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The Language of Democracy, Xenophobia, and the Rise of the Far Right
in France and Spain After the 2015 Migration Crisis

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between immigration and far right-wing popularity in Europe, specifically France and Spain after the 2015 migration crisis. Comparing data from several European Union countries after 2015, a pattern is identified that when immigration increased, so did the representation of far right-wing parties. This thesis then details a nuanced analysis of two case studies, and the underlying reasons why far right-wing parties gained popularity in France and Spain. This thesis also examines the roots of present-day democracy in France and Spain, and how they contribute to current social understandings of national identity, which have led to increases in xenophobia in France and Spain which far right-wing parties have benefitted from. To conclude, this thesis also offers insight into why this trend might be a warning of a larger European issue of a backlash against an increasingly multicultural Europe.

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Introduction

In 2015, hundreds of thousands of refugees from the Middle East began to make the onerous and perilous journey towards Europe in hopes of searching for safety and security for their families. The countries that were the most frequent point of entry from refugees during this crisis were the countries that border the Mediterranean Sea, meaning Greece, Italy, and Spain. These countries had an influx of refugees so large that the European Union felt it was necessary to establish a mandatory redistribution of the quantity of migrants throughout European Union member states. This redistribution effort, the Dublin Regulation, was created so that all member countries would be able to aid each other with this massive influx of people¹. This mandatory call for accommodation was not well received throughout Europe, and some member countries, such as Hungary and Poland, countries under far right-wing leadership, outright refused to accommodate any number of refugees.

There have been many consequences that followed the 2015 migration crisis in Europe, and a significant one has been a clear and common shift in voting and representation of far right-wing parties from the member states of the European Union. Since 2015, many far right-wing parties within European Union member states have begun to gain more power and popularity from their electorates. For example, there is Alternative for Germany, the Law and Justice party in Poland, the Vox party in Spain, and the National Front party in France. This is just a short selection of the current number of right-wing parties that have gained a previously unheard of amount of popularity within Europe since 2015, but this list speaks to a larger problem within

¹ “Asylum and Migration in the EU: Facts and Figures: News: European Parliament,” Asylum and migration in the EU: facts and figures | News | European Parliament (European Parliament, October 30, 2020), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20170629STO78630/asylum-and-migration-in-the-eu-facts-and-figures>.

Europe. These far right-wing parties contain one commonality: their campaigns are mobilizing on anti-immigrant sentiments of the citizens in their countries.

This thesis will investigate the following questions: Is mass immigration a factor that has led to the recent considerable increase in popularity for and representation of far right-wing parties in France and in Spain? To what extent are these two phenomena linked? What does this link reveal about social understandings about citizenship and the pervasiveness of xenophobia in Europe as a whole? How could the foundations of Spain and France's democracies potentially influence the prevalence of these parties? In this thesis, I will argue that this trend in right-wing popularity has an inherent link to the 2015 migration crisis and Europe's attitude towards immigration and foreigners and their reaction to European spaces becoming increasingly multicultural differently. The xenophobic rhetoric displayed by far right wing parties like Vox and the National Front in tandem with the push for restrictions on immigration through support of these parties reveal interesting and preoccupying foundational flaws in the language of the French and Spanish democracies. It also raises concerns over the social conceptualization of national identity and its intersection with democratic values. Though the Vox party and the National Front amassed a large increase in support during the aftermath of the migration crisis, the xenophobic sentiment within these countries are not new. They were further ignited and became less covert by the ostentatious politicization of increased immigration by far right-wing politicians in France and Spain.

Methodology

The methodology for this thesis will entail a two-step approach. The first step involves in-depth research and analysis the backgrounds of the specific political parties that will be

discussed, as well as democratic foundations in France and Spain and their socio historical contexts. The second part of this thesis will compare and analyze the role of the migration crisis and what the electorate's reactions to it reveal in France and Spain comparatively about discrimination, othering, and citizenship. Scholarly texts involving theories of nationhood, democratic ideology, and migration policy will guide and support the analysis of factors to explain the rise in far right-wing popularity.

Chapter 1: Background to the Migration Crisis and the Effect on Europe

In order to demonstrate the link between immigration and far right-wing popularity, these variables must be tested to see if they have the predicted relationship. To visually test this theory, a table is conducive for comparative analysis. Using data from the Eurostat database's 2018 *Migration and Migrant Population*,² I categorized the quantitative levels of immigration (actual numbers of immigrants)³ into three categories: high, moderate, and low. Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy are listed by Eurostat as the countries with the most significant total numbers of immigrants, and all listing as having received between 340,000 to 917,000 documented migrants. Other countries placed in the moderate category ranged from having approximately 111,000 to 189,000. The one country, Denmark, in the low immigration category was recorded to have around 68,800 migrants, and therefore quite lower comparatively to the rest of the countries, so it was labeled as low immigration. The countries I selected to be a part of this comparison are countries from western and central Europe, ones with similar histories post World War II and were not Soviet occupied territories (Germany is a small exception, but it is a special case).

The level of far right-wing increase in representation was categorized as significant, moderate, or low. Each title was designated in comparison to previous numbers of representation in the legislature of that country's history. If a party more than doubled their presence, it is considered significant growth. If the far right only gained a few seats, or had seats but did not

² "Migration and Migrant Population Statistics," Migration and migrant population statistics - Statistics Explained (Eurostat, 2020), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics.

³ An alternative way of assessing this relationship could be to compare the percentage of far right-wing popularity increase to the ratio of immigrants to citizens in a particular nation.

increase in quantity, it was labeled moderate. If the representation in government did not change at all or decreased, it was labeled low.

Country	Level of Immigration	Level of Far Right Wing Increase
France	High	Significant
Spain	High	Significant
UK	High	Moderate ⁴
Germany	High	Significant
Netherlands	Moderate	Low/Moderate
Belgium	Moderate	Moderate
Italy	High	Significant
Greece	Moderate	Low
Austria	Moderate	Moderate/Significant
Denmark	Low	Very Low

Evidently, through the comparison presented in this table, there is a genuine relationship between the amount (numbers) of migration into the country and their increase in popularity and representation for the far right-wing parties. A trend clearly expressed through this chart is when the amount immigration was very high, there was also at the same time a traceable increase in far right-wing party representation.

⁴ The United Kingdom is a special exception due to the circumstances of Brexit, there was already a very conservative center right-wing government in power, as well as a very strong anti-immigration movement in the United Kingdom.

