because these policies define and construct social groups in society. After all, "inclusive legal-political integration policies imply changing the definition of majority group membership in a more culturally diverse host society" (Callens and Meuleman 2017, p. 372). In this regard, inclusive legal integration policies convey the message that immigrants pose no threat to the values, culture or cohesiveness of the majority group, precisely because the host society defines different (immigrant) groups as members of the same ethnically diverse society. Consequently, lower perceptions of symbolic threat will likely follow among natives. Further, integration policies in this dimension define the members of society who have access to (political) power and other societal resources (e.g. residency, citizenship). Following this, inclusive integration

policies signal that resources are available to all members, which is expected to be associated with lower feelings of conflict and competition, and thus also with lower perceptions of threat among the majority population (Callens and Meuleman 2017). Therefore, *we assume that individuals in countries with inclusive integration policies for legal-political dimensions will have lower perceptions of realistic and symbolic threat (Hypothesis 2).*

The socioeconomic dimension of integration policies concerns the access of immigrants to housing, the labour market, etc. Here, it is possible that there is an explicit link between these policies and perceptions of realistic threat. However, literature suggests two diverging mechanisms which we translate into diverging hypotheses.

Because the socioeconomic dimension concerns access to various domains in society, policies that are more inclusive may fuel perceived competition and lead to greater realistic threat perceptions. Previous research found that individuals in more precarious economic positions express less solidarity with refugees following the migration crisis (De Coninck et al. 2021b; Koos and Seibel 2019). This is not surprising: when access to the labour market is easier for immigrants due to specific integration policies, perceptions of competition for jobs among natives will increase, which can consequently contribute to a greater perception of realistic threat (Callens and Meuleman 2017). It is clear that governments are sensitive to these realistic threats as well, as several countries reduced financial aid to asylum seekers and confiscated their financial assets upon arrival, in order to decrease their economic cost to the host society – and as a general deterrent to asylum seekers. Furthermore, (mandatory) integration training, which includes language classes, introductory jobs and work experience placements, was installed with the aim of preparing asylum seekers to actively participate in the host society (Hangartner and Sarvimäki 2017). Based on this literature, we expect that *individuals in countries with inclusive integration policies for socioeconomic dimensions will have higher perceptions of realistic threat (Hypothesis 3a).*

On the other hand, inclusive policies regarding the socioeconomic dimension can also show that immigrants participate as (almost) full members in many socioeconomic domains of the host society. In the case of the labour market, targeted integration policies indicate to the native population that immigrants are potential workers who will contribute to the national economy (Nagayoshi and Hjerm 2015). This is associated with more positive attitudes and lower perceived realistic threat towards immigrants (Nagayoshi and Hjerm 2015). Empirical evidence shows that in countries with labour market policies that are more inclusive, individuals display lower threat perceptions (Callens and Meuleman 2017). Overall, we expect that *individuals in countries with inclusive integration policies for socioeconomic dimensions will have lower perceptions of realistic threat (Hypothesis 3b)*.

Finally, previous literature suggests that socioeconomic integration policies are not associated with symbolic threat (Callens and Meuleman 2017). As the socioeconomic dimension of integration policies refer to the participation of migrants in the productive system of the host society, we expect *that inclusive policies will not be associated with the perception of symbolic threat (Hypothesis 4)*.

Data and methodology

Sample

We used data from the Special Eurobarometer 469, wave 88.2, fielded from October 21 to October 30 in 2017 (European Commission 2018), obtained from the GESIS Data Archive. Having conducted a thorough study of the currently available large-scale datasets containing valid indicators on attitudes towards outgroups, we concluded that no dataset beyond 2017 contains such indicators. Therefore, this Eurobarometer data provided one of the most recent EU28 measurement of intergroup attitudes.

The survey was carried out in the EU28 using face-to-face CAPI interviews in the

respective country's language with respondents aged 15 and older in their homes. The respondents were sampled in a multi-stage, random probability design. In each of the 28 countries, several sampling points were drawn with probability proportional to population size (for a total coverage of the country) and to population density (European Commission 2018). We performed listwise deletion of respondents with missing values. The final sample included 28,080 respondents (55.6% female; M_{age} = 48.6, SD = 18.7). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all dependent and independent contextual variables by country.

Dependent variables: Realistic and symbolic threat

To assess perceived realistic threat of immigrants, we used three negatively phrased statements about the impact of immigrants on the host society: "Immigrants are a burden on our welfare system," "Immigrants worsen the crime problems in [country]," and "Immigrants take jobs away from workers in [country]." Answer options ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree), meaning that a high score indicated greater threat perceptions. The mean score of these items was calculated to obtain a single measure on perceived realistic threat. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .75, indicating moderate to high reliability. To measure symbolic threat, we used the score on the item "Immigrants enrich the [country] cultural life," answered on the same scale as the previous items.

At the aggregate level, the correlation between the country means of realistic and symbolic threat is 0.64 ($p < 0.001$; see Table A1). Although this correlation is moderate, it implies that these variables share approximately 45 percent of their variance at the country level and contain roughly 55 percent of unique information. This correlation leaves enough room for contextual predictors (e.g. policy indicators) to affect both forms of threat separately.

