

**Europe for Europeans: Nationalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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The Syrian Refugee Crisis has become one of the greatest humanitarian issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Millions of asylum seekers fleeing violence in the Middle East have arrived at the door step of the European Union seeking protection and a better life. A mass migration of this scale was not something that the national governments of the EU or the individual members states had been prepared for. Continental Europe has received over 1 million asylum applications and it is estimated that 3.3 million refugees are currently residing in Turkey, seeking asylum there or waiting their turn for admittance into the European Union. But a growing opposition to the influx of refugees has begun to endanger these resettlement programs and indeed has begun to undermine the ability of some states to create any effective policy. This paper will look at a variety of factors that have contributed to the modern emergence of nationalism in Europe.

This study of nationalism is based on the role that nationalist leaders and their parties have played in defining policy with regards to Syrian migrants, how historical trends and the development of national identities now contribute to modern nationalist sentiment, and how the respective economic situations of the two case studies observed has shaped rhetoric surrounding migration. To accomplish this a dual method approach both qualitative and quantitative measures will be used. For the quantitative data, key metrics of economic strength will be used to compare the two case studies and develop an understanding of the impact the economy has on provoking nativist fears and contributing to anti-immigration rhetoric. The qualitative aspect utilizes historical accounts, government documents, and biographical data to develop a picture of what

each movement defines as “the nation” and the role that each leader has played in creating this ideology within their respective movement. Ultimately, this thesis utilizes long standing theories on the origins of nationalistic movements and applies it to modern case studies in order to develop an understanding of the contemporary nationalist movements that can be observed in Europe today.

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## 1.0 Introduction

How did the world go from the end of history and peace on earth to tribalist conflicts on all levels? At the end of the Cold War in 1992, Francis Fukayama published an article entitled “The End of History and the Last Man.” In it he articulated the ideology of the era, that communism had been defeated and now the neoliberal world order would reign supreme (Fukayama 1992). Conflicts would end and society would cease changing. We would all be encompassed within one global community. It was not long before the rise of Islamic extremism, intrastate conflict, and separatist movements quickly challenged this idyllic notion of societal progression. Out of this turmoil emerged another piece of sociological writing that sought to define and encapsulate the zeitgeist of the post-Cold War international order. In his book published just three years later in 1995, *Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World*, Benjamin Barber suggests that the external forces that are moving humanity towards a harmonious future are themselves generating an internal pushback against this world order. This pushback manifests as tribalist factions that resist perceived globalist encroachment often times through violent means (Barber, 1995). The “Jihad” he describes include terrorism, nationalist sentiment, and increased hate crimes towards others. In essence it is the resurgence of an “Us vs. Them” mentality based on our most primal and basic divisions.

Today we have seen a resurgence of nationalism in every corner of the globe. It is not just the usual suspects of Europe and the Western World. We have seen nationalist movements emerge in China, South East Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. Each region with vastly different cultures and histories but each now fostering a resentment towards those from the outside world. The disparity between the end of history and the rising wave of “jihad” is highlighted in the



global response to the Syrian Migrant Crisis. Europe, who claims to be the champion of the liberal world order and human rights, has now seen a resurgence of nationalism and xenophobia in the wake of the Syrian civil war (Calamur, 2019). Less than a decade after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize for preventing conflict for 60 years, the European Union now finds itself embroiled with nationalist tensions. Brexit, and other emerging movements threaten the integrity of the European project. But the question remains, why now? What is happening in the world today that has caused this resurgence?

This thesis seeks to argue that it is the unique political, economic, and social circumstances that have manifested in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that have caused this sudden reemergence of nationalist sentiment. These factors have provided the perfect context for nationalist leaders to craft rhetoric and policies establishing an “in group” and an “out group” specifically targeting Syrian Refugees with the ultimate goal of solidifying their own power. This thesis breaks down the social, economic, and political dimensions within each of the respective case studies to show how each has played a part in the formation of these imagined communities and contributed to the resurgence of nationalism in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe. The political factors are the impact of nationalist leaders on the direction of their movements and the state as a whole. The social factors revolve around the development of the unique national identities in that now serve as the unifying force for contemporary nationalists. To understand these identities this paper will analyze the historical trends and events that over the past several centuries have led to the development of the French and Turkish national identities. Finally, the perceived economic threat that Syrian migrants pose, which appeals to peoples most base fears about financial security and personal well-being, will be compared to the economic realities within the two case studies. While this rhetoric has proven

effective at rallying a base, this paper will show it is ultimately derived from a warped and often entirely imagined perception of the national fiscal situation.

Nationalistic sentiment held by a single individual is not in and of itself particularly dangerous to society or the greater political order. To become weaponized and dangerous, many individuals with similar nationalistic beliefs must coalesce under one banner and one organization. This is the role that is served by the leadership of nationalist parties. These charismatic leaders and their parties help create a uniform set of beliefs for their followers as well as providing political structure for effective mass mobilization. To achieve this goal they rely on stoking peoples most base fears and manipulating the facts of the world around them.

The first mechanism used by nationalist leaders is the corruption of national identities in order to serve their own political agenda. Every nation has its own unique cultural history and identity, but this does not immediately spawn nationalist sentiment. It is only when this identity is presented as superior to others, and as under attack from another culture, that it can be used to rally a nationalist movement. This thesis will use the two selected case studies to highlight the development of their unique national identities and how they have been used today to rally nationalist support by creating exclusionary definitions of what it means to be French or Turkish.

The second and most effective tactic used by nationalist leaders is the use of economic rhetoric. The classic appeal that nationalists most often make is based on what people fear most; financial uncertainty. Immigrants, and in the case of this thesis, Syrian refugees are painted as threats to the economic order and potential parasites on the social safety nets of the state. The rhetoric often uses messaging stating that this foreign group is coming to take jobs away from citizens or that they are coming to start lives as dependents on the state. This will inevitably result in individuals losing work and having no assistance from the government when they need it most.

Worst of all, nationalists will say, they do not contribute to these systems with taxes, etc. Here again we see a divergence from reality and the weaponization of fear and misinformation. Casting refugees as an external threat helps solidify who is a member of “the nation” and creates a common “enemy” for the populace to rally against. This thesis will show that not only is the economy not under threat from this influx of migrants, but this demographic shift actually has the potential to help support the aging workforces we see throughout Europe and much of the developed world.

Fear is a powerful weapon and the ultimate tool of the nationalist, and no fear is more powerful than the fear of “the other”. With all the uncertainty generated by the Syrian Civil War and the Syrian Refugee Crisis, nationalist leaders in France and Turkey have taken advantage of the fear that many people within their states feel in order to solidify power for themselves and promote their own exclusionary agendas. This thesis breaks down the context for this rise and the methodology they have used to bring about this surge in nationalistic sentiment.

## **1.1 Historical Context**

The “inciting incident” that began this upward trend in nationalist sentiment is the Syrian Refugee Crisis caused by the Syrian Civil War. In order to understand the increase in nationalism in Europe, it is important first to understand the historical background that has preceded this trend. The background leading up to the Syrian Civil War, causing the mass egress of citizens, provides vital insight into the mindset of the refugees and asylum seekers entering Europe. This war is often referred to as the first war caused by climate change, which gives the Syrians fleeing the war the new designation of climate refugees (Akbarzadeh, 2016). The war began once years of drought had depleted much of the rural food supply in the country. Farmers and villagers sought support from the government but found none. The requests quickly transitioned into protests and demands. The violent repression of these protests led to the emergence of several regional factions that

opposed the tyrannical rule of Bashar al-Assad (Akbarzadeh, 2016). One of these rebel factions was the extremists of ISIS. The civil war quickly erupted into an internationally backed conflict and years of fighting had ravaged the country. In search of safety and better living conditions, millions of Syrians left their homes behind and headed for Turkey and Europe. In total it is estimated that between 5-8 million refugees have fled into the countries around the Mediterranean and into Europe (Koroutchev, 2016). This mass migration has been called by some in the international community the greatest humanitarian crisis of our time (European Greens, 2019). Where these people will go, for how long, and what they will do when they get there has become the singular focus of many European nations and the greatest concern of modern nationalist movements.

## **1.2 Case Studies**

When using two case studies in a comparative analysis, a method often used by political scientists is the “Most Similar/ Most Different Method” first outlined by John Stewart Mill in his book *A System of Logic*. This method of analysis functions by selecting two case studies that either are similar in almost every dimension except for one, this being “Most Similar”, or two case studies that are different in almost every dimension except one, this being “Most Different” (Mill 1949). The remaining variation between the two cases provides a single variable or small set of variables that can be studied in order to understand a potential relationship or potential causality within the two individual case studies (Mill 1949). In order to better understand the origins of contemporary nationalism in Europe, two case studies have been selected based on their “Most Different” criteria; France and Turkey. In most key aspects, these two case studies are quite different from one another. France is a free democracy, while Turkey is experiencing democratic backsliding (Eder, 2016). France is a predominantly Catholic nation, while Turkey is predominantly Sunni

Muslim. France has a robust economy, while Turkey has recently experienced several financial crises (Goodman, 2019). The “similar” dimension that is the focus of study for this paper is the almost concurrent rise of nationalist movements within both of these states in response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. What this thesis will argue is that by studying this similarity amongst all their differences it becomes clear that nationalist leaders and their manipulation of national identities and use of protectionist economic rhetoric is what has caused the sudden reemergence of nationalism on such a large scale.

Both of these states have been impacted by a large influx of Syrian refugees since the beginning of the crisis (Koroutchev, 2016). Turkey now has the largest number of Syrian refugees in the world. As a Muslim nation, and the most proximate European country to Syria, Turkey has become to many the destination of their migration. Still others see Turkey merely as the gateway into Europe proper. Once here the ultimate destination of many of the migrants are western European nations with strong economies and generous social security schemes. This includes Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Of these France was selected to study based on its historical trends of marginalization and its powerful nationalist movement. These two studies provide very different views on the same problem, and immigrants coming from the same country have vastly different experiences interacting with the citizens. The rest of this section will provide a more in depth discussion of the variations between these two states.

Beginning firstly with France, its national history provides an interesting social dimension to the analysis. France, throughout its history, has prided itself on its unique and distinctive culture. This culture not only helps easily define the nation but now serves as a rallying ideology for the growing nationalist movement. Additionally, French society has continually been criticized for its failure to integrate various waves of immigrants. This has resulted in highly segregated living

spaces where white French citizens reside within inner cities and French people of color reside in the suburbs or as they are called the “banlieue.” This social norm of exclusion is key to understanding the uniquely French version of nationalism that we see manifesting in its political system today.

The Front National, recently renamed to the Rassemblement National, was the second most popular party in France’s 2017 presidential election (Wike, 2017). This dramatic swing from two terms of socialist governance to an election between the center right and far right highlights a dramatic social and political shift within France. This party is particularly interesting because it is not a new party. It has existed since the end of the second world war but was largely relegated to the status of a radical, pseudo-fascist group (Stockemer, 2017). Now it has come back with massive popularity after intense rebranding and redrafting of its central messages. Understanding the causes of this and its newfound support can help develop an understanding of this new wave of nationalist sentiment. Another aspect that makes France an excellent case study for analysis is its relationship with religion.

France has some of the strictest laws regarding the separation of church and state in the Western world. This policy forbids the display of any religious iconography while occupying a state role. This includes municipal workers, doctors, teachers, and even students. While this policy has been promoted as something that creates a cohesive and inoffensive society, the influx of Muslim immigrants has seen this policy take on a much more discriminatory role (Bowen, 2007). Forbidding the hijab or veil in public has become a central issue for secular France. Society is faced with the question of when does inclusion become discrimination in and of itself. The push for secularism also creates a paradox within French identity. Although the country has a relatively small population that actively practices any sort of religion, a vast majority identifies as catholic.

The historical relationship between Catholics and Muslims has also created a contentious dynamic between the nominally “Catholic” French and the devout Sunni Muslim Syrians.

One of the long-touted sources of nationalism is economics and fear of migrant workers. Many countries espouse the same xenophobic rhetoric claiming that immigrant populations and foreigners are coming to take the jobs of French nationals. Although refuted in countless academic discussions, the perception of immigrants taking jobs remains a powerful motivator in the minds of voting people (Wike, 2017). This is particularly true of those who occupy jobs that are lower skilled and more easily replaceable. France is a major economic figure within both the European Single Market and on the world stage in general (France OECD, 2019). This provides an interesting case where even without any tangible economic threat posed by migrants, one of the major pillars of the Front National has been the xenophobic lie of immigrants stealing jobs and tax resources that France cannot afford to pay. This thesis will analyze the economic realities in France and contrast them with the propaganda spread about the economic impact of migrants. Each of these social, political, and economic factors plays an important role in shaping the French perception and reaction to the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

The second case study, Turkey, was chosen specifically because of its divergence from France. In all the key aspects discussed above, Turkey provides different factors for analysis. Beginning firstly with the its national history, Turkey maintained a large contiguous empire throughout central Europe and the Middle East called the Ottoman Empire. Unlike many of the European colonizers, the territories held by Turkey largely shared the same religious background and those that did not were given various degrees of religious freedom (Kia, 2019). The Ottoman Empire and present-day Turkey are majority Sunni Muslim countries. In contrast to the European style of rule, the Ottomans expressed much more religious tolerance for the subjugated people.

While they had animosity and conflict with Christian subpopulations, they maintained amicable relations with Muslim communities (Kia, 2019). That is why Turkey is of particular interest for this thesis. Lacking the historical distaste for Muslim migrants and Muslim people, it is interesting to see such a wide spread rejection of Syrian migrants. Turkey also has a robust separation of religion and governance that was implemented after the fall of the Ottomans and the birth of the Republic of Turkey (Bay, 2011). The current president Recep Erdogan has slowly begun to erode these laws and the lines between the political and the religious has become increasingly blurred. At the same time as he has challenged “discrimination” against Muslims and has actively cultivated a cult of personality centered on traditional Muslim values, Erdogan has also been critical of Syrian migrants who belong to the same “Muslim brotherhood” that he has sought to develop (Kirdis, 2015). This means that there must be some other factor that is not religiously based playing a role in this discrimination. The disconnect between the rhetoric of Erdogan’s increasingly Islamic government and the reality of how they treat fellow Muslims also contributes to Turkey’s value as a case study.

Turkey has also demonstrated its own propensity to discriminate against migrant populations and fail to integrate minority groups. Today Syrians are forced to apply for asylum in the first city they enter and must remain in that governmental province unless relocated by the state (Economist, 2019). This greatly restricts the freedom of movement and ability to connect with family and community members. This coupled with the massive campaigns of forced deportation have increased anti-immigrant sentiment while simultaneously endangering the lives of the millions of Syrian Refugees in Turkey (Farooq, 2019). How this exclusion has contributed to the nationalist sentiment in Turkey provides another aspect of analysis for this thesis.



Turkey also diverges greatly from France in terms of its economic performance. While considered a member of the “developed world” or Global North, Turkey is currently suffering from economic slowdown and rising unemployment that threatens to upend the entire global economic community (Turkey OECD, 2019). This contrast with the strong French economy can provide interesting data on how economic motivations may differ when the reality of employment and job security could be threatened by large swathes of cheap labor at a time when people have to work harder to make ends meet. With its authoritarian regime, primarily Muslim population, and faltering economic situation, Turkey provides an interesting look at how a country experiencing a parallel problem to France can have a vastly different response and still develop a nationalist opposition to migrant populations.