France and the National Front (*le Front National*)

The National Front party, recently renamed as the National Rally, has gained popularity in recent years and has been featured quite frequently within the political media surrounding right-wing populist parties. This is not to make the claim that they are in power at the moment or will be in power in the near future - but to assert that their political following has noticeably grown in the past several years. This political party was founded in 1971 by Jean-Marie Le Pen, their main political interest being to curb immigration from Northern Africa. The National Front is now led by his daughter, Marine Le Pen. She led the charge to oust her father, and took his role in the National Front, and most recently ran for president of France in 2017. Jean-Marie Le Pen and his political views echoed those of the extreme right, abhorrently opposing immigration and European integration, and displaying hyper nationalistic agendas in government. Jean-Marie Le Pen also exhibited fascist tendencies in his political career through his ornery assault of Annette Peulvast Bergeal, a political opponent from the Socialist Party⁵, his numerous convictions of inciting racial and religious hatred, and through his sickening denial and minimization of the Holocaust.⁶ These tendencies and his rhetoric of lies and erasure of the Holocaust are what lead to his removal of leadership of the National Front, inciting a public feud between Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen.

When Marine Le Pen campaigned for the presidency of France in 2017, she caught the attention of many French citizens due to her provocative, nativist rhetoric about migrants and her unsavory ideals of what is to be considered as French. One of the main focuses of this political

⁵ “French Far-Right Leader Is Found Guilty of Assault,” Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles Times, April 3, 1998), <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-apr-03-mn-35646-story.html>.

⁶ “French National Front Expels Founder Jean-Marie Le Pen,” BBC News (BBC, August 20, 2015), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34009901>.

party was the conservation of the traditional 'French' identity, and its defense against foreign and domestic enemies who wish to evolve it.⁷ This concept led into the party's platform of a ferocious and provocative anti-immigrant sentiment, in order to limit the notion of French nationality to fit certain individuals - and during the time of mass immigration into France and cities becoming rapidly more multicultural and from the Middle East- this became more popular than it had been in the past. Le Pen capitalized on the spike in immigrant fear that occurred after terrorist attacks, and she tried her hardest to awaken xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments or preserve the notion "*la France aux français*" or 'France to the French'.⁸ She propagated this ideology at a rally towards the end of her presidential campaign, vowing to halt immigration and "*rendre sa liberté à la France*" or to 'bring France its freedom'.^{9 10}

Marine Le Pen had little success in the 2012 French Presidential election gaining 13.6% of the first round of voters and ceding to President François Hollande.¹¹ This was slightly more preponderant than her father's previous acquisition of votes, but the National Front still had a small presence within the French government. The migration crisis occurred during President Hollande's presidential term, and public opinion and backlash over increased numbers of immigrants in France became a contentious and eagerly followed issue for debate during the following presidential election in 2017. Le Pen gained 21.7% of vote during the first round of

⁷ Jihan Abdalla, "Europe's Refugee Crisis: Right-Wing Populism and Mainstream Cooption in Germany and France," CUNY Academic Works, 2017, https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses/731, 63.

⁸ "Face Au 'Désordre', Le Pen Veut 'Rendre La France à La France,'" Le Point, March 19, 2017, https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/face-au-desordre-le-pen-veut-rendre-la-france-a-la-france-18-03-2017-2112917_23.php.

⁹ Adam Nossiter, "Marine Le Pen Leads Far-Right Fight to Make France 'More French' (Published 2017)," The New York Times (The New York Times, April 20, 2017), <http://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/20/world/europe/france-election-marine-le-pen.html>.

¹⁰ Laurent de Boissieu, "Marine Le Pen, " La France Et Les Français " D'abord," La Croix, March 20, 2017, <https://www.la-croix.com/Journal/Marine-Le-Pen-France-Francais-dabord-2017-03-19-1100833131>.

¹¹ Jihan Abdalla, "Europe's Refugee Crisis: Right-Wing Populism and Mainstream Cooption in Germany and France," CUNY Academic Works, 2017, https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cc_etds_theses/731, 73.

elections, and in the second round she beat her Republican and Socialist opponents but lost to the centrist, Emmanuel Macron. She gained 33.9% of the vote in the second round, a previously unheard of level of support for a radical, far right-wing party like the National Front in France.¹²

Spain and the Vox Party (*El partido Vox*)

The Vox party is a young, far right-wing party led by Spanish politician Santiago Abascal Conde. This party was formed in 2013, but it was purely a protest party for several years because of its inability to gain seats in the Spanish Parliament.¹³ The Vox party proposes radical ideology that would completely reconfigure the government in Spain, like eliminating autonomous communities that were created between 1979 and 1983 after Francisco Franco's death. This running point and anti-immigration policies are the leading ideologies presented in the Vox party's platform. Abascal centers his entire campaign and platform around provoking the highest degree of nationalism, propagating ideas of a unified Spain, which in turn, contributes to the erasure of the struggle of those seeking sovereignty and independence in autonomous communities like Catalonia and the Basque Country.

Abascal presents his party's aversion to immigrants quite overtly, claiming he wants Spain to leave the Schengen zone, ending any kind of free movement of people, and he also calls for the deportation of all non-legally residing residents without any consideration of their particular circumstances. Their rhetoric is overtly xenophobic and anti-immigrant. For instance, Abascal, just days before the November 2019 election, disseminated false statistics that erroneously assigned blame on foreigners for the majority of sexual assaults in Spain, and the

¹² Gregor Aisch, Matthew Bloch, and K. K. Rebecca, "How France Voted," The New York Times (The New York Times, May 7, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/07/world/europe/france-election-results-maps.html>.

¹³ Manzanaro, Sanchez. "Vox: Who Are Spain's Far-Right Party and What Do They Stand for?" *Euronews*, 11 Nov. 2019, www.euronews.com/2019/11/10/vox-who-are-spain-s-far-right-party-and-what-do-they-stand-for.

leader of the Vox party in Madrid, Rocío Monasterio, spoke of immigrant children as a threat to Spain's neighborhoods' safety.¹⁴ The leadership of Vox disguises and justifies their xenophobia and racism as 'concern' for those they see as 'vulnerable', like women and children; they have 'concern' for these demographics - as long as they are Spanish-born. The Vox party tried to corral a sense of fear of foreigners and counted on the rise of this fear to gain votes.

