

Effects of the Syrian Refugee Crisis on the EU: Nationalism on the Rise

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## ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Global Studies

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
Brandeis University  
Waltham, Massachusetts

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The last ten years have been challenging for the European Union. From the economic Euro Crisis in 2009, the after effects of the Arab Spring in 2011, and the peak of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2015, the governments of the EU are increasingly finding themselves in disagreement. Currently, nations are increasingly divided over immigration, with strong nationalistic movements emerging as many member states look to reclaim their sovereignty. In 2016 Britain voted to leave the Union, leaving open the possibility that other states will follow, with nationalism, xenophobia and support for right-wing populist parties rising throughout Europe. This paper will explore in what ways the Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated EU governance issues by increasing nationalism within certain member states. It will also examine the potential breakdown of European values by looking at the rise of right-wing politics, and the increasing xenophobic attitudes of political leaders and EU citizens. This study looks at the refugee problem as a sort of tipping point that could gravely fracture the EU, and it seeks to determine if Europe will be able to overcome this rise in nationalism and remain united.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Syrian civil war has led to mass devastation and destruction in the region. Hundreds of thousands are dead, and millions are either internally displaced or have fled, looking for asylum elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> European countries, namely members of the European Union (EU), have been destinations of choice for many refugees. While Syrian refugees account for the vast majority, refugees are also pouring into the EU from other conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East. The staggering number of migrants coming out of these conflict zones has placed an enormous burden and intense strain on EU migration policies, border controls, humanitarian rights and the execution of international refugee and asylum laws. The challenges that the refugee crisis brings have tested European values and principles to their very core, leaving many Europeans feeling their way of life is being threatened.

### i. The Research Problem

The Syrian refugee crisis came at a time of already tense relations in the EU following the economic euro crisis in 2009 and the after-effects of the Arab Spring in 2011, therefore causing an even further divide between member states. Member states' frustrations with EU governance have engendered a desire to reclaim sovereignties that have taken a back seat as globalization has flourished, creating an interwoven system of shared economies, open borders, the free movement

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<sup>1</sup> "Quick facts: What you need to know about the Syria crisis," Mercy Corps, December 9, 2016, , <https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/iraq-jordan-lebanon-syria-turkey/quick-facts-what-you-need-know-about-syria-crisis>.

of people, and increased multiculturalism. A rejection of globalization and a Eurosceptic sentiment has taken hold and spread throughout Europe. Nationalism is on the rise as right wing populist parties gain ground in various election cycles, and the EU's very principle of bringing together 'an ever closer' union among member states is at risk as we begin to see a fractured solidarity with frequent objections from member states who do not wish to comply with EU policies, especially with respects to the refugee problem. The most notable rejection of the EU can be seen in the case of Brexit; where the British people chose to reclaim their sovereignty, and exit the Union. Thus, one wonders if this will be an isolated event, or might the trend continue? The European refugee crisis has called attention to a mounting problem which warns that the very essence of the EU is in trouble. The Union is being tested, and Europe must come together as one nation in solidarity to deal with migration governance, border controls, humanitarian issues, and the souring attitudes of its citizens towards immigrants. If Europe cannot overcome these challenges, and if nationalism exerts its full force, there is speculation of a broken Union as borders are re-erected and nations are closed off.

## **ii. Rationale for Study**

EU member states are divided more than ever over the issue of immigration, and now it seems that a rise in nationalism is taking shape as many EU member states are looking to reclaim their sovereignty. As we know, Britain has already voted to leave the union, and Italy may be next. Italians voted 'no' to an important referendum on political reforms, a decision that gives EU skeptics in Italy a stronger mandate to push their extreme nationalist agenda.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, right wing populist parties are gaining ground in France and Germany. Experts suggest that

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<sup>2</sup> E.P. Licursi, "Italy Approaches Its Own Choice Between Liberalism and Populism," *The New Yorker*, December 3, 2016.

France's extreme nationalist surge with Marine Le Pen's National Front prompted center-left French president Francois Hollande not to seek reelection due to his unpopularity among French citizens. He stepped down to mitigate a situation that might garner more support for Le Pen.<sup>3</sup> While in Germany the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany led by Frauke Petry is surging in popularity, especially after immigrant related attacks in the country.<sup>4</sup> These two nations are prominent and vital EU member states, and growing Euroscepticism among such significant members such as these could have massive ramifications for EU solidarity.

This paper will explore how the Syrian refugee crisis has exacerbated EU governance issues by increasing right wing nationalism within certain member states. The paper will examine the breakdown of European principles and values by looking at the rise of right wing politics and the increasing xenophobic attitudes of political leaders and EU citizens in order to gauge whether this is a passing phase or if a new model for European morality and politics is forming. This study looks at the refugee problem as a sort of tipping point that could gravely fracture the EU, and it seeks to determine if Europe will be able to overcome the rise in nationalism and remain united.