Independent variables: Integration policies

We used the Migrant Integration Policy Index to assess migrant integration policies in 2017.

MIPEX is a country-level index of migrant integration policies that simultaneously considers 50+ policy indicators from eight policy domains (healthcare, education, political participation, labour market mobility, anti-discrimination, permanent residence, access to nationality, family reunion) (Solano and Huddleston 2020). Scores ranged from 0 (critically unfavorable policies) to 100 (the best possible integration policies). Aside from using the aggregated MIPEX policy score, we will also consider the separate integration policy strands. For the socioeconomic dimension of integration policies, we used labour market mobility (LMM). For the legal-political dimension of integration policies, we used political participation (PP), anti-discrimination (AD), permanent residence (PR), and access to nationality (N). Table A1 presents a partial correlation analysis of key integration and threat indicators (controlling for country). The latter analysis indicated that most of the integration policy scores were moderately to weakly correlated with one another and with threat perceptions. Only between the overall MIPEX scores and political participation ($r = .75$), a strong correlation was found.

Controls at the contextual level

As mentioned earlier, we included several contextual control variables that were previously identified as relevant predictors of threat perceptions (Meuleman et al. 2009; Semyonov et al. 2006; Schlueter and Davidov 2013).

Asylum applications per capita. Perceived group threat is higher in countries with larger outgroups, as this increases perceived competition (Schlueter and Davidov 2013). In the context of the refugee crisis, we used the relative number of asylum applications of 2017 as an indicator of size of the asylum seekers and refugee group in a country. In order to calculate this number, we used information on the total number of asylum applications and population size from Eurostat (2020a).

GDP per capita. In line with much of the literature, we include the GDP per capita of

2017 as a measurement of the economic conditions in the country, taken from Eurostat (2020b).

Unemployment rate. A second assessment of the economic situation in a country is the unemployment rate of 2017, the data for which were obtained from Eurostat (2020c).

Media freedom. In order to obtain information on the degree of media freedom in a country, we used data from the 2017 World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders 2020). The index is compiled by pooling the responses of experts to a questionnaire with quantitative data on abuses and acts of violence against journalists during the period evaluated. The criteria evaluated in the questionnaire are pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information. Scores ranged from 0 (highest possible media freedom) to 100 (lowest possible degree of media freedom) but were reversed prior to analysis for ease of interpretation. The data for this indicator were taken from Reporters Without Borders (2020).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of dependent and contextual variables

	N	Realistic	Symbolic	IP	LM	PP	PR	N	AD	GDP	Unempl	AA	MF
AT	1,012	2.61	2.30	41	59	20	50	13	53	44,920	5.50	1.41	86.53
BE	1,005	2.49	2.39	69	56	65	75	65	100	39,130	6.00	2.40	87.25
BG	1,027	3.06	3.14	40	43	0	69	13	100	7,400	6.20	0.31	64.99
CY	502	2.58	3.00	41	24	25	50	53	62	24,920	11.10	15.58	80.21
CZ	1,027	2.69	2.86	47	54	10	50	36	64	18,330	2.90	0.18	83.09
DE	1,554	2.55	2.41	58	81	60	54	42	70	39,440	3.80	2.00	85.03
DK	1,005	2.40	2.07	48	65	70	42	41	51	51,140	5.80	0.47	89.64
EE	1,004	2.57	2.63	52	63	20	75	16	48	18,130	5.80	0.08	86.45
ES	1,016	2.28	2.25	57	67	55	75	30	59	24,970	17.20	2.51	81.31
FI	1,017	2.27	2.07	86	85	95	96	74	100	41,080	8.60	0.82	91.08
FR	1,030	2.32	2.41	54	52	40	58	70	79	34,250	9.40	2.25	77.76
GB	1,382	2.25	2.12	54	48	45	58	61	94	35,730	3.80	0.67	77.74
GR	1,003	2.88	2.87	47	56	20	46	52	67	16,470	21.50	7.21	69.11
HR	1,038	2.58	2.58	40	44	10	54	19	71	11,920	11.20	0.34	70.41
HU	1,038	2.93	3.01	45	37	15	81	25	96	12,960	4.20	0.05	70.99
IE	1,008	2.23	2.04	59	22	85	50	79	91	62,550	6.70	0.97	85.92
IT	1,025	2.72	2.72	55	67	25	67	46	78	28,940	11.20	0.73	73.74
LT	1,008	2.41	2.49	35	46	5	52	22	51	14,950	7.10	0.23	78.63
LU	508	2.07	2.07	65	35	85	58	79	89	95,170	5.50	3.70	85.28

