

## **Rise of the Far Right parties in Europe: from Nationalism to Euroscepticism**

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### **Abstract**

After the 2015 refugee crisis, the far right parties are not marginal anymore and they have become mainstream in most of the European countries. The present paper aims to (1) portray a perspective of the rise of the far right in Europe with emphasis on their characteristics specially Euroscepticism, nationalism and xenophobia (2) provide a summary for the main cause for the rise of the far right parties (3) to come to some further insights about their supporters and social base by analyses and review of the prior researches. In this article, we focus on immigration and refugee crises as the main reasons for the recent success of Far right parties in Europe, the study reveals that these parties benefited from the protest vote and rise of dissatisfaction among the citizen toward the ruling elites, however, the refugee crisis and arrival of foreign immigrants to Europe, and particularly Germany, and poor performance of traditional political left and right parties are among the main causes for their rise.

**Keywords:** Far Right, Migration, Europe, Euroscepticism.

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## **1. Introduction**

Over the past decades, far right parties have significantly expanded in Europe. Since the 1980s, followed by the globalization and increase in the number of immigrants and refugees who entered the European countries, new political parties have emerged in European politics. These parties defined themselves as the only true alternative and the voice of the silent majority. They blame the traditional mainstream parties for what they call the poor consequences of migration. They also criticize their government's multicultural policies and instead insist on native cultural values and national identity.

Moreover, some of the far right parties have tried to distance themselves from traditional fascism and biological racism, so we cannot simply put them in the category of Nazism, these parties can also be viewed as anti-establishments, which means the far right can benefit from the growing scepticism and dissatisfaction toward the ruling parties; this may lead to a phenomenon named the protest vote. Nowadays, far right parties are not marginal anymore, and in some of the European countries they have gained about 20 % of the votes. Hafeznia believes that the new right wing nationalism is on the rise in three different local, national and supra-national scales (Ahmadi,2017:378)

Brexit or withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) which its transition ended on 31 December 2020 was a result of the growth in Euroscepticism and far right attitudes in the UK. After the 2015 refugee crisis, far right parties in Europe benefited from the growing anti-migration tendencies among the voters, especially in rural areas. In Germany the far right AfD party entered the Bundestag as the first far right party after the World War II in 2017, At the same time, Marine le pen managed to reach the second round of the presidential election with 34 % of the votes which nearly doubled compared to the previous election. (Nourbakhsh,2018:39-40) In Hungary, the Fidesz party lead by Victor Orban succeeded in the parliamentary elections, which made him the prime minister for the fourth time. The Eurosceptic far right parties also performed well in 2019 European parliament elections. (Schultheis,2019) As a result the center-right and conservative parties in many cases have been forced to adopt more radical policies toward immigration to prevent their supporters from voting for the far right. On the other hand, the far parties have

borrowed some features from the far left: being populist, anti-establishment, anti-NATO, and Eurosceptic are among the common characteristics between the far left and the far right.

It should be noted that apart from the party level, there is also underground groups (such as the neo-Nazis) as well as the level of individual right-wing extremists. The lower layers of this movement (non-partisan levels) are usually more radical and are particularly violent, for example in Norway 2011, in Germany 2011, and also in the UK 2016 before the British election there has been several right-wing terrorist incidents, they also attack foreign immigrants or the left elite by spreading hate speech in the Internet and social networks.

In this paper, we focus only on party level of the far right nationalism by descriptive analytics method, in which tries to describe characteristics of the far right nationalism as well as the main reasons behind its growth in selected European countries. Data collection of this paper is based on published books and articles as well as the online sources.

## **2. Terminology**

After the world war, the far right was marginalized. In those years, neo-fascist and racist parties failed to succeed in any election, suggesting that the far right politics could not emerge again. However, in the last decades of the 20th century, following the collapse of communism and increase in migration rate, far right populist parties started a growing trend in European politics, which is also known as the third wave of the far right.

A critical difference between the last wave and those which emerged in the post-war period was that in the third wave they successfully tried to distance themselves from the traditional racism. The term "far-right" is not acceptable to these parties and their supporters (Mohammadi and Nourbakhsh, 2017:166). They believe that it creates a negative image of them. Instead, their supporters insist on using terms such as patriot or nationalist. Also, there is no agreement among scholars concerning the definition of the far right, in most cases, there are discussions as if the far right also demonstrates illegal underground neo-nazi groups. Buhr (2017) defines "radical right" with two key characteristics (1) exclusive notions of national belonging and (2) anti-system sentiment.

Some academics have used different names such as 'challenger' and 'protest parties' for naming the far right. (Hainsworth,2008:11) Jean Yves Camus argues that the term Populist Xenophobic far right is an appropriate name for this phenomenon. He believes that far –right's anti-elite approach, along with anti-globalization and Euroscepticism is much similar to the radical left. Betz uses the term far right for naming it with the following features: anti-elitism, Euroscepticism, and patriotism. Other names include extreme-right, radical right, right-wing populist, populist parties, anti-immigration parties, neo-fascist parties, and neo-populist parties (Mudde,2007:11-12; Hainsworth,2008:5-23). So, there is no unique agreement in the academic literature of the far-right. (Jesuit and et al.,2009). Mudde (2019) believes that most of the defining and terming is done by outsiders like academics, anti-fascists, and journalists rather than by far right itself. He divides the Far Right into Extreme Right with an anti-democratic approach such as the Nazi party, and the Radical Right, which he believes accepts the democracy but not the liberal democracy. In this research, we use the term far right for all kinds of right wing radical parties.