### **iii. Proposed Methodology**

Research for this paper will incorporate existing primary and secondary data using peer-reviewed literature on the subject. Data will also be collected from EU, UN and NGO reports, news articles, and media sources. To explore rising nationalism, this paper will focus on Britain

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<sup>3</sup> Cockburn, Harry. "Francois Hollande to step aside from French elections to help stop 'extremism' winning," *The Independent*, December 1, 2016, , <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/francois-hollande-france-election-will-not-stand-a7450661.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Davies, Gareth. "Support for Germany's far-Right AfD party soars to one-year high after Berlin truck attack ," *Daily Mail*, December 23, 2016, , <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4062594/Support-Germany-s-far-Right-AfD-party-soars-one-year-high-Berlin-truck-attack.html>.

and Germany. These countries were selected because they are some of the top economic leaders in the Union and because they have strong populist uprisings that have been further encouraged by the refugee crisis. Britain has already voted to leave the Union, so this paper will explore nationalism and how it led to this decision. Germany's Angela Merkel once welcomed immigrants with open arms but is now retracting that invitation in order to fall in line with her conservative party and quell the spread of right-wing nationalism as an opposing populist party Alternative for Germany gains ground during an important election year.<sup>5</sup> Comparing the way different member states have responded to the refugee crisis might yield some insight as to why a surge in refugees and immigrants is having such complex negative effects such as rising nationalism and xenophobic attitudes.

This paper will utilize a comparative case study approach using two EU member states. As previously stated, the paper will focus on Britain and Germany, specifically. Hopefully the research will uncover hidden issues such as xenophobic tendencies that have led to a rise in nationalistic right-wing political parties. The main category of analysis will be nationalism, and for the purposes of this paper nationalism will be operationally defined using the variables mentioned below to determine how and why nationalism is gaining popularity:

- Key public figures/political parties: What do they stand for? What do they believe? What is their stance on immigration?
- Campaigns/rhetoric: An analysis of discourse like speeches, propaganda, and campaign marketing.

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<sup>5</sup> Knox, Patrick. " About Turn! Now Angela Merkel says she will send 100,000 migrants back to war-torn countries after finally admitting Germany is struggling to cope," *The Sun*, November 29, 2016, , <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2287440/germany-angela-merkel-will-send-100000-migrants-back-to-war-torn-countries-admitting-germany-struggling-to-cope-migrant/>.



- Major Incidences: What major incidences have occurred if any in each country regarding refugees and citizens that could increase xenophobic attitudes. For example – The sexual assault attacks in Cologne, Germany on New Year’s Eve 2016.
- Laws: What international asylum laws are being broken or altered? What domestic laws regarding refugees and migrants have been introduced/altered, if any?

This paper will posit that the four variables above work together as a feedback loop. In this model: Key public figures introduce campaigns and rhetoric that focus on nationalism. When major incidents involving refugees occur, these help to reinforce and then amplify the rhetoric of key figures. As new incidents occur, public sentiment is influenced, which in turn, influences governments to introduce domestic laws which penalize refugees, and in some cases, violate international law. These actions by governments then reinforce and amplify the rhetoric established by said key figures, creating a loop of rising nationalist sentiment.

#### **iv. Definitions of Key Terms, Concepts, and Variables**

**Nationalism:** Nationalism can be patriotic feelings, principles, or efforts. In an extreme form, nationalism can be marked by feelings of xenophobia and superiority over other countries, nationalities, and ethnicities. It can also be seen as the advocacy for political independence for a particular country.

**Xenophobia:** An intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.

**Right-Wing:** An extreme conservative or reactionary section of a political party or system.

**Populist:** Populism came to be associated with the blue-collar class. Populism can be hard to predict. It sometimes has a religious tendency; it usually isn't very interested in international

affairs; it has sometimes been unfriendly to immigrants and minorities; and it's often anti-intellectual.

**European Union:** The European Union is a politico-economic union of 28 member states that are located primarily in Europe. It has an area of 4,324,782 km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of over 510 million.

**Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

**Asylum:** Asylum is granted to people fleeing persecution or serious harm in their own country and therefore are in need of international protection. Asylum is a fundamental right; granting it is an international obligation, first recognized in the 1951 Geneva Convention on the protection of refugees

#### v. **Parameters of Study**

My study will primarily focus on the influx of Syrian refugees into the EU since they are the largest group of immigrants that have migrated to the region in the shortest amount of time. The study will primarily include literature, reports, and articles from 2011 (the year the Syrian conflict began) to early 2017. I will be examining the rise of nationalism and xenophobia in specific EU member states, namely Britain and Germany.