LV	1,001	2.55	2.71	36	33	20	46	16	67	13,890	8.70	0.10	81.38
MT	509	2.69	2.90	47	48	35	46	63	63	25,010	4.00	8.29	75.24
NL	1,025	2.26	2.05	56	59	50	52	55	85	43,090	4.90	1.46	88.72
PL	1,037	2.49	2.53	44	31	10	69	50	63	12,170	4.90	0.11	73.53
PT	1,099	2.33	2.05	82	94	80	71	86	100	19,020	9.00	0.18	84.23
RO	1,055	2.62	2.60	50	46	5	56	38	96	9,580	4.90	0.13	75.54
SE	1,051	2.05	1.60	87	91	80	90	83	100	47,730	6.70	2.57	91.73
SI	1,014	2.48	2.56	48	26	20	77	22	90	20,820	6.60	1.84	78.30
SK	1,080	2.85	2.80	37	17	5	65	28	79	15,540	8.10	0.04	84.49
Total	28,080	2.50	2.44	52.86	51.75	37.68	61.86	45.61	77.36	29,616	7.55	1.59	80.65

Note:

IP = integration policies; LM = labour market mobility; PP = political participation; PR = permanent residence; N = access to nationality; AD = anti-discrimination; GDP = GDP per capita; AA = asylum applications per capita: MF = media freedom.

AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; BG = Bulgaria; CY = Cyprus; CZ = Czech Republic; DE = Germany; DK = Denmark; EE = Estonia; ES = Spain; FI = Finland; FR = France; GB = Great Britain; GR = Greece; HR = Croatia; HU = Hungary; IE = Ireland; IT = Italy; LT = Lithuania; LU = Luxembourg; LV = Latvia; MT = Malta; NL = Netherlands; PL = Poland; PT = Portugal; RO = Romania; SE = Sweden; SI = Slovenia; SK = Slovakia.

Controls at the individual level

To account for other antecedents of threat perceptions, and for compositional differences across countries, we controlled for several individual-level characteristics, in addition to gender and age (Ceobanu and Escandell 2010). Respondents' subjective income was assessed with the question "During the last twelve months, would you say you had difficulties to pay your bills at the end of the month?", with a response scale from 1 (most of the time) to 3 (almost never/never). Respondents indicated their education in years and their political affiliation by answering the question "In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on this scale?", with a response scale from 1 (left) to 10 (right). Further, respondents were asked about their life satisfaction (1 = very satisfied, 5 = not at all satisfied; this was reverse coded prior to analysis) and the type of region in which they resided (1 = rural area, 2 = suburban area, 3 = urban area). A final individual control variable contained information regarding respondents' perceived social class: "Do you see yourself and your household belonging to…?", with answer categories ranging from 1 (the working class of society) to 5 (the higher class of society). All control variables that were included have been shown to be associated with perceived migrant threat in previous research (for some examples, see Ceobanu and Escandell 2010 or Callens and Meuleman 2017).

Analytic strategy

Because we analyzed data from a hierarchical dataset with variables on two levels (respondents nested in countries), multilevel analysis was an appropriate technique as it considers and correctly estimates the complexity of the dataset. Use of this type of modeling provides an empirical advantage over regression analysis in that it does not underestimate standard errors, which would be the case if macro-level variables were to be included in an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis owing to the lack of variability in the macro-level indicators

(Hox 2002). The software used was SAS version 9.4, and we ran eight models. First, we entered the controls at the individual level (Model 1), followed by the controls at the contextual level (Model 2), and the integration policy indicators (Model 3 to Model 8).

We conducted four robustness checks. First, due to the high number of country-level variables and the somewhat limited number of countries in our dataset, we conducted a robustness check in which we omitted all country-level control variables, and only included individual-level variables and policy indicators. The results of this analysis can be found in Table A2 and Table A3, but the findings closely align with those from the main analysis. Second, we estimated a model including all integration and country-level variables (Table A4). Given that this model includes a high number of country-level variables among a (relatively) limited group of countries, some findings changed. This may be caused by overfitting the model, which affects both estimates and p-values (Jilke et al. 2015); we should therefore be careful about drawing conclusions from this analysis. Third, we wanted to ensure that our results were not driven by one or several outlying countries with particularly open or restrictive integration policies (Table A5). To do so, we re-ran Model 3 (using the overall MIPEX scores as main IV) twice: once without the six countries with the lowest overall MIPEX scores (Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovakia), and once without the six countries with the highest overall MIPEX scores (Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Sweden). Fourth, we also controlled for endogeneity bias given the potential reciprocal nature of the relationship between integration policies and threat perceptions. We were unable to conduct the Durban-Wu-Hausman test for endogeneity on the multilevel model (Hausman 1978), but we tested this on a single-level model and had to reject the null hypothesis that there was no endogeneity for the overall MIPEX scores. The same held for all the MIPEX subdimension scores (Table A6). Because of this, we conducted an additional robustness check (Table A7 and Table A8) in which we estimated a multilevel model using two-stage least

squares estimation (2SLS). This method is commonly considered the primary means of tacking the endogeneity problem "by using exogenous variables (instruments) […] to rid the regressors of the endogeneity problem. These instruments "identify" the coefficient of interest in a regression model" (Gawande and Li 2009). In 2SLS analyses, we first look for a genuinely exogenous variable (the instrumental variable) that is strongly correlated with the endogenous regressor. In a first stage, we use the potentially endogenous variable as the dependent variable, and all exogenous variables and instrumental variable(s) as independent variables. In a second stage, we use the estimated values of the dependent variable from the first stage regression in place of the problematic variable. As described by Shepherd (2013, p. 42), "we can think of the estimated values from the first stage as the part of the problematic variable that varies due to exogenous influences (the instrument and exogenous variables), which solves the endogeneity problem." The results of this 2SLS also align very closely with those of our main model, adding to the robustness of our results. Continuous variables were centered around their grand mean.