### **3. History of the Far Right**

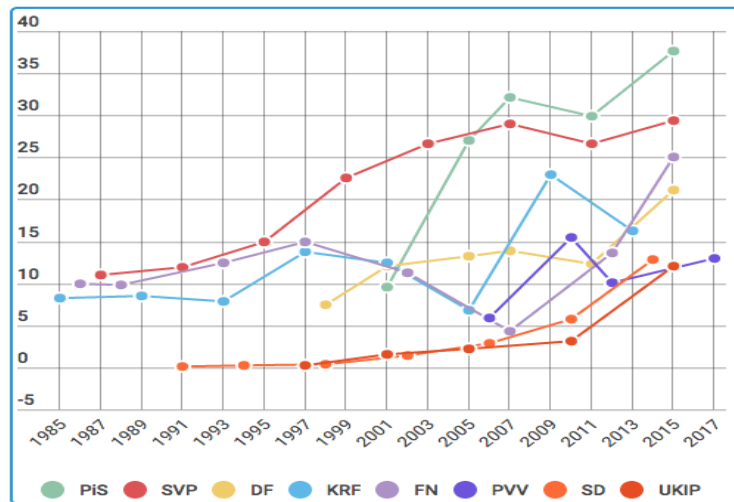
After 1945 most of the western European countries had stable political systems. Victory over fascism, economic growth, and lower unemployment rates, were all factors that prevented the emergence and success of the far right in those years. However, as the twentieth century moved towards its last quarter, the gap from the 1930s–1940s became further, and by shading the living memories of that period, the new far right parties succeeded in winning significant levels of support (Hainsworth,2008:2).

In fact, before the 1980s far-right was a synonym to neo-fascism. During this period, the only party that called itself the far-right was MSI (in Italy), which was a fascist party. However, in the 1980s the conditions were changed, during these years, the number of far-right parties which found a way to enter the parliament was only six, in the mid-1990s their numbers rose to 10 and 15 respectively. the French National Front was transformed from a marginal party into the big party, which in elections gained approximately 10 percent of the votes (Goodwin,2011; Kitching,2011). Entering the twenty-first century, these parties had intensified their efforts to join the government and contrary to what was thought before, these parties had been able to keep their supporters. (Goodwin,2011:1).

In Austria, the parliamentary election in fall 1999 flags the beginning of a particular period of right-wing national populism directed against the European Union. The far-right Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)<sup>1</sup> gained the second highest number of votes, this was the first time in the EU history that a party with ties to the National Socialist past was accepted as a coalition partner on the national level. In reaction to this break of taboo, the other fourteen EU member states fiercely protested. (Liebhart,2020:402-403)

Austria's FPÖ's biggest victory to date was Norbert Hofer's 31.1% in the first round of the 2016 presidential election. He was eventually defeated by his opponent, Hofer scored 49.7% and 46.2% respectively in the two run-off elections, Cas Mudde recalled 'that Hofer achieved the best result of any populist radical right candidate in an established European democracy (Liebhart,2020:407)

**Figure (1): Right wing Populist Parties' Electoral Results Since 1985**



Results are in percent

PiS: Law and Justice Party (Poland); SVP: Swiss People's Party (Switzerland); DF: Danish People's Party (Denmark); KRF: Progress Party (Norway); FN: Front National (France); PVV: Party for Freedom (Netherlands); SD: Swedish Democrats (Sweden); UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party (UK).

(Source: Abdalla,2017:86)

1.(German: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ)

One of Europe's most successful far right parties is the French National Front<sup>1</sup> (FN), which changed its name to the National Rally<sup>2</sup> in 2018, over the past four decades it rose from a small party into an influential political party, from the local elections (communes, etc.) to the parliamentary and presidential elections and even to the European Parliament, it has had notable results. In 2002 Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the National Front defeated the candidates of the left parties and managed to reach the second round with 18 percent of the votes. (Nourbakhsh,2019:166)

In the French presidential election in 2012, Marine Le Pen gained 18 percent of votes, suggesting that she could be a proper heir for her father. The National Front Party gained unprecedented success in the local elections in March 2014. However, the party's biggest success was during the European Parliament elections in May 2014, which secured the highest number of seats in France (Ray,2018). During the 2017 French presidential election, the French far right was able to get to the 2nd round by defeating all traditional mainstream parties. It has almost doubled compared to 2002, reaching 34% of the votes (Aisch and et al.,2017). Le Pen was also chosen by Time magazine as the most influential person in 2015, and Politico's website has named her the most influential person in the European Parliament after Martin Schultz. (Ray,2018)