### **1.3 Research Question(s)**

The essential purpose of this paper is to synthesize existing theories of nationalism and apply them to a contemporary example. Nationalism, xenophobia, islamophobia, and racism have existed for centuries before the Syrian migrant crisis. There is an extensive library of literature discussing the rise of nationalist governments and analyzing the contributing factors behind them. The global reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis allows for a contemporary application of this theory and the formation of a deeper understanding of this ongoing phenomenon. This thesis attempts to do that analysis to understand why we are seeing the reemergence of nationalism in these particular regions of the world and at this particular time, and by using the “Most Different” method of analysis, it becomes clear that both countries’ contemporary nationalist movements have followed a similar trajectory to rise in power and influence. The many facets of modern nationalism make it both extremely similar and markedly novel. One such change is that in both France and Turkey,

the current waves of nationalism are spearheaded by highly educated and affluent members of their respective societies (Stockemer, 2017). Indeed, this trend can be seen across Europe and across the globe. That is why understanding the role of leadership and other important social factors is necessary to understanding the modern emergence of nationalism. Understanding what defines the nation and who belongs to the nation is also at the heart of grasping this alarming trend. Why this resurgence has come about now and in direct response to the Syrian Refugee crisis is the main research question that this thesis will answer.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

This project utilizes both a qualitative and quantitative approach to analysis. The reasoning behind this “dual methodology” is that each form of analysis encapsulates different aspects of the reaction to refugees and provides unique insight into the problem at the center of discussion. Certain things within the qualitative spheres cannot be captured by hard data or statistical analysis that characterize quantitative analysis. Conversely, quantitative methods can provide insight into causal relationships and trends that a qualitative analysis cannot.

Within this paper, the primary qualitative methods being used are the analysis of propaganda, historical sources, and government publications. For the sake of this discussion, government publications includes speeches from politicians, party platforms released by candidates, and press releases from government offices or ministries. The governments that these are sourced from are France, Turkey, and the European Union. Since France is a member state of this supra-national organization, it has an impact on the policies developed by the EU and vice versa. The goal with analyzing these pieces is to develop an understanding of the perception of Syrian migrants and the overall Syrian refugee crisis. How people view their economic impact.

What political threats people believe they pose. The policy initiatives crafted in order to prepare for the influx and subsequently to deal with the influx are central to understanding the mindset of people within France and Turkey. Historical accounts provide a context for the concept of “the nation” as well as helping to explain the impact that certain trends have on leadership, parties, and government initiatives in both Turkey and France.

Examples of government publications includes press releases and policy statements from France, Turkey, and the European Union. Marine le Pen and the Rassemblement National published 144 policy initiatives and actions they would take had they won the presidency (Rassemblement National, 2016). This provides a substantive look at what nationalist governance and parties look like outside of the redundant racist and xenophobic things that are commonly circulated in the press. These provide insights into what particular aspects of the migrant crisis are most concerning to those who support these parties beyond the primal fear of “the other.” It is also important to reiterate that these are merely the perceptions that people have formed and that governments are presenting. That is why such a significant emphasis has been placed on having both the qualitative and quantitative aspects to the project.

The quantitative methods used provide insight into the actual impacts that the Syrian refugees have had on France and Turkey. In some sense providing a “reality check” for many of the perceptions developed and analyzed by the qualitative methods. For this paper the quantitative methods consist primarily of economic metrics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Income (GNI), Unemployment, and GDP per capita. These will help explain the reality of the financial situation in each country as well as providing some rationale behind the policies and programs proposed by modern nationalist movements. Much of the nationalist literature focuses on the economic impacts that migrants have whether it’s by directly taking jobs, or by

utilizing state social programs without contributing the proper taxes. Economic figures should show that the reality of the situation is very different from the perception and propaganda used to describe it. This can then lead into a discussion into the origins of these differences and how they can possibly be reconciled. Again, ultimately the function of the quantitative section is to counterbalance the qualitative section. Quantitative evidence provides insight into the reality and causes surrounding the influx of refugees that qualitative research cannot. These complimentary elements develop a much clearer picture than either in isolation.

## 2.0 Nationalism and the Nation State

Any discussion of contemporary nationalism must first begin with defining what is meant by nationalism. Nationalism and the idea of the nation-states have their roots in both political and philosophical definitions. In his work *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson highlights that there is no one universal definition of nationalism (Anderson, 1983). Unlike many other terms in political science such as racism, sexism, and xenophobia, nationalism has no encapsulating definition. While it can be identified and studied through the analysis of case studies, the field still lacks one unified understanding on nationalism. In order to develop a functional definition of nationalism to be used in this discussion, first the history of the modern nation state must be understood. This section will summarize the prevailing theories about state development, the origins of nations, and the process through which nation-states are formed and recognized. The goal is that these processes and definitions can be contrasted with the arbitrary nature of “the nation” that is focused upon by nationalist movements. What this section shows is both the political and philosophical aspects to the emergence of the nation-state and how this can contribute to the rise of nationalism. The discussion on the evolution of the nation state will explain how groups of unorganized people coalesce in one geographic space under one central authority, and the discussion of Anderson’s work will explain how this political organization develops its own cultural identity and unifying ideology to become an imagine community (Anderson, 1983). The structures of leadership, economic systems and priorities, as well as the national identity created by these imagined communities can ultimately serve as the roots of nationalism.

## 2.1 Defining Nation States and Understanding their Development

Inexorably linked to the study of nationalism is the observation of the nation state. In modern international relations theory, the nation state is one of the most commonly referred to units of organization for political entities. It encapsulates both cultural and political dimensions of society. The nation is a group or community of individuals who identify with a similar language, shared heritage, or religious/cultural practices. In a majority of groups, a nation also revolves around a shared ethnic or tribal background but there are several notable exceptions, namely the United States. The concept of the state also has many competing definitions and theories on their development. For this discussion, the definitions of a state is outlined in *Political Geography* by Joe Painter and Alex Jeffrey. They outline five characteristic that are essential for a political organization to achieve modern state hood.

According to Painter and Jeffrey states are:

1. Ordered by precise boundaries with administrative control across the whole;
2. Occupy large territories with control given to organized institutions;
3. Have a capital city that is endowed with symbols that embody state power;
4. The government within the state creates organizations to monitor, govern, and control its population through surveillance and record keeping;
5. They increase monitoring over time.

Now these criteria can be applied to the two case studies of this paper in order to evaluate if they meet this definition of statehood. Beginning firstly with France, although they are members of the European Union and have unrestricted travel in accordance with the Schengen Agreement, the French government still has precise borders with administrative control. They also have a large bureaucratic apparatus established to aid in governance as well as surveillance and record keeping.

The capital city of Paris is home to the presidential residence, the parliament, and other cultural sites that embody the history and power of the French state.

Focusing now on Turkey, it is evident that Turkey also easily meets the criteria laid out by Painter and Jeffrey. The geographical boundaries of Turkey are clearly defined and well recognized. The government has administrative control over all parts of the country and has various branches and organizations that oversee day to day governance. The capital of Istanbul is home to political and cultural sites that embody the power and history of the state. Finally, the Turkish government possess the ability to surveil and keep records on those within its borders.

While the status of these two states may seem common knowledge and this exercise may seem unnecessary, it is important to establish the link between the nation-state and nationalism when discussing contemporary nationalist movements. It also opens up the possible exploration of nationalism within groups that do not belong to a recognized state, a topic that will be discussed later.

## **2.2 The Evolution and Creation of the State**

The characteristics, and modern states do not simply emerge out of nothing, there is often long histories and processes that over time result in the formation of a recognizable state. The study of the formation of these states also produces four major theories on the development of states. Of the many theories articulated in the literature, three stand out as the most widely accepted and discussed: the Force theory, the Divine Right theory, and the Social Contract theory.

Beginning first with the Force theory, one of the most notable thinkers within this school of thought is Max Weber. Weber defines the state as being the actor with “a monopoly of legitimate physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 1919). Within this framework the state emerges

from many feuding factions as the sole group that can maintain order throughout the geographical boundaries identified with the state. In order for this governing structure to be recognized as a legitimate state, the area that they lay claim too must be free of other armed factions or groups claiming legitimate authority. In the presence of these groups, the state must demonstrate an ability to suppress them and maintain control.

The Divine Right theory, while not as commonly cited today, also remains prevalent in the literature of state formation. Many theocratic or monarchical systems use the reasoning of divine intervention to justify power and statehood. God, or some other divine being, ordained that a particular person or family should rule over a granted area without question. While this has obvious implications within states that have a monarch it also has profound impact in how states relate to one another, can redefine what it means to be a nation, and plays a vital impact on the development of nationalism.

In *World Order*, Kissinger outlines the Islamic world and China's diverging viewpoints on the international community. Much like the Christian crusaders before who viewed the world in the dichotomy of Christendom and uncivilized savages, many Islamic oriented countries were founded with a similar mentality (Kissinger, 2014). All claimed to have the divine right as the true inheritors of Mohamad's expansive Muslim empire and all were founded with the idea of unifying the Islamic world under one flag. All other outsiders were viewed as non-believers and antithetical to this world view. While the geopolitical realities and interactions between primarily Muslim countries tell a different story, this rallying around an abstract religious ideal is one mechanism of state formation. Similarly, China since ancient times has viewed itself as "the Middle Kingdom." This made them the literal center of the Universe and the cultural pinnacle of human civilization. While the notion of the ruler gaining their power through the "Edict of Heaven" this idea of



centrality and superiority still permeate through China and are reflected in their foreign policies (Kissinger, 2014). One could even argue that the Colonial United States was settled with a similar notion of Divine Right. The first colonists came seeking to settle a New Zion and become a “shining city on a hill”; a quote later reused by President Reagan.

The third theory relevant to this discussion of nation forming is the Social Contract Theory. This theory’s most relevant author is Thomas Hobbes and It is best articulated in his book: Leviathan. This theory argues that people tend to willingly organize into larger and larger groups, sacrificing personal freedoms, because of the security and other benefits they get from being part of the collective. Hobbes illustrates this trade off in Leviathan by explaining that the formation of “a commonwealth” by the people is mutually agreed upon in order to escape the savagery of the state of nature (Leviathan 1651). Political theorists within this school argue that the same process plays out on a much larger scale over time with the formation of nation states.

The other theories are less commonly used and much less relevant to the discussion of this thesis. What all of these theories highlight is the constructed nature of the nation. While various philosophers and political scientists throughout time have attempted to grasp what it means to be a nation and a nation state, ultimately it is an arbitrary distinction granted by people and political bodies. With the influx of Syrian refugees into Europe there has been an increased focus on preserving the “nation” and the state from these foreign populations. The next two sections will explain the political process that a nation must undergo to receive recognition of its legitimacy, followed by a continued discussion on Anderson’s concept of the nation and nationalism. The function of understanding these political processes is to again highlight the arbitrary nature of what define a nation or nation-state so that this can later be contrasted with the argumentation of nationalists that the nation and the state are concrete objects that must be preserved.

### 2.3 Sovereignty and International Order

When a governing structure controls a territory in which all the subjects, or the vast majority, belong to one singular national identity this is considered a nation state (Weber, 1919). While this is now the accepted unit for international relations, this model of sovereign governance emerged relatively recently in human history (Kissinger, 2014). Within the international order there are also several examples of nations who exist without a recognized state. Notable examples of this phenomenon are the Kurds, Palestinians, and some scholars would also include separatist movements like the Chechens and Catalonians. These groups have a shared cultural history, social identity, and often unique languages or dialects, yet they lack a formal state structure. These stateless nations provide interesting case studies in state development as their quest for statehood helps illustrate the process that many states go through. Of course there is no official list of requirements that lead to recognized statehood. The current system is based solely around previously recognized states acknowledging and recognizing new states as legitimate (Kissinger, 2014). This typically results in membership in the United Nations if a majority of existing member states approve them. Palestine, Kosovo, and Taiwan stand out as potential nation states that have been recognized by some in the United Nations but still remain in limbo. Yet these stateless nations are just as real and just as tangible to their members as any other imagined collective that exists on the world stage. This makes them equally capable of creating a common national identity and even forming their own nationalist ideologies. The next section continues the conversation with Anderson's book *Imagined Communities* which explains the arbitrary nature of the nation and the emergence of nationalism.

## 2.4 Nationalism

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson argues that the nation is “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently sovereign and limited” (Anderson, 1983). He goes on to elaborate that nations are imagined in the sense that the ties that bind the members of the community are invisible and imagined. It is some shared history, some shared cultural value that creates a “deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 1983). It is important to note here as well that the use of the word imagined should not be interpreted as fake, rather it emphasizes the ethereal nature of what defines and composes a nation. As Anderson defines it “the arbitrariness of their inclusion and juxtaposition...shows the linkage between them is imagined” (Anderson, 1983).

Another important aspect to Anderson's theory is the relationships created between members of the nation. He points out that although it is likely impossible for every member of the nation to know every other member personally, they still feel a sense of connection and comradeship simply because of their perceived inclusion in the same imagined community. This can also have the reverse effect where members of one nation can feel threatened by another person solely on the basis that they do not belong to the same imagined community. This dynamic will be of particular importance later on in this discussion. Anderson points to the unity and exclusion created by imagined communities. Ideals and values arbitrarily create an “in” group and an “out” group that not only define the nation but serve to inspire nationalist sentiment. According to Anderson, people not in one particular group are often treated with suspicion and animosity by members of “the nation” (Anderson, 1983). This creates the phenomenon referred to as nationalism.

This paper will use historical and biographical data to explain the creation and manipulation of “the nation” in both Turkey and France. Subsequent chapters will use historical

trends to identify the key characteristics of both the French and Turkish national identity. Equally important is understanding the perceived leaders of these nations and their modern nationalist movements. The common ideals of these imagined communities serve as the rallying ideology for nationalists, and the leaders of each of these movements play an important role in defining the “in” and “out” groups that shape nationalistic rhetoric and policy.

A subcomponent of this particular strain of nationalism that has been observed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the ethnocentric nature of the rhetoric. There is a distinct division between the members of that state or the proper citizens in society and the foreign invaders. This ethnic element to the discrimination is an important factor in not only understanding how this current wave manifests itself but also to understanding the origins of 21<sup>st</sup> century nationalism. Along with this ethnic component, another component of interest is the religious component. The majority Christian composition of Europe’s population creates a contentious dynamic with the predominantly Muslim immigrant population. Contributing to this most recent wave of nationalism is islamophobia. Islamophobia, in the terms of this discussion, is defined as a fear or negative bias towards people who practice Islam. The role that religion plays will be discussed when the origins of each country’s national identity is discussed. Of particular interest is the interplay of religion and nationalism in Turkey since both Turkey and Syria have majority Sunni Muslim populations.

## **2.5 Populism**

Closely linked to the discussion of contemporary nationalism is populism. Much like nationalism, populism is another term that has been notoriously difficult to define. Cas Mudde, a notable scholar in the field of populism explains that based on the regions of the globe or the time period during which you examine populism, it can denote wildly different concepts (Mudde,

2017). The current and most widely accepted definition put forth by Mudde, and the one that shall be used in this discussion of contemporary nationalism, frames populism as an ideational approach. This means that populism is represented more as an ideology or discourse rather than a concrete political phenomenon (Mudde, 2017).

The three core components, outlined by Mudde, that make up this definition are the people, the elite and the general will (Mudde, 2017). This concept of “the people” is rather similar to Anderson’s conception of “the nation” in his book. It revolves around creating an exclusionary “in group” that are all united by certain characteristics who make up the constituency of populist leaders and parties (Mudde, 2017). The people possess within them the second major concept of populism: the general will. This abstract notion serves as the manifesto of populist leaders. They live to enact the general will of the people and present their policies as the codification of society’s desires (Mudde, 2017). Mudde warns that this is where the dark side of populism can emerge. Leaders may use the banner of the general will to create authoritarian policies and craft legislation that harms those who are not regarded as part of “the people” (Mudde, 2017) For this discussion, the concept of those who are a part of “the people” and those who are not is largely the same as the arbitrary division between members of “the nation” and those who exist outside of it. The last of the three central pillars is the concept of “the elite.” This faceless enemy is often the prime target of populist movements. The elite are often presented as working for the interests of an outside or “alien group” or even representing an outside group themselves (Mudde, 2017). The connection between this populism and nationalism is clear. Both rely on creating an in group, whether classified as “the nation” or “the people”, and an out group classified as either “the elite” or a foreign threat. Both of these movements also justify their actions by appealing to the general will of the people or by saying that they act as the protectors of the nation. The nationalist movements

that have reemerged in France and Turkey rely on populist ideologies and an appeal to “the common people.”