Results

Realistic threat

In a preliminary analysis, presented in Table A9, we found that 14.2% of the variance of perceived realistic threat can be found at the country level, making multilevel analysis suitable (Hox 2002). In the first full model (Model 1, Table 2), we introduced the individual-level variables. Here, we found that people who were enrolled in education for more years, and thus likely held a high level of education, had significantly lower realistic threat perceptions than people who were enrolled for fewer years. We also found that people who reported financial difficulties held higher realistic threat perceptions than people who reported to never have had financial difficulties. Additionally, people who were dissatisfied with their lives and who place

themselves towards the right of the political spectrum displayed stronger feelings of realistic threat. Finally, older people and people living in a rural or suburban area reported greater realistic threat than younger people and those living in an urban region. No gender differences were found.

In the following model, we first introduced the contextual control variables (Model 2). Results showed that no contextual control variables were significantly associated with realistic threat. Subsequently, we introduced the integration policies (aggregate score and separate strands) one by one, while controlling for the other variables (Model 3 to Model 8). When considering the results of the general MIPEX score, we found that general integration policies were significantly related to perceptions of realistic threat (Model 3): more inclusive integration policies were associated with lower feelings of realistic threat (H1). We then consider the different integration strands, starting with the legal-political dimension. In Model 4 and Model 6, we observed that the strands of political participation and access to nationality were significantly related to realistic threat perceptions: people living in countries with more inclusive political participation and easier access to nationality reported lower perceptions of realistic threat. The effect sizes also indicate that access to nationality was most strongly associated with perceived realistic threat, while the overall MIPEX score had the weakest association of the three significant results. These findings partially supports our hypothesis (H2) that policies concerning the legal-political domain are associated with lower feelings of competition and therefore also realistic threat perceptions. The results for other two integration policies in the legal-political domain (permanent residence, Model 5; anti-discrimination, Model 7) were not significant, but were both in the same direction as the results for the other strands.

Table 2. Multilevel hierarchical regression analysis of realistic threat

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.00 (.06)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.00 (.05)	.00 (.05)
Individual level								
Age	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Gender (ref: male)								
Female	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Political ideology	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)
Years in education	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)	-.15*** (.01)
Social class	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)
Financial difficulty (ref: never)								
From time to time	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Most the time	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)
Life satisfaction	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)	-.13*** (.01)
Place of residence (ref: urban)								
Rural area	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)
Suburban area	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)	.02* (.01)

Country-level indicators

GDP per capita	-.09 (.06)	-.07 (.06)	-.03 (.07)	-10 (.06)	-.03 (.05)	-.08 (.06)	-.09 (.06)
Unemployment ratio	-.07 (.05)	-.04 (.05)	-.04 (.05)	-.06 (.05)	-.06 (.04)	-.07 (.05)	-.07 (.06)
Asylum applications PC	.02 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.05 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.02 (.04)
Media freedom	-.10 (.06)	-.03 (.07)	-.02 (.08)	-.09 (.07)	-.06 (.06)	-.11 (.06)	-.10 (.08)
Integration policies							
MIPEX: Total		-.11* (.07)					
Political participation			-.16* (.09)				
Permanent residence				-.02 (.06)			
Access to nationality					-.19** (.05)		
Anti-discrimination						-.06 (.05)	
Labour market							.01 (.07)
AIC	44,415.0	44,419.4	44,420.1	44,419.4	44,423.2	44,414.1	44,422.0	44,423.0
BIC	44,417.8	44,422.2	44,421.7	44422.2	44,426.0	44,416.9	44,424.8	44,425.8
Variance components							
Level 2: Country	.09***	.07***	.06***	.07***	.07***	.05***	.07***	.07***
Level 1: Individual	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***

Note: AIC: Akaike information criterion. BIC: Bayesian information criterion. Asylum applications PC: Asylum applications per capita *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

We assessed socioeconomic integration policies with the labour market policy indicator. Model 8 shows that labour market policies were not significantly associated with realistic threat perceptions. This result, in short, did not corroborate either expectation in H3 or H4, given that we expected the socio-economic dimension of integration policies to be either positively (H3a) or negatively (H3b) associated with realistic threat.

To summarize, for realistic threat perceptions we tested several hypotheses concerning the legal-political and socioeconomic dimensions of integration policies and found only evidence for the expectation that more inclusive policies – and in particular more inclusive access to nationality and political participation policies – were related to lower realistic threat perceptions.