In Italy the Lega (formerly known as the Northern League<sup>3</sup> (LN)) became part of the Italian government coalition between 2018 and 2019 and came first in European Parliamentary elections in 2019. Leader Matteo Salvini has been vocally critical of immigration and, as Minister of the Interior, has sought to crack down heavily on immigration from the Mediterranean as well as even suggesting creating a census of Roma<sup>4</sup> people in Italy with a view to deporting thousands. (Feldman and Tucker,2020:9)

After the 2015 migrant crisis, initiated by Germany's decision to briefly open its borders, Brussels began cajoling and coercing other EU member states to accept some of the migrants in the name of burden sharing. (Foreign Affairs,2019:58) In the 2017 German election, the Alternative for

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1. (French: Front National)

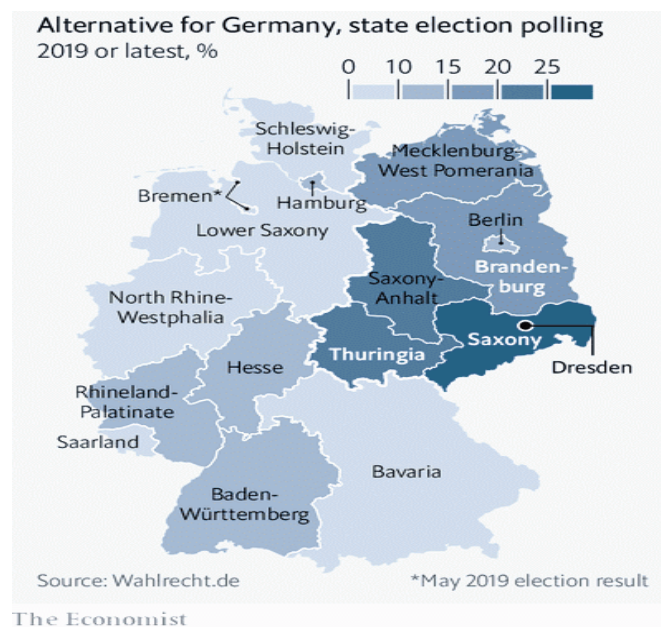
2. (French: Rassemblement National)

3. Lega Nord

4. Gypsies

Germany<sup>1</sup> (AfD) party took 12.6% of the vote, forcing Angela Merkel's government into a weakened position and by the 2019 European Parliament results, the AfD remained consistent, taking 11.00%. (Lilley,2020).

**Figure (2): Alternative for Germany (AfD) Vote Share in 2019 European Parliament Election**



(Source: Economist,2019)

The eastern states of Germany became important for the further development of the AfD. In the 2017 federal election, the AfD did extraordinarily well there. In 2019 European Parliament election AfD polled up to 33 percent in some of the south-eastern districts, making them by far the strongest party. (Arzheimer,2019)

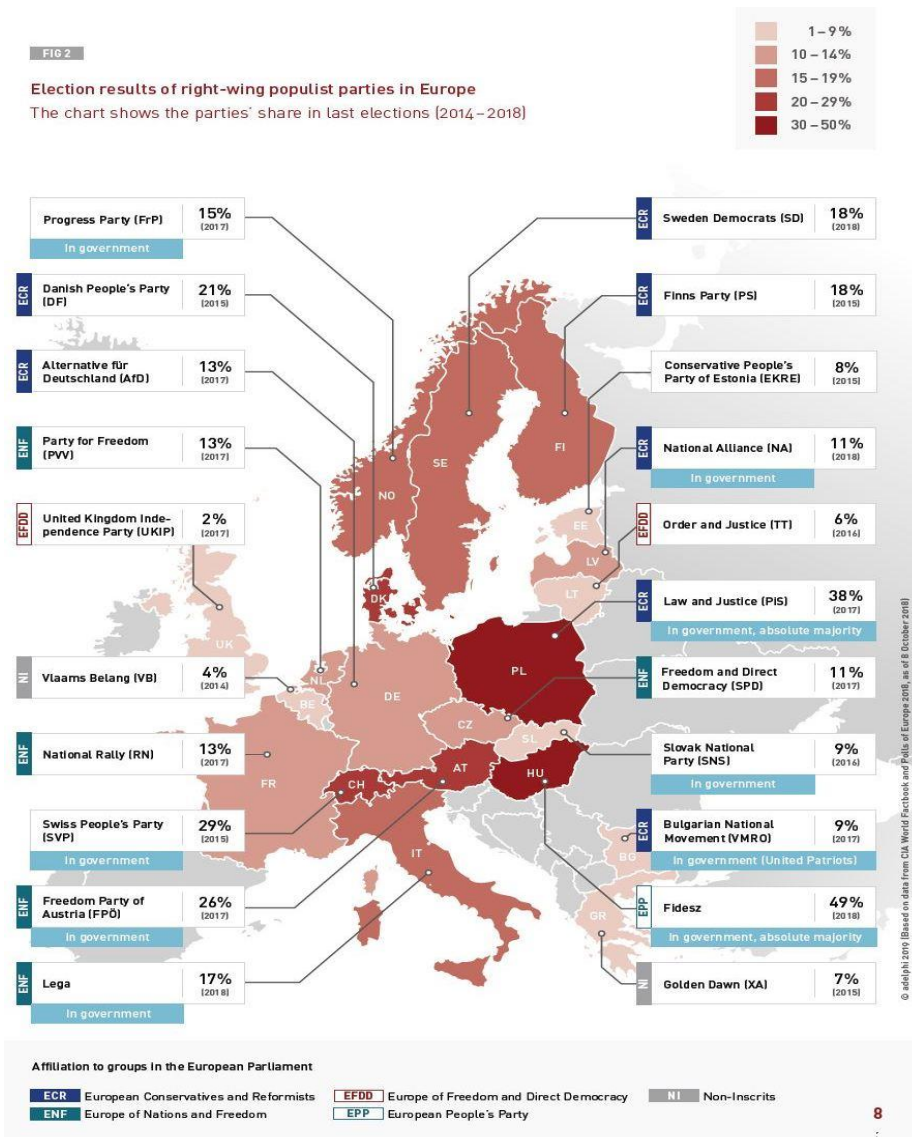
In his recent research, Mudde introduces the Fourth wave, which he believes started in 2000, and the refugee crisis of 2015 played a particular role in its development. this wave is also known by mainstreaming of the far right, while the far right parties are considered acceptable for the coalition by

