

**PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON REFUGEES IN FRANCE AND CANADA:  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

by

**Mason Krista Palissery**

Bachelor of Philosophy

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This thesis was presented

by

Mason Krista Palissery

It was defended on

November 17, 2017

and approved by

Luis Jiménez, PhD, Political Science

Bernard Hagerty, PhD, History

Heath Cabot, PhD, Anthropology

Thesis Advisor: Michael MacKenzie, PhD, Political Science

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# **Public Discourse On Refugees in France and Canada:**

## **A Comparative Analysis**

Mason Krista Palissery, B.Phil., Political Science

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This research is meant to provide insight into the public discourse surrounding Muslim refugees in the countries where they have been resettled. In general media, the plight of refugees is often discussed; however, very few studies have been conducted which examine the relationship between refugees and public discourse, which leads to the necessity of this study. This study follows the plight of refugees in France and Canada because of the vastly different public discourse surrounding refugees in both countries.

For the purposes of this research, two sources of public discourse from each country were selected for analysis. One source from each country is representative of the political-left, and the other, the political-right. The analysis is supplemented by an interview with a Canadian Imam who provides additional insight into the life of the average refugee in Canada. The findings from this study show that social, interpersonal, and communication issues are more highly publicized in French than Canadian public discourse. The public discourse representative of the French political-right draws attention to issues surrounding refugees in France, likely with the intent to tarnish the reputation of the refugees themselves. However, the public discourse representative of the French political-left showed deep sympathy for the refugees in France.

Canadian public discourse primarily focused on the political effects of refugees landing in Canada, but social, interpersonal, and communication issues were largely unreported by both sides of the public-discourse. The political-left and political-right in Canada shared sympathy for Syrian refugees where French public discourse provided sympathy on the left and criticism on the right. This is problematic because important issues concerning the well-being of refugees are largely ignored by the Canadian sources of public discourse. The lack of depth within Canada's public discourse surrounding refugees shows that there is a general lack of understanding of the plight of refugees even after they settle in Canada.

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## **PREFACE**

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In addition, I greatly appreciate time and effort put into development and revision of this thesis by my other committee members, Dr. Heath Cabot and Dr. Bernard Hagerty, as well as Dr. Luis Jiménez, who graciously agreed to travel from Boston, Massachusetts, to attend my thesis defense.

I am also grateful to Dr. Andrew Lotz for his willingness to become involved with this research project, and I would like to thank the Canadian Imam who went out of his way to help with this study by answering all of my questions.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support and sense of humor. Without them, this study would not have been possible.



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The refugee crisis of the early 2010s overwhelmed Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Africa as one of the largest forced migrations in recorded history. News media outlets around the world have covered the refugee crisis extensively for the past six years using a multitude of languages to describe the events surrounding it. People on all sides of the crisis are portrayed in different ways depending on the news media, and each country involved has its own political stances on the crisis itself. Questions remain as to how refugees are portrayed in news media from place to place, and whether their lives are significantly impacted by these portrayals.

The aim of this thesis is to answer at least three questions, written on page 3, through a series of contextual analyses. The focus of this thesis will be on news media from France and Canada due to their cultural differences: France has a history of colonial ties to the Syrian Arab Republic, yet it exists as one of the most outwardly xenophobic states in the modern Western world. In contrast, Canada has repeatedly issued public statements to refugee populations in the Middle East and elsewhere that it is a safe and welcoming destination for those fleeing war zones. France and Canada have historically been intertwined due to colonialism and linguistic commonalities, but their involvement in and portrayal of the refugee crisis has been extraordinarily different.

The news media most representative of the public discourse surrounding refugees in both countries comes primarily from newspapers both online and in print. Newspapers are the most easily accessible sources of public discourse for an international audience, and by default, refugees may be more likely to hear and read these sentiments over any others. Unlike fora on the internet where personal opinions are both chaotic and uncensored, newspapers provide information and insights in an organized, logical manner. For a multitude of reasons, public discourse in the form of online fora generally exclude refugees and asylum seekers who are new to their host countries. This research study demands reliable and generalized sources of information representative of both the political left and right, which fora do not offer. To

supplement the information gleaned from analysis of the sources of public discourse, I have chosen to interview the Imam of a regional mosque in Ontario, Canada. However, the interview process is not the primary goal of this thesis, nor is it the primary focus; it merely provides extra insight into the contextual analysis created by this thesis.

In addition, this thesis is based only on Muslim refugee populations in France and Canada. Due to the mass exodus of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic and the rhetoric surrounding Syria specifically, I have chosen to focus this research study on refugees from the Levant as opposed to those from numerous African countries where the refugee crisis has been amplified. The public discourse chosen for this study includes articles from the most popular and well-read newspapers in both France and Canada. In addition, the Muslim Imam interviewed is both reliable and representative of his congregants. Imams are often rooted to their countries (in this case, France and Canada) by birth or migration, and can communicate with refugee populations while simultaneously understanding the outstanding public discourse surrounding them. Thus, the Imam's responses to the interview questions provide valuable supplementary material to the analysis of public discourse within this thesis.

## **1.2 THESIS DESIGN**

This thesis is written with the intent of giving as much detail as possible to the situations causing the refugee crisis in the Middle East because in order to analyze the public discourse surrounding refugees in both France and Canada, it is important to understand the reasons for the refugee crisis. Section 2.0 outlines the major sources of the contemporary refugee outflow and the causes behind this outflow, as well as the historical ties between France, Canada, and the Middle East. Section 3.0 summarizes the findings from analysis of public discourse surrounding refugees in France. Sources for the public discourse surrounding refugees in France will be discussed along with reasons behind the choice of these specific sources.

Section 4.0 discusses findings from analysis of public discourse surrounding refugees in Canada. Just as in section 3.0, this section will discuss the reasons that these sources were chosen for analysis. Within section 4.0 is a comparison of the findings of public discourse and the

findings from the interview with the Canadian Imam. The questions asked of the Imam—as well as how he responded, and whether new issues were brought to light during the interview—are listed in section 5.0. Section 6.0 concludes the study with a discussion of the significance of the public discourse in relation to the research questions. This section serves as a final comparison between the findings of the sources of public discourse in both countries. The concluding section also aims to analyze the possible impacts of this study on the Muslim refugee populations in a broader context. The conclusion is meant to draw connections between the research questions stated in section one and the final findings of the research study. Within section 6.0, a subsection will discuss the implications of this study. Immediately following section 6.0 are two sections dedicated to the sources used for this thesis, as well as any accompanying notes on these sources.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1. How are refugees portrayed by the news media in France and Canada on both sides of the political spectrum?**
- 2. Do these portrayals have a significant impact on the well-being of these refugees?**
- 3. Are there any possible issues surrounding Muslim refugees that are not prevalently discussed in the public discourse?**

Throughout this study, I expected to find that sources of French public discourse on both the political-left and the political-right would be critical of the refugees within France. I also expected that the French public discourse overall would be more critical than the sources of Canadian public discourse. Due to the overwhelming invitations to refugees in Canada, I expected to find that the Canadian public discourse would reflect more sympathetic feelings for refugees than the public discourse in France. In addition, I expected to find that the public discourse from the political-right in both Canada and France would be more critical of refugees in both countries than the public discourse from the political-left.

## **1.4 FINDINGS**

From the analysis of public discourse, I found that the French political-right was the most critical of refugees both within the country and within the comparative analysis laid forth by this thesis. Canadian sources of public discourse on both the political-right and left were supportive of refugees in Canada and elsewhere. From the analysis of Canadian public discourse alone, it seems that there were few to no complaints from refugees about their own portrayal in public discourse. However, the public discourse surrounding them lacked depth in addressing important issues faced by refugees in their adaptation to Canadian society. In French sources of public discourse, the political right was more critical than the political left, but the effects of the critical stance on refugees are unknown as I was unable to conduct a supplemental interview with any Imam in France. In addition, the French sources of public discourse, more so on the political-right than political-left, blatantly pointed out the issues which Canadian public discourse was hesitant to address.

From the findings of this study, it seemed that refugees might possibly be adversely affected by many issues that were not found to be discussed in the sources of public discourse. From a supplementary interview with an Imam in Canada, I found that many issues reported by the Imam were rarely reported in public discourse both in Canada and France. This finding is further discussed in Section 5.0.

## 2.0 THE REFUGEE CRISIS

### 2.1 OVERVIEW

Countries in Western Europe and North America have been subject to numerous “migration crises”<sup>1</sup> spanning several centuries, with refugees originating in Eastern European countries, as well as the continents of Africa, Asia, and South America. Western Europe has historically been an attractive destination because of its wealth, economic opportunity, and reputation for safety. North America has been an attractive destination for similar reasons, and the close ties between Western Europe and North America demonstrate the interdependence of these two continents today. However, recent waves of migration as a result of the refugee crisis have become points of contention for many countries in Western Europe and North America.