Symbolic threat

Building this model in the same way that we did for realistic threat, we first found that 18.5% of the variance of perceived symbolic threat can be found at the country level (see Table A8), which is again suitable for multilevel analysis (Hox 2002). In the first model (Table 3, Model 1), we introduced the individual-level variables. Here, we again found that people who were enrolled in education for more years, and thus likely held a high level of education, had significantly lower symbolic threat perceptions than people who were enrolled for fewer years. Furthermore, people who were less satisfied with their lives and who place themselves towards the right of the political spectrum display stronger feelings of symbolic threat. Finally, older people, women and people living in a rural or suburban area reported greater symbolic threat than younger people, women and those living in an urban region. No differences by perceived financial difficulties were found.

Again, we first introduced the contextual control variables (Model 2), and we found that people held lower feelings of symbolic threat in countries with a higher GDP per capita,

with fewer asylum applications per capita, and with more media freedom. We then introduced the integration policies in Model 3 through Model 8. We found that general integration policies were significantly related to perceptions of symbolic threat (Model 3): more inclusive integration policies were associated with weaker feelings of realistic threat (confirming H1). When reviewing the legal-political dimension of integration policies in Model 4 through Model 7, we observed that the strands of political participation and access to nationality were again significantly related to symbolic threat perceptions: people living in countries with more inclusive political participation and easier access to nationality reported lower perceptions of symbolic threat. However, effect sizes here indicate that inclusive political participation is more strongly associated with symbolic threat than the overall MIPEX score and access to nationality, which differs from findings regarding realistic threat. The results for the other two integration policies in the legal-political domain (permanent residence, Model 5; anti-discrimination, Model 7) were not significant, but were both in the same direction as the results for the other strands. When assessing socioeconomic integration policies with the labour market policy indicator, we again found no significant association with symbolic threat (confirming H4), but we did note that the direction of the result was in line with those from the legal-political dimensions.

Table 3. Multilevel hierarchical regression analysis of symbolic threat

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.03 (.07)	.02 (.05)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.05)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.02 (.05)
Individual level								
Age	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Gender (ref: male)								
Female	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)
Political ideology	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)
Years in education	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)
Social class	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Financial difficulty (ref: never)								
From time to time	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Most the time	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Life satisfaction	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)
Place of residence (ref: urban)								
Rural area	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Suburban area	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)

Country-level indicators

GDP per capita	-.12* (.05)	-.10* (.05)	-.04 (.06)	-.13* (.05)	-.06 (.05)	-.10* (.05)	-.14* (.06)
Unemployment ratio	-.08 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.07 (.05)	-.07 (.04)	-.08 (.05)	-.07 (.05)
Asylum applications PC	.10* (.04)	.09* (.04)	.10** (.04)	.09* (.04)	.12** (.03)	.09* (.04)	.09* (.04)
Media freedom	-.18** (.06)	-.10 (.06)	-.09 (.07)	-.17** (.06)	-.15** (.05)	-.19*** (.06)	-.14* (.07)
Integration policies							
MIPEX: Total		-.15* (.06)					
Political participation			-.18* (.08)				
Permanent residence				-.02 (.05)			
Access to nationality					-.13** (.05)		
Anti-discrimination						-.08 (.05)	
Labour market							-.06 (.06)
AIC	46,625.6	46,614.0	46,610.1	46,612.6	46,618.0	46,601.2	46,615.4	46,617.0
BIC	46,628.4	46,616.8	46,612.1	46,615.4	46,620.8	46,609.2	46,618.2	46,619.8
Variance components							
Level 2: Country	.14***	.06***	.05***	.05***	.05***	.04***	.05***	.05***
Level 1: Individual	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***

Note: AIC: Akaike information criterion. BIC: Bayesian information criterion. Asylum applications PC: Asylum applications per capita. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

The sharp increase in asylum seekers and refugees entering Europe from 2014 to 2016 along with growing levels of perceived threat due to this immigration among citizens in host societies make it particularly important to understand the sources of this threat. While the role of integration policies receives considerable attention in studies that attempt to explain this threat, multi-country data on integration policies following the migration crisis is absent. Due to this lack of data, studies so far have been unable to investigate whether and how (different strands of) integration policies are associated with perceived threat following the migration crisis. This study is the first to examine the association of integration policies in 2017 (using new MIPEX data) with perceived realistic and symbolic threat while controlling for economic conditions, outgroup size, and media freedom in 28 countries.

Our results demonstrate that integration policies are clearly linked to the public's perceived threat towards migrants. This link was consistent and significant even with the inclusion of individual (age, gender, political ideology, etc.) and contextual (economic conditions, outgroup size, media freedom) control variables. The main contribution of this study is that it shows that inclusive integration policies are associated with lower perceived realistic and symbolic threat towards migrants following the migration crisis. With this, we confirm the association between the integration policies showing that migrants are supported in the settlement in the country of immigration on the one hand, and the public's likelihood to think that migrants do not pose a threat to their labour market position, the national economy, or the country's culture and values (Ariely 2012; Solano and Huddleston 2020), on the other. However, using a general index of integration policies can sometimes produce misleading results (Callens and Meuleman 2017), given that these policies consist of a variety of measures in many areas of society. For this reason, we also investigated the separate role of different policy strands on threat perceptions.