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1. Alternative für Deutschland

mainstream right and their policies are adopted in, moderated form by the mainstream (Mudde,2019).

**Figure (3): European far Right Parties in latest Elections**



(Source: Yeo,2019)



The electoral geography of the nationalist far right parties reveals a new pattern in which there is a huge difference between big cities or capitals and the countryside or small towns, as the capitals are the stronghold of left parties the suburbs and small towns vote for the far right parties. In France, the National Front has always been strong in its eastern departments, areas that had been occupied by Germany for decades. The Mediterranean coast, home to both rightist former colonists and poor immigrants both from northern Africa, is a winning ground as well (de Voogd,2014).

#### **4. The Ideology of the far Right Nationalism**

The most important features of the far right are nativism, hostility to immigrants, Euroscepticism, and populism. Far right considers itself as a representative of the silent majority, which he believed ignored by the ruling elites (Biswaz,2011:17). the political scientist Cas Mudde believes nationalist populists often represent not a silent majority but a very loud minority. (Foreign Affairs 2019:38). In another definition, Martin Schultz defines far right as Radical, Nationalist, Anti-Semite, and islamophobe. (Langenbacher and Schellenberg,2011:35) Some experts believe it includes populism, authoritarianism, and nativism (Mudde,2007) Yael Tamir suggests that the main problem today is a clash between nationalism and neoliberal globalism. Nationalists want states to intervene in the market to defend their citizens. (Foreign Affairs,2019:8)

Ignazi argues that traditionally far right opposes representative democracy. additionally, these parties stand against ideas such as equality and, in some cases, have an authoritarian approach (Hainsworth,2008:1). One of the consequences of the rise of the far right is control over the borders, which means the national security, national interests and national identity is on danger from the foreigners (Ahmadi,2017:373)

Most of the far right parties are also populists. Populism ultimately is nothing more than an “us-versus-them” mentality or, as Mudde describes it, a “thin-centered ideology,” one that merely sets up a basic structure of a society divided into two monolithic and antagonistic groups: that of a “pure” people against a “corrupt” elite. In this context, the establishment is perceived as a monolithic entity concerned only with its own well-being, while the people are perceived as a homogenous community with the

general will<sup>1</sup>concerned with ensuring the common good. (Rzayev,2017:28) Betz suggests that *populism* has a vital role in far right ideology (Smith, 2003). The referendum, as one of their popular solutions, can restrict minorities like Muslims (Bjurwald,2010:14). Müller believes Populism, is sometimes taken to be a shorthand for “criticism of elites and more important, however, is their claim that they and they alone represent what they usually call “the real people” or “the silent majority.” Populists thus declare all other contenders for power to be illegitimate. (Foreign Affairs, 2019:35)

Ultra- Nationalism is the other characteristic that opposes human equality and, in some cases, leads to racism. The successful far right parties, however, have tried to concentrate on national identity and culture instead of biological racism. They think that the national identity is under threat from the migrants and minorities (Carter,2005). Far right concludes that the nation's native citizen should be on the top priority in social service (Guibernau,2010:12). Rydgren also assumes that these parties benefit from the xenophobic trends in society. (Rydgren,2007:241-262). The ultra-nationalism is a challenge to the European integration process, (Ahmadi,2017:379)

Euroscpticism is another important feature of far -right. Mudde (2019) defines it as “dissatisfaction about the process of European integration and the institution of the European Union”. Far right parties believe that the European Union has violated their national sovereignty by fading the borders and enlargement. The globalization and eurozone crises also have created a condition in which far right supporters blame the EU for almost every problem in the country. So, Euroscpticism has become one of the main aspects of the far right parties (Wilson and Hainsworth,2012:3-14). The far right strongly opposes the EU expansion and consider it as a threat to their national identity and culture. Their supporters believe that the EU is the waste of money, lack of control over borders, rising crime rates, and an increase in bureaucracy (Bartlett and et al.,2011:66-76).