The “refugee crisis” of today began with the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011. The Arab Spring was a series of uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, which spread to Libya, Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, and several other Middle Eastern countries.<sup>2</sup> At the onset of the Arab Spring, the stress surrounding leaders of the Gulf region in 2011 caused several to step down (as in Tunisia); However, those who did not lashed out at their people with violent force, causing uprisings to fail. Though other peoples in other states were later motivated to use violence, Syrians attempted to use peaceful protest for as long as possible. They protested the government under control of Bashar al-Assad after witnessing peaceful revolutions in neighboring states. However, Assad responded violently to threats to his power. The Syrian protests which began with the same peaceful intentions as those in Tunisia and Egypt soon turned violent, with selective incidents of violence stemming from Assad’s command. The violence escalated quickly, as Syrian security

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<sup>1</sup> Migration crises often begin in areas within the Global South, and are largely unnoticed until refugees begin to enter areas of the Global North, such as Europe and North America. Upon entry to the Global North, refugees create a “crisis,” especially as they are humanized by events surrounding them. See Jan Blommaert’s “One crisis, three photos: how Europe started caring for refugees,” for further analysis: <https://alternative-democracy-research.org/2015/09/04/one-crisis-three-photos-how-europe-started-caring-for-refugees/>

<sup>2</sup> Lynch, Marc. *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2017. 47-49.

forces started to “[crack] down hard on any manifestation of protest” after surveillance of Syrian citizens was increased.<sup>3</sup>

The first violent attacks on Syrians went relatively unnoticed by the international community because the death count was in the tens as opposed to the thousands. Assad carefully avoided scrutiny by holding parliamentary elections in 2012, revising the Syrian constitution, and dressing his security forces in plainclothes so that their recognition was unlikely.<sup>4</sup> His actions were similar to actions taken by other Middle Eastern leaders during the Arab Spring, thus they did not seem to provoke much response from the international community. Social media, consumed by the Arab Spring events in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya regarded the Syrian uprising with some excitement, but mostly a vengeful attitude toward Assad.<sup>5</sup>

The escalation of violence toward the Syrian people caught the world’s attention in early July 2012, after a large protest in Hama, where 400,000 Syrians gathered alongside US Ambassador Robert Ford. In an attempt at retaliation, Assad lashed out at the end of July with a massive military assault on his people. Hundreds of civilians were murdered, and at this point, the UN Security Council had finally paid enough attention to condemn the atrocities in Hama. However, military intervention was ruled out because of the Russian veto; the United States was also unable to intervene on behalf of either side, which allowed the uprising to amplify considerably.

The growing strength of rebellion groups in Syria caused the first visible increase in violence, and it paved the path for the rise of the Islamic State. By September 2012, the civil war was in its earliest stages, but the movement against the Assad regime drew in militant extremists from neighboring Iraq, which left numerous areas vulnerable to the pressures of the developing Islamic State.<sup>6</sup> The conflict had already begun to wreak havoc on the local populations in Aleppo and suburbs of Damascus, Syria. By late 2012, the Syrian regions Homs and Deraa had seen a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Fisher, Max. "Straightforward Answers to Basic Questions About Syria's War." The New York Times. September 18, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/19/world/middleeast/syria-civil-war-bashar-al-assad-refugees-islamic-state.html>.

mass exodus of residents due to the escalated violence initiated by the government. At the beginning of 2013, more than 85,000 Syrians had already fled the country due to the conflict between rebel groups and the Assad regime, which enlisted Hezbollah, Iraqi Shia, and Lebanese Shia Islamist fighters to move in on its behalf.<sup>7</sup>

By April 2014, more than two million Syrians had fled their homes and resettled in neighboring countries. Geographically, the closest countries to Syria were Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan; thus, they took in the most refugees. The number of refugees to the countries surrounding Syria are only estimates based on refugee registration; the actual number of refugees in these countries is much higher than reported. As the conflict escalated, with no end in sight, Syrian refugees attempted to find more permanent residences in areas of the world less torn by war. If they could afford it, the flight of Syrian refugees took them to areas in Europe and North America. Between April and October 2016, Syrian refugees had filed 884,461 applications for asylum in Europe.<sup>8</sup> The Syrian refugee crisis has since become one of the largest forced migrations in history.

The Syrian case is only one of several ongoing crises of forced migration presently taking place around the world. North Africa has seen an increase in internally displaced persons and refugees since the Arab Spring took hold of the region. Libya, in particular, has been affected by the adverse effects of the Arab Spring, and as of the end of 2015, more than 9,300 refugees were registered by the UNHCR.<sup>9</sup> The Libyan case brought attention to the ongoing refugee crisis because of the vast numbers of persecuted or otherwise endangered persons crossing the Mediterranean Sea in an attempt to land in Italy.

In Libya, the Arab Spring began on 15 February 2011, after peaceful protests outside of the Benghazi police headquarters turned into violent confrontations with the Libyan military. The situation escalated on 17 February 2011 when the National Conference for the Libyan

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<sup>7</sup> BBC News. "Syria's Refugee Exodus." BBC News. May 29, 2014. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24900116>.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Syria Regional Refugee Response." UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Libya." Libya | Global Focus. [http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/12003#\\_ga=1.202847697.1974203609.1480390477](http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/12003#_ga=1.202847697.1974203609.1480390477).

Opposition declared a national “Day of Rage,” and the following day, security forces withdrew from Benghazi. Protests spread across the country quickly, promoting the idea that the Qaddafi government could be overthrown in Tripoli by the National Transitional Council, a government formed in Benghazi in March 2011.<sup>10</sup> However, a coup against Qaddafi later proved to be difficult. Faced with mounting pressure from the government, along with threats of brutal mass killings to all those who opposed Qaddafi, protesters were forced to endure months of violence, seemingly with no end. The Qatari government voiced concern for the Libyan people during the large-scale protests, often using its many media outlets to promote the idea of intervention by the Arab League.<sup>11</sup>

After only a month, the chaos surrounding Qaddafi had culminated in charges in the International Criminal Court for Crimes Against Humanity, but he was not unseated so quickly. In August 2011, after six months of war, the Qaddafi regime was finally removed from power while one Libyan militia planted the Qatari flag in Tripoli. Though the protests had died down after Qaddafi’s removal, an important problem remained for the state of Libya. Militias hailing from different countries, Libyan regions, and rebel factions were still heavily armed, jockeying for control of postwar Libya. During the crusade against Qaddafi, Qatar- and UAE-backed militias worked together to attain a livable Libya, with added help from NATO. After the fall of the regime, however, these militias remained separate, waging private war between themselves over power granted to them by foreign aid into the liberated Libya. The danger of armed factions showed its face when the new leaders of Libya refused peacekeeping forces in their war-torn country. Each faction was out for domination. As Mark Lynch puts it in his book “The New Arab Wars,” “the failure of the new transitional government to disarm or integrate the militias is now widely seen as the critical failure dooming the transition” as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

The situation in Libya has only improved in the sense that Qaddafi is no longer in power. Otherwise, even six years after the start of the war, it remains divided with heavy fighting still

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<sup>10</sup> Cornell University Library. "LibGuides: Arab Spring: A Research & Study Guide \* الربيع العربي: Libya." Libya - Arab Spring: A Research & Study Guide \* الربيع العربي - LibGuides at Cornell University. June 27, 2017. <http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31688&p=200751>.

<sup>11</sup> Lynch, 79-90.

<sup>12</sup> Lynch, 89.



ongoing throughout the country. Libya has become one of the largest exporters of refugees in the world as it is a gateway for the rest of North Africa to send its refugees into the hands of people smugglers, and then the uncertain waves of the Mediterranean Sea. From 2014 to 2015, according to the UNHCR, the number of “people of concern” rose eighteen percent, with 9,305 refugees registered through the UNHCR in 2015 alone.<sup>13</sup> This number represents much more than refugees fleeing the borders of Libya. The massive outflow of refugees crossing the Mediterranean Sea mainly heads to islands south of Italy such as Lampedusa and Malta, while a rare few make the journey all the way to the Italian peninsula.

Those refugees who land in Italy are restrained from seeking asylum in other countries in the Western European bloc. Italian borders with France, Switzerland, and Austria have been fortified to such an extent that during the past several years, hundreds of refugees who have tried to cross the border have been forcibly returned to Italy.<sup>14</sup> The French border with Italy has been closed at times as reports of refugees scaling the Alps to enter France have surfaced.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the restrictions on travel from France to Italy, restrictions on the Schengen Agreement have been replaced after more than twenty years since its institution. For example, border control in France was imposed in July 2017 due to “foreseeable cases” where threats to the security of the state were believed to exceed thirty days.<sup>16</sup>

The border control situation in France has affected refugees, immigrants, and EU-citizens holding Schengen visas. The xenophobic rhetoric in Western European news media has been largely affected by the movement restrictions set in place by the French government, but refugees continue to find ways to bypass border control and settle in their ultimate destinations.

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Libya." Libya | Global Focus. [http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/12003#\\_ga=1.202847697.1974203609.1480390477](http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/12003#_ga=1.202847697.1974203609.1480390477).

<sup>14</sup> Donadio, Rachel. "Fleeing North Africa and Landing in an Italian Limbo." The New York Times. March 30, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/31/world/europe/31italy.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Osborne, Simon. "Migrants in Italy Scaling the ALPS to Evade Border Police and Enter France." Express.co.uk. August 16, 2016. <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/700592/Migrant-crisis-Alps-Italy-France-border-police-Calais-jungle>.

<sup>16</sup> European Commission. "Temporary Reintroduction of Border Control." Migration and Home Affairs - European Commission. December 06, 2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/borders-and-visas/schengen/reintroduction-border-control_en).