Marine Le Pen has described the European Union as an army of elite bureaucrats who do not act in the interest of the French people (Rassemblement National, 2016). This highlights her use of populist ideology to fuel her nationalist movement. In the Turkish example, Erdogan has repeatedly denounced any opposition to his government as intervention from unknown outside forces. He has increasingly cracked down on journalists and outspoken critics accusing them of acting as agents of an outside threat (Eder, 2016). The utilization of populist ideologies have contributed to the effective mobilization and reemergence of nationalism in 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe.

## **2.6 Propaganda as a Tool for Nationalist Movements**

The method through which political leaders and movements convey their ideologies and amass supporters is by using propaganda. In order to fully understand the rise of nationalism in contemporary Europe, it is essential to understand what the term propaganda means. While this term is used frequently in popular media and political discourse, its connotation varies greatly. A widely accepted and applicable definition of propaganda can be found in Edward Bernays’ seminal work *Propaganda* from 1928. This largely unchallenged text has stood as the benchmark for the study of propaganda and political communication. In it, Bernays argues that people seek organization in the chaos of everyday life, and often look for “short cuts” on how to make decisions (Bernays, 1928). Propaganda is any form of communication that is meant to quickly provide information to a consumer and to influence that person’s opinion on a certain issue (Bernays, 1928). Notably, this definition removes the negative connotation often associated with propaganda. In the political arena, politicians often use the term propaganda to dismiss the

messaging of their opponents as false or inherently misleading, but Bernays' definition highlights that all political communications are propaganda because they are designed to influence how people view a certain issue (Bernays, 1928).

Using this definition of propaganda, this discussion of nationalism will highlight policy proposals, campaign posters, and other messaging tactics used by nationalist leaders in Europe in order to gather support from the electorate and promote nationalist ideologies. The two most effective propaganda campaigns undertaken in France and Turkey have been reshaping the national identity to form a more exclusionary definition, and the use of refugees and migrants as scape goats for perceived economic downturn. The messaging and propaganda utilized in France and Turkey serve as mass appeals for support and voter mobilization in elections.

## **2.7 Synthesis**

The concept of the nation, nationalism, and nationhood have always been notoriously difficult to define but this section has outlined a historical, political, and philosophically based working definition that will serve as the foundation for analysis and discussion. Key to the analysis in this thesis is understanding the ideals that comprise the nation, how the political leadership in each case study impacts the direction of the movement, and what propaganda is used to rally supporters around specific issues. For this paper the primary issues discussed are economically based such as impact on employment, social services, and overall economic health. This chapter has created a benchmark definition for analysis that can help answer the research questions fundamental to understanding the rise of nationalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **3.0 French Nationalist Leadership**

What creates nationalist movements is when members of “the nation” begin to take actions against those who are perceived to be outsiders. Often times individuals can possess nationalistic sentiments and have discriminatory tendencies. Achieving the wide spread nationalistic fervor that can be observed today around the globe requires a centralized leadership structure. This centralization of authority can help define the movement, rally support, and more effectively disseminate nationalist messaging. This can take the form of an individual leader or a party whose platform is rooted in nationalist ideology. Often nationalist leaders, like populist leaders, rely on a cult of personality and their own charisma to help unite supporters under one banner. This section will take a look at the origins of France’s far-right nationalist party, Front National, and its current leader who has attempted to bring its message of discrimination into main stream political discourse. What this ultimately reveals is the emergence of Marine Le Pen as the charismatic leader of the far-right in France and the process by which she rebranded her party to most effectively take advantage of the fear and uncertainty in France during the Syrian Refugee Crisis.

#### **3.1 Biography of Marine Le Pen**

Marine Le Pen was born on August 5, 1968 in a commune just outside of Paris (Tasch, 2017). Her father is Jean-Marie Le Pen, the original founder of the Front National party, and she is the youngest of his three daughters (Tasch, 2017). The radical and unpopular nature of her father’s political party made her childhood lonely and isolated. At some points in her life she had to leave Paris for the south of France because the volume of death threats became a safety concern for the Le Pen family (Tasch, 2017). It was not just verbal and written threats made against the family but acts of physical violence as well. In 1976 a bomb meant to kill the entire Le Pen family exploded



in the middle of the night in their Paris apartment (Beardsley, 2017). In her own autobiography Le Pen claims that this incident changed her life forever by demonstrating the power of her enemies and the lengths people would go to in order silence her family (Beardsley, 2017).

As a young adult she earned her master's in law from Université Paris 2 Panthéon-Assas in 1991 and worked as a lawyer until 1998 (Tasch, 2017). She then began work in the Front National's legal department following her father into the field of politics (Tasch, 2017). Le Pen quickly rose through the ranks of the party and in 2011 took over as its head from her father (Tasch, 2017). This created a further schism in her and her father's already contentious relationship as she attempted to overhaul the party's image (Tasch, 2017). As leader of the party she has single handedly rebranded the party's platform and firmly cemented herself as the face of the party and the far-right movement in France (Beardsley, 2017).

It is important to note however that Marine Le Pen is not the leader of the French government and RN still holds very little political sway on the national level. The focus on her as a political figure is primarily based on her notoriety and popularity as the face of nationalism in France. Even after making it to the second round of the presidential election, she only won a third of the popular vote. While not an insignificant portion of the population, a vast majority of French voters rejected her nativist message in favor of the more moderate center-right Macron and his party "Republique En Marche." Macron's party has taken a much less nativist approach to handling the influx of asylum seekers. In 2018, Macron's party passed a policy that cut down the maximum wait time for asylum claims and also increased access to vital integration programs (Hilliar, 2018). While parts of this policy have been denounced by the left in France as de facto methods of limiting immigration, it is still much more pro-immigrant than the RN's calls for a temporary immigration ban (Hilliar, 2018).

While Marine Le Pen and her party serve as the face of French nationalism, it is important to remember that they exist primarily as an opposition party and not as the ruling regime in government. This is not to minimize the impact that their malicious rhetoric has had on the general political discourse in France, but rather to contextualize the limitations of their impact on actual policy making and implementation on the national level. The next two sections will discuss the history of the Front National, and the reforms that Marine Le Pen has made in order to increase the party's popularity.

### **3.2 History of Front National and Rassemblement National**

The Front National (FN), which today has been rebranded as the Rassemblement National (RN), has been the embodiment of far-right politics in France for almost five decades. The party was founded in 1972 by Marine Le Pen's father, Jean-Marie Le Pen in an effort to unite the many scattered and disorganized far-right movements (Stockemer, 2017). This party emerged during the aftermath of the Algerian War and that event served as the original unifying cause for the disorganized far-right. Le Pen and many of the early members of FN were unhappy with Charles de Gaulle's decision to withdraw French troops and colonial authority from Algeria and FN emerged as a far-right Anti-Gaullist movement (Stockemer, 2017). As its leader he defined a clear nationalist, socially conservative, and anti-immigrant platform (Stockemer, 2017). The radical nature of the party and its discriminatory policies kept it largely in the margins of political discourse for much of its early history and earned Jean-Marie the nickname "the devil of the Republic" in popular media (Stockemer, 2017). The wide-spread use of anti-Semitic rhetoric and controversial opinions on the holocaust and World War II in his speeches ostracized many French voters and earned Front National its reputation as a radical right wing party (Stockemer, 2017).

Front National (FN) has maintained that the nation is a concrete place and structure rather than an abstract idea, similar to Anderson's definition of the nation, and that the nation must be defended from foreign invaders who seek to destroy French culture and society (Stockemer, 2017). This platform failed to gain much support for the first decade of the parties existence but in the 1980's as the most western countries began to see a right-ward shift in the political spectrum, France also moved away from its left leaning parties and more towards the center presenting a unique opportunity for Le Pen and FN (Stockemer, 2017). Several municipal elections saw members of FN elected to city councils and after petitioning the federal government FN began to receive air time on TV and radio for their political ads (Stockemer, 2017). This led to an increase in national support for the party which culminated in FN winning 10 seats during the 1984 European Elections (Stockemer, 2017). In 1988 Le Pen won 14% of votes in the presidential election, a previously unthinkable feat (Stockemer, 2017).

Support for FN has risen and fallen based on a variety of factors impacting the country. With his daughter Marine Le Pen taking control of the party in 2011 and undertaking massive reform and rebranding efforts, the party has slowly begun to increase in general popularity (Piser, 2019). In France's most recent election, which occurred in the wake of several terrorist attacks carried out by Islamic extremists, FN received its highest electoral support ever and Marine Le Pen was one of two candidates who made it to the second round. Although she lost to Emmanuel Macron's centrist party "Republique En Marche," Le Pen and her party managed to win 33% of the national vote in the second round (Wike, 2017). In 2018, Front National was officially rebranded to Rassemblement National (RN), or National Rally in English, in an attempt to create further distance from the controversial origins of Jean-Marie Le Pen and to continue to ride the newfound wave of support garnered in 2017 (Piser, 2019).

It appears as though in times of economic or political turmoil, FN finds its greatest increases in support. The nationalistic messaging resonates more with the French people when they perceived their livelihoods or indeed lives to be threatened by “foreign invaders.” The anti-EU, anti-Muslim rhetoric were effective rallying cries in the wake of the Euro-zone crisis and the series of terrorist attacks in France. By attempting to link the Syrian Refugee crisis to Islamic extremism Marine Le Pen and her party have found a consistent source of fear and hatred that they hope will continue to motivate the French people to support the newly rebranded RN.

### **3.3 The New Face of French Nationalism**

As alluded to in the previous sections, Marine Le Pen has made a conscious effort to make FN/RN’s message more “palatable” to the French people (Stockemer, 2017). Her efforts appear to be largely successful as RN continues to win municipal elections and seats in the European Parliament, but many critics have argued that the ideology and message of RN has not changed from its discriminatory roots, but rather have just changed vocabulary and rhetoric (Piser, 2019). This section will analyze the steps taken by Le Pen to rebrand her father’s party and will show that the same nationalistic sentiment that led to its founding in 1972 is alive and well within Rassemblement National.

The first major effort that Le Pen took was ousting many of the more vocal anti-Semites within the party in an attempt to “de-demonize” the image of Front National (Tasch, 2017). This included the removal of many of her father’s longtime friends and supporters and eventually Jean-Marie Le Pen himself (Tasch, 2017). Her father’s exit from the public eye was presented as a sign that the party was changing into a more progressive and inclusive platform, but the reality is that even with those members gone, these discriminatory ideologies were not purged from the voters who

continued to support the party. The specific demographics and beliefs of FN/RN voters is detailed in the next section. Additionally, the anti-Semitic rhetoric was replaced by increased anti-Muslim rhetoric (Stockemer, 2017). This too was done in fashion to make the party outwardly appear less offensive. In contrast to the overt anti-Muslim rhetoric of her father, Marine Le Pen uses dog whistling tactics to convey the same message. By using the French policy of secularism known as “Laïcité” that will be discussed in more detail later, she has targeted French Muslims and Muslim immigrants who wear hijabs and display other religious symbols (Alduy, 2015). This shift in rhetoric allows RN to deflect criticisms of racism and claim that they simply want legal compliance with pre-existing laws. This is part of her efforts to make Syrians and Muslim immigrants from the EU and beyond the new target and “enemy of the nation” for supporters of RN to focus on.

Additionally, the nationalist rhetoric of RN has decreased direct focus on immigration and instead speaks more towards concerns about the European Union and the ominous and omnipresent “Elites” which again serve as dog whistling messages directed against Syrians and other Muslim migrants (Alduy, 2016). Le Pen has become one of the loudest voices in the “Euroscepticism” movement which criticizes the EU for eroding sovereignty of the member states and being ruled by elite bureaucrats who operate independently from the will of the people (Stockemer, 2017). Of course this criticism of the supra-national organization also includes criticisms of its immigration policy claiming that it reduces France's ability to control its borders and protect French citizens from foreign threats (Alduy, 2015). Again, these are examples of policies that do not seem to directly target the Syrian refugee population in the EU, but ultimately impact them most severely.

These changes represent surface level alterations to the party's platform and image in an attempt to garner more popular support. While Marine Le Pen has been somewhat successful in

making RN seem more like a far-right conservative party instead of the radical nationalist group of her father, the substance and ideology of the party have not substantially been changed.

### **3.4 Demographics of French Nationalists**

Aside from the policies and initiatives undertaken by RN and Marine Le Pen, it is also important to understand the demographics and viewpoints of the French voters who support RN. Richard Wike of the Pew Research Center published a study where he discussed the positions and demographics of FN voters. His study asked participants whether or not they had a favorable view of Front National and then broke up respondents by other characteristics (Wike, 2017). He firstly points out that men without a college degree who identify as catholic are more likely than other groups to have a favorable opinion of Front National (Wike, 2017). This is in line with Marine Le Pen's alleged "preference" for white, Christian French people over other groups (Alduy, 2015). Wike also found that those who favor Front National are more likely to express negative attitudes towards Muslims and have higher concerns that refugees are an economic burden as well as a threat to national security (Wike, 2017). This is reflected in Le Pen's platform for the last election where she outlined plans to reduce immigration and restrict non-citizens' access to government assistance programs (Rassemblement National, 2016). Wike's study also found that those who hold a favorable view of Front National tend to be more skeptical of globalization and hold a less favorable view of the European Union (Wike, 2017). These views are again reflected in Le Pen's "anti-globalist" and Eurosceptic rhetoric (Stockemer, 2017).

What this information shows is that the messaging put out by Le Pen and RN has an audience in France and their policies speak to the concerns of some French people. Le Pen is

utilizing their pre-existing biases in order to tailor her message to maximize the mobilization of her base.

## **4.0 French National Identity**

In the previous section about the origins of nationalism and the nation state, it was emphasized that a nation is a group that congregates around an ideology or set of cultural values that abstractly represent “the nation.” To continue analysis into the reemergence of nationalist sentiment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this section will apply these principles by attempting to synthesize what ideological framework is the basis of the modern French nation and how Syrian migrants have been excluded from this imaging of the nation. The first component of this is understanding the “shared history” that serves as the foundation for French national identity. Next it is important to discuss the unique French culture that forms part of imagined community. This includes aspects such as religion, language, identity, etc., and each component will be dissected and expanded upon in this section. By focusing on certain elements of this national identity and crafting an exclusionary version of the French shared history, nationalists like Marine Le Pen and RN in France have been able to rally supporters around what they present as the “true French” identity against the wave of “foreign Syrian invaders.”

### **4.1 Origins and History**

The question of when the French nation began is a complicated one. King Clovis I is the first monarch to refer to himself as “King of the Franks” in 509 AD after he united the many competing Frankish tribes who lived within the borders of modern France (Horne, 2004). Others point to the ancient tribe of Gauls who used to reside within the modern borders of France as the cultural ancestors to the modern French nation (Horne, 2004). What both of these groups, the Franks and the Gauls, have in common is that they have largely defined themselves in contrast to the major groups around them. Their identity was largely formed around their independence and



separation from other hegemonic groups around them. For the Gauls this enemy manifested in the form of the Roman Empire. The Romans faced some of their fiercest opposition from the Gauls as they attempted to spread their influence and power across the ancient world. This resistance culminated in a series of struggles known as the Gallic Wars which took place from 58 BC to 50 BC and resulted in the ultimate defeat of the Gauls (Horne, 2004). After they were forced into life under Roman rule, the Gauls still worked to preserve their unique culture even as they politically became another province of the vast Roman Empire.