Hafeznia believes that the rise of the far-right parties in European countries is based in the anti-immigration attitude towards the non- European (Asians, Africans, Muslims, etc.) migrants, the right-wing parties blame the refugees

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1. volonté générale

specially those from the Islamic countries as a threat to their security, jobs, Christian identity and their European values, (Ahmadi,2017:372)

Many scholars have indicated this as the principal figure of far right parties, which is sometimes followed by violent activities against migrants and minorities (Smith,2003:32). They believe that minorities who cannot adapt to the dominant culture should be excluded from the country. They blame foreign immigrants for the high crime rate and unemployment (Smith,2003: 6) claiming that this opposition to foreigners is not racism, far right believes that the immigrant's culture has not integrated into the host country and as a result, they are a threat to the national security and culture. (Wilson and Hainsworth,2012:3). The immigration issue shapes all the other aspects and policies of the far right politics; They define immigrants, especially those from the third world countries, as a threat to their job, security, culture, health, and lifestyle as well as their national identity. "France for French people," "Austria first" are among the far right s mottos. Anti-immigrant attitude leads to xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.

Islamophobia, an irrational fear of Islam or Muslims, has become the defining prejudice of the far right (Mudde,2019) Most of the successful far right parties have anti-Muslim policies. This phenomenon has increased in recent years. Most of the far right parties introduce Muslims as the source of problems in their country. (Wilson and Hainsworth,2012:3). The findings of one case-study in the UK shows that opposing Islam and Muslims among the far right supporters are two times more than other parties' voters. (Goodwin,2011:10) Following 9/11 and after London and Madrid terrorist attacks, Islamophobia increased in Europe. According to the report by the EU Bureau on Fundamental Rights, among the three Muslims, one has experienced prejudice, another report by Open Society Institute which has been provided through interview with Muslims in eleven cities in Europe shows that 50 percent of them have been discriminated while this rate was 9 for non-Muslim population, Far right introduces Muslims as a danger for society order (Goodwin,2011:19) Haider, the founder of Austria's Freedom Party, believed Islam has conflicts with western values, and the Muslims are the source of intolerance.

According to research conducted by Friedrich Ebert, anti- Semitism is the main characteristic of the far right in Eastern Europe (Zick and et al.,2011). Of course, in Western Europe, the far right parties have replaced anti-

Semitism with Islamophobia (Bjurwald,2010:10). In Central and Eastern Europe, anti-Roma attitude is also visible among the far right parties such as Hungarian Jobbik, Bulgarian Ataka, and the Slovak National Party. In recent years even in Italy, there has been an increase in violence against the Roma. These have resulted in the migration of the Roma to other countries like Canada. The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority. Approximately ten to twelve million Roma live there, but the figures are uncertain and could be much higher. (Bjurwald,2010:25).

### **5. Causes for Rise of the Far Right Nationalism**

Some reasons for the emergence of far-right are globalization, multiculturalism as a threat to cultural identity, and the expansion of terrorism and crime rate by immigrants. At the same time withdrawing traditional fascism or biological racism and hostility to democracy are among the most significant reason from the party's side, which helped them to raise their share in the ballot (Langenbacher and Schellenberg,2011:5). Anti-immigration attitudes are found to be strong predictors of far-right voting in Europe. Far-right parties throughout Europe are at least temporarily benefiting from voters' anxieties regarding the influx of migrants. These anxieties result from a crisis of national identity among the postindustrial liberal democracies of Europe brought about by their transformation into multicultural societies as a result of globalization processes, and manifest themselves as social and cultural protectionism. (Rzayev,2017:53)

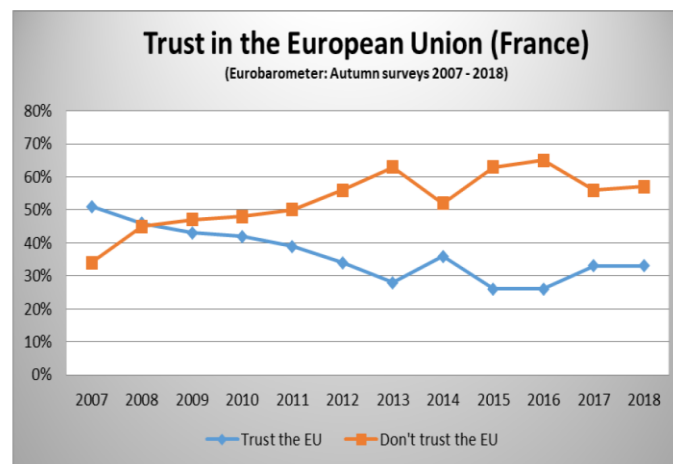
#### **5-1. Protest Vote and Political Dissatisfaction**

One of the significant factors affecting increased support of far-right is dissatisfaction toward the mainstream right and left parties. For instance, political researchers believe that Le Pen's votes in France 2002 presidential election were protest votes. In that election, The French citizens tired of the traditional political left and right decided to vote for Le Pen to stating their protest. Protest voters back a party not because of its policies or an ideological affinity, but rather to punish or send a message to the established parties. (Patton,2019:72)

In 2007, 51% of French people said they trusted the EU, compared to 34% of those who said they did not trust the EU. Since 2008, this confidence has been shaken, with confidence rates towards the EU falling significantly, to

reflect in the year 2018 the lack of confidence of French public opinion towards the European Union at 57%, compared to 33% which shows confidence towards the EU. (Nastos,2019:9) Mudde (2019) believes protest voters can become support voters when they see the far-right party achieving policies they support.