Policies on the legal-political dimension of integration – in particular, access to nationality and political participation – seem to play the most beneficial role in mitigating threat perceptions: more inclusive policies regarding access to nationality and political participation are associated with less perceived threat. Interesting to note in this regard is that the same policy strands that are significantly associated with realistic threat, are also associated with symbolic threat – in the same direction. By contrast, policies on the socio-economic dimension (labour market integration) turn out to play no role, as our results show no significant association with either type of threat. These findings provide support for the policy feedback perspective (where policies influence threat perceptions): especially the political participation strand of integration policies has not prominently featured in electoral/societal debates over the past years, yet it is associated with both types of threat perceptions. Policy responsiveness (where perceptions influence policies) is less likely to be at play here, as integration strands like labour market integration and anti-discrimination – both of which featured prominently in the public debate – would likely be associated with threat perceptions in this case.

The lack of significant associations of the socio-economic dimension of policy strands with perceived threats may also be explained by the fact that media and public discourse regarding asylum seeker and refugee integration are mostly centred around the symbolic and cultural conflicts in host societies, with discussions about identity, culture, and religion dominating the debate (De Coninck et al. 2021b). Although economic concerns were present, the impact of labour market policies may be less pronounced in the context of this crisis, given that these newcomers were mostly perceived as very lowly educated, thus only presenting labour market competition to a limited segment of the active population.

Despite its new insights into the policy-threat nexus, this study also has some limitations. First, while we expected that (strands of) integration policies influence the level of perceived threat, these relations may also operate in the other direction. It is possible that

greater perceived realistic and symbolic threat may have led to pressure on policy makers to implement stricter integration policies or may have led to the election of political parties with a negative view of migration, which could indirectly result in more restrictive integration policies. A robustness check in which we estimated this relationship (Table A10) indicates that the fit of these models is significantly worse than that of the models with threat perceptions as dependent variables, but the potential for endogeneity bias can still not be excluded. In any case, the direction in which these relations operate cannot be assessed with the data because of their cross-sectional character. Adopting a longitudinal design could also prove valuable as the convergence of threat perceptions that was found in this article may disappear as more time passes since the peak of the migration crisis and other societal concerns (such as the long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic) take priority over migration. Furthermore, it is possible that the "effect" of integration policies (which take some time to develop) on threat perceptions only appear after some time, rather than in the same year. To summarize, these data do not allow us to make claims regarding changes in perceived threat due to the migration crisis. To do so, we would need to link information from multiple waves of these large-scale population surveys that precede and follow the crisis. However, the data used in this article can provide a perspective on attitudes of the public following the refugee crisis. Second, future studies should attempt to further explore the role of the cultural-religious dimension of integration policies. Although the MIPEX does not contain data on these types of policies, our results indicate a shift from economic to cultural concerns regarding immigration following the migration crisis, and information on this third policy dimension could provide valuable additional insights. Third, using the Eurobarometer data also resulted in some limitations for the analysis. For example, a number of recent studies in Europe indicate that religious affiliation and religiosity also play a role in the development of perceived threat (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2016). The role of educational attainment is also more commonly assessed by looking at the highest

degree that was attained rather than the number of years in education (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). However, the Eurobarometer data that we used did not contain this information, which left us unable to add such variables to the analysis. Finally, given the fact that the exogenous shock of the migration crisis caused shifts in public opinion on migration, it is unfortunate that there are no large-scale datasets containing information on threat perceptions or outgroup attitudes more recent than 2017. We encourage researchers and those involved in large-scale surveys such as Eurobarometer, European Social Survey, and the European Values Study to once again measure such outgroup attitudes in order to provide opportunities to investigate the long-term effects of the migration crisis on public opinion among Europeans.

Conclusion

The findings in this article, along with those from a variety of other studies over the past years (Callens and Meuleman 2017; Green et al. 2020; Heath et al. 2020; Just and Anderson 2014; Meuleman and Reeskens 2008; Schlueter et al. 2013), confirm that there is an important link between integration policies and threat perceptions towards immigrants in Europe. Our study, one of the first to use MIPEX integration indicators that were collected in the wake of the so-called European migration crisis, indicates that favourable integration policies are associated with lower realistic and symbolic threat. When looking at the subdimensions of MIPEX integration policy scores, we specifically find that favourable legal-political integration policies (i.e. access to nationality, political participation) are associated with lower perceived threat. Policies in the socioeconomic dimension (e.g. labour market integration) are not associated with threat perceptions in this study.