The Franks too had a complex relationship with the romans early in their history. They found themselves allied with or fighting against the Romans depending on the region, conflict, and local leadership (Horne, 2004). Once they were united under Clovis I they adopted a new trait that set the apart from other nations around them: Christianity. Clovis was the first Frankish/French ruler to become baptized in the Christian church which made the Franks the first Christianized tribe on a still largely pagan continent. As previously discussed in the section concerning the origins of nationalism, Anderson highlights religion as one of the unifying traits of a nation (Anderson, 1983). Becoming the first Christian tribe allowed the nascent French nation to unify around their newfound religion and also allowed members of this nation to clearly define the “in” group and the “out” group. For this reason, many historians and cultural anthropologists point to Clovis I and his kingdom as the birth of the French nation and the time when the seeds of French nationalism were planted. More on the role of religion and its impact on nationalist ideologies will be discussed later in this chapter.

Clovis I began a long line of French monarchs from many different families with a variety of religious and political affiliations. With the execution of Louis XVI the first Republic was born and the identity of the nation fundamentally changed. No longer did the monarch and their cultural

values define the ideology of the nation and the republican ideal of secularism removed the influence of any future leader's religion. With the advent of democratic representation, "Liberté, Égalité, et Fraternité" became the rallying cry of the French People (Horne, 2004). New national heroes such as Marat, or the fictitious Marianne became key components of the French national identity. The modern red, white, and blue French flag called the "Tricolour" replaced the white flag of monarchical France (Horne, 2004). The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen became the founding document for the new nation state (Horne, 2004). As discussed previously, the development and acceptance of these new national symbols redefined the culture of the nation state and shifted the ideals focused on by nationalists.

Now in its Fifth republic, French identity continues to remain strongly tied to the ideals of the Revolution but has also evolved to incorporate new ideas. After the second world war the new idea repeated throughout society was "Solidarity" (Milhaud, 2010). After the physical, economic, and human destruction experienced during the German occupation and subsequent liberation the country rallied together to rebuild their homes and lives. This time period saw the birth of France's expansive social welfare system as well as their universal healthcare system that to this day is a major source of pride for French citizens (Milhaud, 2010). Today there is still a Ministry of Solidarity and Health that helps oversee the massive bureaucratic structure that makes up the French social security system.

Each of these historical changes have contributed a piece to the modern French national identity. In the modern era the most significant change has come with France's membership in the European Union. Since the birth of the EU's predecessor, the European Coal and Steel Community, France has positioned itself as a key member state on the European continent (Pinder, 2007). To many French officials and people, the European Project is the end result of French efforts

and French leadership. This idea was pervasive in the 1960's that Charles de Gaulle twice vetoed the United Kingdom's application for membership. While he claimed it was due to political and economic concerns that he believed would damage the integrative project, many historians believe this was his attempt to maintain France's superiority in the Union (Pinder, 2007). Today, in light of Brexit, it seems that once again France is emerging as a key member state in the European Union. The integrative progress made by the European Union have not been universally lauded by all French citizens. The Rassemblement National and other "Eurosceptic" groups have argued that the EU has actually decreased French sovereignty and watered down the French national identity (Rassemblement National, 2016). As the Gauls and Franks had defined themselves in contrast with other around them, French nationalists have attempted to define themselves in contrast to the idea of European citizenship and continue to fight for their French identity (Stockemer, 2017).

What this historical background shows is the shared history that Anderson argues helps defined the imagined community of the nation-state (Anderson, 1983). The early kings and tribal origins established France as a separate entity to other peoples and countries. The revolutions created a political identity and a national origin story for future generations to rally around. Solidarity and the post-war reconstruction united the country together and established key systems that have become part of the French identity. The European Union has served to bolster French pride as the leaders of the continent while also creating internal resistance to the perceived loss of sovereignty an identity. This is similar to the phenomena discussed earlier in *Jihad vs. McWorld*. Both of these reactions to the EU contribute to the French National Identity and how members of the nation view themselves and those who are part of the "other." With a firm grasp of the shared history and how it has contributed to the French national identity, the next sections will break down other components of national identity beginning first with religion and its role in French society.

## 4.2 Religion and Secularism in France

France has a complicated history with religion. It has at times been a bastion of Catholicism and fervent defenders of the Church. Other times it has been intensely anti-religious and at times actively promoted secular policies. Today it seems to have settled on a sort of compromise between the two in a policy known as “Laïcité.” This section will explore the mercurial attitudes towards religion in France as well as the impact that current government policies have on the perception of outsiders, specifically Muslim refugees.

As previously discussed, France first became a Christian nation when Clovis I was baptized as King of the Franks. France’s monarchs from then on tried to appease the institutions of the catholic church and maintain it as a key part of French society. King Henri IV famously converted to Catholicism from Protestantism in order to appease the Catholic majority of the country (Horne, 2004). The staunchly catholic King Louis XIV famously revoked the Edict of Nantes that provided religious freedom to Protestants effectively reasserting Catholicism as part of the French identity (Horne, 2004). Throughout the decades Catholicism has remained an important part of French life. Even today the majority of French people identify themselves as catholic emphasizing again how important this label is to the French identity (Fernando, 2014). While currently 60% of French citizens identify as catholic that figure requires a bit of context (Fernando, 2014).

France is a famously secular country. It maintains a strict separation of church and state through a policy of laicity. This policy, in France, known as “Laïcité,” has very broad and strict guidelines. It forbids any person who works for the government or serves in a state-funded position from displaying any religious iconography or expressing any form of religious beliefs (Fernando, 2014). This includes state workers, teachers, local officials, doctors and other medical staff, etc.

(Fernando, 2014). This has far reaching implications and has also become a central issue within the debate surrounding immigration and refugees.

In the last presidential election, immigration and the Syrian Refugee crisis was at major topic of discussion for the candidates. Concerns about the economic impact of migrants and a series of terrorist attacks in France had the population feeling anxious. This issue of migration quickly got tied to the policy of Laïcité. The growing Muslim population in France posed a new challenge to the policy. Many practicing Muslim women continued to wear hijab or “the veil” as it is more commonly referred to in France (Bowen, 2007). To some critics this represented an unwillingness to assimilate and follow the laws that had been in place for decades (Bowen, 2007). To some more extreme pundits, the veil was a symbol of the type of religious extremism that was becoming a threat to French citizens (Bowen, 2007). Even though the vast majority of French people lived secular lives and rarely participated in any form of religious activities, the Catholic heritage of the French nation-state put the white French citizens in the “in” group and forced the growing Muslim minority into the “out” group (Bowen, 2007). These Islamophobic sentiments are not a new phenomenon in France. During its colonial rule of Algeria, the French government attempted to “westernize” and “assimilate” the Muslim populace (Evans, 2012). Many of the Algerians who migrated to France have faced generation of discrimination and social exclusion (Fernando, 2014). France’s history of exclusion and complicated relationships with minority groups will be further expanded upon in a later section of this chapter.

Religion, like a shared history, is a key component to the imagined community that forms a nation and often a major art in the imagined ideology that nationalists rally behind. France is no exception. Rassemblement National and other right-wing groups have appealed to religious ideals and the “otherness” of different religions to gather supporters who believe in the “true French

identity” (Stockemer, 2017). While Marin le Pen advocates for strict enforcement of Laïcité in the name of secularism, in reality it has become a tool of discrimination and exclusion for new ethnic groups arriving in France. Her policies focus almost exclusively on displays of Muslim religious symbols and talk very little about reinforcing policies against the wearing of the cross or display of Christian symbols (Rassemblement National, 2016). Yesterday it was the Algerians and today it is the Syrians who bear the brunt of this discrimination. Fear and otherness based in religious and cultural differences have helped fuel the flames of modern nationalism in France.

### **4.3 Language**

The next element of French national identity that is crucial to the discussion of nationalism is language. Anderson points out that language is one of the easiest ways for members of a nation to distinguish between members of the “in” group and those outside of the nation (Anderson, 1983). This section will look at how France and the French language are viewed by French people and how these ideas have been weaponized by RN and similar nationalist groups.

The official language of France is, unsurprisingly, French. This means that all government offices, street signs, and official forms appear in French. The origins of this type of policy can be traced back to 1635 and the foundation of the “Académie Française” (Horne, 2004). This institute was founded by Cardinal Richelieu for the preservation and study of the French language and to this day remains the preeminent authority on the language (Horne, 2004). The entire French lexicon as well all the rules of grammar are created and maintained by the Academy (Horne, 2004). This has made the ability to speak French, and more importantly “proper” French, a vital component for membership in the French nation-state. It also creates the expectation that any person who interacts with the massive French bureaucracy should be able to effectively speak

French. This makes obtaining legal documents and filling out government forms more difficult for those who cannot speak French.

The emphasis on speaking French has been weaponized in RN propaganda as well. Those who cannot speak French or who speak other languages have been painted as foreigners even if they have lived in France for several generations. To many nationalists, the French language is a key marker of those in the French-nation state and also serves as a proxy for race and ethnicity. French dialects spoken in former colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia are treated as inferior versions and those who speak it are marginalized (Evans, 2012). As with history and religion, language has been used by modern nationalist movements as another justification and reason to view Syrian refugees and most foreigners living in France as a threat and a problem. Le Pen herself has declared that her primary goal is to “make France more French” (Nossiter, 2017). This also alludes to larger trends of discrimination that have existed throughout French history. The next section will analyze historic incidents of discrimination and exclusion and how that has contributed to French national identity and modern nationalist movements.

#### **4.4 Xenophobia, Islamophobia, and Anti-Semitism in France**

This section takes a historical and sociological look at various times in history where increased levels of discrimination, whether it is anti-Semitism, xenophobia, or islamophobia, have become widespread throughout the French nation-state. The first example to be discussed is the anti-Semitism and discrimination witnessed during World War II. This conflict saw some of the greatest humanitarian and human rights tragedies in history. France, a major world power when the conflict began, quickly fell to the advancing German forces in 1940. The country was subsequently divided into an occupied zone controlled directly by the Nazis and a “free” zone

ruled by a cooperative French regime out of Vichy, France. Far from being complacent in German rule, the Vichy government actively coordinated efforts with Germany and the SS to capture and deport French Jews (Paxton, 2019). The Vichy government was headed by Marshal Petain hero of the First World War. Like many of the fascist leaders across Europe at the time. Petain attempted to construct a cult of personality that revolved around “true French ideals” and a France for the French mentality (Paxton, 2019). The Vichy government produced hundreds of pieces of anti-Jewish, anti-communist, and anti-immigrant propaganda. These publications created a climate of distrust and hostility towards minority groups in both the occupied and free zones.

This hostility is something that the French government and people are still attempting to reconcile. While some have openly apologized and voiced regret for France’s role in the Holocaust, the ideologies of French nationalism and anti-Semitism remain prevalent in many regions (Calamur, 2019). This state-sponsored hate speech and violence is not something that has been forgotten in the decades since. The liberation of France saw the fall of the Vichy regime but not the destruction of their ideology. Many political parties emerged that espoused some sort of hateful and exclusionary policies. In 1972 many of these fledgling factions were united under the banner of the Front National (National Front 2019). This self-proclaimed nationalist party reinvigorated the politics of exclusion that had been commonplace during the Vichy regime. France for the French, and government that serves white native-born French people became central features of the new party. Even beyond formal political organization, many in the French electorate personally hold the same beliefs that were codified and formalized during the German occupation of France (Wike, 2017). These xenophobic ideas continue to inform the voting patterns of the French populace and continue to play a role in the Syrian refugee crisis with many of the former Vichy regions of France now being where FN/RN find their highest levels of support (Smith, 2014).



Many of the statements and speeches given by Le Pen reflect the same bigoted rhetoric that appeared in Vichy French propaganda. During campaign rallies, Le Pen has referred to refugees and migrants as “that immense army of the shadows that want us to live in terror” (Nossiter, 2017). Campaign posters also emphasize the concept of the “true French people” vs. dangerous foreigners. One poster from the last election published by FN depicted a white woman with French flags painted on her cheeks with the tagline “Preserve our identity. Vote Front!” Another similar poster depicts the same woman juxtaposing a woman in a niqab with the text “Choose your neighborhood. Vote Front!” What this quote and these posters show is Le Pen’s clear creation of an “us vs. them” dichotomy. There is a clear divide between the beautiful, white, Christian French identity, and the shadowy dangerous Muslim foreigners. This conception of the nation creates a rallying point for nationalist supporters and promotes Islamophobic policies and discourse.

Another startling trend has played a much larger role in the growth of nationalism in France. French society has an unfortunate history of segregation and ethnic exclusion. The most apparent manifestation of this is the division between cities and the suburbs called “banlieue” (Franklin, 2018). While the cities are mostly populated with white French people, the suburbs are lower income areas with higher crime rates that have become the home to much of France’s minority populations (Franklin, 2018). So stark is this division that many neighborhoods are referred to solely as “the north African neighborhood” or “the Muslim quarter” (Franklin, 2018). This physical division between the white and minority populations of France carries over into social and economic life as well. Schools in these neighborhoods are of lower quality than schools in the cities (Franklin, 2018). Economic opportunity is much lower and employers outside of the suburbs often will not hire from these demographics, claiming that they employ “true French” workers only (Stockemer, 2017). This has caused tension on both sides of the dividing line and

continues to be a problem today. People who are descendants of Algerian immigrants are still referred to solely as Algerian even if their family members have been French citizens for multiple generations (Stockemer, 2017). This highlights an unwillingness to assimilate and incorporate other ethnic groups into French society as a whole. Even today, Algerians and symbols of Algeria are used in the campaign messages of FN as representations of “the other.” In the last presidential election Front National released posters with an image of the Algerian flag on a ballot going into a ballot box. The tagline was “if you do not vote, the immigrants will. Vote Front!” Other similar posters displayed a map of France with the Algerian flag superimposed over it and a woman in a burka standing beside the map. The poster displayed the message “No to Islamization. Youth for the Front.” It is propaganda like this published by Front National that helps perpetuate unwillingness to accept refugees and immigrants. This trend of non-assimilation has only become more apparent through the early treatment of Syrian refugees entering France. Tent cities appeared in many regions of Europe and large refugee camps emerged in Calais (Koroutchev, 2016). The unwillingness of French society to accept and integrate new ethnic groups leads to tensions and has continually contributed to discriminatory movements throughout French history.

#### **4.5 Role of the European Union in Nationalist Rhetoric**

France exists as a member state of the European Union and this membership also plays an important role in developing the nationalist French identity that Marine Le Pen and RN have used to increase their support. As the leader of the Eurosceptic movement in France, Le Pen has continually spoken of the European Union as a threat to the sovereignty of France (Stockemer, 2017). She has also criticized the Schengen Agreement because of its borderless immigration policies that she has argued are responsible for letting in Islamic radicals and other “undesirables”

(Stockemer, 2017). The European Union represents the faceless elites that Le Pen has repeatedly blamed for much of the struggles of the people. Many of her policies outlined in her “144 Presidential Proposals” discuss the burden the EU regulations and policies place on French people and the threat that its liberal immigration system poses to national security (Rassemblement National, 2016). It has also served as a group that can serve as a contrast to “the nation” of true French people that French nationalists have created. Continued membership in the EU is criticized not only as a bureaucratic drain or a globalist project, but also as an existential threat to France (Stockemer, 2017). The rhetoric she uses against the EU not only garners her the support of those Eurosceptics that exist in the French populace, but also allow her another opportunity to present herself as the protector of the French people and the champion of French sovereignty.

#### **4.6 Synthesis**

This chapter explored the origins of French national identity and how the various components of this identity have played a part in the rise of nationalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first section looked at the historical development of the French national identity over time and how these various parts have been manipulated by nationalists for their own goals. The subsequent sections explored the role that religion and language have played in both the development of a unique national identity and the formation of nationalist ideology. The last section provided historical examples of when this French identity manifested as an exclusionary label that had serious repercussions for those viewed as outside of the nation-state. To solidify her own political power, Marine Le Pen has taken presented herself as the protector of the French identity and during her failed presidential campaign advertised herself as “the president of those French who want to continue living in France as the French do” (Nossiter, 2017). These examples and historical trends

have provided the context and explanation for the nationalist reaction in France today due to the influx of Syrian refugees.