**Figure (4): Trust in the European Union(France)**



(Source: Nastos,2019:9)

In fact, despite that democracy as a form of governance has been accepted among most Europeans, some of them are dissatisfied with the performance of their governments. One of the most important reasons for this is the migration, and many of the voters are unsatisfied with main parties due to immigration policies, for example, in the UK, many voters blame the Labour party for the rising number of immigrants. In this circumstance, far right -populists have achieved a suitable opportunity. At the same time, angry people are more willing to support a party that they feel pays more attention to their needs (Goodwin,2011:21). Far -right parties introduce themselves as the only alternative which can change the situation (Wilson and Hainsworth,2012:4). In 2017, the AfD absorbed 690,000 previous backers of fringe protest parties and 1.2 million former nonvoters, far more than did any other party (Patton,2019:83)

Pippa Norris, in her study, believes that scepticism toward main political parties and representative democracy have played an important role in supporting far-right. In her study, she indicates that in Belgium, France,

Denmark, and the Netherlands (in comparison to other European countries), the role of protest vote and dissatisfaction were more noticeable (Van der Brug and et al.,2000).

### **5-2. Globalization**

In recent decades, globalization has resulted in increasing unemployment and declining living standards for the working class. This process has caused the formation of new social and economic divisions. One of the consequences of economic globalization was the increasing migration of workers, refugees, technicians, and experts to industrial western countries. Globalization has also caused the transformation from industrial society towards the postindustrial one, and migration, unemployment, and identity crisis are the result of this trend (Nourbakhsh,2018:39-40)

The polarization between the groups of modernization “winners” and “losers” created a cleavage between those who defend globalization and neoliberal economic policies and those opposing neoliberalism and holding protectionist positions. According to this theory, the rise of far-right populism is a result of growing income inequality in the West, social deprivation and grievances among the losers from globalization processes, disaffection and resentment with mainstream social democratic parties, and distrust in the ability of the mainstream parties to respond to these concerns (Rzayev,2017:4).

According to far-right's view, globalization is a way that foreigners dominate the market., globalization is similar to exporting jobs to the undeveloped countries (Rzayev,2017:17). Furthermore, they believe that globalization has increased the number of immigration populations, drive down wages, and reduced the native population (Mudde,2009:187). The bulk of the far-right voters are the people who call themselves losers of globalization with a sense of insecurity and uncertainty. Analyses of right-wing populism in different countries show that the far right appeals to those on the losing side of current social processes. (Langenbacher and schellenberg,2011:13).

Far-right parties rationalize their hostility towards immigration with their notion of a homogeneous cultural identity that globalization and neoliberal capitalism tries to destroy by intentionally provoking migration. For them, the aim of globalization is to eliminate differences between peoples (Rzayev,2017:16).

Kitschelt states that unemployment is a primary factor in increasing the support of these parties, in its electoral slogan, French Front National announced that the existence of two million immigrants means unemployment of two million French people (Smith,2003:41). Lubbers & Scheepers have found that the success of far-right parties in areas with higher unemployment is more than the other areas (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000). And vice versa (Arzehir,2009:273).

Usually, the far -right parties are not willing to discuss economic policies, but their overall approach is to blame foreign countries for their economic problems. These parties support local industries and national companies. French National Front assumes that the uncontrollable entrance of immigrants to France has ruined the French economy. In Germany, they believe that the country's economic problem can be solved with the deportation of immigrants (Rovn,2009).

Today's nationalists decry the "globalist" liberalism of international institutions. They attack liberal elites as sellouts who care more about foreigners than their fellow citizens. And they promise to put national, rather than global, interests first (Foreign Affairs,2019:36).