The representation of the Vox party in Spain was unprecedented before the election in 2018 where the Vox party gained 11% of the votes cast and 12 seats in regional government.¹⁵ Soon following that in April of 2019, the Vox party gained comparatively significant representation in the congress of the *Cortes Generales* that before. They gained 24 seats in congress, and the following election in November of 2019, the number of seats increased to 52, more than doubling this party's representation.¹⁶

A seemingly common denominator to the far right political parties in France and in Spain is their anti-immigrant rhetoric. Both the level of popularity and size of the platform for their agenda obtained by Marine Le Pen and the National Front in the 2017 election was not routine. This far right-wing party historically had never gained the active popularity in elections that they had until that election. The National Front historically ran on the same platform, the same xenophobic ideology, but the difference between the 2012 election and the 2017 election was the contextual social nuances in France created by current immigration situation caused by the refugee crisis in 2015. Spain is a migratory passage for immigrants because of its proximity to

¹⁴ Sam Jones, "Vox Party Puts 'Menace' of Migrant Children at Centre of Election Drive," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, November 10, 2019), <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/10/vox-party-puts-menace-of-migrant-children-at-centre-of-election-drive>.

¹⁵ Stuart J. Turnbull-Dugarte, "Explaining the End of Spanish Exceptionalism and Electoral Support for Vox," *Research & Politics* 6, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168019851680>, 1.

¹⁶ Guy Hedgecoe, "Spanish Elections: How the Far-Right Vox Party Found Its Footing," *BBC News* (BBC, November 11, 2019), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46422036>.

the sea, and North Africa. There was no representation of the extreme right in Spain's congress until Vox, and it is necessary to view this alongside the timeline of this election. A tentative conclusion is that there is pattern between the level of immigration and the success of nationalistic right-wing populist parties, when the immigration increased, so did the popularity surrounding the xenophobia rhetoric presented by far right politicians. Marine Le Pen and the National Front shifted the political narrative in France farther to the right, as did Santiago Abascal in Spain. In order to perhaps better understand how recent immigration patterns could have been the catalyst for the rise of far right political movements in both countries, it may also be useful to analyze more closely some of the foundational elements of the French and Spanish democracies.

Chapter 2: Analytical Background

In order to analytically assess the relationship between immigration, democracies, and far right-wing voting in this thesis, it is necessary to use guiding texts that detail the foundations and components of nations to better understand the function of national identity and by extension its relationship to voting. French historian Ernest Renan, in his lecture, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (“*What is a Nation?*”), published in 1882, theorizes what constitutes a nation and how people organize to form the construct of a nation. Renan defines a nation as a spiritual entity that is motivated to act through the will of free people who seek a collective identity.¹⁷ Renan makes several important assertions about what constitutes a nation and what does not. For what does not constitute the foundation of a nation, he addresses several falsehoods commonly associated with the definition of a nation. He asserts that, “Ethnographic considerations have therefore counted for nothing in the constitution of modern nations.”¹⁸ This is to assert that race nor ethnic origin are the foundations for belonging to or being a part of a nation. This undermines an inherent misconception about the presence of foreigners in a nation. Far right politician’s like Marine Le Pen misconstrue that the movement of refugees, specifically people from outside Europe, will diminish the French national identity. Le Pen markets Arab immigration, for example, as “*une menace pour l’Occident*” and specifically refers to France as targeted because of high levels of immigration.¹⁹ This is inherently false when considered in relation to the foundations of a nation. Renan takes this a step further and asserts:

¹⁷ Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-Ce Qu'une Nation? = What Is a Nation?* (Tapir Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-Ce Qu'une Nation? = What Is a Nation?* (Tapir Press, 1996). 8.

¹⁹ Le Point, “Marine Le Pen: ‘Les Révolutions Arabes, Une Menace Pour L’Occident,’” Le Point, March 18, 2011, https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/marine-le-pen-les-revolutions-arabes-une-menace-pour-l-occident-18-03-2011-1308405_20.php.

“This exclusive interest in language as a criterion of nationhood has, like that of race, its dangers and inconveniences. When one exaggerates its importance, one limits and closes oneself up in a particular culture understood as national. One leaves the open air that one breathes in the midst of humanity in order to lock one’s self away in little freemasonries of one’s compatriots. Nothing could be worse for the mind nor more regrettable for civilization. We must not abandon this fundamental principle: that man is a reasonable and moral being before he is penned up in this or that language, a member of this or that race, or a participant in this or that culture.”²⁰

Renan asserts that language cannot act as the basis for unity, it is only a commonality between peoples, not an invitation for solidarity as conflict between linguistically similar groups exist. This is important to consider in the case of France, where there is a high emphasis placed on the importance of the French language, and much xenophobic rhetoric targets linguistic diversions from the French language. There is a fear of deviation from a norm because some French regard the presence of linguistic diversity as a threat to the French national identity, but this is false. A diverse concentration of languages does not threaten the integrity of a nation.

Renan identifies memories of suffering and struggle as integral to encouraging the unity of a nation. This concept is particularly interesting in the context of Spain with its history involving the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Regime. Many in Spain suffered during these events, a fact that should unify opinions and create a foundation for empathy of those fleeing civil war and internal strife of their home country. Instead, due to the lack of dismantlement of Franco’s legacies and institutions, and *El pacto de olvido*, a different sentiment has become fostered in Spain. Interestingly, the regions that have been historically suppressed and denied

²⁰ Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-Ce Qu'une Nation? = What Is a Nation?* (Tapir Press, 1996), 11.

independence from Spain, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country, are the regions in Spain most welcoming to refugees and immigrants, nearly 17% of Catalonia's population being foreign-born.²¹²² Through Renan's writing it is possible to assert that many of the polarizing subjects and issues far right wing parties portray as threatened by immigration (language, religion, origin) are not what compound the identity of a nation. In understanding Renan's logic of what elements do and do not form a nation, it can easily be deduced that migration does not threaten nationality, though many far right-wing political leaders want to pose it as one for their political gain.

Another fundamental text is the one by French philosopher and historian, Étienne Balibar, who in his article, *Europe et réfugiés: l'élargissement*, writes on the issue of migration and the European Union as a community, as well as the need for political change in Europe as a whole. Balibar's text serves as a guiding theory on current immigration into Europe and the consequences of the current reaction to refugees. Through Balibar's analysis of the limitations of the current democratic system in Europe, we can understand that this issue of xenophobia and the anti-immigrant platform is not just an issue within France and Spain, but a larger problem pertaining to questions of European identity. Balibar identifies the problems posed by the crisis and how a unilateral response was called for by Angela Merkel, but not entirely followed by European states. He critiques the disunity over the politics of migration, and distinguishes two Europes, differing in ideology for migration policies. Balibar defends the concept of a unilateral response to migration and critiques the nations who deviated from this kind of response,

²¹ Sanjay Jeram, "Immigrants and the Basque Nation: Diversity as a New Marker of Identity," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 11 (2013): pp. 1770-1788, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2012.664281>.