## **5.0 The French Economic Dimension**

In contrast with the previous section, which relied primarily on qualitative data and theory, this chapter will integrate quantitative data and measurements into the analysis. This will create an accurate portrait of the economic realities within the two case studies which can then be used to compare and contrast nationalist rhetoric about the economy and the true state of economic affairs. Fears of unemployment or overburdening of social safety nets has always been a focus of nationalist movements. These strike at the basest of human fears of insecurity and instability. This chapter will analyze the effectiveness of this propaganda and look at the language used in the discourse about refugees in the national economy. There are several key metrics that are necessary to make this kind of analysis so first they must be defined.

### **5.1 GDP, GNI, and Unemployment Rate**

It is important to understand the strength of the French economy because the claims made by RN mostly revolves around the idea that international migration has done significant damage to the French economy and is responsible for economic woes on both the micro and macro level (Alduy, 2016). To measure the strength of an economy three commonly used metric are Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Income (GNI), and the National Unemployment Rate. GDP is a valuation of the total output of a national economy based on data from within the physical country (France OECD, 2019). In order to get a snapshot of economic health at a particular moment and how it changes over time GDP, GDP per capita, and percent change of GDP year to year will be used for analysis. GNI is similar to GDP in that it measures total output of a national economy but it differs in that it also measures the output of assets held by national companies outside of the physical country (France OECD, 2019). The national unemployment rate measures the percentage

of the working age population that is currently not working. There are other metrics that could be used to measure economic strength such as inflation rate, debt-to-GDP ratio, and change over time in the valuation of currency but these would largely relay the same information as the previously chosen metrics without adding much more depth to the analysis.

## **5.2 The Employment Rhetoric of French Nationalists**

Before discussing the economic realities in France, it is important that the motivations and rhetoric of the nationalist movement are dissected. Nationalism relies heavily on the fear of the “other” and that most clearly manifests when people have fears about immigrants and refugees taking away the unskilled labor jobs that many rely on for a living. In order to bolster support for their movement, nationalist leaders tap into this fear often distorting the truth in order to paint a much scarier world. Trends in international migration and globalization have had profound impact on the global economic system but the weaponization of workers fears rarely addressed actual concerns or reflect the economic reality of the day.

Throughout history there are countless examples where the threat of economic uncertainty has been central to the ideologies of movements based in fear and hate. In Nazi Germany, the post-World War I economic downturn was blamed on Jews, communists, and other “undesirables” (Paxton, 2019). After the Great Recession, anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States increased in response to rising unemployment and concerns about the future of unskilled labor in America (Thompson, 2018). Today, concerns about the free movement of labor throughout the Schengen Zone has sparked nationalist backlash in Great Britain, France, and Germany. On a basic level these fears all revolve around members of the imagined “in” group fearing economic insecurity as a result of cheaper immigrant labor replacing their positions.

The nationalist movement emerging in France today is no different. Much of the political propaganda published during the last presidential and parliamentary elections by Rassemblement National (RN) focused on economic issues. In her presidential platform Marine le Pen proposed policies that would curb the flow of migrant workers from within the EU, restructure government procedures for obtaining work permits, and decrying the economic injustices created by globalization and membership in the EU (Rassemblement National, 2016). While many of the published policies seem to target EU migrants and migration in general, much of the contemporary rhetoric has revolved around Syrian refugees as the number of Syrians in Europe increases (Stockemer, 2017). On the campaign trail, Marine Le Pen denounced France's acceptance of Syrian refugees stating "more and more are coming from the third world taking advantage of our benefits" (Nossiter, 2017). The reason for this focus on foreign migrants is largely motivated by racism and islamophobia. The anti-migrant laborer propaganda focuses on two groups: Eastern European migrants, who are not viewed on the same level as citizens of Western European countries, and Syrian migrants who are viewed as foreigners and threats to national and economic security (Calamur, 2019).

### **5.3 Migrants as a Threat to Social Safety Nets**

In addition to fears over unemployment and the loss of jobs, nationalist propaganda also often portrays migrants and foreigners as burdens on the state. France is renowned for the scope and pervasiveness of its social programs but membership in the European Union and global migration patterns are now causing some to call for reforms to the system. In order to fully comprehend the proposed reforms and the propaganda concerning the welfare state this section will first provide a brief overview of the French welfare system.

In comparison to many of its fellow Western European states, France has a much more comprehensive approach to social welfare. Annually, it allocates 31% of its GDP towards its various social programs (Thomas, 2019). Funding for this program is derived from taxes collected on individuals and businesses. France collects 46.2% of its governmental operating budget from personal income taxes (Dobush, 2018). It uses this money to fund a wide variety of social programs. The most well-known of these programs is France's socialized medical insurance scheme. This program covers all medical expenses as well as the cost of prescription drugs. One unintended consequence of this is that the average French citizen consumes far more pharmaceuticals than other EU members. A reported 90% of doctors' appointments end with someone receiving a prescription for medication (Local, 2019). The current system does not require individuals to provide any form of proof that they are a French or EU citizen and any person can use the medical services. This singular point became a major point of contention in the last election. This insurance program also covers other forms of medical care including dental medicine, optometry, and other specialty care. While most primary care medical expenses are fully covered through government programs, some specialty care requires individuals to pay a small portion of costs (Local, 2019). The total costs of medical procedures per capita is still much lower than in other developed nations, notably the United States. In addition to health insurance, the French welfare state also provides other forms of support through unemployment insurance, workplace injury insurance, paid family leave, and retirement (Dobush, 2019).

As the average age of French and European Union citizens continues to increase there soon will be a larger pool of people pulling from state services than those paying into the system. This is a genuine concern and is a problem that much of the developed world is going to have to face as the reproductive rate of the developed world continues to decline. In order to address these



concerns reforms are necessary but those put forward by Marine Le Pen and RN attempt to use foreign nationals as a scapegoat for the cracks emerging in the system. In her presidential platform Marine Le Pen put forward several policy proposals designed at limiting access to health care for non-French citizens. One program would create a system of national medical identification cards that would be required in order to receive care (Rassemblement National, 2016). These cards would only be provided for French citizens and would force EU migrants and Syrian Refugees to pay for medical treatment out of pocket, utilize some form of private insurance, or receive care from non-governmental organizations (NGO) like the International Red Cross or World Health Organization (WHO). The logic put forward is that these people are not paying into this system or contributing to the French economy so they should not be able to benefit from it. Le Pen has bluntly stated what she believes to be the motivation for Syrian refugees coming to France as follows: “They want to transform France into a giant squat house” (Nossiter, 2017). This rhetoric, portraying foreigners as parasites on the system, creates another dangerous “us vs. them” division about healthcare and causes people to falsely assign blame to immigrants when the real problem is the aging of the French populace.

#### **5.4 Economic Realities in France**

Now that the propaganda and rhetoric of French Nationalists is understood, this can be contrasted with the economic realities in France. This section will utilize the previously defined metrics in order to develop an understanding of the strength and general trend of the French economy. As was alluded to in the previous section, there are genuine criticisms of the French economy that can be made but the solutions and policies put forward by RN unfairly target EU migrants and Syrian refugees as scapegoats. The facts and figures surrounding the French economy

will show that these groups have contributed little to the economic struggles that motivate many French voters and that these groups can in fact help long term economic growth.

GDP and GNI are essential metrics of economic growth and health. To contrast the propaganda discussed above, this section will provide facts and figures that ultimately dispel the protectionist rhetoric of RN. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), France is classified as a “High Income” member state meaning that its level of prosperity and economic health are some of the highest in the world today (France OECD, 2019). Since the Global Economic Crisis and Recession of 2008 swept across Western Europe, France has experienced an average annual GDP growth of 1.40% compared to the United States which average around 2% growth annually (France OECD, 2019). This is a healthy level of growth for a country of France’s size and makes it one of the more robust members of the Single Market in the European Union (The European Union, 2020). The Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook also reports that Frances GDP per capita in 2019 is \$42, 953.27 making it the 41<sup>st</sup> highest in the world (CIA, 2019). The World Bank reported in 2018 that France’s GNI per capita was \$43, 600, closely mirroring its GDP per capita (World Bank France, 2020). What all these metrics indicate is that France continues to have a healthy economy that has remained largely unaffected by the influx of Syrian refugees beginning in 2012.

With regards to unemployment it is important to note that the unemployment rate in France did rise between the February 2008 reaching a peak of 10.6% in May 2015 (World Bank France, 2020). Upon first glance it could be easy to falsely relate this to the increase in refugees entering the European Union and France. The Syrian refugee crisis is generally agreed to have begun in 2012 and numbers of refugees began to decline after a peak in 2015 due to new restrictions, regulation, and changing situations in the Middle East and European Union (BBC, 2016). A quick

exploration of other factors reveals that this correlation is likely unrelated to the increase in unemployment. Many economists note that this trend can more accurately be attributed to continued fallout from the Global Economic Recession in 2008. The impact of this event caused the slowdown of economic activity in much of the developed world and hit those economies closest to the United States the hardest. This includes the European Union, China, Japan, and many other prominent trading partners. Another point related to this trend that also further separates unemployment from the increase in migration is the fact that this increase in unemployment during this same time frame can be seen in many other countries. This includes other EU member states as well as countries completely removed from Europe and the Syrian refugee crisis. In Europe, the United Kingdom also experienced a similar rise in unemployment during the same time frame. Another EU member, Lithuania, experienced a much more dramatic spike in unemployment during this time reaching a peak of 18.3% in July 2010 (World Bank Lithuania, 2020). This example is of particular importance because Lithuania has received very few refugees under the EU's resettlement program. This suggests that the rise in unemployment witnessed in Lithuania, and many other EU member states, is caused by a factor other than an influx of Syrians. There are two factors, operating on different scales, that are responsible for these increases in unemployment. On the international level, continued fallout from the Eurozone crisis has contributed to restructuring and increased unemployment (Smith, 2014). On the local level, automation has decreased the required number of people to effectively operate most manufacturing plants (Smith, 2014). Neither of these factors has anything to do with immigration and neither is the focus of nationalist rhetoric.

The regions of France where the RN has gained the most ground and finds the most support are the northern industrial districts. In these regions, large portions of the population rely on

manufacturing jobs as their primary source of income. As technology has continued to improve, the need for large human workforces has steadily declined. Factory owners and corporations have found that investment in automation and robotic processes can help maximize profits and efficiency. Of course, these come at the cost of many human jobs. This is not a uniquely French problem, across the developed world, automation is displacing thousands of workers who had previously stable employment. Unfortunately, for the governments of the world, retraining and re-educating workers are currently the best options for addressing this economic trend. Programs like these are expensive, take time, and do not provide guaranteed employment for workers who complete them. This is why so many workers are drawn to the populist rhetoric of those preaching economic nationalism like Marine Le Pen in France or Donald Trump in the United States. An interesting facet of this trend is that researchers have found that it is not the bottom of the working class impacted by automation that tends to vote more for the radical right, but rather it is the lower middle class where FN finds the most support (Im, 2019). In a paper published by Zhen Jie Im et al. they argued that lower middle-class workers, who are under threat from automation, tend to vote more for the radical right than their working-class peers (Im, 2019) This is because working class voters are typically politically inactive and tend to abstain from elections more than voting for the far right. The lower middle class, that have both the economic fears imposed and the political consciousness to participate in elections, are the base of FN/RN in the modern era (Im, 2019). The rhetoric put forward by RN gives a face to the challenges and threat endured by French workers and this lower middle class. Policies like limiting migration or increasing documentation requirement for foreign workers are offered as quick solutions to complex problems. RN voters support these policies, regardless of the lack of evidence supporting them, because doing anything is better than the current inaction they witness from the national government.

Concerns about unemployment and economic fears are one of the most powerful motivators for any voter. Rassemblement National's effective weaponization of these fears can best be understood by analyzing where it has had the most impact. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, Front National found the most success in regions with the highest unemployment rates and regions where unemployment had increased the most since the last election (Smith, 2014). Maps depicting regions with higher unemployment and higher support for FN show a remarkable level of overlap. These regions also have the same catholic populations without college educations that were shown to have a more favorable view of FN in the previous chapter (Wike, 2017). This means that these regions are more likely to buy in to the xenophobic propaganda of FN and are more likely to feel the supposed "consequences" of unregulated immigration as Le Pen presents it. Yet, there is consistent evidence that suggests that not only does immigration not hurt employment rates or overburden social programs but in fact may actually help promote long term economic success over time.

## **5.5 Immigration Rates and Aging Populations**

This section will explore the relationship between immigration, aging workforces, and long-term economic health. In their article "Should International Migration Be Encouraged to Offset Population Aging? A Cross-Country Analysis of Public Attitudes in Europe" published in the Population Research and Policy Review authors Ceobanu and Koropecj-Cox analyze the relationship between migration and long-term economic growth. Their argument is based on the current demographic trends that can be observed not only in Europe, but in most of the developing world: the average age of a person in the developed world is increasing. This has troubling implications for the economic welfare of these countries moving forward. Countries like Japan

and China are projected to experience a reduction in the size of their workforce by almost 20% by 2040 (Ceobanu, 2013). By 2060, if current trends continue, Japan will lose almost half of its working age population (Ceobanu, 2013). Countries like France, Italy, and Germany are also projected to experience similar reductions of 10-15% over a similar timeframe (Ceobanu, 2013). What they discuss in this piece is the very mechanism behind what's motivating many nationalist supporters. Automation and aging populations are the actual causes of increasing unemployment and the increased burden on social services. While nationalist parties have been quick to blame immigration, this paper and the paper of Ceobanu highlight that immigration may actually be the key to saving Western workforces and their national economies.

The theory proposed by Ceobanu and Koropeckyj-Cox argues that the economic benefits conferred on a state by international migration greatly outweigh any nationalistic or xenophobic concerns about their impact on the nation. They point to that immigrant populations tend to be younger, tend to have children at a higher rate than native citizens (at least for the first few generations), and that they have a high tendency to open small businesses that increase local employment and governmental tax revenues (Ceobanu, 2013). The income tax and other forms of government revenue collecting implemented in the European Union, such as the Value Added Tax (VAT) on most goods, are the means by which current and future immigrants can help contribute to long term economic health in the EU. For France and Turkey, the two case studies of this thesis, immigration and the acceptance of Syrian refugees could help remedy the problems that will arise as French and Turkish populations continue to age with a low reproductive rate.

Scholars also point out that countries with robust immigration policies have thus far been able to avoid the early stages of this global aging and decline in workforce. Particularly, Australia, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom are highlighted as examples where their higher

levels of immigration have managed to keep the average age of the work force low and these countries are some of the few developed nations expected to experience an increase in their working age populations over the next several decades (Ceobanu, 2013). This literature has not been updated to factor in the changes to British immigration as a result of Brexit, but they nonetheless provide valuable insight into the positive impacts of immigration. The take-away is clear that Syrian refugees, and indeed most immigrants may actually help the economy rather than hurt it as nationalists are quick to argue.

## **5.6 Synthesis**

This section explored the myths and rhetoric surrounding immigration and economics put forward by the Nationalist movement of France, manifesting in the Rassemblement National. This propaganda was then contrasted with the economic realities of the state expressed by its unemployment rate, GDP, and GNI revealing that many of the claims made by RN are completely false or based in misinformation and fearmongering. The last section then revealed that not only are immigrants not responsible for increasing unemployment rates and overburdening of social safety nets, but may in fact be the key to fighting these problems and promoting long term economic health in France. Economic fears are a central tenet of many nationalist platforms, but it is not one that is based in reality. It serves only as a method of promoting simple populist solutions based in xenophobia that, in the long term, may end up hurting the people that they are supposed to help the most.