Although our findings are partly in line with those from previous studies, there are also two key differences. First, overall integration policies are negatively associated with symbolic threat, while this did not appear to be the case in prior studies. Second, scholars reported differences in associations of policy subdimensions with realistic and symbolic threat: labour

market integration and political participation were negatively associated with realistic threat, while no policy strands were significantly associated with symbolic threat. We did not find such differences between threat perceptions, as political participation and access to nationality are both related to lower realistic and symbolic threat. Despite a similar correlation between realistic/economic and symbolic/cultural threat, these differences illustrate that the genesis of threat perceptions might have changed following the migration crisis. Although there is much literature supporting the theoretical and empirical differences between these two threat types (Ben-Nun Bloom et al. 2015), it is possible that the exogenous shock of the migration crisis has (temporarily) led to a convergence of realistic and symbolic threat in Europe. As Hagelund (2020) states, such shocks are associated with change and windows of opportunity open in otherwise stable policy models. This may also explain why symbolic threat is related to policies at this time. Although symbolic threat appears to be more enduring and harder to change by policy interventions than realistic threat, the exogenous shock of the migration crisis and its subsequent "moral panic" with accompanying heated debates on identity, culture, and religion may have caused such a shift from largely economic oriented concerns about migration to more culture-oriented concerns about migration in the minds of many Europeans (Heath et al. 2020).

Disclosure of interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Acknowledgements

Endnote

Data from the Special Eurobarometer 469, wave 88.2 that were used in this article are available upon request here:

https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/gdesc2.asp?no=0008&search=&search2=&db=e&tab=0&notabs=&nf=1&af=&ll=10

Data from MIPEX that were used in this article are available here:

https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/pdf/Policy%20Indicators%20Scores%20(2007-2019)%20%E2%80%93%20core%20set%20of%20indicators.xlsx

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Table A1. Partial correlations of key study variables

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Realistic threat	1							
2. Symbolic threat	.64***	1						
3. MIPEX: Total	-.15***	-.19***	1					
4. Political participation	-.22***	-.27***	.75***	1				
5. Permanent residence	-.05***	-.05***	.68***	.35***	1			
6. Access to nationality	-.16***	-.13***	.47***	.38***	.09***	1		
7. Anti-discrimination	.02*	-.01	.49***	.15***	.43***	.52***	1	
8. Labour market	-.06***	-.14***	.66***	.58***	.31***	-.09***	.03***	1

*** $p < .001$; * $p < 0.05$. This analysis controlled for country of residence.

Table A2. Multilevel hierarchical regression analysis of realistic threat without country-level controls

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.00 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.04)	.00 (.05)	.00 (.05)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integration policies						
MIPEX: Total	-.19*** (.05)					
Political participation		-.20*** (.05)				
Permanent residence			-.05 (.06)			
Access to nationality				-.21*** (.05)		
Anti-discrimination					-.08 (.05)	
Labour market						-.07 (.06)
AIC	44,406.5	44,404.4	44,418.3	44,402.1	44,417.1	44,417.4
BIC	44,409.3	44,407.2	44,421.1	44,404.9	44,419.9	44,420.2
Variance components						
Level 2: Country	.06***	.06***	.10***	.05***	.09***	.09***
Level 1: Individual	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***

Note: AIC: Akaike information criterion. BIC: Bayesian information criterion. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A3. Multilevel hierarchical regression analysis of symbolic threat without country-level controls

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.00 (.05)	.00 (.05)
Individual level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integration policies						
MIPEX: Total	-.28*** (.05)					
Political participation		-.28*** (.05)				
Permanent residence			-.09 (.07)			
Access to nationality				-.23*** (.06)		
Anti-discrimination					-.12 (.07)	
Labour market						-.13 (.07)
AIC	46,608.5	46,606.0	46,627.5	46,615.8	46,626.0	46,622.7
BIC	46,611.3	46,608.8	46,630.3	46,618.6	46,628.8	46,625.5
Variance components						
Level 2: Country	.07***	.06***	.14***	.09***	.13***	.12***
Level 1: Individual	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***

Note: AIC: Akaike information criterion. BIC: Bayesian information criterion. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A4. Multilevel regression analysis of realistic threat and symbolic threat with all integration indicators

	Realistic threat	Symbolic threat
	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.00 (.05)	.02 (.05)
Individual level		
Age	.05*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Gender (ref: male)		
Female	-.01 (.01)	-.05*** (.01)
Political ideology	.14*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)
Years in education	-.15*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)
Social class	-.03*** (.01)	-.00 (.01)
Financial difficulty (ref: never)		
From time to time	.05*** (.01)	.01 (.01)
Most the time	.06*** (.01)	.01 (.01)
Life satisfaction	-.13*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)
Place of residence (ref: urban)		
Rural area	.03*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Suburban area	.02* (.01)	.04*** (.01)
Country-level indicators		
GDP per capita	-.02 (.08)	-.07* (.08)
Unemployment ratio	-.06 (.06)	-.07 (.05)
Asylum applications PC	.07 (.05)	.12** (.04)
Media freedom	-.07 (.09)	-.13* (.09)
Integration policies		
MIPEX: Total	-.02 (.24)	-.00 (.28)
Political participation	.02 (.15)	-.01 (.14)
Permanent residence	-.02 (.10)	.02 (.09)
Access to nationality	-.22** (.14)	-.14** (.13)

Anti-discrimination	.07 (.08)	-.01 (.08)
Labour market	.06 (.10)	-.03 (.10)
AIC	44,427.4	46,623.9
BIC	44,430.2	46,626.7
Variance components		
Level 2: Country	.06**	.05**
Level 1: Individual	.78***	.75***