Though the news media in Western Europe is not the original source of xenophobia, it has largely amplified the voices of the far right.

## 2.2 FRANCE

Though the governments of France and Syria have been on bad terms since the onset of the refugee crisis, refugees created by Assad's crackdown on public dissonance fled to France. After many years of French rule, Syrian people had come to understand French culture. This understanding was carried through generations, causing an air of familiarity between the Syrians and France. As the refugee outflow stemmed from the Middle East through Turkey and into the rest of Europe, France became a destination for both asylum-seekers and those who wished to get to Germany for its economic prospects, services, and ideas of tolerance. Within France, areas of heavy refugee settlement included Paris, Lyons, Nice, and multiple refugee camps across the country, including the recently closed "Jungle" in Calais. This subsection explores the complex history of French involvement in the Middle East, dating back to the early twentieth century.

In 1916, the Mandate system was put in place to divide a large swath of Middle Eastern territory which now consists mainly of Iraq and Syria. The French mandate was a result of the secret Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 which laid out a plan for two mandates which arbitrarily divided territories of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East between Great Britain and France; Great Britain received Transjordan and Iraq, and France received Greater Syria. The mandates were officially recognized under the Mandate Act by the League of Nations during the San Remo Conference of April 1920, several years after the original Sykes-Picot agreement took place.<sup>17</sup> The official recognition of the mandates cemented the ties between France and Syria for the rest of the twentieth century.

The French Mandate in Syria began with the arbitrary division of Syrian territory into five separately governed states including Lebanon, the State of Syria, Latakia, the Sanjak of

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<sup>17</sup> Hacken, Richard, comp. *San Remo Convention. San Remo Convention - World War I Document Archive*. Brigham Young University, 14 Apr. 2007. [https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/San\\_Remo\\_Convention](https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/San_Remo_Convention).

Alexandretta, and Jabal Druse.<sup>18</sup> The division of the Syrian territory was a cause for resentment toward the French until 1928, when uprisings in each of the five French-mandated Syrian states caused the foundation of the mandate to become unstable.<sup>19</sup> Then, in 1933, after a series of elections and changes to the Syrian constitution, France and Syria created a treaty for future relations.<sup>20</sup>

The treaty between France and Syria allowed France to remain involved in the administration of the Syrian state. It stipulated “that foreign advisers, magistrates and officials [would] help the Syrian Government,” and that these advisers, magistrates, and officials would specifically be French.<sup>21</sup> For more than a decade after its approval, the treaty allowed France to remain in partial control of Syria. Until 1946, French government officials remained in Syria despite the fact that they were perceived as an illegitimate authority.<sup>22</sup> The French returned to and were ejected from Syria several times until the League of Arab States Council expressed the need for Syrian independence and demanded the withdrawal of French troops from Syria.<sup>23</sup> “The French government agreed to transfer command of the Syrian military to the Republic of Syria on August 1, 1945,” and the “last remaining French troops withdrew on April 17, 1946,” leaving the newly formed Republic of Syria to govern itself.<sup>24</sup>

After the complete withdrawal of France from Syria, the formation of the Ba’ath Party and the Muslim Brotherhood began to influence the political landscape of the Middle East. France became preoccupied with Israeli relations and subsequently lost interest in Syria until the

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<sup>18</sup> Antonius, George. "Syria and the French Mandate." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1931-1939)* 13, no. 4 (1934): 529. doi:10.2307/2603401.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Khoury, Philip S. "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition: The Quarters of Damascus during the French Mandate." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 4 (1984): 508. <http://www.jstor.org/pitt.idm.oclc.org/stable/163156>.

<sup>21</sup> Antonius, 533.

<sup>22</sup> Khoury, Philip S. "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition: The Quarters of Damascus during the French Mandate." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 4 (1984): 508. <http://www.jstor.org/pitt.idm.oclc.org/stable/163156>.

<sup>23</sup> "11. French Syria (1919-1946)," Accessed April 13, 2017, <http://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/middle-eastnorth-africapersian-gulf-region/french-syria-1919-1946/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

joint Franco-Anglo-Israeli Suez invasion of 1956, in which the former mandate and its colonizer were poised to fight against each other.<sup>25</sup>

After the standoff with its former mandate in 1956, France kept its distance from Syria until the 1990s. At the turn of the century, Hafiz al Assad's death allowed his son, Bashar al Assad, to become the president of Syria.<sup>26</sup> At first, Bashar drew praise from France's then-president, Nicolas Sarkozy, and relations between the two countries were amicable.<sup>27</sup> It seemed that France and Syria had reached a point of mutual respect until the Arab Spring swept North Africa and the Levant in 2011. At that point, Sarkozy's change of heart about Assad was broadcast through his announcement that "Assad should resign after massacres that caused 'disgust and revulsion around the world.'"<sup>28</sup> Assad's harshness caused the French government to adopt an abrasive stance toward the regime; this caused deeper involvement in the Syrian Civil War than that which was originally intended.

Syrian refugees who landed in France in the early years of the Syrian Civil War were met with compassion, at first. Though many were hoping to make Germany their final destination,<sup>29</sup> the Dublin Regulation stood in their way, and thousands were forced to stay in France. Despite the culture shock, Syrian refugees in France had the advantage of historical ties to the country which, in theory, should have been enough to make them feel welcome. However, upon arrival, many refugees were forced to move into camps such as that in Calais while awaiting a decision on asylum applications. Multiple news outlets have cited the conditions in refugee camps,

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<sup>25</sup> Styan, David, *France and Iraq: Oil, Arms and French Policy-Making in the Middle East* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Ramani, "Why France is so entangled with Syria," November 19, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/19/why-france-is-so-deeply-entangled-in-syria/?utm\\_term=.009c312c9af2](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/19/why-france-is-so-deeply-entangled-in-syria/?utm_term=.009c312c9af2).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Le Monde avec AFP. "Sous La Pression, Merkel Accepte De Limiter Le Nombre De Réfugiés En Allemagne." *Le Monde.fr*, Le Monde, 9 Oct. 2017, [www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2017/10/09/merkel-accepte-de-limiter-le-nombre-de-refugies-en-allemande\\_5198034\\_3214.html?xtmc=refugies\\_allemande&xtcr=12](http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2017/10/09/merkel-accepte-de-limiter-le-nombre-de-refugies-en-allemande_5198034_3214.html?xtmc=refugies_allemande&xtcr=12).

especially the one in Calais, as deplorable. Until October 24, 2016, “the Jungle” refugee camp in Calais was one of the main locations for refugees to settle while waiting for asylum news.<sup>30</sup>

The French government, headed by Hollande in 2015, allowed for migrants from many countries to settle in “the Jungle,” while the Syrian crisis was still being dealt with militarily. Despite a seemingly warm welcome and a promise to add more than 30,000 refugees to French society over two years, refugees in other cities in France faced difficult challenges during the asylum application process. For example, an article from *Le Monde* detailed the experience of applying for asylum in Paris, specifically:

“Dans la capitale, les migrants ont passé des nuits entières sur le trottoir afin d’être seulement admis à y pénétrer le matin à l’ouverture, car seul les premiers arrivés sont reçus. Une fois à l’intérieur, le migrant obtient un ticket lui donnant un rendez-vous... mais sous plus d’un mois.” (“In the capital, migrants spent entire nights on the sidewalk in order to enter [the reception office for asylum seekers] as it opened, because only the first arrived are received. Once inside, the migrant receives a ticket which gives him an appointment...but in more than a month.”)<sup>31</sup>

The vast number of refugees welcomed by France between the onset of the Syrian Civil War and today are the cause of the French government’s inability to resettle all of them safely and in a timely manner. Unlike in other countries, the governmental policy toward refugees under the new president, Emmanuel Macron, is questioned for being racist. Where the US may have people and organizations willing to welcome and support refugees from all countries, the French government under Macron has announced a plan to set up “hotspots” in Libya in order to accommodate the demand for asylum from that country specifically.<sup>32</sup> National policies such as this one are indicators to the rest of the world that Macron is less willing to accommodate

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<sup>30</sup> BBC News. "Calais Migrant Camp: Last Shelter Destroyed." BBC News. October 31, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37828190>.

<sup>31</sup> Baumard, Maryline. "Devenir Réfugié En France, Mode D'emploi." *Le Monde.fr*. March 01, 2017. [http://www.lemonde.fr/les-nouveaux-arrivants/article/2017/03/01/devenir-refugie-en-france-mode-d-emploi\\_5087507\\_5084811.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/les-nouveaux-arrivants/article/2017/03/01/devenir-refugie-en-france-mode-d-emploi_5087507_5084811.html).

<sup>32</sup> Farand, Chloe. "Emmanuel Macron Says France Will Set up Refugee 'hotspots' in Libya." *The Independent*. July 30, 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/emmanuel-macron-france-hotspots-libya-migrants-a7867466.html>.

refugees than previous presidents have reported. Though the refugee crisis today may not be sending as many refugees to the country as it did in 2011, the fact that there are so few resources for refugees in all of France is disconcerting.