What these three chapters have shown is how Marine Le Pen has rebranded Front National for the modern world in order to expand the reach of party's message. She has worked to take advantage of pre-existing biases amongst certain populations of the French electorate in order to

create an exclusionary definition of what it means to be French. This creates an imagined concept of the French nation that serves as an “in group” that must be protected from the “out group.” To fill the role of this nefarious out group, RN has casted Syrian refugees as economic burdens who want to come take jobs and pensions away from French workers and corrupt the purity of France through Islamization. The in-group out-group dynamic used by Le Pen and her party have not yet won her the presidency, but they have begun to win some municipal positions and European Parliament seats for the French nationalist movement. This malevolent messaging and political strategy have added xenophobia and islamophobia back into mainstream French politics to the detriment of the state, European Union, and world as a whole.

The next three chapters will examine how Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party have relied on developing a similar in-group out-group dynamic to solidify their power and accomplish their political agenda. Turkey provides a case study in what happens once nationalist discourse becomes translated into nationalist policy, and highlights the human cost of these ideologies for citizens and refugees alike.



## 6.0 Turkish Leadership

Now that the discussion of France and the variety of factors contributing to its revival of nationalism is concluded, the next three chapters will focus on the other case study: Turkey. To allow for an easy comparison of the two case studies, a parallel structure will be used. This means that the same dimensions and factors, such as religion and economics, will be discussed but within the framework of Turkish society and historical background. Since the first factor discussed for the French case was the role that leadership and the prevailing nationalist party play on modern nationalism, this will also be the focus of this first chapter for Turkey. Just as Marine Le Pen and the nationalist party her father founded have largely shaped the narrative of French nationalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so too have Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) shaped the policy regarding Syrian refugees.

One key difference between the role of Erdogan and Le Pen is that Erdogan is currently the president of the Republic of Turkey and his party controls the legislature. This makes Erdogan's leadership more impactful because while Le Pen and RN have added their ideology to the national political discourse, Erdogan and his party currently make up the ruling regime in Turkey. Their influence goes beyond simple proposals and campaign platforms and is actually translated into real policy decisions. This section will highlight Erdogan's rise to power and the influence that he has had on shaping the nationalist discourse surrounding the millions of Syrian Refugees who live in Turkey today. To begin this discussion, the next section will provide a brief biography of President Erdogan and his rise to power in Turkey.

## 6.1 Biography of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Recep Tayyip Erdogan was born in Istanbul, Turkey on February 26, 1954 and completed his primary schooling in the Istanbul school system (Republic of Turkey, 2020). He received his college degree from Marmara University's Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in 1981 and during his time in college took an active role in youth politics as a member of several political youth organizations (Republic of Turkey, 2020). His first foray into formal politics came in 1983 when he joined the newly founded Welfare Party, an Islamist political group that replaced two previously existing Islamic parties that had been banned from political participation (Republic of Turkey, 2020). Eventually in 1998, the Welfare party itself would also be banned from the political arena because it, like its predecessors, was determined to have violated the constitutional separation of church and state (Taspinar, 2012). Quickly rising through the ranks of the party, Erdogan became a member of the party's Central Executive Board in 1985, where he used his new position to increase youth and women outreach to broaden the party's base (Republic of Turkey, 2020). On March 27, 1994, four years before the party would be banned by the Turkish Constitutional Court, Erdogan was elected Mayor of Metropolitan Istanbul and began a series of reforms and projects aimed at improving life for Turkish citizens in a bid to garner more support for his Islamist party (Republic of Turkey, 2020).

As the central government, army, and Constitutional court began to grow increasingly wary of the messaging and theocratic nature of the Welfare Party, Erdogan became an outspoken proponent of his party and its religious ideologies (Taspinar, 2012). This culminated in public speech where he recited a modified version of a historical Turkish poem, where the modified verses were deemed by the Turkish court system to be a call to arms of the Welfare Party's Islamic supporters and an attempt to incite violence against the state (Taspinar, 2012). As a result of this

incident Erdogan was convicted of attempting to incite violence of a religious or racial nature, stripped of his mayoral title, and sentenced to ten months in prison (Republic of Turkey, 2020).

After serving four months of his ten-month sentence, Erdogan and other former members of various Islamic political factions founded the Justice and Development Party in 2001, which goes by the Turkish abbreviation AKP (Republic of Turkey, 2020). This party like the Welfare party found its roots in Islamic ideologies and struggled to present itself in a way that would not result in its forced removal or ban by the constitutional court (Taspinar, 2012). This new party quickly gained popularity and Erdogan was elected to the office of prime minister in the 2003 elections running on a center-right Islamist platform (Republic of Turkey, 2020). He would serve as Prime Minister of Turkey under the now-defunct parliamentary system from 2003 to 2014, and in 2014 was elected to be the 12<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Turkey (Republic of Turkey, 2020).

In 2017, the Turkish parliament passed a constitutional amendment changing Turkey from a semi-presidential system where the majority of the power rested with the parliament to a full presidential system (Republic of Turkey, 2020). In 2018, Erdogan was elected as the “First President of the Republic of Turkey” under the new system and carried his party to a majority of seats in the legislature (Republic of Turkey, 2020). The major impact of this political change was that it granted much broader powers to the executive and allowed Erdogan to speed up the democratic backslide that has been ongoing in Turkey for many years (Eder, 2016). What is clear from this brief biography is the Islamic basis for much of Erdogan’s political career and his ability to reshape and redefine himself and his platform to most effectively coalesce power.

## 6.2 The Rise of the Justice and Development Party

Unlike FN/RN in France which has existed for almost 50 years, Erdogan's AKP has only been around for 19 years (Kumbaracibasi, 2009). It is important to note however that AKP is very much the successor of previous Islamist parties who have existed at the margins of Turkish politics since the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Taspinar, 2012). The key to AKP's success seems to be a combination of rebranding and shifts in the political structure of Turkey. While previous Islamic-based parties like the Welfare Party and its predecessor were removed either by the military or by the Constitutional Court, Erdogan has managed to avoid these two major hurdles as he centralizes power under the office of the president (Eder, 2016). One reason for this is his co-optation and appeasement of the military in Turkey which has allowed him to not only avoid political banishment but also more directly enforce his will onto the people (Kumbaracibasi, 2009). To overcome the second major hurdle, Erdogan has taken a two pronged approach of appointing loyal justices to the Constitutional court, as well as marketing the AKP as center-right conservative party rather than an more radical Islamic party like the Welfare Party and others (Taspinar, 2012). This has allowed his party to not only remain a legitimate political entity, but has also allowed AKP to become an unchallenged political force in Turkey with Erdogan serving as its increasingly authoritarian leader (Eder, 2016).

Erdogan's efforts to rebrand the AKP provides two valuable insights to the overall discussion of contemporary nationalism. First, it highlights that Erdogan's desire to remain in power supersedes any ideological convictions he has about promoting Islamic ideals. While he still has calls for solidarity with other Islamic parties across the Muslim world, notably the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, he is willing to sacrifice that branding to remain in control of government (Kumbaracibasi, 2009). This observation then lends itself to the second major insight which can

help explain the disconnect between Erdogan's message of Islamic solidarity and his discrimination and anti-Syrian messaging (Farooq, 2019). In order to achieve this rebranding Erdogan and AKP have had to add additional dimensions to their party platform in order to rally supporters. What they have chosen to focus on is the Turkish national identity and their imagining of the nation-state (Kumbaracibasi, 2009). This is why we see a resurgence of focus on the legacy of the Ottomans and Atatürk as well as parallels being drawn to Erdogan and famous historical leaders of Turkey (Eder, 2016). The state-run website from which much of the above biographical information was drawn makes numerous emphatic references to Erdogan as the "First President of the Republic of Turkey" and features portraits of Erdogan and Atatürk side by side (Republic of Turkey, 2020). Images from various speeches or rallies that Erdogan has attended also contain his portrait usually paired with the Turkish flag and portraits of Ataturk. This is all a thinly veiled attempt to create a connection between President Erdogan and the "Father of Modern Turkey" Atatürk in order to further establish the cult of personality he has fostered as an authoritarian president. The irony is that secular, progressive Ataturk and Islamist, authoritarian Erdogan could not be more different leaders. What this reliance on national identity and pride has done is create the perfect breeding ground for nationalism in Turkey. So although the vast majority of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey belong to the same sect of Islam that Erdogan and his supporters do, the difference in national origin now matters more in the interactions between these groups. This explains the religious paradox and provides background for the role that Erdogan and AKP have played in creating this modern wave of nationalism that can be observed in Turkey.

### 6.3 Electoral Support for AKP

As discussed with the French example, it is important to understand who is voting for AKP and why. Turkey's recent national and municipal elections provide insight into the evolving voting patterns of the Turkish electorate. Although Erdogan's AKP maintains control of the country on almost every level, some challenges have slowly begun to emerge from the opposition. The most notable challenge was AKP's recent loss in the mayoral election in Istanbul in 2019 to the Republican People's Party (Soz, 2019). This Republican People's Party, abbreviated as CHP, won the rerun of the election in June 2019 after the results of the original March 2019 election were contested (Soz, 2019). CHP is a social democratic party that follows in the legacy of Ataturk as a more secular, progressive, and cosmopolitan party. Increasing concern about Erdogan's authoritarianism and Islamic principles have caused an increase in support for opposition parties in Turkey (Soz, 2019). One of the major issues that concerns Turkish voters is the war in Syria and the influx of refugees. On this issue, Erdogan's party maintains a majority of popular support for their policies and initiatives (Soz, 2019). Where they seem to be facing the most opposition is on relations with Turkey's Kurdish population and their economic practices. On these issues, AKP has faced its own internal struggles with their "chief strategist" resigning over Erdogan's unwillingness to make reforms, and their chief economic minister resigning due to similar concerns (Soz, 2019). This has put Erdogan's son-in-law, Berat Albayrak, in charge of economic advisement. Erdogan's rhetoric against the Kurds has also caused some Turkish voters to question their support for his party. Another opposition party in Turkey is the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) which has mobilized Kurdish voters in opposition to AKP (Soz, 2019).

Unfortunately, two major factors limit the effectiveness of these opposition movements to AKP. The first is that Erdogan's policies on the Syrian War and Syrian refugee crisis still remain

hugely popular amongst Turkish voters (Soz, 2019). This allowed him and AKP to win the national elections in 2018 and has assured that they will remain in power at least until the next elections in 2023 (Soz, 2019). The second factor is that the longer Erdogan remains in power, the more authoritarian the Turkish government becomes and the less the actual will of the people matters. Since the attempted coup against him, Erdogan has begun jailing journalists, government officials, and other political figures who oppose his party on vague charges of terrorism (Soz, 2019). He has gone so far already as to forcibly remove and arrest several HDP mayors and party leaders on charges of terrorism in a clear authoritarian power grab (Soz, 2019). Thus, for the time being it appears as if the majority of Turkish voters still support Erdogan and his government and the longer they support him the less likely it is that an effective challenge can be mounted to his authority. This means that the more time passes, the more powerful Erdogan becomes and the more likely it is that his view of Turkey becomes reality.

## **7.0 Turkish National Identity**

Continuing with the parallel structure of analysis, this chapter will discuss the origin of the Turkish national identity. As Anderson explains in *Imagined Communities*, national identity and the idea of the nation is based on invisible ties built around a shared language, a common history, and other cultural factors such as religion (Anderson, 1983). This chapter will break down each of these components in order to develop a deep understanding of what Turkish people believe it means to be Turkish and what they think separates them from nations and ethnic groups around them. Ultimately, it is these perceived differences that create the exclusionary mentality which leads to the nationalist sentiment observed in modern Turkey and the discrimination of Syrian refugees. This section recounts the historical and cultural development of the Turkish national identity and then shows how it has been weaponized by Turkish nationalists to exclude Syrian refugees and promote Erdogan and AKP as the protectors of this unique cultural identity.

### **7.1 Origins and History**

The name Turkey is derived from the ancient Latin word meaning “land of the Turks.” Similar to how the Gauls were a semi-nomadic tribe that settled in modern France, the Turks settled within the boundaries of modern-day Turkey (Kaldellis, 2019). The rich agriculture land and access to ports allowed them to quickly establish prosperous settlements and slowly sow the seeds of future empire (Kaldellis, 2019).

The history of the Turkish people begins with several centuries of conquest and reconquest and occupation by a variety of different forces. Most notably the first large empire to occupy parts of modern Turkey was the Roman empire (Kaldellis, 2019). As with much of the known ancient world, the Turkish people were governed as a province of the Roman empire. As the power of



Rome began to decline Constantinople, what is today known as Istanbul, Turkey, was declared the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire when the imperial holdings were divided in two in 330 AD (Kaldellis, 2019). The Eastern Roman Empire, also known as the Byzantine Empire, would outlast much of the western Roman empire with Turkey as its center of power (Kaldellis, 2019). This imperial prestige is often harkened back to in Turkish culture and classical literature (Uzer, 2016). The siege of Constantinople in 1453 crushed the last remnants of the ancient Roman empire and gave rise to the Ottoman Empire, with whom the modern Turkish state relates much more closely to (Kia, 2019). The Ottomans empire differed from many other major powers at the time in that it did not impose its language or culture on the lands and people they conquered (Kia, 2019). They ruled over many nations and many peoples until the end of the First World War, while allowing those in the conquered provinces to live their lives largely uninterrupted by the conquering authorities (Kia, 2019). This does not mean that the Ottomans viewed all cultural groups equally though. They still viewed their centralized Islam-based culture as superior to the Christians and other religious sects over which they had dominion, but their religious tolerance was something largely unseen at the time (Kia, 2019).

World War I saw the end of the long-standing Ottoman Empire and the birth of the modern Republic of Turkey (Kia, 2019). The founder and “father” of this new republic is Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. As the first president of the new republic elected in 1923 he began several ambitious and large-scale projects aimed at modernizing and westernizing the new Turkish state (Bay, 2011). He also sought to establish Turkey as a regional power seeking diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and many western powers including the longtime enemies of the Turks, Greece (Bay, 2011). The cultural impact of Atatürk and his programs had far reaching implications for the Turkish state and the modern Turkish national identity. The following sections will go into more detail about

how each of these historical time periods impacted and contributed to the Turkish identity. A particular focus will be given to the impact of Atatürk and his programs, because many Turkish people today still view him as the father of the nation (Bay, 2011). The Turkish people take pride in their history of empires, conquest, and progressive development. The modernization and secularization conducted by Atatürk set Turkey apart from many of its Middle Eastern neighbors. This has over time contributed to a sense of superiority that has now become the root of nationalism and discrimination in modern Turkey. Syrians and other Arabic refugees are viewed as inferior to the Turkish people and unwelcome in their country (Uzer, 2016). These historical events and trends have again highlighted that the development of a national identity and the concept of a shared history serves as a powerful basis for contemporary nationalism.

## **7.2 Turkey in the Islamic World**

Perhaps one of the most defining features of the Turkish national identity is the constant effort by the Turkish people to stand out and exist as a separate entity from the rest of the world around them. This holds true both in the ancient world and as they became members of the Islamic world. While Kissinger in his book *World Order* suggests that most Islamic based governments at their core seek a unified multinational caliphate, Turkey throughout its history has sought to differentiate itself from the powerful Islamic entities (Uzer, 2016). The two predominant ethnic groups that make up the majority of the middle east are Persian and Arabic. Persian people originate from Iran and speak the language Farsi. This language, spread by the Persian empire, is today spoken in a variety of dialects in Afghanistan and Tajikistan as well as modern day Iran (Uzer, 2016). Arabic people originate from the Arabian Peninsula and through early Muslim conquests now inhabit the majority of the middle east. Arabic is also the name of the language

spoken in the majority of these countries although regional dialects and variations exist (Uzer, 2016). The Turkish people have made a conscious effort to resist assimilation into either of these groups even during the many centuries of conquest and occupation that saw these groups trading control of Turkey (Uzer, 2016). The Turks also maintained their own unique culture during the Byzantine empire and the governance of the Romans. This effort to create and preserve a unique identity has existed throughout Turkish history and continue until the modern era. This next section will look at religion and the role that it has played in shaping Turkish national identity.