Note: AIC: Akaike information criterion. BIC: Bayesian information criterion. Asylum applications PC: Asylum applications per capita. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A5. Multilevel regression analysis of realistic threat and symbolic threat without countries with lowest and highest MIPEX scores

	Without 6 countries with lowest MIPEX		Without 6 countries with highest MIPEX	
	Realistic threat	Symbolic threat	Realistic threat	Symbolic threat
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.04 (.05)	.01 (.05)	-.01 (.07)	.01 (.04)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls				
GDP per capita	-.09 (.05)	-.10* (.05)	.02 (.16)	-.26* (.13)
Unemployment ratio	-.02 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.03 (.06)	-.06 (.05)
Asylum applications PC	-.00 (.04)	.08* (.04)	.00 (.05)	.10* (.04)
Media freedom	.03 (.08)	-.09 (.07)	-.08 (.10)	-.04 (.08)
Integration policies				
MIPEX: Total	-.19* (.08)	-.17* (.07)	-.19* (.16)	-.04 (.12)
AIC	35,414.6	37,273.5	34,777.9	36,712.1
BIC	35,417.0	37,275.8	34,780.2	36,714.5
Variance components				
Level 2: Country	.06**	.05**	.08**	.05**
Level 1: Individual	.76***	.73***	.80***	.78***

Note: Asylum applications PC: Asylum applications per capita. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A6. Durban-Wu-Hausman test for integration policy scores

	Realistic threat		Symbolic threat	
	F-score	p-value	F-score	p-value
MIPEX: Total	233.47	.000	297.96	.000
Political participation	232.88	.000	294.66	.000
Permanent residence	220.43	.000	281.63	.000
Access to nationality	250.62	.000	306.54	.000
Anti-discrimination	225.68	.000	291.13	.000
Labour market	220.09	.000	285.66	.000

Table A7. Two-stage least squares estimation of multilevel model of realistic threat

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.04)	.00 (.05)	.00 (.05)
Individual controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integration policies						
MIPEX: Total	-.12* (.06)					
Political participation		-16* (.08)				
Permanent residence			-.01 (.05)			
Access to nationality				-.17*** (.04)		
Anti-discrimination					-.05 (.05)	
Labour market						-.01 (.06)
Variance components						
Level 2: Country	.06***	.06***	.10***	.05***	.09***	.09***
Level 1: Individual	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***	.78***

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A8. Two-stage least squares estimation of multilevel model of symbolic threat

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)	b (se)
Intercept	.02 (.04)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.00 (.05)	.00 (.05)
Individual level	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integration policies						
MIPEX: Total	-.14** (.05)					
Political participation		-.18** (.05)				
Permanent residence			-.02 (.04)			
Access to nationality				-.15*** (.04)		
Anti-discrimination					-.07 (.04)	
Labour market						-.07 (.05)
Variance components						
Level 2: Country	.07***	.06***	.14***	.09***	.13***	.12***
Level 1: Individual	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***	.75***

Note: *** $p < .001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Table A9. Intra-class correlation coefficients of realistic and symbolic threat perceptions

	Realistic threat	Symbolic threat
Variance components		
Level 2: Country	0.143	0.185
Level 1: Individual	0.862	0.817
ICC	0.142	0.185
AIC	61,673.7	65,412.0
BIC	61,676.5	65414.8

Note: ICC: Intra-class correlation coefficient. AIC: Akaike information criterion. BIC: Bayesian information criterion.

Table A10. Overview of fit indices for models with threat perceptions as dependent variables, and for models with integration policy scores as dependent variables

	-2LL	AIC	BIC
MIPEX -> RT	44,415.9	44,420.1	44,421.7
MIPEX -> ST	46,608.7	46,610.1	46,612.1
PP -> RT	44,415.4	44,419.4	44422.2
PP -> ST	46,608.6	46,612.6	46,615.4
PR -> RT	44,419.2	44,423.2	44,426.0
PR -> ST	46,614.0	46,618.0	46,620.8
AN -> RT	44,410.1	44,414.1	44,416.9
AN -> ST	46,600.0	46,601.2	46,609.2
AD -> RT	44,418.0	44,422.0	44,424.8
AD -> ST	46,611.4	46,615.4	46,618.2
LM -> RT	44,419.0	44,423.0	44,425.8
LM -> ST	46,613.0	46,617.0	46,619.8
RT -> MIPEX	206,102	206,098	206,095
ST -> MIPEX	210,560	210,420	211,110
RT -> PP	205,245	204,996	204,990
ST -> PP	212,489	212,152	212,076
RT -> PR	206,657	206,531	206,525
ST -> PR	211,156	211,021	210,970
RT -> AN	206,888	206,453	206,232
ST- > AN	210,532	210,332	209,876
RT -> AD	205,813	205,735	205,465
ST -> AD	212,819	212,435	212,315
RT -> LM	207,319	207,263	207,041
ST -> LM	211,698	211,315	211,085

RT = realistic threat; ST = symbolic threat; LM = labour market mobility; PP = political participation; PR = permanent residence; N = access to nationality; AD = anti-discrimination.