However, the nature of French Republicanism has long been recognized for its embrace of *laïcité*, or secularism. The first article of the French constitution proclaims that “La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale.”<sup>33</sup> With one keyword being “laïque” (secular), the nature of France is to reject religious representation within the government, and thus, within the public sphere. Though still disconcerting, the fact that the French government has strict boundaries regarding the support of Muslim—or any religious—refugees is historically grounded. In this sense, French Republicanism has been irreconcilable with Islam since the creation of the Republic of France after the French Revolution.

## 2.3 CANADA

Canada’s history with the refugee crisis is also extremely complex, but it differs significantly from that of France. The effective barrier between Canada and Western Europe is the Atlantic Ocean, which is difficult to cross in the absence of passports and necessary funds for plane or boat tickets. However, Canada’s government and people have found a way to welcome more than 40,000 refugees between November 2015 and January 2017.<sup>34</sup> Taking this figure into account, the refugee crisis in Europe is more like a refugee welcome party in Canada. However, where Western Europe struggles with refugees from North Africa and the Middle East, Canada has focused specifically on allowing Syrian refugees to resettle in the country. As of March 2016,

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<sup>33</sup> Rubio, Aurore. "Les Laïcités Dans le Monde: La France." Les Cafés-Histoire De L'Association De Thucydide. October 2015. Accessed November 20, 2017. <http://www.thucydide.com/realisations/comprendre/laicite/france.htm>.

<sup>34</sup> Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. "#WelcomeRefugees: Key Figures." Government of Canada. February 09, 2017. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>.

Canada had committed \$245 million Canadian dollars to resettlement programs within its own borders over the course of five years.<sup>35</sup>

Canada's dedication to resettlement and acceptance largely stems from the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988, which "provided a legislative framework for the official policy of multiculturalism adopted by the government in 1971."<sup>36</sup> The creator and initial supporter of multiculturalist policy, Pierre Trudeau, was the father of Canada's current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. During the 1960s, Pierre Trudeau was an avid supporter of liberal ideology, especially as it pertained to citizen-government relations. In 1968, Trudeau announced his candidacy for the position of Prime Minister of Canada, later winning support for himself and the Liberal party.<sup>37</sup>

Pierre Trudeau's dedication to Liberalism later led him to support the Canada Act of 1982, with particular interest in the development of the Canadian Constitution. Included in the Canada Act of 1982 was "the Constitution Act, 1982, which contained the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, recognition of the rights of aboriginal peoples, respect for the multicultural heritage of Canadians."<sup>38</sup> Though Trudeau's liberal ideology had long supported the idea of multiculturalism, the Canada Act was the first to verbally recognize its importance in Canadian society. Thus, Trudeau's service as Prime Minister of Canada is generally known for its attention to and attempts to develop multiculturalism.

Pierre Trudeau's multiculturalism was the seed of inspiration for the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, mentioned above. His legacy is imbued in the policies of Canada's current Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau. The Multiculturalism Act of 1988 was essentially an attempt by the Canadian government to strengthen the cultural heritage of Canadian citizens through the

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<sup>35</sup> Ling, Justin. "Canada Announces a \$30 Billion Deficit and 10,000 More Syrian Refugees." VICE News. March 22, 2016. <https://news.vice.com/article/hed-canada-announces-two-percent-growth-110-billion-in-debt-and-10000-more-syrian-refugees>.

<sup>36</sup> Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21. "Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988." Canadian Multiculturalism Act, 1988 | Pier 21. Accessed November 27, 2017. <https://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/canadian-multiculturalism-act-1988>.

<sup>37</sup> English, John, "TRUDEAU, PIERRE ELLIOTT," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 22. University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. accessed November 27, 2017. [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/trudeau\\_pierre\\_elliott\\_22E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/trudeau_pierre_elliott_22E.html).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

creation of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.<sup>39</sup> The Multiculturalism Act expounded upon the language used in the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1977 to include

“[T]he Government of Canada recognizes the diversity of Canadians as regards race, national or ethnic origin, colour and religion as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian society and is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada.”<sup>40</sup>

As the first country in the world to adopt a written policy of multiculturalism, Canada’s history now reflects the importance of a multicultural society, especially with regard to the refugee crisis.

Though the refugee crisis as a whole has been well documented for the past several years, Canada’s own involvement in the crisis truly began with the election of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The son of Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is an adamant supporter of his father’s implementation of multiculturalism. In 2015, Trudeau won the election for Canadian Prime Minister, putting an end to the “Stephen Harper decade” and Conservative Party rule.<sup>41</sup> Stephen Harper was well-known during the period of 2006 to 2015 for promoting his party’s political agenda, within which lay the basis of policy regarding immigration and refugee acceptance. Harper’s government adopted a policy of pre-judging refugees based on the country from which they fled using a document known as the “safe country” list.<sup>42</sup> This policy was enacted in an effort to deter fraud associated with asylum-seekers, but it was later struck down by

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<sup>39</sup> Canada. Minister of Justice. *Canadian Multiculturalism Act*. Ottawa: Minister of Justice, 2017. <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/C-18.7.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Austen, Ian. "Justin Trudeau and Liberal Party Prevail With Stunning Rout in Canada." *The New York Times*. October 19, 2015. [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/20/world/americas/canada-election-stephen-harper-justin-trudeau.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/20/world/americas/canada-election-stephen-harper-justin-trudeau.html?_r=0).

<sup>42</sup> Lenard, Patti Tamara. "Stephen Harper's Abhorrent Record on Refugees and Immigration." *Broadbent Institute*, September 15, 2015. [http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/pattitamara-lenard/harper\\_dimal\\_record\\_refugees\\_immigration](http://www.broadbentinstitute.ca/pattitamara-lenard/harper_dimal_record_refugees_immigration).



the Federal Court because of its unconstitutionality.<sup>43</sup> Despite its history with multiculturalism, Canada's longstanding reputation as an open and welcoming country was damaged during the short time that Harper's "safe country" policy was in place.

In addition to the "safe country" policy, an overall decrease in refugee acceptance was recorded near the end of the Harper administration.<sup>44</sup> Harper's promise was to bring in 20,000 refugees through the year 2020, which exacerbated the issues with his immigration policies. Frustration reached an all time high when Harper's policy was compared to Germany's 800,000 refugee admittance in the year 2015. Thus, Prime Minister Trudeau's responsibility at the end of Harper's term was to reverse harmful policies in order to reestablish Canada as the liberal, welcoming country it had been in the past.

Immediately under the Trudeau administration, new policies regarding refugee acceptance and settlement were adopted. As recently as January 2017, Trudeau sought to combat discrimination against refugees fleeing to North America through widespread press releases and the internet. Turning to Twitter on 28 January 2017, Trudeau's message was "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith."<sup>45</sup> This message came after two years of prioritizing admittance of refugees into the country, and exemplified the warm reception of refugees in Canada.

The number of refugees reaching Canada continues to grow with no sign of stopping. The hospitality shown to Muslim refugees affected by the crisis (and, no doubt, the Syrian Civil War) is a signal to others that the journey across oceans is worthwhile. A series of articles from the New York Times chronicled one full year of resettled refugees' lives in Canada, noting that they

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<sup>43</sup> Staff of Torstar News Service. "Canada's 'safe Country' List Ruled Unconstitutional, Discrimination | Metro News." Metronews.ca. July 23, 2015. <http://www.metronews.ca/news/canada/2015/07/23/canadas-safe-country-list-ruled-unconstitutional-discrimination.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Ling, Justin. "Canada's Prime Minister Refuses To Take Additional Refugees After Backlash Over Drowned Syrian Boy." VICE News. September 03, 2015. <https://news.vice.com/article/canadas-prime-minister-refuses-to-take-additional-refugees-after-backlash-over-drowned-syrian-boy>.

<sup>45</sup> Austen, Ian. "In Canada, Justin Trudeau Says Refugees Are Welcome." The New York Times. January 28, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/world/canada/justin-trudeau-trump-refugee-ban.html>.

had essentially been adopted by Canadian families willing to help resettle them.<sup>46</sup> American media, such as the New York Times, has been privileged to interview refugees directly in order to gauge their sense of comfort in Canada specifically. During the year that the Times chronicled the lives of Muslim refugees, widespread attention focused on Canada for the gracious humanitarian efforts of regular citizens. Though not available everywhere in the world, news about the treatment of refugees in Canada is widespread enough to attract more asylum applications specifically to Canada.

Below, page 19 provides two maps which depict the locations (Figure 1)<sup>47</sup> and concentrations of refugees per 10,000 people in Canada (Figure 2)<sup>48</sup>, respectively.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, no maps depicting the locations and concentrations of refugees in France were made available by the French government. Statistics on refugee populations were also closely guarded by the French government, but the actual number of persons granted protected status in France was 35,170 at the end of 2016.<sup>50</sup> This number is only a fraction of the actual asylum applications received by the French government: by the end of 2016, approximately 97,300 asylum applications had been received.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Kantor, Jodi, and Catrin Einhorn. "Refugees Welcome." The New York Times. December 23, 2016. [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/world/americas/canada-syrian-refugees.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/world/americas/canada-syrian-refugees.html?_r=0).