### **7.3 Religion and Secularism in Turkey**

While France converted to Christianity early on in its history, Turkey has had a less straight forward trajectory in terms of religion. The Byzantine empire, with its capital in Constantinople, emerged during the last years of the Roman empire when Emperor Constantine had declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire (Kaldellis, 2019). The division of the empire also corresponded with a division of Christendom where the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church split (Kaldellis, 2019). The Orthodox church became an integral part of the Byzantine culture and part of the lives of Turkish people residing within imperial borders (Kaldellis, 2019). Change in governance brought with it changes in religion as well.

As the Ottomans built their empire from the ruins of the Byzantine empire, they brought to their new government their religion: Islam (Kia, 2019). For the remainder of Turkish history the predominant religious group is Muslim. This does not mean that there are no other groups present but the vast majority identify with Islam. During the reign of the Ottoman Empire, being Muslim became an essential component to the Turkish identity. While the Ottoman empire maintained

religious tolerance for a wide variety of ethnicities and religions, Turkish Muslims had the most opportunity to advance through the vast Ottoman bureaucracy (Kia, 2019).

With the birth of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk wanted to reshape the Turkish identity and pivot away from the Islamic world and more towards the western world (Bay, 2011). One of the major reforms that Atatürk enacted was a strict policy of secularism in the new Republic of Turkey (Bay, 2011). This forbids the public display of religious symbols, the wearing of religious dress such as head scarves, and banned the call to prayer that was often loudly broadcasted in the streets to worshippers (Edroos, 2018). The provisions regarding secularism in the new constitution also established a strict separation between religion and governance (Edroos, 2018). These provisions are the same ones that were used by Turkey's constitutional court to ban Erdogan's previous Islamist parties. The rigidity of Turkey's secular governance is based on some of the regions strictest laws regarding religion and government.

This has all begun to change under the rule of Erdogan and AKP. The active promotion of Islamist ideas and reliance on support from conservative Muslim communities has shaped the current government's approach towards secularism. Some representatives within AKP have called this constitutional secularism oppressive towards "pious citizens" and have called for reforms to assure that religious Turks receive the "same rights" as every other Turkish citizen (Edroos, 2018). Some more radical members of AKP have even called for amendments to the constitution to remove the state enforced secularism to allow for more Islamic policies in government (Edroos, 2018). One notable champion of this movement is Erdogan's wife who regularly wears a headscarf during public appearances and in government offices. This type of rhetoric, while appealing to conservative Muslims in Turkey, has little appeal to the general voting population in Turkey who view secularism as an important part of modern Turkish culture (Edroos, 2018). There has been

push back from his political opposition as well as resistance from Turks who for generations have enjoyed a secular society in Turkey (Heper, 2013). Acknowledging the risk of promoting such radical pro-Islamic changes to Turkey's constitution, Erdogan has taken a much more measured approach to the issue promoting relaxation of these laws rather than their outright abolishment (Edroos, 2018). While he is still undoubtedly a pro-Islamist leader who promotes Islamic values through his policies, Erdogan's tact in adjusting his rhetoric to increase his appeal shows his skill as a populist leader. His recent actions taken against Syrian refugees also highlight his ability to go directly against his messages of Muslim solidarity in order to maintain popular support and political control.

The millions of Syrians currently residing within Turkey belong to the same religious sect as Erdogan and most Turkish Muslims, yet the forced deportations and anti-immigrant rhetoric that is coming from Ankara highlights that national identity supersedes religious unity. Turkey's history has been one of divergence and differentiation in the Muslim world and Erdogan's current policies put this on display. While he has used religion to develop a cult of personality and to rally supporters, his focus is on the preservation of the nation over which he rules and not loftier goals of religious unity and harmony. While the Ottomans and beyond have been major powers in the Islamic world, the Turkish national identity has always been one that emphasizes its uniqueness and separation from all countries around it. This is the basis for Turkish nationalism that is observed today. Turkey has and continued to view itself as distinct and more advanced than its Arabic neighbors and as such has rallied to Erdogan nationalistic and protectionist messaging. The current debates surrounding Turkish secularism highlight both the general public's resistance to Islamic elements of society, and Erdogan's ability to adapt his message to best reflect the what he perceives as the general will of the people. While religion plays a key part in this differentiation,

language has also played a role in helping Turks set themselves apart from both Europe and the Middle East and this dynamic is explored in the next section.

#### **7.4 Written and Spoken Language**

As previously discussed the two predominant language groups in the middle east are Farsi and Arabic. Yet, in Turkey they speak neither of these languages and instead speak their own unique language: Turkish (Uzer, 2016). This is notable because the reason that two languages dominant so many countries is primarily because of the history of conquest in the area. First the Persian empire conquered and spread Farsi to all its provinces, and then the spread of Arabic tribes and the spread of Islam through conquest spread Arabic across the Middle East (Kia, 2019). Yet, the Turkish people managed to preserve their language during all the centuries of occupation and shifting governments. This has helped the Turkish people maintain their unique national identity.

Another important contribution that Atatürk and his reforms made to the modern Turkish national identity is the change in alphabet. During Ottoman rule, Ottoman Turkish utilized the same Perso-Arabic alphabet that was used throughout the Middle East but as part of his westernization efforts Atatürk changed this to the Latin alphabet used throughout Western Europe (Bay, 2011). This further distinguished Turkish from any other language in the surrounding countries. Now, not only did the spoken language distinguish Turks from those around them but after this alphabetic shift the written language also provided another differentiating characteristic.

#### **7.5 Turkey and the European Union**

Although Turkey has yet to gain membership into the European Union, the regional cooperation still plays a role in Turkish politics and the Turkish national identity. The continued

attempts by consecutive regimes to gain membership into the EU highlights the Turkish desire for formal recognition as a European state. Going back to the days of the Ottoman Empire, Turks played an active role in the First World War and sought to be viewed as an equal colonial power to the Western empires of continental Europe (Kia, 2019). After the fall of the Ottomans, the primary goal of Ataturk's reform movement was the modernization, secularization, and westernization of Turkey so that it would be culturally more similar to continental Europe and could further distinguish itself from the Middle East (Bay, 2011). Today, the pursuit of membership in the EU is the continuation of this desire to be viewed as an integral part of Europe. These efforts have been complicated by Erdogan and his increasingly authoritarian tendencies. The democratic backsliding that Turkey has been undergoing under the AKP regime coupled with its tenuous economic situation have caused many within the EU to call for an end to membership talks with Turkey (Reilhac 2019). Whether or not they become a member of the bloc anytime soon doesn't change the fact that the EU is viewed by many to be the logical next step towards Europe and away from Asia.

## **7.6 Synthesis**

The national identity of the Turkish people has been defined by what sets them apart from those around them. Their unique geographical position situates them at the doorstep of Europe and the very beginning of what is considered the Middle East, helping to create a culture that is not wholly encapsulated by any region. The long Turkish history of empire, conquest, upheaval created a sense of pride in the Turkish ethnicity and identity. The modernization efforts of Ataturk helped further differentiate Turkish people from Persians, Arabs, and Europeans. Their shared history, culture, religious identity, and language have all created a distinct national identity that

has becoming a rallying point for Turkish nationalists under Erdogan's regime. Being defined largely in contrast and opposition to the Arabic world has also contributed greatly to the anti-Syrian sentiment that can be observed in Turkey today.



## **8.0 The Turkish Economic Dimension**

As with the previous section on economics, this section will now diverge from the qualitative analysis of the previous sections on Turkey in order to provide a quantitative analysis of the economic aspect of Turkish nationalism. The structure will be largely similar to the section on France with a few sections modified. Firstly, the Turkish economy will be compared in size and strength to the French economy to provide context for the financial situation in each case study. Next, as with France, a section will be dedicated to the nationalist rhetoric based in economic fears that appears in Turkey. This includes both their impact on employment and their perceived effect on social safety nets. A discussion of the Turkish governments employment policies will also shed light on the early actions taken by the state to integrate migrants and the nationalist backlash experienced afterwards. Then, an analysis of recent Turkish policies on migrant movement within Turkey and its economic consequences will be discussed. The goal of this chapter, as with the French economic section, is to develop an understanding of the rhetoric and logic put forth by nationalist groups in Turkey and then to compare this constructed version of the economy with the economic realities of Turkey. What this analysis shows is that, just as with the French example, the economic rhetoric surrounding Syrian refugees is based in misconceptions, and the protectionist policies crafted around this misinformation hurt both Turkish citizens and Syrian refugees.

### **8.1 Turkey's Economy vs. France's Economy**

For several decades Turkey has been attempting to gain membership in the European Union (Reilhac, 2019). They have attempted to rein in their debt to GDP ratio, tried to prove that they believe in the same humanitarian and social norms as other members of the bloc, and have tried to

present themselves as a beacon of stable democracy (Reilhac, 2019). Over time they have had varying levels of success with these programs and have subsequently moved closed and further away from being accepted. Much of this progress has been undone however under the rule of President Erdogan, who many believe is trying to serve as a pseudo-theocratic dictator (Reilhac, 2019). In addition to the democratic backslide that Turkey is experiencing, it is also having rather severe economic troubles. In 2018, Turkey experienced a national debt and currency crisis that many economists worried would set in motion the next global financial crisis (Goodman, 2018). While there are many contributing factors to this debt crisis, the main factors have been attributed to high inflation, overborrowing from the national government, and high levels of loan defaults (Goodman, 2018). Many of these problems were initiated as Erdogan continued to centralize power under the executive branch in a very authoritarian manner and began passing and enforcing questionable interest rates and borrowing policies (Goodman, 2018). Additionally, economists point to Turkey's long-standing trend of having low savings rates built in to their national budget (Goodman, 2018). This leaves them without many resources during times of financial decline, and leaves them unable to fund large mitigation programs during times of crisis (Goodman, 2018).

So, while France and Turkey are both nominally "European" states, they exist with very different economic situations. The next part of this section will elaborate on key economic metrics in Turkey to develop a clear picture of the quantitative differences between France and Turkey. A comparison of these two case studies can be used to show both the similarities and differences between the potential economic motivations of nationalist groups and their supporters.

Turkey's total GDP as of 2018 was \$771.35 Billion with a total national population of 82 million people (World Bank Turkey, 2020). Compare this to France's total GDP of \$2.8 Trillion in 2018 with a total national population of 67 million people (World Bank France, 2020). This

highlights a major difference in the economic strength of the two economies. The GDP per capita further highlights the economic disparity between these two countries. In 2018, Turkey had a GDP per capita of \$9,370 (World Bank France, 2020). Compare this to France's GDP per capita in 2018 of \$41,463 (World Bank France, 2020). It is important to note that the difference in these metrics does not immediately mean that Turkey should be viewed as an impoverished state. These metrics and others simply highlight that there is a vast difference in the economic strength of these countries. Another important distinction can be found in the OECD's classification of these two case studies. While France has the classification of a "High Income" state, Turkey does not have this same designation putting it in a different qualitative category (France OECD, 2019). This serves as another metric to distinguish Turkey from France. What this difference indicates is that France has more financial resources available for the influx of refugees and has an economic situation that is more forgiving to an influx of people who need social services and state assistance as they resettle. The number of migrants and their impact on the social services of Turkey will be analyzed in later sections of this chapter. Now, with a firm understanding of the economic strength of Turkey, the next section will discuss the employment situation in Turkey as well as government actions taken in an attempt to address the influx of refugees into the country.

## **8.2 Employment, Social Safety Nets, and Turkish Resettlement Efforts**

The general unemployment rate of Turkish adults in 2017 was measured at 13% with youth unemployment measured at 19% (Del Carpio, 2018). This makes it higher than many of the countries currently members of the European Union including France. As of 2004 35.9% of Turkish people were employed in the agricultural sector compared to 4.6% of French citizens in the same year (Del Carpio, 2018). Another important aspect of the Turkish labor force is the high

number of people who are either self-employed or employed in the informal sector. People who are self-employed or who work in the informal sector receive less government protections and may receive fewer benefits than those employed in organized corporations and formal businesses (Del Carpio, 2018). The relationship between this specific facet of the economy and nationalism is that these types of jobs are much more vulnerable to being undercut by migrant workers and refugees. The low skill requirements of the agricultural sector and the informal job sector mean that it is more likely that employers would hire foreign laborers and a cheaper rate than native workers. This adds to the fears of the already anxious Turkish workforce who continue to weather high unemployment rates and the fallout of the 2018 currency crisis.

The sheer scope of the refugee crisis in Turkey has also been a cause for alarm amongst the native population. In 2018, there were approximately 3.3 million displaced Syrians living in refugee camps and Turkish cities, making it the largest single recipient of refugees in Europe and the Middle East (Del Carpio, 2018). With its already struggling economy and its relatively small national budget, Turkey was quickly overwhelmed by the number of people seeking asylum. During a public address, Erdogan attempted to highlight the feeling of isolation of overburdening that many of Turkish people felt. He stated that “we are the ones who feed 3 million refugees” (Karadeniz, 2016). While this makes for a good sound bite, it does not reflect the reality of the situation. While Turkey does bear much of the physical cost of housing 3 million people, and a portion of the economic costs as well, the international community has also provided significant aid to Turkey. The United Nations, European Union, and many non-governmental organizations have provided resources and capital to help Turkey. In order to provide aid to the Turkish state as well as prevent refugees from entering into the European bloc, the European Union struck a deal with Turkey that would provide financial support to Turkey if they agreed to continuing hosting

the vast majority of refugees within their state borders (Ingleby, 2019). While this influx of capital helped temporarily, Erdogan wanted increased support from the European Union as the EU slowly increased restrictions for new migrants entering the bloc (Ingleby, 2019). As fewer and fewer asylum seekers were being admitted into the EU, and more continued to enter Turkey, Erdogan stated that Turkey would no longer be a “refugee camp for the European Union” (Farooq, 2019). Before this escalation in nationalist sentiment, the Turkish government itself had taken steps to address the economic challenges posed by the growing numbers of migrants.

In an attempt to calm the fears of the people and to alleviate the burden placed on state enterprises by the refugee population, the Turkish government enacted policies allowing Syrian refugees to seek work in the formal sector even going as far as to grant the formal work permits (Del Carpio, 2018). The goal of the program was to allow Syrians to gain financial independence and decrease reliance on social services provided by the state and other non-governmental organizations (Del Carpio, 2018). While these initiatives have been praised by the international community as being progressive, overtime the reaction of the Turkish people and Erdogan’s administration to the growing numbers of refugees has devolved into protectionist and xenophobic policies.

### **8.3 Shifting Policies and the Rise of Economic Nationalism**

As the number of refugees entering Turkey continued to rise and the mediation efforts taken by Turkey, the EU, and international organizations struggled to tackle a humanitarian crisis of this size, there was a very distinct shift in the policies of Erdogan’s administration. The economic costs of hosting 3 million foreign nationals was beginning to incite mass demonstrations and protests against the acceptance of any further refugees (Ingleby, 2019). These protests have

come both from organized political factions in Turkey, such as smaller nationalist parties, as well as popular uprisings formed by citizens dissatisfied with perceived government inaction on the migrant crisis (Farooq, 2019). One of the first actions taken by Erdogan's government was to restrict the movement of migrants within Turkey itself. The goal of this policy was two-fold: firstly to limit the amount of people entering Turkey to use it solely as an intermediary on their journey to Europe, and to allow the government to equally disperse the existing populations of refugees (Economist, 2019). One major unintended consequence of this is that restricting the movement of refugees also restricts the access to labor for certain areas of the country. Rural provinces that rely on agriculture as their main economic output require young people to serve as laborers (Del Carpio, 2018). These provinces received the fewest refugees as part of this resettlement program. Meanwhile, the already congested cities continue to host the majority of refugees further increasing tensions between native Turks and Syrian migrants resulting in unrest and protests as described above (Farooq, 2019).