²² Sonya Dowsett, "Catalans Woo Immigrants in Quest to Split from Spain," Reuters (Thomson Reuters, June 16, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-catalonia-immigration/catalans-woo-immigrants-in-quest-to-split-from-spain-idUSKBN19711U>.

especially ones who actively minimize their obligations and close their borders. He calls this a politically organized “*front transnational du refus des réfugiés et des migrants*”.²³ Balibar is calling for unity across Europe through the power of the European Union, and their democratic legitimacy to persuade Europe into conceptualizing a system that redefines European citizenship and also condemns violence against migrants.²⁴

Both Renan and Balibar provide the framework for analysis of the migration crisis. Renan provides an outlook on the sentiments that symbolize and construct nationalisms, which are important when considering xenophobia and its relation to politics. Different conceptualizations of nationalism sway political affiliation, and parties that promote increased nationalism above all else, like the National Front or the Vox party, tend to be the ones that are strongly against immigration.²⁵ In turn, Balibar provides a detailed trajectory of how these nationalisms will divide Europe. These nationalisms fueled by the presence of increased refugees and migrants will show the fragile bones of the cohesion of Europe. The lack of cohesion makes the situation in Europe more difficult and raises questions on what is European identity as a whole, as well as European citizenship. Another notion conceptualized by Balibar is the non-typical system of borders in Europe and what this means for the infrastructure of democracy in Europe. Balibar argues that for Europe to become a place that is safe for refugees and migrants, who are fleeing to Europe due in part to past European or Western influence in the Middle East that has led to violent conflict, Europe form a unilateral initiative to accommodate refugees. To

²³ Etienne Balibar, “Europe Et Réfugiés : L’élargissement,” Attac France, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://france.attac.org/nos-publications/les-possibles/numero-8-automne-2015/dossier-questions-strategiques-apres-le-coup-d-etat-contre-la-grece/article/europe-et-refugies-l-elargissement>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Sonya Dowsett, “Catalans Woo Immigrants in Quest to Split from Spain,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, June 16, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-spain-catalonia-immigration/catalans-woo-immigrants-in-quest-to-split-from-spain-idUSKBN19711U>.

do so in Balibar's eyes would mean creating a Europe of solidarity, without the divisions caused by nationalisms of member countries.²⁶

These two texts provide a nuanced understanding of how nationalism and the individual are related, and the necessity of dissolving the emphasis on nationalisms that divide Europe and make it democratically weakened in how they respond to the influx of refugees. The arguments and ideas presented by these two theorists will guide the analysis of certain aspects of how democracy functions in France and Spain. They will also provide a framework to delve into how the nature of French and Spanish democracies have allowed these nationalisms to be rooted into social exclusion of outsiders to their social conception of national identity, which subsequently has allowed far right-wing politicians and political parties to gain support.

²⁶ Etienne Balibar, "Europe Et Réfugiés : L'élargissement," Attac France, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://france.attac.org/nos-publications/les-possibles/numero-8-automne-2015/dossier-questions-strategiques-apres-le-coup-d-etat-contre-la-grece/article/europe-et-refugies-l-elargissement>.

Chapter 3: Democracy in France

Brief History

The democracy of France has gone through numerous transformations throughout its existence, and the history of revolution and regime change is important to understand its foundations. The French esteem their democracy quite highly, and many French hold the particular values of French democracy integral to their identity. France's original democracy, the First French Republic, famously derived from the overthrow of the King and the Constitutional Monarchy and the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution in 1792. Between then and current day, France has endured numerous regime changes, and the French's notion of their democracy has become nuanced through change. The regimes included a Directory, a Consulate, two Empires run by dictators, several restorations, a second monarchy, and four more Republics, ending in the *Cinquième République* (Fifth French Republic) which is now France's current republican form of government. It was created by Charles De Gaulle because of the collapse of the Fourth Republic.²⁷

Under the regime of the Fourth Republic (1946-1958), France still operated as a colonial power and had colonies abroad in Africa and Asia. It is important to note that France, a country that promotes strong belief in its "républicain" values and esteems its democracy very highly, still held onto some of its ex-colonies by turning them into four *Départements d'outre mer*. In the context of analyzing the foundations and strengths of France's democracy, France's preservation of its status as a colonial power until most of the 20th century is quite contradictory to the proclaimed values of its democracy. The fall of the Fourth Republic was triggered by the

²⁷ "French Governments Timeline," Preceden, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://www.preceden.com/timelines/243116-french-governments-timeline>.

unrest during the start of decolonization in France's colonies and the Algerian War. The Algiers Crisis of 1958 led to significant political turmoil in France over the status of Algeria as a colony. Charles de Gaulle instilled a new Constitution after a near coup, and the Fourth Republic became the Fifth. Under his constitution, the President of France was given a very strong position and led the National Assembly, and the Parliament was given weaker powers. This in itself is potentially a recipe for disaster because it causes an imbalance of power of democratic institutions - the President has more weight than the representative parliament.

La Cinquième République derived from exclusionary and xenophobic ideals. These ideals are subtle undertones in De Gaulle's Constitution. In article 1 of the French Constitution it reads, "France shall be an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic. It shall ensure the equality of all citizens before the law, without distinction of origin, race or religion." This is to create a notion of equality under the law, which would exclude any acknowledgement of a person's background in an attempt at universality. This concept of universalism has been rooted into French citizenship for centuries, dating back to the enlightenment - and it is dangerous for those who do not fit the mold of what is considered typically 'French' or do not wish to assimilate into a homogenized form of 'Frenchness'. This as an element of the French Constitution shows the Republic's exclusionary roots. "This was based on an understanding of a people or nation as socio-culturally homogenous".²⁸ France as a nation is not, and should not have to be, socially homogeneous. This practice of treating all people living in France 'universally' functions as a tool that suppresses any deviation from the 'French norm' and is a tool that forces assimilation. For example, the notion of French secularism, or *laïcité*, does not have an even application on all demographics in France, a point that is developed in the second

²⁸ Jeremie Gilbert and David Keane, "Equality versus Fraternity? Rethinking France and Its Minorities," OUP Academic (Oxford University Press, January 20, 2017), <https://academic.oup.com/icon/article/14/4/883/2927935>, 4.

part of this chapter. Not all from differing backgrounds are treated the same under these ideals, and universalism creates an unhealthy and oppressive phenomenon of ‘othering’ in France, permitted by the words of the Constitution, when one does not follow a specific set of beliefs for what a ‘French’ citizen should look like. The constraints of what makes a ‘French’ citizen are what xenophobic, Islamophobic, and anti-immigrant politicians like Marine Le Pen have capitalized on. In her platform through the National Front, she tries to frame the narrative on refugees through the lens of citizenship, before presenting refugees as people in need of solidarity and refuge.