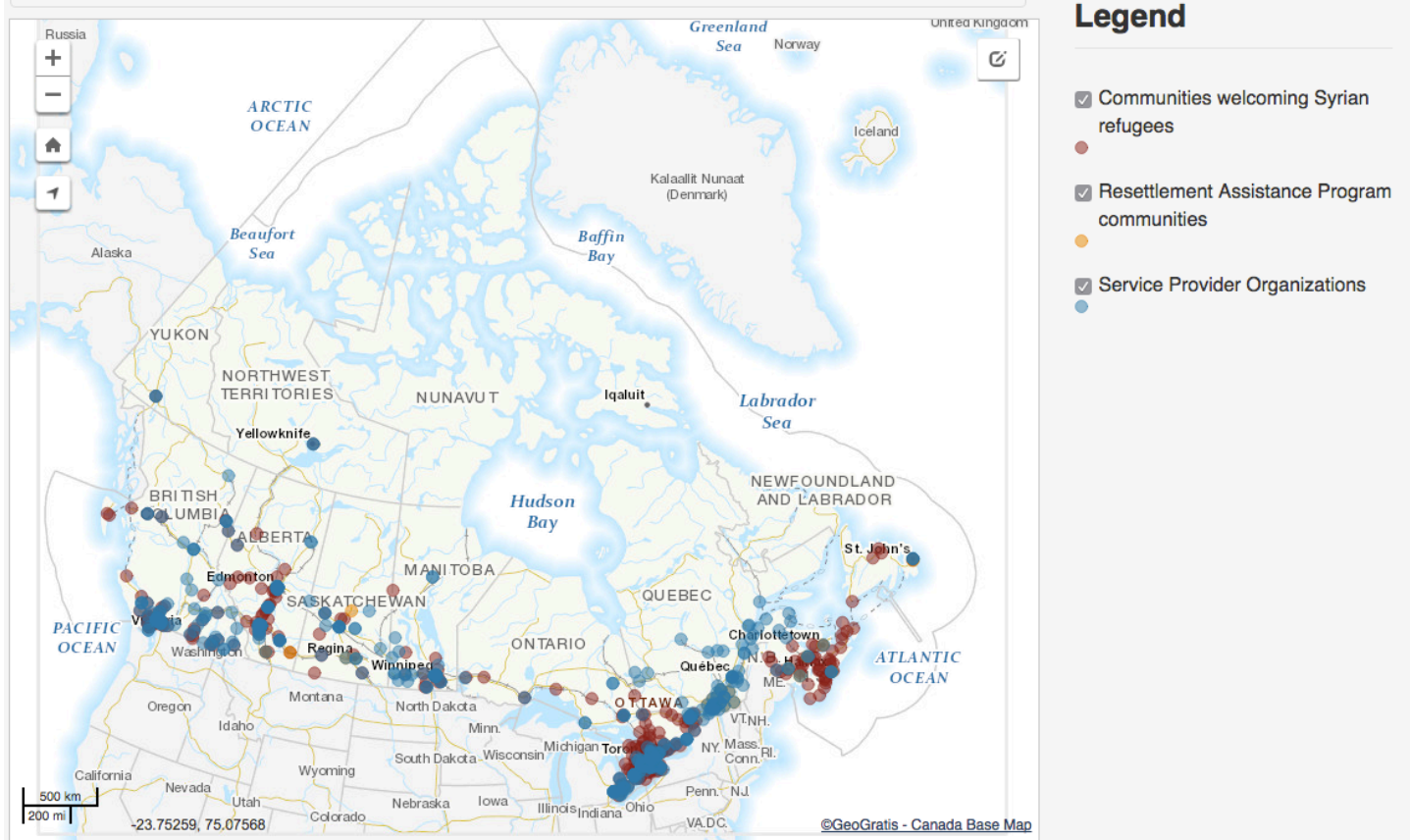
<sup>47</sup> Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. "Map of Destination Communities and Service Provider Organizations." Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. May 01, 2017. [http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp?\\_ga=2.191468908.755222165.1511125310-2100471978.1511125310](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp?_ga=2.191468908.755222165.1511125310-2100471978.1511125310).

<sup>48</sup> Taylor-Vaisey, Nick, and Amanda Shendruk. "True North Refugees: Where Syrians Have Settled in Canada." *Macleans.ca*. Rogers Media, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/true-north-refugees-where-25000-syrians-have-settled-in-canada/>.

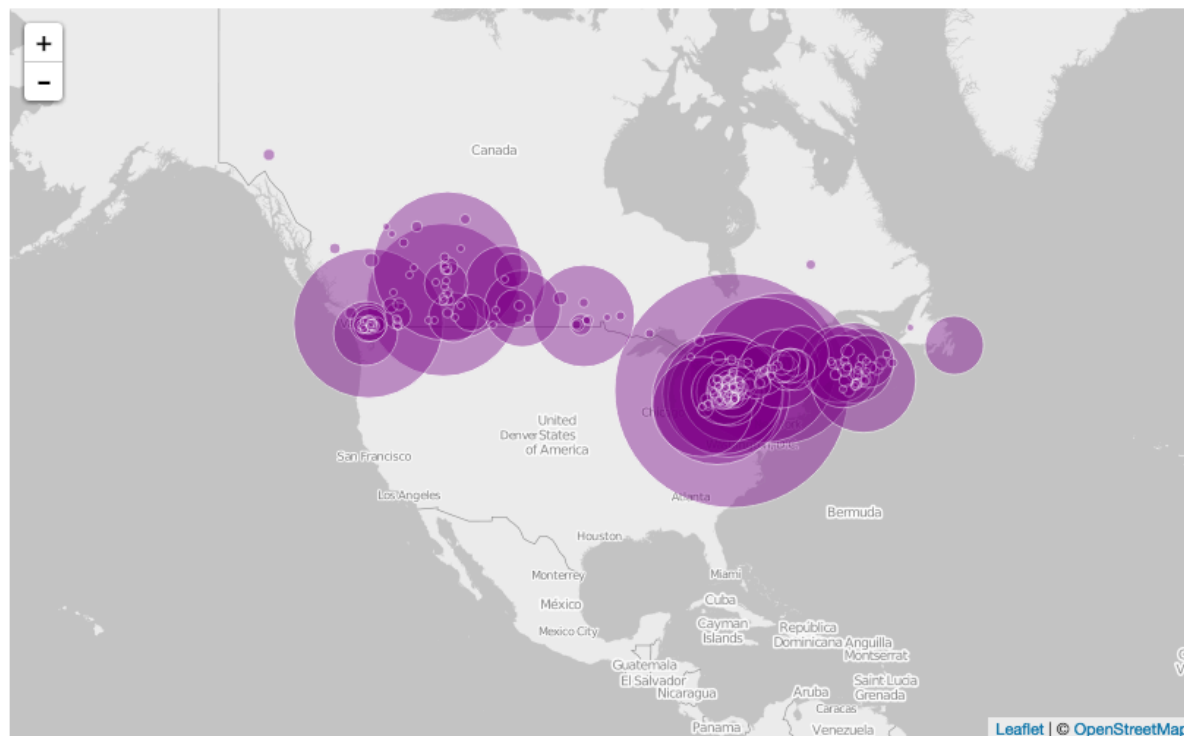
<sup>49</sup> The data provided by OpenStreetMap is available under the Open Database License, and the cartography is licensed as CC BY-SA. Please see **this page** for further explanation as to the copyright permissions of OpenStreetMap, OpenDataCommons.org, and licensees, including macleans.ca.

<sup>50</sup> Eurostat. *EU Member States Granted Protection to More than 700 000 Asylum Seekers in 2016*. Report no. 70/2017. April 26, 2017. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8001715/3-26042017-AP-EN.pdf/05e315db-1fe3-49d1-94ff-06f7e995580e>.

<sup>51</sup> France. Ministère De L'intérieur - Direction Générale Des étrangers En France. Département Des Statistiques, Des Etudes Et De La Documentation. <http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/fr/Info-ressources/Donnees-statistiques/Statistiques/Essentiel-de-l-immigration/Chiffres-clefs/Les-demandes-d-asile-statistiques>. By OFPRA. July 11, 2017.



**Figure 1.1:** Locations of resettled refugees as reported by the Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. *Source:* <http://www.cic.gc.ca>



Data: [Citizenship and Immigration Canada](#), accurate to Feb. 29, 2016. Calculations for number of refugees per 10,000 used 2015 population numbers for Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and 2011 numbers for all others. For communities with fewer than 10,00 residents, the number of refugees per 10,000 will be greater than the actual number of refugees that arrived.

**Figure 1.2:** Concentrations of refugees per 10,000 people in Canada. *Source:* [macleans.ca](#). © OpenStreetMap contributors.

### 3.0 SUMMARY OF FRENCH PUBLIC DISCOURSE

#### 3.1 METHODOLOGY

The public discourse included in this study comes from four popular news outlets in France and Canada. From the various French sources available, *Le Monde* was chosen because of its status as the most popular center-left newspaper. *Le Figaro* was chosen to represent the public discourse of the political right in France because of its status as the second most popular newspaper in the country.<sup>52</sup> Articles from the onset of the migrant crisis (March 2011) up until August 2017 were chosen from each of these sources and their content was compared. Articles were chosen based on their content, depiction of Muslim refugees, and relationship to the refugee crisis.

Each of the articles chosen from one politically aligned source in France was compared to an article representative of the opposite ideology. The findings from the analysis of public discourse in France will later be compared to the findings from sources of public discourse in Canada.