The most dramatic change in policy from Ankara has been the forced deportation of Syrian refugees. Against the advice of the UN, EU, and many other international organizations, Turkish authorities have begun sending thousands of Syrians back to Syria (Farooq, 2019). Erdogan's government explained the policy by saying Turkey does not have the resources to support a refugee population of this size for the long term (Farooq, 2019). This couples with increased restrictions on migration into Europe, means that more and more refugees are stuck in Turkey permanently (Economist, 2019). The state sponsored deportations have also served to amplify the xenophobic sentiment in Turkey. Since the implementation of these policies, many nationalist groups have seen them as signals from the government that refugees aren't welcome and have embraced this messaging (Farooq, 2019). Smaller nationalist parties have openly supported AKP and their

initiatives furthering strengthening the voting bloc that Erdogan controls (Soz, 2019). An increase in mass demonstrations against further acceptance of refugees as well as increase pressure on the government to take steps to close the borders have been observed throughout Turkey (Farooq, 2019). These actions taken by Turkey have caused further tensions between Erdogan's government and the leadership of the European Union and the EU has responded by ending membership talks and negotiations (Reilhac, 2019).

#### **8.4 Synthesis**

Economic rhetoric is a mainstay of nationalist movements around the globe. Whether in France or Turkey, the accusations made against refugee populations regarding stealing jobs or burdening social services appear in the rhetoric of nationalists in both countries. The key differences between these two cases studies is the impact that the refugee crisis has had on both of these countries and the actions taken in response to the refugees. While France has had to deal with a growing refugee population, it is nothing compared to the millions of Syrians who now reside in camps in Turkey. Additionally, much of the nationalistic rhetoric has manifested in the Rassemblement National who, for the time being, do not possess much power in the national government. In Turkey, the party in control of the national and many municipal level governments are the ones espousing the xenophobic and nationalistic rhetoric. Additionally, while they attempted to integrate the Syrians into the labor force and provide asylum, this shifting into enacting policies and programs that have been condemned by the international community. Limited internal movement and forced deportations show the dangerous end result of economically based nationalism. These programs have continued to make a bad situation worse and have caused

damage to Turkey, Syria, and most importantly the people who have been displaced by the Syrian Civil War and the ongoing conflicts in Syria.



## 9.0 Conclusion

The Syrian Refugee Crisis has presented the international community with a humanitarian crisis on a scale not seen in decades. Millions of Syrians have been displaced from their homes and have sought refuge in countries across the Middle East and Europe (Koroutchev, 2016). While the governments of the world have made efforts to provide asylum and resettle these refugees, their efforts have been threatened by a corresponding rise in nationalism around the globe. Nationalism is a term that is notoriously difficult not only to define but also to analyze. Understanding the origins and contributing factors of various nationalistic movements throughout history has often been a struggle for political scientists, sociologists, and politicians. This holds true for this contemporary study of nationalism as well. The working definition of nationalism and nationalistic movements utilized in this thesis are based on the works of political theorists and philosophers who have attempted to understand what defines a nation and what creates nationalism. Most notably is the work of Benedict Anderson in his work *Imagined Communities*. From these works the nation came to be defined as a synthesis of shared cultural history, religion, language, and other social factors that form a common national identity used to define an “in” group and an “out” group (Anderson, 1983). With this definition, two case studies were selected for analysis based on their unique political, social, and economic factors: France and Turkey. The qualitative and quantitative approach used in this analysis has provided insights that a singular cause alone cannot explain. Something as complex and ambiguous as nationalism needs to be attacked from multiple angles.

The particular case studies discussed act as good micro-examples of a trend that is happening on the macro scale. The Syrian refugee crisis has caused an uptick in nationalist

sentiment in Europe that aligns with an uptick in nationalist sentiment around the world. France and Turkey present us with two countries similar in geography and who are both dealing with the same event, the Syrian Refugee Crisis, but in very different ways. The political, cultural, and economic differences between these two states provides some insight into how nationalism develops in isolation and in different environments. France is a Western democracy with a semi-presidential system, with a history of poor assimilation policies, that exists as an economic powerhouse within the Single Market and upon the world stage (World Bank France, 2020). Turkey contrasts this by being an increasingly authoritarian presidential system, with a unique imperial history of governance, and a struggling economy that makes financial security a top concern. A central topic of exploration in this thesis is also the differences in religious demographics of each state and how this may act as a contributing or mitigating factor to nationalist sentiment. France is a majority Christian country with a negative relationship with the Muslim world for most of its history. Turkey on the other hand is a majority Sunni Muslim country that, at the height of its imperial powers, governed territories that practiced many different sects of Islam and other religions. The similarities between France and Turkey as well as their differences is what makes them case studies perfectly suited for this type of multi-dimensional examination. Further discussion of the valuable insights they revealed will take place later in this section.

The fundamental question at the heart of this discussion is why did these movements re-emerge now and in reaction to the Syrian Refugee crisis? To answer this, many varying sources of data and methods of analysis were used to develop a comprehensive picture of the current political, economic, and social situations in each of these countries. This then allowed for discussion of how each of these contributes to the voting patterns and socio-political trends witnessed in recent elections. What was revealed is that it is the unique national identities created over the centuries

in each of the countries weaponized by the charismatic and powerful leaders of the budding nationalist movements who used misinformation, fear mongering, and xenophobic ideologies to present Syrian refugees as outsiders and enemies of “the nation.” This fear of the “out group” has in turn been used to motivate supporters and gain power for themselves. A review and final synthesis of the evidence used and arguments made is detailed below.

### **9.1 The Role of Leadership and Parties**

Without a centralized political authority, nationalist movements would be unable to coalesce into any meaningful body, which is why nationalist parties and their leaders have proved so effective and so devastating and developing nationalist movements and creating discriminatory policies. In both of these case studies, the leaders analyzed had either created or directly inherited, their political parties for the sole purpose of achieving individual power. The method by which both Le Pen and Erdogan have chosen to achieve this goal is to rally supporters through xenophobic and nationalist ideologies, specifically capitalizing on the uncertainty and chaos created by the Syrian refugee crisis to gain public support. The personal connection between each of these leaders and their party also reflects the personal nature of nationalist movements. An “Us vs. Them” mentality motivates members of the imagined nation to support the leader who presents themselves as the protector and savior of the nation.

In France, the impact that Marine Le Pen and her party Rassemblement National have had on shifting the political landscape and discourse around migration into France was clearly presented. Inheriting the organizational structure of Front National from her father, Le Pen has rebranding and reformed the party’s platform to capitalize on the surging wave of islamophobia that have emerged in France after a series of terrorist attacks in the last decade (Stockemer, 2017). She has

concentrated and weaponized the fear and uncertainty of the French populace by giving them a series of scapegoats and targets upon which to unload their frustrations. Whether it is the EU, the Syrians, or the ever present “Elites” Le Pen has single handedly defined the far-right and nationalist movements throughout France, and has used the timing of the Syrian Refugee Crisis as fuel for the meteoric rise of Rassemblement National.

In Turkey, Erdogan has proved himself to be an equally proficient orator and manipulator of the people. Finding his first supporters amongst conservative Islamic groups in Turkey, Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party have used their platform as the ruling regime to create policies and ideologies of exclusion towards the 3.3 million Syrians currently in Turkey (Ingleby, 2019). Erdogan has modified his more radical Islamic message to appeal more to Turkish people’s sense of national identity and pride to present himself as the leader of the nation and protector of the people from this ever-growing foreign threat (Farooq, 2019). The policies passed by his government have been directly detrimental to the refugees in Turkey as well as fostering a growing anti-immigrant sentiment within the country (Farooq, 2019). The more he continues to coalesce power and support of the people through his nationalistic measures, the more authoritarian he and his party become (Eder, 2016). Like Le Pen, Erdogan is the chief architect of his party’s platform and has single handedly crafted its message of the Turkish nation vs. the Syrians for his own personal and political gain.

Both of these leaders and their parties have defined the modern nationalist movements that can be observed today and this paper clearly demonstrated the path that they as individuals took to achieve this goal. Yet, much of the rhetoric and ideology that they utilize was not developed uniquely for their movements but rather is based in centuries old ideas about the national identity within each country and the concept of who belongs in “the nation.”

## 9.2 The Role of National Identities and the Imagined Nation

The chapters on the role of leadership in each case study highlighted Le Pen and Erdogan's ability to effectively rally people to their nationalist cause and to effectively organize the fear and hatred of those movements into effective political bodies. The ideologies that they used within their rhetoric is not something that they as individuals created specifically for those movements but rather it is a weaponization and distortion of long-standing notions of what it means to "be French" or to "be Turkish." That is why an extensive historical analysis on the development of each case studies respective national identity was done in order to develop an understanding of how citizens within each of those countries view themselves in contrast to citizens of any other country. The history highlighted in each chapter is the same history highlighted in schools that is then used to define what it means to be part of that particular nation-state. This is comparable to the teaching of American history in schools, and how this history is used to convey the values and ideologies central to the United States of America. By themselves these historical trends and patterns are not harmful or damaging, but nationalist movements in France and Turkey have hijacked these stories in order to shape exclusionary identities that can be used to rally support for their various causes.

The French identity has been shaped by its reputation as a unique nation on the multi-cultural continent of Europe and as a leader on the world stage. Its central values are reflected in its complicated relationship with religion over the years and its identity as the inheritors of the French revolution (Horne, 2004). The proud heritage of the French language makes it a central component of the French national identity, and people proudly point to Laïcité as a policy that promotes assimilation, secularism, and religious harmony. These factors have not been hijacked by RN and by using a distorted narrative and playing on the pre-existing discriminatory tendencies of French

society, they have created an exclusionary national identity that puts Syrian refugees and most immigrants firmly outside membership in the French nation (Piser, 2019).

The Turkish identity has been shaped by centuries of empire, conquest, and preservation of the unique Turkish culture. Their own traditions of westernization and secularization, begun by Atatürk, have now been used as justification for discrimination against refugees who are viewed as backwards and uncivilized (Kirdis, 2015). In order to grow the power and influence of his government, Erdogan has utilized the Turkish people's concept of their national identity in order to again create an exclusionary idea of who belongs in Turkey and what it means to be Turkish.

National identities have existed for as long as people have organized themselves into nations. There is an unavoidable human tendency to define the group that one belongs to in contrast to other groups around it. Whether this is legal definitions, or social definitions, these identities have existed and will continue to exist. What these chapters contributed to this general discussion of nationalism is the distortion of the idea of national identity to fit nationalistic propaganda. These identities were not only used as labels but now served as barriers and things that had to be defended from external threats. Syrian refugees were presented as existential threats to the nations of France and Turkey and had to be physically forced out as in Turkey, or politically excluded, as was advocated in France (Ingleby, 2019). This dynamic again highlights the influence that information and the presentation of facts have on the power of nationalist movements. The ways that Syrians refugees have been presented in both of these cases was deliberately crafted to show them as outsiders and threats to the national identities that Erdogan and Le Pen have crafted. Nothing highlights the power of misinformation more than the economic rhetoric and policies developed by the nationalist parties in France and Turkey.

### 9.3 The Role of Economic Rhetoric

Nationalism is at its core based on fear, fear of the other, fear of the outsider; and nothing is scarier than the idea that someone else is coming for your job, your home, your livelihood. That is why nationalist parties and leaders focus so much of their policy and rhetoric on the perceived economic threat that migrants pose and Le Pen and Erdogan are no different. Both have utilized misinformation and people's base fears to create power movements of nationalism in their states. The chapters on economics broke down the rhetoric and showed that not only is it not based in reality, but the policies put forward by Le Pen and Erdogan had the capacity to do more harm to the citizens of their own country than any imagined Syrian threat.

With the French example there is a plethora of economic data. Spending data, taxation schemes, revenues generated, employment statistics and much more was gathered from the French government, the OECD, and World Bank. What this analysis revealed is that France is performing quite well. Its unemployment has decreased steadily over the past decade and the GDP per capita is on the rise. This suggests that perhaps many of the economic concerns voiced by nationalist supporters are not based in any reality but rather an imagined perception of the country. In her party platform published in 2016, Marine Le Pen extensively discusses measures to limit the ability of non-French citizens to access state resources such as healthcare and un-employment benefits (Rassemblement National, 2016). Many of the concerns she raises are not problems that are actually happening or are happening on a rather insignificant scale. With regards to the loss of jobs, France has a highly formalized employment sector with extremely intrusive state regulation and monitoring. This largely precludes undocumented immigrants or refugees from taking competitive jobs without proper identification and documentation. This reflects a direct attempt by nationalist parties to conjure up fear amongst the population. Complaints about taxation, EU

migrants taking jobs, and stagnant wages were professed as the primary motivations of nationalist movements. But many of these concerns too are not based in fact, rather are just perpetuated within in these resistance movements.

Here again Turkey stands out as an effective counter to what is witnessed in France. While France stands out as strong economic player on the world stage, many economists have noted that the uncertain economic situation in Turkey could potentially be ground zero for the next economic crisis (Goodman, 2019). Another stark difference is the large informal labor sector that exists in Turkey. This makes it much easier for undocumented people to obtain employment which can be viewed as a challenge or threat to Turkish citizens (Del Carpio, 2018). Due to its economic distress, Turkey also has less state resources at its disposal further exacerbating people's concerns about migrants who do not pay taxes stealing precious state resources. The perceptions of an individual's economic situation coupled with the level of state spending on resettlement programs have been shown to be some of the most impactful contributing factors amongst nationalist voters.

What analysis of both of these countries and the economic rhetoric of their nationalist movements show is again that these movements are based more in a xenophobic and racist fantasy than in any quantitative reality. By taking advantages of the genuine concern and economic suffering of their citizens, these nationalist groups serve only to empower themselves at the cost of their citizens well-being and the well-being of the Syrian migrants they have painted as scapegoats.

#### **9.4 Final Discussion and Future Research**

What this paper has highlighted through its diverse and in-depth analysis is that nationalism, like many political phenomena, is not a simple cause and effect relationship. There are several



contributing factors from many different aspects of life that coalesce together and cause an individual or group of people to support nationalist policies. A central theme that has been identified through this discussion is the power of “in group” and “out group” dynamics that have presented the Syrian Refugee Crisis as an “Us vs. Them” zero sum game. To cultivate nationalist support, leaders and parties must cultivate a sense of fear and uncertainty and then provide a scapegoat as the target for people’s frustrations. Each chapter has shown how the nationalist movements in France and Turkey have weaponized people’s fear and uncertainty surrounding the Syrian Refugee Crisis, creating clear concepts of “the nation” in contrast to “the other”, in order to gain support for their political movements. Ultimately, this helps explain the sudden rise in nationalism that has been observed throughout Europe and the Middle East. To combat this governments can take a more hands on approach to integration and assimilation as well as taking measures to counter the spread of fear mongering and misinformation. If people understand the true causes for their situations and understand the true ideals of their nations, this can help reduce the potential damage done by nationalism.

The major policy prescription that can be derived from the conclusions of this thesis is the importance of government communication in combatting misinformation and fear. In times of crisis it is crucial that the central government can effectively provide clear and accurate information to the people. Any lapse in leadership or mixed messaging leaves gaps of confusion that can be harnessed and weaponized by other groups to serve their own ends. The Syrian Refugee Crisis is a humanitarian disaster on a scale not seen in almost a century. The mixed signaling and perceived lack of action from key leaders in Europe left room for nationalists to develop rhetoric based in misinformation that has stoked the fears of the populace and won them popular support.

In the future, governments of the world must make fact-based communication their first priority in handling crises so they can maintain the trust of the people and maintain support for their efforts.

Future exploration into exact policy initiatives can help translate the research of this paper into actual policy initiatives that can help end this wave of nationalism and hopefully prevent future waves from emerging. This is no small task but understanding the roots of this dangerous trend is the first step in developing prescriptive policy recommendations that can help address it.

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