The new French Constitution continued to preserve some of the notions of the original French Republic, ones that came out of the French Revolution as a tool to reinforce the practice of universalism. One of the most known phrases embedded in the French Republic is the phrase “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*” - liberty, equality, and fraternity. In the preamble of the Constitution there is also reference to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a writing that was created during the French Revolution. This declaration defines liberty as follows:

*“La liberté consiste à pouvoir faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui: ainsi, l'exercice des droits naturels de chaque homme n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux autres membres de la société la jouissance de ces mêmes droits. Ces bornes ne peuvent être déterminées que par la loi”.*²⁹

To summarize in English, this article states that “freedom consists in being able to do all that does not harm others” and that using natural rights shouldn’t be limited other than to assure that others in society receive the same chance to enjoy those rights. The definition presented in this

²⁹ “Déclaration Des Droits De L’Homme Et Du Citoyen De 1789,” Conseil constitutionnel, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/le-bloc-de-constitutionnalite/declaration-des-droits-de-l-homme-et-du-citoyen-de-1789>.

article can be twisted and limited by the notions of universalism and the emphasis of assimilation in France. That is to say, to be accepted in society in France is to assimilate, but if you don't assimilate or you are not recognized as a part of French society, you do not maintain the same level of freedom or basic rights. The embodiment of “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*” as the foundations for French values are not present in what France's current socio-political climate demonstrates with the popularity of extreme right-wing parties like the National Front. The National Front's “preservation” of French identity by rejecting immigrants and refugees is an appalling deviation from the definition given in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. There is no liberty, equality or fraternity in refusing to accommodate persecuted people, because of their background and social differences. Here we see the true danger that is permitted by the language of the Republic - an intolerance for difference in ideology. The way the Constitution was written, framed, and understood provides a ground for manipulation from far right-wing parties to use language of the Republic to advance their xenophobic agenda.

Democracy and Immigration. The Case of Laïcité and Universalism.

In 2015, at the beginning of the migration crisis, France received a large number of migrants and refugees, many being from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan due to internal conflict and war in their respective regions. The arrival and presence of these refugees has since been stigmatized and ‘othered’ by a portion of the French population, and politicians like Marine Le Pen have worked to further outcast this demographic of refugees as a threat to the ‘frenchness’ of France. The methodology and justification from the political right for this stigmatization and labeling of refugees as ‘unfrench’ is intimately linked to one of the foundational parts of the French Republic: *laïcité*, or French secularism.

In France, *laïcité* serves as a tool to separate religion from the public sector of France but does not limit its expression in private. This notion of secularism has been present in France since the Revolution and was written into law, from the Jules Ferry laws on secular education to the *loi du 9 Décembre 1905*, concerning the separation of the church and state. The laws of French secularism call for no religious influence in government affairs or public procedure. This applies to the domain of all republican institutions, most contentiously, in public schools and publicly funded institutions such as townhalls for example. The language surrounding religious expression is vague and underdefined. The law calls for the removal of “ostentatious” religious signifiers. But it is difficult to define what is “ostentatious,” and this is subject to the government’s interpretation. The hijab or headscarf, a normal and typical religious article of clothing that many Muslim choose to wear, is defined as “ostentatious”. President Jacques Chirac banned the wearing of hijabs in schools and labeled it as an “aggressive symbol” that France could no longer accept. What is a normal and accepted religious signifier in many countries around the world, worn out of personal choice of religious expression, is seen as a sign of “religious proselytism,” or as a means to try to convert the French to Islam.³⁰ This here helps demonstrate the Islamophobia that is ingrained in the French republic: the options for Muslim women are to either assimilate by taking off their veil, compromising their religious beliefs, or be punished by the Republic. There is such an intense fear of culture change with the influx of each immigration wave, particularly coming from North Africa and certain Middle Eastern countries, that France is attempting to censor any visible deviation from their Western comfort zone.

³⁰ “France Bans the Veil in Public Schools,” Facing History and Ourselves, accessed December 8, 2020, <https://www.facinghistory.org/civic-dilemmas/france-bans-veil-public-schools>.

The French concept of national identity is shaped through institutions and France's school system works to enforce "the cultural assimilation and political integration" of students living in France.³¹ Recently, in October 2020, there was a horrific incident in Paris where a history teacher, who showed political cartoons about the Prophet Muhammad, was killed by an immigrant teenager who was offended by the cartoon. This event reawakened the debates over secularism and schooling in France, and many communities, notably Muslim communities from around the world, are calling for a change in schooling procedure in France, which many in France are against. It also built on existing sentiments of Islamophobia from previous acts of terrorism in France, like the Charlie Hebdo massacre and the 2015 attack in Paris at the Bataclan. In response to this event, French President Emmanuel Macron revealed measures that will be put forth to combat "radical Islamism" and "Islamic Separatism".³² He began a crackdown on those showing "signals" potential for radicalization by conducting raids and threatening deportation, as well as he announced his plan to "reform Islam" into a French Islam "of the Enlightenment" which he hope will "halt repeated deviations from the values of the republic".³³ Macron wants to increase the daily presence of the Republic and its associated value on the individual, clearly targeting the Muslim individual. Schools receiving public subsidies must pledge allegiance to the Republic through a contract with the state, and education through public institution is obligatory, if not attending a private institution. Instead of addressing issues of systemic racism or creating a

³¹ Norimitsu Onishi and Constant Méheut, "A Teacher, His Killer and the Failure of French Integration," *The New York Times* (The New York Times, October 26, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/26/world/europe/france-beheading-teacher.html>.

³² Hadrien Mathoux, "Loi Sur Le Séparatisme Islamiste : Macron Appelle à Un 'Réveil Républicain' Et Rend L'instruction à L'école Obligatoire," *Marianne*, October 7, 2020, <https://www.marianne.net/politique/macron/loi-sur-le-separatisme-islamiste-macron-appelle-a-un-reveil-republicain-et-rend-linstruction-a-lecole-obligatoire>.