#### vi. **The Research Question(s)**

How has the Syrian refugee crisis engendered a rise in right wing nationalism and xenophobia in European Union member states?

## **vii. Chapter outline**

Chapter One introduces the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the methodology, defining key terms and stating the research question. Chapter Two delves into the theoretical background providing a literature review on nationalism theories. Chapter Three outlines the historical background leading to the Syrian refugee crisis and the European predicament with regards to rising nationalism and xenophobia. Chapter Four introduces two case studies that explore rising nationalism, xenophobia and right-wing populist parties in EU member states, specifically Britain and Germany. Chapter Five looks at some key variable comparisons between the two countries and concludes the paper with final remarks.

## II. Theoretical Background

Nationalism, once thought by many academics to be a declining ideology, has surprisingly returned with renewed stamina in recent years, especially in the last decade.<sup>6</sup> After the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War, nationalistic tendencies were on the rise, especially in the countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, but following the patriotic surge of that era, nationalism began to take a back seat as Europe became further integrated and globalization expanded its reach. However, nationalism has shown an uncanny capacity for survival, and adaptation, and as new issues emerge in EU governance and as member states push to reclaim more of their sovereignty, nationalism rises again as populist right-wing movements rapidly gain leverage in some of the most prominent EU member states.

This paper will define nationalism as an ideology that gives a nation a sense of unity by imposing on them the same set of identities, for instance, linguistic, historical and cultural. Additionally, it is important to note that within some nationalistic frameworks, race can be seen as a defining factor. Stoddard (1923) expresses this by stating that “the idea of America or Britain as the bearers, on a global scale, of Anglo-Saxon Christian civilization was to be found both in theory and in practice. Parallel with this was the fear of the degradation of white European societies in consequence of the ‘rising tide of color.’”<sup>7</sup> This notion is true for white

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<sup>6</sup> Delanty, Gerard, and Krishan Kumar. *The SAGE Handbook of NATIONS and NATIONALISM*. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Stoddard, Lothrop. *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World – Supremacy*. (New York: Scribners Sons, 1923).

supremacist nationalist movements like the alt-right movement in America. Fenton (1999) goes on to say that multicultural nations like the United States unintentionally adopt “a dominant race framework within which others are inferiorized. These inferiorized groups are ... associated with low status and class position ... [and] there is constant pressure towards racializing nation, both in its internal representations, and in the control of borders and inter-state relations.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, Fenton supposes that both historically and theoretically it is possible to “discern race as nation, and races within nations, as divisions within them.”<sup>9</sup> In some nationalist movements, different races are marginally accepted as long as there is a shared ideology or belief system. We can see this trend in the case of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) whereby foreign recruits of varying races are accepted as long as they pledge their allegiance to the cause.

Especially unique to nationalism is the tendency to define one’s own nation against ‘the other’ inside or outside of the state borders. Fairclough (1995) defines the term “ideology” as a set of assumptions and beliefs, demonstrating how an ideology is ingrained in the way things are talked about – the discourse.<sup>10</sup> Finlayson (2003) suggests that “[w]e might say that nationalism is itself a kind of social theory – a kind of theory about how the world works, of what gives us a place in it, how we should think of our relations with other people and of how it should be politically organized.”<sup>11</sup> Nationalism is both old and new, and today nationalism takes shape in a different manner than it may have during its first appearance more than two centuries ago.

Delanty and Kumar (2006) reflect on this idea by stating that:

The emergence of modern nationalism in the period following the French Revolution was on the whole connected with the formation of the modern nation-state, on the one side, and on the other

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<sup>8</sup> Fenton, Steve. *Ethnicity: Racism, Class and Culture*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 201

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Fairclough, Norman. *Media Discourse*. (London: Edward Arnold, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Finlayson, Alan. “Nationalism,” in *Political Ideologies, An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), 102.

with the emergence of industrial society. Most nationalist movements were shaped by one, or very often both, of these developments. While the crystallization of nationalism and nationhood took many different forms it was inextricably connected with statehood and with the centralizing and modernizing tendency towards the homogenization of populations.<sup>12</sup>

In a modern society with increasing globalization, “nationalism derives from the periphery rather than the center.”<sup>13</sup> This has definitely been the case in Europe where we see a resurgence of nationalism stemming from political parties on the fringes of society which have begun to push forward and intensify nationalistic influence and spread patriotic ideologies. In Europe, especially Western Europe, nationalism can be seen as “anti-statist”<sup>14</sup> which is quite obviously displayed by the intensification of extreme-right ideologies and populist tendencies occurring in member states like France (National Front), Germany (Alternative for Germany) and Britain (UK Independence Party), to name a few.