#### 3.2 ANALYSIS

An extensive search through the articles and archives of *Le Figaro* led to a collection of articles ranging from September 2015 to April 2017. Search terms used on *Le Figaro*'s website were "Syrie," "réfugié," and "France," while the specified time period ranged from March 1, 2011 to August 31, 2017. The most prevalent themes brought to the forefront with this search were those which criticized the arrival of refugees in France. For example, the first relevant article produced by the online search is dated 9 March 2015 and titled "Une majorité de Français hostile à

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<sup>52</sup> "Top 30 French Newspapers & News Media." Top 30 French Newspapers, French Press and News Media - Le Monde, Le Figaro, L'Internaute, 20minutes and More - Paris Newspapers - AllYouCanRead.com. <http://www.allyoucanread.com/french-newspapers/>.

l'accueil des migrants.”<sup>53</sup> This article’s body begins with the description of a survey for BFMTV in which 56% of respondents were opposed to welcoming migrants and refugees to French territory. It continues by citing a survey conducted for *Le Figaro* itself which provided similar figures— 64% of respondents in this survey were also hostile toward the idea of welcoming migrants and refugees. The article compares recent survey response figures to a 2014 survey in which the majority of respondents (54%) were welcoming to Christians from the Middle East.<sup>54</sup>

Another article from *Le Figaro*, published September 9, 2015 and titled “Pour les réfugiés arrivés en France, l’espoir ‘d’une vie meilleure’,” represents a completely different theme within the general public discourse. This article, though published only six days after the former, presents interviews with refugees from Iraq and Syria, with the main point being that they genuinely love France and want to remain there. This article is anomalous compared to the others due to the positive descriptions of these refugees; more often, the French center-right public discourse in *Le Figaro* was prominent in its display of negative views on refugees. The general perception of refugees created by this article is much more closely aligned with that of *Le Monde*.<sup>55</sup>

Research from *Le Monde* proved to be more contemporarily aligned with the onset of the refugee crisis, unlike articles from *Le Figaro*. Search terms used to locate articles from *Le Monde* archives were the same as those used when searching through *Le Figaro*: “refugie,” “Syrie,” and “France.” The timeframe specified was the same as that specified in the search through *Le Figaro* (1 March 2011 to 31 August 2017). Early articles suggested sympathy for the Syrian people specifically, and they were much more detailed in their suggestion that the Syrian government was failing. For example, one article from August 6, 2012 detailed the affairs which

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<sup>53</sup>Bastie, Eugénie. "Une Majorité De Français Hostile à L'accueil Des Migrants." *Le Figaro*. September 03, 2015. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/09/03/01016-20150903ARTFIG00042-une-majorite-de-francais-hostile-a-l-accueil-des-migrants.php>.

<sup>54</sup> IFOP. "LES FRANÇAIS ET LES CHRÉTIENS D'IRAK." Ifop - Les Français Et Les Chrétiens D'Irak. August 4, 2014. [http://ifop.fr/?option=com\\_publication&type=poll&id=2736](http://ifop.fr/?option=com_publication&type=poll&id=2736).

<sup>55</sup> Maligorne, Clémentine. "Pour Ces Réfugiés Arrivés En France, L'espoir «d'une Vie Meilleure»." *Le Figaro*. September 09, 2015. <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/09/09/01016-20150909ARTFIG00354-pour-ces-refugies-arrives-en-france-l-espoir-d-une-vie-meilleure.php>.

led to the ultimate condemnation of Bashar al Assad's regime by the French government, specifically pointing out the plight of the Syrian people.<sup>56</sup>

In keeping with the theme of sympathy for the Syrian people, *Le Monde* also published later articles which explicitly advocated on behalf of Syrian refugees in France. Dated 6 May 2013, "Les universités françaises veulent faciliter l'accueil des étudiants syriens," describes how the conference of presidents of French universities demanded to facilitate the welcoming of Syrian refugee students to French universities for the 2013-2014 school year.<sup>57</sup> Articles such as this one, despite the temporal difference, provide direct contrast to the ideas advocated for in articles such as those cited from *Le Figaro* (e.g. "Une prime de 2500 euros pour inciter les migrants à rentrer dans leur pays").<sup>58</sup> Similar to those articles already cited from the same time period, *Le Monde* published numerous pieces which compared the French stance on immigration to that of Germany, advocated for open borders across Europe to welcome fleeing peoples, and criticized the government, the EU, the UN, and the Assad regime in Syria.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, according to the search using the same keywords and temporal restrictions on *lefigaro.fr*, *Le Figaro* did not publish any articles during the 2013-2014 period which had any of the purposes explicated above.

As early as May 2011, *Le Monde* had published statements in support of the population of Syria, who had begun to flee the country as a result of Assad's attacks. In Bensalama and Mamou's piece, "L'heroïsme des Syriens appelle notre soutien," the authors criticize the French

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<sup>56</sup> Le Monde. "Après Les Défections,." Le Monde.fr. August 06, 2012. [http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2012/08/06/le-premier-ministre-syrien-limoge-selon-la-television-d-etat\\_1742872\\_3218.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2012/08/06/le-premier-ministre-syrien-limoge-selon-la-television-d-etat_1742872_3218.html).

<sup>57</sup> Le Monde Avec AFP. "Les Universités Françaises Veulent Faciliter L'accueil Des étudiants Syriens." Le Monde.fr. June 06, 2013. [http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2013/06/06/les-universites-francaises-veulent-faciliter-l-accueil-des-etudiants-syriens\\_3425694\\_3218.html?xtmc=refugie\\_syrien&xtcr=63](http://www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2013/06/06/les-universites-francaises-veulent-faciliter-l-accueil-des-etudiants-syriens_3425694_3218.html?xtmc=refugie_syrien&xtcr=63).

<sup>58</sup> Jacob, Etienne, and Juliette Mickiewicz. "Une Prime De 2500 Euros Pour Inciter Les Migrants à Rentrer Dans Leur Pays." Le Figaro. November 24, 2016. <http://premium.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2016/11/23/01016-20161123ARTFIG00389-une-prime-de-2500-euros-pour-inciter-les-migrants-a-rentre-dans-leur-pays.php>.

<sup>59</sup> Henry, Pierre. "L'UE Doit Protéger Les Réfugiés Syriens." Le Monde.fr. August 28, 2012. [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/28/l-ue-doit-protoger-les-refugies-syriens\\_1752409\\_3232.html?xtmc=pierre\\_henry\\_l\\_ue\\_doit\\_protoger\\_les\\_refugies\\_syriens&xtcr=1](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2012/08/28/l-ue-doit-protoger-les-refugies-syriens_1752409_3232.html?xtmc=pierre_henry_l_ue_doit_protoger_les_refugies_syriens&xtcr=1).

ambassador to Syria for not taking a harder stance to defend the Syrian people.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, once again, *Le Figaro* had only just begun to cover the migrant crisis, and in their early coverage, they managed to provide a neutral timeline of events while simultaneously avoiding a direct announcement of support for Syrian people.<sup>61</sup> In fact, a search through *lefigaro.fr*'s online archives with only the words "France," "Syrie," and "réfugié" and a focus on the months of March 2011 through March 2012 reveals that only forty articles were written in the course of the year that had any reasonable significance in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. As such, for the period directly following the initial Syrian uprising in 2011, literature representative of the French center-right, taken from *Le Figaro*, is scarce and not heavily opinionated. In addition, the dominant themes were devoid of sympathy.

### 3.3 FINDINGS

Throughout the analysis of the general themes in the French sources of public discourse, the most prominently negative portrayal of refugees came from *Le Figaro*. As previously noted, the journalism from *Le Figaro* was also limited in its temporal range, having begun to cover the refugee crisis much later than other sources (such as *Le Monde*). In addition, compared to the *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*'s descriptions of refugees, events surrounding them, and the general conditions they were met with upon their arrival in France was far more critical. This comes despite the fact that articles based on the refugee crisis were harder to find due to the lack of coverage of the refugee crisis in its earliest years. Overall, the analysis of public discourse in France supported the idea that political discourse from the political-right would be more critical than public discourse from the political-left.

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<sup>60</sup> Benslama, Fethi and Jacky Mamou. "L'héroïsme Des Syriens Appelle Notre Soutien." *Le Monde.fr*. May 23, 2011. [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/05/19/l-heroisme-des-syriens-appelle-notre-soutien\\_1524016\\_3232.html?xtmc=l\\_heroisme\\_des\\_syriens\\_appelle\\_notre\\_soutien&xtcr=1](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2011/05/19/l-heroisme-des-syriens-appelle-notre-soutien_1524016_3232.html?xtmc=l_heroisme_des_syriens_appelle_notre_soutien&xtcr=1).

<sup>61</sup> Girard, Renaud. "Le Président Syrien Abroge L'état D'urgence." *Le Figaro*. March 27, 2011. <http://premium.lefigaro.fr/international/2011/03/27/01003-20110327ARTFIG00262-le-president-syrien-abroge-l-etat-d-urgence.php>.