³³ James McAuley, "Perspective | Instead of Fighting Systemic Racism, France Wants to 'Reform Islam'," *The Washington Post* (WP Company, October 23, 2020), https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/macron-france-reform-islam-paty/2020/10/23/f1a0232c-148b-11eb-bc10-40b25382f1be_story.html.

plan to alleviate the cyclical nature of poverty within immigrant dominated suburbs, Macron wants to fight further acts of violence by further increasing the presence of “republican values” in the public sector. His strict response to this incident has created international tensions between France and countries with large Muslim populations, most notably Turkey. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of Turkey, raised concerns against Macron’s response over his defense of the cartoon, and France’s rhetoric pertaining to Islam.³⁴ It should also be noted that Macron’s response to this incident received praise from Marine Le Pen, claiming he finally accepted “her ‘common sense’ view of ‘Islamism’ as the implacable enemy”.³⁵

This issue can be traced back to the root of how secularism is practiced and understood in France, and its effects on the Muslim population, the population in France most targeted by the contradictions of *laïcité*. While the tragic Charlie Hebdo massacre made it impossible for many people living in France and citizens to examine the potential root of the problem leading to this act beyond the issue of freedom of expression and that of terrorism, this recent event has made many French people rethink the constant use in schools of cartoons that portray or characterize a religion in offensive to certain members of its society. The argument that the separation of religious expression from schools and that secularism is applied universally is idealistic, but it does not reflect the actions and reactions of present-day France.

The French notion of secularism is meant to fall under the *républicain* concept of universalism, but it affects certain religious demographics disproportionately and it has become

³⁴ Samuel Preston, “Tensions between EU and Turkey Escalate over Erdogan Insults,” ABC News (ABC News Network, October 26, 2020), <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/tensions-eu-turkey-escalate-erdogan-insults-73833870>.

³⁵ Arthur Goldhammer, “Macron Wants to Fix France's Social Ills – but He Won't Do It by 'Reforming' Islam,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, November 3, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/03/emmanuel-macron-islam-french-president-terror-attacks>.

the basis for the French to try to force a problematic type of assimilation of those who practice Islam. French secularism targets Muslim women, some of who choose to express their faith by wearing a hijab - which is sometimes integral to their religious practice, in a way that it does not target people who practice France's dominant religion, Catholicism. The notion that secularism serves as a principle of universalism, so that 'everyone is equal with the distinction of the law' is fraught because *laïcité* works to establish a lack of acceptance of the expression of individual religion outside of Christianity. It shows a lack of tolerance for difference and particularity, so as to be French, you must not be expressing your religion in a way that might distract from the 'Frenchness' of France. This 'universalism' is constrained to France's understanding and definition of what is 'normal' or what the standard for universal should mean. This is capitalized on by the National Front and Marine Le Pen as a way to mark generations of immigrants from the Middle East and Northern Africa, many of whom practice Islam, as outsiders and detriments to the notions of France and its core values. It is important to note that although the 2015 immigration is not limited to those regions, it is the narrative that is often encompassed by the far right that way as well as in terms of a threat to secularism and French 'values'.

Chapter 4: Democracy in Spain

Brief History

The current democracy established in Spain is relatively recent and its structure emerged during a period of great civil, political, and social upheaval in Spain. The circumstances that lead to Spain's transition into a Constitutional Monarchy are important to reference when speaking of Spanish democratic values. Spain's democracy emerged during the fall of the authoritarian regime of Francisco Franco, the long-time dictator that controlled Spain for 39 years. Franco rose to power at the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939 after overthrowing the democratically elected Republic, imposing his nationalist party as the governing head of his fascist regime. With the memory of the collectively traumatic civil war in the minds of Spanish residents, Franco capitalized on their fear of a second civil war to solidify his power, and this same fear became a legacy tactic that disrupted the transition into democracy.³⁶ Under Franco there was authoritarianism; he silenced any political opponent, outlawed opposing political parties and tried to repress any opposition through the *Guardia Civil*, a military force that policed with violence. He heavily suppressed any form of resistance to his regime, most horrifically in the Basque country and in Catalonia. Before his death he reinstated the monarchy and named his successor, Juan Carlos I. The fact that the democracy in Spain is founded on the dying dictator naming a "successor" that imposed a Monarchy, although the democratic government he overthrew was a republic, makes it easier to understand why many in Spain denounce the shaky foundations of this democracy. Political parties in the Basque Country, for example, refused to recognize and ratify the constitution as a result.

³⁶ Paloma Aguilar Fernández, "La Presencia De La Guerra Civil y Del Franquismo En La Democracia Española," *Revista De Pensamiento Contemporáneo*, 2003, pp. 13-23.

The Autonomous communities in Spain were created so as to not give certain regions in Spain the possibility to vote in a referendum for their sovereignty and independence from Spain. After denying regions the vote for the right to self-determination, the constitution pressured the newly formed Autonomous communities to conform to this post-Franco democracy for the sake of peace and stability. Minimal rights were devolved to Autonomous Communities but the most important political and economic factors (social security, foreign policy and macroeconomics) were reserved for the central government in Madrid. These are placating tactics, and they further the gap of opportunity for regions seeking real autonomy and in some cases statehood. The desire for “indivisible” or unified Spain is harmful to large portions of its populous and erases the struggle of regions wishing more control within their autonomy, or who request the right to decide through a democratic regional vote whether to remain as part of Spain or to regain its independence. It is important to remember that many people in the Basque Country and Catalonia consider themselves as colonies of Spain and France.

While there are a plethora of unresolved issues concerning the structure of governance and democracy in Spain, one of the most alarming, but telling, factors about emergence of democracy in post-dictatorship Spain is the fact that the current Spanish Constitution was partially drafted by a former member of Francisco Franco’s regime, Manuel Fraga. Fraga served several roles throughout his time in power in Franco’s Cabinet, most notably as Propaganda Minister, as well as was an accomplice to the many horrific crimes committed under Franco’s dictatorial reign during the Spanish Civil war. Fraga is listed as “*partícipe y cómplice de toda la política represiva que se aprobaba en el Consejo de Ministros: fusilamientos, cárceles, campos de concentración, despidos, exilio, Tribunal de Orden Público graves violaciones de los derechos humanos, expedientes a periodistas, cierre de medios de comunicación y asesinatos de*

trabajadores".³⁷ In English, this testimony lists Fraga as a participant in political repression through his work on the Council of ministers during Franco's regime. He is listed as involved with mass imprisonment, assassinations, surveillance and censorship of media, and serious human rights violations. The notion that a prominent member of the previous Fascist government in Spain was attempting to help write its constitution is a threat in itself. The Spanish Constitution was drafted quite quickly after Franco's downfall and Franco's regime was never truly abolished during this transition into democracy. "Fraga believed that Francoism should evolve by building a democratic system capable of recognizing the moderate opposition sectors".³⁸ Fraga's presence within the writing of the Spanish Constitution works to preserve Francoist legacies - ones that are inherently undemocratic.