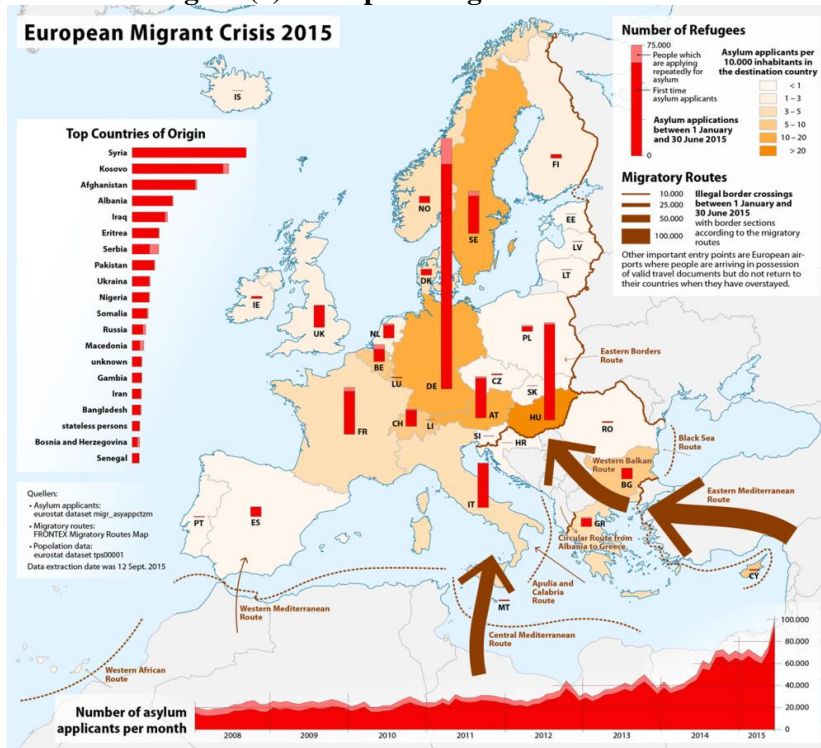
### **5-3. Immigration**

Immigration is the most significant reason for the rise of the far right. Different studies show that European citizens are concerned about how the immigration effects in their society, according to Betz, studies have shown that 71 percent of German voters have identified immigrants as the most critical challenge. Also, in France, this subject was ranked as the second major factor, according to the voter's view. In another study two-thirds of respondents believed that their country has not the capacity to accept more immigrants, and the fifth of them demanded the government to take a radical position towards both legal and illegal immigrants or force them to return to their countries (Goodwin,2011:14).

Cas Mudde believes "Populist radical right parties typically claim that "mass immigration" constitutes an existential threat to their nation and state, while extreme right groups are more concerned about race, claiming that western countries are facing a "white genocide" because of mass immigration and state-sponsored multiculturalism" (Mudde,2019). Far-Right parties put the issue of immigration as a primary concern in their electoral campaigns (Williams,2006:70). Ignazi, in his research about the

causes of French Front National success, has identified immigration as the principal reason for victory. Hainsworth also supposes that the issue of immigration is the most prominent factor in supporting far-right (Hainsworth,2000). In many cases, immigration is engaged with security in society (Ivaldi,2004:29-32). In another survey in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, and Norway it is identified that far right parties gained more support from those people who are concerned about immigration, i.e., the people who feel that the immigration rate is high and the ones who are unhappy with current immigration policies of their governments. According to Roumina et.al in their research, migration from the Middle eastern countries is among the main causes in the rise of the far right in Europe which is also a challenge to the European integration process at the same time (Roumina and et. Al ,2020:41).

**Figure (5): European Migrant Crisis 2015**



(Source: Lilley,2020)



A September 2017 study by Ipsos revealed that only five per cent of Hungarians and 15 percent of Poles believe that immigration has had a positive impact on their country and that 67 percent of Hungarians and 51 percent of Poles think their countries' borders should be closed to refugees entirely (Krastev,2018).

In 2015, Europe experienced a sharp increase in the inflow of refugees. In the last months of 2014 and in particular, over the course of 2015 the number of people filing for asylum in European Union countries increased dramatically. More than 700,000 refugees applied for asylum in the EU countries in the first eight months of 2015 alone.( Rzayev,2017:33)

According to Mudde the migration crises caused the rise of the nationalistic and Eurosceptic attitudes in Central Europe or "Visegrad 4<sup>1</sup> countries," in response to German chancellor Angela Merkel's Willkommenspolitik ("Welcome Politics") in 2015, opening Germany and thereby much of the EU to asylum seekers, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán led a nativist backlash of a growing coalition of member states. Central and East European countries were the most overt and vocal in their opposition to non-European immigration, and most radical in their new anti-immigration policies – including the building of fences and the criminalization of undocumented immigrants" (Mudde,2019).

#### **5-4. Islamophobia**

Islamophobia is widely used by national populists in countries like France where they have a considerable number of Muslim immigrants (Kattago, 2019:14). One study revealed that most of the people believe that Muslims have too many demands, which caused instability in Europe. Moreover, it showed that there is a concern about the presence of the Muslim minority in European countries. At the same time, at least 40 percent of people in Italy, UK, Germany, and the Netherlands think that the number of Muslims in their countries is excessive. (Zick and et al.,2011)

The results of another study in the UK indicate that more than half of the population think that they have no common culture with the Muslims. Even 25 percent of them claim that Islam and western values could not co-exist peacefully (Goodwin,2011;19). In another research, 75 % of participants