## 4.0 SUMMARY OF CANADIAN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

### 4.1 METHODOLOGY

The Canadian source for public discourse which best represents the political-left is *The Globe and Mail*. In contrast, *The National Post* was chosen to represent conservative public discourse. As with French articles, the Canadian articles chosen for this study date from the onset of the migrant crisis to August 2017. In addition, as with the French sources of public discourse, articles were chosen based on their content, depiction of Muslim refugees, and relationship to the refugee crisis.

### 4.2 ANALYSIS

In Canadian public discourse, the most prevalent theme from *The Globe and Mail* was sympathy for the Syrian people, as well as criticism of governments at large. The search terms used on *The Globe and Mail*'s website were "Canada," "Syria," and "refugee," though unfortunately, the search results could not be easily manipulated in the sense that many of the results provided articles which had little to no connection to the research questions or the refugee crisis. In addition, the oldest available articles came from January 2014, which severely limited the timeframe meant to be used for this study. However, from the available articles, it was obvious that the overwhelming theme of journalism pertaining to the refugee crisis in *The Globe and Mail* was one of sympathy. For example, one article from 2014 titled "Trapped Syrian Civilians Face Worsening Disaster" paints the refugee crisis as a true global tragedy as opposed to a spurious or limited event.<sup>62</sup>

Very few articles from *The Globe and Mail* provided negative opinions or criticism of refugees. More often, as with the article cited above, the public discourse avoided interviewing refugees themselves, and instead favored general descriptions of the living conditions, journeys,

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<sup>62</sup> Wingrove, Josh. "Trapped Syrian Civilians Face Worsening Disaster." *The Globe and Mail*. March 25, 2017. <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/trapped-syrian-civilians-face-worsening-disaster/article17506518/>.



and difficulties faced by refugees.<sup>63</sup> Though the broad themes of these articles may be helpful to conceptualize the pain of Syrian refugees, they do nothing in the way of creating a dialogue with refugees about their own situations. For this reason, articles from *The Globe and Mail* provide contrast to articles from outlets such as *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*.

Surprisingly, the Canadian newspaper *The National Post* published many articles which engaged in discussion with the refugees themselves. *The National Post* has a reputation for both being conservative and sometimes provocative in terms of comments, editorials, and op-eds. However, using the search terms “Canada,” “Syria,” and “refugee” turned up results that were completely antithetical to the researcher’s expectations. Throughout the results of this search, with some exceptions, a general theme of sympathy was reflected. For example, an article dated September 13, 2015 titled “‘I’m one of the luckiest people you will ever find’: Syrian refugee reflects on her new life in Vancouver” summarizes an interview with a Syrian refugee named Mai Eilia in which she describes her communication with friends and family who have not been able to flee the violence in Syria.<sup>64</sup>

This article is followed by several others which give firsthand accounts of the difficulties in the process of relocating to Canada and leaving friends and families behind. For example, an article dated December 6, 2015 titled “‘In Syria, people faced us with live bullets’: A refugee’s long journey to Canada, in his own words” was published only two months after the aforementioned article from September 2015.<sup>65</sup> The article is the firsthand account of Hany al Moulia, transcribed by Austin M. Davis, in which he recounts the reasons why he and his family fled their home in Homs, Syria, and how their journey to Canada unfolded.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Al-Mousawi, Nahrain. "Why Syrian Refugees Are Left Begging on the Other Side of the Arab World." *The Globe and Mail*. March 25, 2017. <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/why-syrian-refugees-are-left-begging-on-the-other-side-of-the-arab-world/article17446532/>.

<sup>64</sup> Press, The Canadian, and Darryl Dyck. "'I'm One of the Luckiest People You Will Ever Find': Syrian Refugee Reflects on Her New Life in Vancouver." *National Post*. September 13, 2015. <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/syrian-refugee-reflects-on-her-new-life-in-vancouver>.

<sup>65</sup> Postmedia News. "'In Syria, People Faced Us with Live Bullets': A Refugee's Long Journey to Canada, in His Own Words." *National Post*. December 06, 2015. <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/in-syria-people-faced-us-with-live-bullets-a-refugees-long-journey-to-canada-in-his-own-words>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Seemingly in juxtaposition to the articles mentioned above, less than a year after their publishing, Kelly Hobson of *The National Post* reported on a poll conducted by the Angus Reid Institute in which “[m]ore than 70 per cent of Canadians don’t support the federal government taking in more than 25,000 Syrian refugees.”<sup>67</sup> This article would promote a theme of hostility toward refugees if it neglected to report on previous polls, and polls from other sources, which concluded that the majority of Canadians at different points in time were supportive of the efforts to resettle at least 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.<sup>68</sup> Once again, despite the expectation of negative findings, *The National Post* published articles with sympathetic views which demonstrated support for the refugees entering Canada, lending further support to the Canadian multiculturalist front.

### 4.3 FINDINGS

The public discourse surrounding refugees in Canada was surprising in its lack of critical themes from both sides of the political spectrum. More specifically, the political-right source of public discourse from Canada was expected to portray at least minor disdain for the refugees in the country. However, the analysis showed that the body of articles from *The National Post* were actually far less critical of refugees than their titles would suggest. Overall, the analysis of public discourse from Canada did not support the idea that political discourse from the political-right would be more critical than public discourse from the political-left.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hobson, Kelly. "More than 70% of Canadians Think Liberals' New Refugee Target Is Too High: Poll." *National Post*. February 19, 2016. <http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/majority-of-canadians-dont-want-to-take-in-more-than-25000-syrian-refugees-new-poll>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> *Additional Note*: The Canadian government has the power to select refugees for asylum where France and other European countries do not. The Atlantic Ocean serves as an effective barrier against refugees who could have illegally entered Europe via land or water. Thus, a question persists as to how Canadians truly feel about the violation of their borders; without the power to decide who may or may not enter Canada, government policy and public discourse surrounding the refugee crisis could be extremely different.

## **5.0 SUPPLEMENTARY INTERVIEW**

### **5.1 OVERVIEW**

The interview process consisted of nine questions designed to gauge the average lives of Syrian refugees in Canada, with the expectation that the findings from the interview would: (1) help to answer the research questions outlined in the introductory section; and (2) provide supplementary information to the analyses in sections two and three above. The nine questions are as follows:

1. Are there many refugees in your congregation?
2. How long have most congregants been part of this mosque?
3. Where do the majority of them come from?
4. Are there reasons why they may not feel well-received or welcome in London?
5. What are some common concerns they have with living in this city?
6. Do the families as a whole seem to be adjusting well?
7. How do you think London compares to other cities in terms of acceptance of refugees?
8. Are there any reasons why your refugee congregants regret coming to London?
9. Are there any reasons other congregants may not be welcoming to these refugees?

For the sake of the Imam's privacy, the researcher has elected not to identify him by name, and instead, only by city and country. The supplementary interview was held with an Imam from the city of London, Ontario on September 6, 2017. Some responses to the interview questions were unexpected, but the Canadian Imam indicated that the majority of the Syrian refugees living in London, Ontario, who regularly attended his mosque were generally comfortable with the way their transition into Canadian life had gone. When asked the first question, the Imam responded that approximately 2,000 refugees had been relocated to London, Ontario, after the onset of the Syrian Civil War, and that many had elected to join his mosque. In

that respect, some refugees had been members of the mosque for up to six years, while others had only just arrived in London approximately one year ago.<sup>70</sup>

The Imam also added that the majority of the refugees he sees in both his mosque and the city of London came from Syria, while only a few came from Iraq. He also reported that most refugees felt welcome in London, with very few incidents of exception, and that congregants in the mosque were extremely welcoming to refugees. The overall perception of refugees, the Imam reported, is generally good. According to the Imam, the only recent event which was cause for concern was a rally which took place on August 26, 2017, and was organized by a nationalist group called Patriots of Canada Against the Islamization of the West.<sup>71</sup>

The Imam of the mosque in London also suggested that refugees in his city had the most issues with language development and job searches, which echoes the findings of a study conducted by the Canadian government on the well-being of refugees in different areas of the country.<sup>72</sup> The Imam also said that some of the refugees who comprise his congregation were having difficulty adapting to the socio-cultural norms of Canada as a whole, and events or actions (such as physical manifestations of aggression) considered normal “at home” (in Syria) were unacceptable in Canada. The Imam also clarified that a negative perception of refugees in London was not pervasive of the entire city; more often than not, any reasons for negativity surrounding Syrian refugees could be traced back to bad choices that millennial refugees had made, such as fights in school, etc.<sup>73</sup>

One last important piece of information that the London Imam offered was that the government-assisted refugees (GARs) and their counterparts differed in the way they adapted to their new country. As noted above, the majority of the refugees that the London Imam spoke about had run into problems with both language development and finding employment. The

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<sup>70</sup> Imam of one mosque in London, Ontario, in discussion with the primary researcher, September 2017.

<sup>71</sup> Margison, Amanda. "2 Arrested at Anti-Islam Rally in London, Ont." CBCnews. August 26, 2017. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/london-nationalist-rally-1.4263721>.

<sup>72</sup> Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. "Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative." Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. May 31, 2017. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/rapid-syria.asp#toc1-2>.

<sup>73</sup> Imam of one mosque in London, Ontario, in discussion with the primary researcher, September 2017.