The governmental structure in Spain is constrained by the lingering memory and legacies from Franco's regime. "*Tampoco se depuraron las principales instituciones administrativas del régimen, ni se hicieron gestos de condena a la dictadura, ni de reconocimiento público a las víctimas del franquismo*".³⁹ There was no dissolution of Franco's governmental institutions, and no dismantlement of his dictatorial legacies. Spain's government refused to acknowledge the terrors that occurred under Franco in their shift to democracy, which is a fundamental flaw to its foundation. A country cannot collectively move past a fascist dictatorship without taking a unified stance against it and critically recognizing the harm and damage done by the regime.

³⁷ Sonia Vizoso, "El Pasado Franquista De Manuel Fraga Esquiva La Ley De Memoria Histórica," EL PAÍS (Ediciones EL PAÍS S.L., January 9, 2019), https://elpais.com/politica/2019/01/08/actualidad/1546941710_563318.html.

³⁸ Emmanuel Rodriguez and Isidro Lopez, "Franco's Afterlife," Jacobin, August 12, 2016, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/12/spain-franco-dictatorship-psoe-podemos-pp-democracy-austerity>.

³⁹ Paloma Aguilar Fernández, "La Presencia De La Guerra Civil y Del Franquismo En La Democracia Española," *Revista De Pensamiento Contemporáneo*, 2003, pp. 20

Anything other than this will work to preserve a legacy that does not merit conservation or reverie, and in the words of one Spanish citizen, "*no se es demócrata sin ser antifranquista*".⁴⁰

A piece of legislation that works to preserve Francoist legacies is *El pacto de olvido*, a far right-wing tactic which announced the intentional avoidance of direct confrontation of the horrors that occurred under Franco. In short, Spain was to “forget” about its fascism, agree to put the past behind them, and transition to democracy. But years of oppression and terror cannot be forgotten so quickly; this narrative is entirely reductive to those oppressed under Franco, and is a barrier for justice and the recognition of undeniable truths surrounding the crimes of Franco and his regime. *El pacto de olvido* could not act as a catalyst for a strong democracy when it contributed to an erasure of history. In contrast, the left in Spain advocated for the *memoria necesaria*⁴¹, the necessary memory of this era, which would recognize the struggle against dictatorship.

This avoidance and “*olvido*” of the legacies and memories of dictatorship, are a unstable foundation for democracy, and shows a lack of emphasis on accountability of historic and systemic violations of persecuted and oppressed people, like those in the Basque Country or Catalonia. If the Spanish government is willing to “forget” these injustices, ones committed against populations they claim as their own, as “Spanish”, how easily could they permit or excuse the maltreatment and discrimination against foreign people, specifically refugees from the Middle East? The circumstances in which the Spanish Constitution was written and the content it contains gives the perfect window of opportunity for far right-wing parties to become popular. It

⁴⁰ G. Malaina , D. Barcala, and E. Herrera, “Víctimas Del Fraga Franquista,” Inicio (Público, 2012), <https://www.publico.es/espana/victimas-del-fraga-franquista.html>.

⁴¹ Paloma Aguilar Fernández, “La Presencia De La Guerra Civil y Del Franquismo En La Democracia Española,” *Revista De Pensamiento Contemporáneo*, 2003, pp. 21

gives an excuse for xenophobia, by allowing political parties like Vox to single out immigration as a threat to Spanish nationality.

Democracy and Immigration: The Case of Indivisibility.

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 calls Spain the “indivisible homeland of all Spaniards” and the preamble states that Spain will “*proteger a todos los españoles y pueblos de España en el ejercicio de los derechos humanos, sus culturas y tradiciones, lenguas e instituciones*”.⁴² In English, Spain will protect its people and their human rights, culture, traditions, languages, and institutions. These qualities and promises are the ones that the Spanish government markets as foundations and goals for their democracy but are ones that are not upheld or represent the true nature of Spanish democracy; the actions of the government are what reveal its true nature. Spain’s systematic and repetitive suppression and forced integration of autonomous regions like Catalonia and the Basque Country as cases in point. These regions of Spain have repeatedly struggled and resisted for their independence from Spain before, during, and after the Franco dictatorship, but have been historically restricted and denied the right to decide their future by the Spain government under this idea of “indivisibility” of the Spanish country. In this matter, the Constitution does not act as it says it shall, not when these regions and their culture and their agency to self-determine and self-govern are suppressed by Spain in order to enforce an ideal of a unified nation. Renan describes the composition of a nation as “a daily referendum”, and in describing nationhood that way he asserts that nations are constantly evolving and changing.⁴³ Returning to the concept of indivisibility, it’s clear that the suppression of successionist movements in the Basque Country and Catalonia disregards the concept of continued consent of

⁴² “CONSTITUCIÓN ESPAÑOLA” (Las Cortes, 1978), <https://boe.es/legislacion/documentos/ConstitucionCASTELLANO.pdf>, 7.

⁴³ Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-Ce Qu'une Nation? = What Is a Nation?* (Tapir Press, 1996), 11.

nationhood. This reveals much about the nature and foundations of the Spanish democracy and how the Spanish government still views its nationhood and identity as static and unchanging. There is no listening to the will of the people within these regions on how they wish to define their nationhood or national identity.

When the Spanish government does not listen to the will of people they claim as their own citizens, this puts into questions how they may characterize immigration and anything they see as a further threat to Spanish “indivisibility”. This leaves room for the Vox party to formulate their rhetoric on immigration as a threat to Spanish unity and national identity. The Vox Party’s platform and ideology works to further build on these barriers and suppression of autonomous communities. They are anti-immigrant and anti-separatism, purporting the notion that Spain is indivisible and should “abolish all home rule”.⁴⁴ Alongside their anti-successionist rhetoric is their anti-immigrant rhetoric, which aims to make Spain a country that is unwelcoming to foreigners, or outsiders to their indivisibility.