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1. Visegrád Four is political alliance of four countries of Central Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia)

believed that Muslim's loyalty towards themselves is more than their loyalty to their nations, and approximately 50 percent of them think that the acceptance of Muslims may lead to the disappearance of Britain's identity (McLaren and Johnson,2007). Findings show that in Denmark, more than half of the populations identify Muslims as a threat to their national identity. The researches reveal that in the area with a more Muslim population, support for far right parties is higher (Bowyer,2009). For instance, in the UK, the regions with more Muslim minority (Pakistani and Bangladeshi), far-right has more supporters in comparison to those areas with other minorities like Non-Muslim Asians or blacks. The amount of discontent toward the presence of Muslims has risen considerably. In Denmark, in 1994, only 35 percent of voters believe that Islam has threatened their national integrity, but, in 2007, this amount raised to 81 percent. (Langenbacher and Schellenberg,2011). Following 9/11, far-right has empowered its anti-immigrant policies against Muslims; these parties believe that they are a cultural threat and claim that Islamic values are in contradiction with Western values (Minkenberg,2011).

#### **5-5. Nativism**

Nativism takes nationalism a step further. Mudde (2017) describes it as “an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the ethnic group (‘the nation’), and that non-native people and ideas are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.” (Kattago, 2019:11)

Emphasizing on national identity has a significant role in attracting votes. In this context, a study was conducted among 18 countries. The results revealed that concern about the loss of cultural integrity was nine times more than economic concerns. For instance, the French National Front has focused its election policies on national culture, morality, and immigration. Only 12 percent of this party's plans were about economic issues. This is also true in the case of Belgian, Italian, and Austrian parties. Populist leaders of far-right have used the concept of the heartland for encouraging people toward nationalism. They try to revive the glorious nostalgic history and national values. Multiculturalism and the process of European integration are in contrast with the concept of heartland (Caporaso and Kim, 2009).

Bruter and Gavin distinguish the civil and cultural aspects of identity. In their view, the first one includes laws and roles of political life, but the second one includes a sense of belonging (Bruter,2004:35). Gavin believes that the existence of a common European culture is necessary for shaping the sense of belonging to Europe. Accordingly, he concludes that European citizens have many identities that the EU is one of them. For European citizens, national identity is more superior in comparison to the European one. Nevertheless, their European identity is not in contrast with their national identity necessarily. These parties believe that society should be based on ethical, racial, and cultural issues (Rydgren,2004:5).

After joining many eastern and central European countries to the EU in 2004 and 2007, the union population was doubled in less than four years. Polls show that the EU citizens regarded this expansion as a fast and unexpected process, and it has resulted in the creation of nationalism instead of one unique European identity (Stoke,2009).

## **6. Conclusion**

During the last four decades, the far right parties emerged in many European countries; As it was reviewed, there are two types of far right parties: the neo-fascist parties which failed to gain a considerable amount of votes and the far right populist parties which succeeded in the last decades.

This study found that the main features of European far right are the opposition to mainstream parties, populism, hostility to representative democracy, scepticism toward the European Union, criticism of multiculturalism, nativism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, Ant-Semitism, anti-Roma and most importantly, anti-immigrant attitude. Among these, some features like opposition to immigration are common among all of the far - right parties, however some points such as Islamophobia and anti-Roma may vary. The anti-immigrant characteristic of these parties is that they see immigrants as a threat to their jobs and opportunities.

These parties are also Eurosceptic which means they perceive the EU as a threat and believe that it is responsible for fading their national borders, and the rise of the crimes. Finally, the anti-establishment approach, along with the increased dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the mainstream, has created an opportunity for rising of the far right. The social base of the far right shows most of their supporters are those who feel threatened by arrival of the immigrants specially men with lower education. Furthermore, these

parties have attracted most of the young people. It is also a popular party in the working class. They consider themselves the voice of the silent majority that has been ignored by the elites. It is welcomed, especially among the working class and those who consider themselves losers of the globalization process. In this paper we focused on the rise of the far right nationalist parties in France, Germany, Austria and Italy, as it mentioned most of their electoral patterns and political campaigns are similar.

Concerning the current perspective, the reasons for the rise of the far-right in recent years can be summarized in: refugee crisis and the arrival of foreign immigrants to Europe, and particularly Germany, which peaked in 2015, and poor performance of traditional political left and right parties.

The results show other reason for their rise includes negative effects of globalization, skepticism toward the mainstream parties and political elites and thereby attract some protest votes. Although not every far right supporter vote for protest, but a significant percentage of them are those who vote only for expressing opposition to the ruling parties or for showing dissatisfaction and do not necessarily have an ideological or organizational affiliation with them.

The current situation shows the polarization of politics in Europe, with emphasis on issues such as nationalism, the return of borders, opposition to globalization and weakening international institutions. One of the consequences of this will be the transformation of the far right into the mainstream, the decline of liberalism, and the violation of minority's rights.

Ultimately, it must be noted that the far-right parties will continue to grow, and the biggest factor in their success should be the mismanagement of the mainstream left and center parties of Europe, which is losing the confidence of the people. The current trend in Europe today has to accept the fact that the extreme right is no longer a marginal movement and that by emphasizing the dark aspects of fascism it cannot prevent people from being attracted to it.

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