Imam speculated that the GARs had more trouble adjusting to life after their government assistance had ended, compared to those refugees who received no government assistance upon arrival.<sup>74</sup>

Below are two figures provided by the government of Canada. The first shows the distribution of refugees as they were classified by the government upon arrival as of January 29, 2017 (Figure 1.1).<sup>75</sup> The second (Figure 1.2) provides information about the classification of refugees in London, Ontario (1,250 refugees resettled in the city were GARs). Though there is no way to know how many of those refugees have joined the mosque where the interviewed Imam is based, the available data suggests that the majority of the refugees in the interviewed Imam's mosque are Syrian GARs, while others were either blended-visa office-referred refugees, or privately sponsored refugees.<sup>76</sup>

Breakdown by category	
Data as of January 29, 2017	
Refugee category	Number of refugees
Government-Assisted Refugee	21,876
Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugee	3,931
Privately Sponsored Refugee	14,274
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>40,081</b>

**Figure 1.3:** Distribution of refugees as they were classified by the government upon arrival as of January 29, 2017. *Source:* <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. "#WelcomeRefugees: Key Figures." Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. February 09, 2017. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>.

<sup>76</sup> Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. "Map of Destination Communities and Service Provider Organizations." Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, Communications Branch. May 01, 2017. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>.

Destination community						
Select	Province	Destination community	Number of GARs admitted since Nov. 4	Number of PSRs currently in the inventory	Number of PSRs admitted since Nov. 4	Number of BVORs admitted since Nov. 4
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ontario	London	1250	196	428	75

**Figure 1.4:** Classification of refugees in London, Ontario. *Source:* <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp>.

## 5.2 INTERVIEW NOTE

After numerous attempts to contact Imams in both France and Canada for the supplementary portion of this study, the Imam from London, Ontario, was the only one receptive to interview requests. However, the information provided by this Imam both clarified research questions and brought new questions to light that the researcher failed to previously consider.

The Imams in Canada sought by the researcher were selected based on the number of refugees their cities were reported to receive, according to the Government of Canada's Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Communications Branch.<sup>77</sup> In France, Imams sought by the researcher were chosen based on the largest number of mosques in each city. The researcher also used media reports of the largest number of refugees in each city to find the most suitable Imams for this study. Unfortunately, the government of France neglected to provide resources detailing the locations of the refugees in France. However, *total* numbers of admitted refugees in 2015 and 2016 were published by the French government, by the Ministère De L'Intérieur and are displayed in the table (Table 1.3) below.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> France. Ministère De L'intérieur - Direction Générale Des étrangers En France. Département Des Statistiques, Des Etudes Et De La Documentation. <http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/fr/Info-ressources/Donnees-statistiques/Statistiques/Essentiel-de-l-immigration/Chiffres-clefs/Les-demandes-d-asile-statistiques>. By OFPRA. July 11, 2017.

Les dix premiers pays pour les premières demandes d'asile<sup>1</sup> :

	2015		2016
Soudan	5 091	Soudan	5 897
Syrie	3 403	Afghanistan	5 646
Kosovo	3 139	Haiti	4 927
Bangladesh	3 071	Albanie	4 601
Haiti	3 049	Syrie	3 615
Rép. Dém. Congo	2 937	Rép. Dém. Congo	2 551
Chine	2 814	Guinée	2 336
Albanie	2 245	Bangladesh	2 276
Irak	2 145	Algérie	1 972
Afghanistan	2 122	Chine	1 854

Source : OFPRA

**Table 1.1:** Total numbers of admitted refugees in 2015 and 2016. *Source: <http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/fr/Info-ressources/Donnees-statistiques/Statistiques/Essentiel-de-l-immigration/Chiffres-clefs/Les-demandes-d-asile-statistiques>.*

The primary investigator's intention was to search for the most populous Canadian cities in terms of refugees, and the reportedly most populous cities in France, also in terms of refugees. The primary investigator then planned to interview Imams using the same questions as those asked of the Imam from London, Ontario. Included below is a list of cities within which the researcher attempted to contact at least one Imam, if not several, for the supplementary portion of this study:

**Canada:** Hamilton, Kitchener, London, Ottawa, Toronto

**France:** Paris, Toulouse, Nice, Lyons

Though the interviews would have been useful as an additional comparative dimension of this study, the analysis of public discourse in sections three and four provide fascinating findings capable of standing alone. The lack of interview material collected had no truly negative impact on the findings of this study.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 FINDINGS**

The findings of this study suggest that the general public discourse surrounding Syrian refugees varies considerably between France and Canada. In addition, based on the findings from public discourse, the ease with which refugees were able to assimilate into their new countries was notably different. Finally, the public discourse was found to be limited in how it portrays the refugees and their various issues in both countries.

Based on the findings of analysis of the French public discourse on the right side of the political spectrum, it could be theorized that social, interpersonal, and communication issues might be more highly publicized in French than Canadian public discourse. This could be because the rapacious nature of the French political-right allows for less sensitive editing while biased criticisms of refugees take center stage. The French political-right seems to draw attention to issues surrounding refugees in France with the intention of further tarnishing the reputation of the refugees themselves. However, possibly the most surprising finding from this study was that the French political-left source of public discourse showed deep sympathy for the refugees in France. This is surprising because of the xenophobia projected by the country within its government, laws, and general culture. It is unclear why there was such a divide between the French political-left and political-right sources, and even less clear is why the French political-right was so late to begin coverage of the refugee crisis as it unfolded.

In contrast, though Canadian public discourse has been primarily focused on the political effects of refugees landing in Canada, social, interpersonal, and communication issues were largely unreported by both sides of the public-discourse. This finding was expected because on both sides of the public discourse surrounding refugees in Canada, the greatest theme was sympathy, not criticism. Canada's outwardly welcoming culture could be one reason for both sides of the public discourse to ignore some issues, but perhaps it could also be a result of the nature of Canadian public discourse itself. The researcher expected the political-right source of



Canadian public discourse to represent disdain for the refugees in Canada, but the analysis in section three provided no such finding.

## **6.2 IMPLICATIONS**

The political-left and political-right in Canada shared sympathy for Syrian refugees where French public discourse was of two minds: sympathy on the left, and criticism on the right. This is problematic because, as the interview with the Canadian Imam suggested, important issues concerning the well-being of refugees are largely ignored by the Canadian sources of public discourse. The lack of depth within Canada's public discourse surrounding refugees shows that there is a general lack of understanding of the plight of refugees even after they settle in Canada.

The point of public discourse is to engage the public with ongoing issues; by only portraying refugees in a positive light, the Canadian public discourse fails to fulfill its entire responsibility. Although it may be in the best interest for many refugees to be portrayed positively, the lack of understanding of their personal issues once integrated into communities could cause refugees to be at a disadvantage during the first few years of their lives in Canada. For example, as the Imam in London, Ontario pointed out, refugees are often plagued by interpersonal and behavioral issues which are deemed normal in their home countries and societies. The lack of public discourse surrounding these issues leads to an ill-informed public, including resources (such as resettlement agencies, school therapists, etc.) which might be able to aid refugees further in their resettlement. Though a positive portrayal of refugees may be helpful in shaping the public opinion, there are ways to positively portray refugees so that their cultural differences are understood without menace.

France's public discourse, though focused on both sympathy and criticism, had largely the same problem. The critical aspects of France's public discourse were focused on cultural differences, but they did almost nothing to highlight issues that the researcher would have expected to find. Instead, the positive and negative portrayals of refugees in the public discourse clashed, and it seemed that neither would lead to a better-informed public due to ignorance of the

issues surrounding the refugees themselves. This is problematic for the same reasons as the Canadian public discourse.

Overall, the public discourse was not fairly representative of refugees' issues on either the left or the right in either country. Though the Canadian political-right public discourse was far less critical than the French, public discourse in both states is insufficient in the way it deals with refugee-related issues. This statement is echoed in the findings from the interview with the Canadian Imam.

### **6.3 SECTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

*The findings from this thesis are incomplete due to the lack of interview material from Imams in France. This section delineates the possibilities of furthering this research study to include interview material from Imams in France and additional Imams in Canada.*

Though the findings from this study were conclusive in that they brought focus to previously underreported issues affecting refugees, the study could be improved with more interviews in both countries. The interviews could possibly be even more effective were they to come from refugees themselves, but only in the event that the refugees are willing to truthfully cooperate. Imams have proven to be difficult to contact via both email and telephone, which is obvious from the lack of supplementary interview material from Imams in both countries. However, it is possible that with more time and resources, traveling to both France and Canada for the purpose of interviews would create the optimal outcome sought by the researcher: interviews on both sides.

It may also be prudent in future study to include more sources of public discourse. In the the introductory, second, and third sections of this thesis, the reasons for choosing each source were thoroughly explained. Though the researcher stands by these decisions and the reasons behind them, it may be useful in future study to include more sources of public discourse on both sides. However, it may also be difficult in future studies to draw borders between what is truly representative of public discourse versus conjecture within one group of society. For example, as

noted within the introductory section, the use of message boards or online fora would be difficult to justify considering the vast number of opinions on both the far left and the far right. Online fora are not truly representative of general public discourse, and so they would be excluded from a furthering of this study. However, magazines and smaller, lesser-known newspapers in each country may be questioned for their worth in public discourse for a multitude of reasons. Inclusion or exclusion of these sources is questionable at this point in time.

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