There is no ambiguity within the rhetoric of the Vox party, as Abascal champions the slogan “¡Españoles primeros!” (“Spaniards first!”) in his position, this slogan having been historically used and contextualized by nativist and nationalist parties in Spain like *Democracia Nacional*.⁴⁵ He clearly is attempting to further the divide between his constituents, and migrants, by falsely portraying migrants as threats to the Spanish quality of life. Recently, Vox’s spokesperson in Congress, Iván Espinosa de los Monteros, asserted that illegal immigrants will receive a large sum from social security benefits according to a law recently passed by the

⁴⁴ David Gardner, “Spain's Open Election Highlights Its Polarisation Problem,” *Subscribe to read | Financial Times* (Financial Times, April 21, 2019), <https://www.ft.com/content/819e8bf2-60fc-11e9-a27a-fdd51850994c>.

⁴⁵ Miguel González, “Vox Pide Que Se Aplique La ‘Prioridad Nacional’ Para Discriminar a Los Extranjeros,” *EL PAÍS* (Ediciones EL PAÍS S.L., October 31, 2019), https://elpais.com/politica/2019/10/31/actualidad/1572526392_520673.html.

Spanish government, a statement that was denied by the Minister of Social Security and Migration on the basis that immigrants with irregular status' cannot logistically even receive any social security benefits.⁴⁶ Espinosa followed his statement with a disturbing message dictated three times in three different languages for maximal dissemination, so his message could reach the highest quantity of people. He said, "*El mensaje tiene que ser muy claro para todos los inmigrantes que están pensando llegar a España. No vengan*".⁴⁷ In English, "The message needs to be very clear for all immigrants thinking of arriving in Spain. Don't come. We cannot welcome you." Later he refers to migrants "dangerous journeys"⁴⁸, a discourse clearly indicating that they are referring to migrants coming from outside of Europe, like those from the Middle East during the migration crisis. Vox wants to send a clear message to potential migrants to Spain saying that they will not be accepted there, and it is an even more threatening message to immigrants within Spain by implying that they should not feel secure or wanted there.

Vox creates an "'us versus them' dichotomy, which characterizes populist discourse, [and it] is not only used against immigrants but it is mainly framed as a reaction of the 'Spanish people', supporting a unitary, homogeneous state, against forces of federalism and independence accused of undermining the integrity of the nation".⁴⁹ To Vox, Spain's integrity lies in its unity and a precise notion of what it means to be Spanish; they wish to maintain a static and unchanging identity of Spanishness by excluding immigrants. To justify this closeminded notion, they call upon the language of "indivisibilidad" in the Spanish Constitution and have constructed

⁴⁶ "Espinosa De Los Monteros (Vox) a Los Inmigrantes: 'El Poco Dinero Que Tenemos Es Para Los Españoles,'" *elperiodico* (El Periódico, June 2, 2020), <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20200602/espinosa-monteros-vox-inmigrantes-dinero-para-espanoles-ingles-frances-7984612>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ David Vampa, "Competing Forms of Populism and Territorial Politics: the Cases of Vox and Podemos in Spain," Taylor & Francis, 2020.

and encouraged a nativist and discriminatory narrative in the minds of their electorate. Vox actively encourages Spaniards to see themselves as superior to migrants because of their heritage as Spaniards and “put themselves first”. Vox’s presentation of the ‘us vs. them’ ideology works to demonize migrants and to encourage discriminatory behavior by nationalists in Spain.

Chapter 5: Concluding Remarks

Many speak of the 2015 migration crisis as the factor that is to be attributed for a rise in popularity for far right-wing political parties and a wave of xenophobia in Europe, but I would nuance this argument. In France and Spain, the sentiment against foreigners was already present, subtly ingrained in the language of their democracies. The massive movement of people became the catalyst that allowed these politicians to become more overt about their disdain for migrants from outside of Europe, using their platforms to publicly create a sense of fear of migrants and to encourage adoption of intensely nationalistic sentiments.

It is important to view the issue of rising nationalism and xenophobia not just as a result of immigration. Given the elections results, it is easy to assert the connection that after the migration crisis, there began a rise in far right-wing popularity in France and in Spain, or even in Europe as a whole. But it would be erroneous to consider the influx of immigration as the only catalyst for this obvious shift in public support of these far right-wing parties with xenophobic rhetoric. The narratives of the National Front and Vox do present immigrants and refugees as problems causing the rise in popularity of these parties. Even if these immigrants cannot be blamed for the erosion of Frenchness or Spanishness, their presence is a convenient excuse for a platform onto which these parties can easily continue to build their already present xenophobic agendas. The wave of increased support for the far right calls for a more nuanced analysis for what allows the spiteful rhetoric disseminated by the National Front and Vox. It can be argued that in both cases, France's and Spain's, the issue lies in the potentially faulty foundation of their democracies and in how the democratic principles have become conceptualized into harmful notions of sociopolitical identity.

The way that France and Spain's democracies formed were drastically different, one emerging from a revolution and developing through many regime changes, and the other developed out of the end of a rather recent dictatorship. Despite their geographic proximity, the two countries have had drastically different political histories after World War II, but they are now mirroring each other in a way. Both countries are experiencing political shifts towards the far right, framing their ideological and political platforms around those they paint as threats to national identity, that is to say the refugees and immigrants from outside of Europe. The nature of the language of both French and Spanish democracies allow these parties to construct a narrative on non-European refugees and migrants as presences that will harm the fundamental components of their democracies. For France, it's the presence of religious diversity and the conservation of uneven secularism as well as cultural sentiments derived from their nuanced history that becomes their justification. For Spain, the concept of indivisibility becomes their basis for strict preservation of a specific national image. Though, both nations emerged from drastically different histories and circumstances, they have begun to exhibit similar trajectories in their sway towards the far right. This presents an image that can possibly be reflective not just of France and Spain but of a shift in Europe as a whole, much like Balibar warns against.

Alongside migration crisis, Europe has begun to go through a social reformation and change – and political change should follow. The European Union bases its ideals and foundations on 'cooperation' and 'common standards and projects', such as the Schengen area, therefore there must be actual embodiment of these ideals in their migration policy as well as a larger effort to make sure Europe as a whole is cohesively acting. It is a challenge the European Union must embrace as a whole because a fragmented approach has the potential to divide Europe as a whole- and elements of that are already present. It is, admittedly, more easily put

than done - but it is a must to prevent Europe from devolving into a continent divided by differing nationalisms. Far right-wing popularity is increasing and with it, Euroscepticism and xenophobia - threatening the stability of the community of Europe as well as the safety of refugees and migrants seeking safety and opportunity.

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