Before we can understand why nationalism has played such a big role in shaping the current crisis facing EU solidarity and further integration, we must first understand nationalism and its origins. Ironically, the inventors of nationalism were members of the Tudor aristocracy in England in the sixteenth century. At first, the word ‘nation’ meant ‘an elite’, and “specifically referred to an elite of representatives of cultural and political authority.”<sup>15</sup> The word ‘nation’ later became synonymous with the English ‘people’, a word which had previously defined the masses or those of a lower class of society but with its new definition now elevated all people to a level of dignity and equality. This reconceptualization of what a nation was gave the people the right of self-government and sovereignty. Greenfeld (2006) believes that modern societies are

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<sup>12</sup> Delanty, Gerard and Kumar, Krishan. *The SAGE Handbook of NATIONS and NATIONALISM*. (London: Sage Publications, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Greenfeld, Liah. “Nationalism and Modernity,” in *Nationalism and the Mind: Essays on Modern Culture*. (One World, 2006), 70.

based on values of nationality and that these principles assist the development of major economic and political “structures of modernity”.<sup>16</sup> Greenfeld theorizes that “the emergence of nationalism is seen as tightly connected to the modern phenomenon of state-formation, and [thus] related to the trend of the secularization of culture.”<sup>17</sup> There are also sociological factors that relate to nationalism, as Greenfeld believes that human social reality is culturally constructed, and she goes on to say that “nationalism was a response of individuals affected by [perceived] dysfunctions of the society of orders – the traditional structure [that] modern society replaced.”<sup>18</sup> This paper assumes that certain factors of globalization challenge the Westphalian<sup>19</sup> notion of sovereignty. In the case of the voters who supported Brexit’s leave campaign, the concept of a dysfunctional and a flawed society rang true as Britons wished to recapture old traditional structures of society.

Gellner (1983) believes that the rise of industrialism birthed nationalism because it allowed for the barriers between communities to dissolve due to standardized education which permitted economic and social mobility.<sup>20</sup> Prior to industrialism, communities were separated by classes, as a majority of the population were peasant farmers and communities did not share a common existence, but this all changed with the advent of industrialism. However, since industrialization did not spread evenly among all communities within the ‘state’, those that did not industrialize missed out on opportunities that their counterparts in society benefited from, therefore causing a rift in culture.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>19</sup> Westphalian sovereignty refers to the principle of international law that each nation state has sovereignty over its territory and domestic affairs, to the exclusion of all external powers, on the principle of non-interference in another country's domestic affairs.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983).

This notion of missing out or being left behind can be compared with globalization today, where some members of society welcome globalization, believing it benefits their communities and the ‘state’, while others reject it, wishing for civilization to revert to a former state of being. This can be seen in the case of Brexit, where to some, the concept of European identity forged by globalization created a sense of belonging and an attachment to a community beyond the confines of the ‘nation-state’. However, this ‘unified identity’ was rejected by a faction of the population; rather, Euroscepticism took hold and many clung to nationalism, yearning for a solely British identity, rooted in shared culture and values.

According to Gellner, with regards to nationalism, two phenomena might occur: assimilation, or lack of assimilation.<sup>21</sup> If both communities share a language, culture and ethnicity, then assimilation is possible, but if there is no shared ethnicity, assimilation cannot take place. Those who do not assimilate are excluded from society, thus nationalism also occurs as the excluded ‘ethnicity’ pushes for political sovereignty. We see this type of assimilation occurring in places like Turkey, where the Kurdish people are fighting for autonomy within the state. Finally, Gellner believes that nationalism strives for one culture or ethnicity to be housed under one ‘state’. He deems this to be the most important feature of a successful state; therefore, if we use this definition of nationalism to interpret the phenomenon of Brexit, it is clear to see why the British people would vote to leave the EU in a quest to preserve the ‘state’. Germany and France are on a similar journey as they too seek to preserve the ‘state’, especially from ‘the other’.

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<sup>21</sup> Gellner, Nations and Nationalism.



Conversely, Delanty and Kumar believe that the overwhelming appeal of the idea of a nation is unquestionably due to the fact that it is a “social category,”<sup>22</sup> and they suggest that this is a “contrast to the idea of the state, which is a category of political rule and unlike class is by definition inclusive.”<sup>23</sup> They go on to say that the idea of a nation encapsulates social issues, “such as solidarity and we-feeling, which are often eroded by the general tendency towards the transnationalization of the state whereby the state disengages itself from the nation.”<sup>24</sup> Delanty and Kumar believe that in both developed and developing societies, the state has become more absorbed with transnational processes, hence the increase in social fragmentation. This idea differs from the kind of nationalism that arose in Western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, “when nationalism was implemented more as a tool towards integration and citizenship.”<sup>25</sup> Due to globalization, the nature of nationalism has changed today and concerns a wider range of social phenomena. This study will focus on the phenomenon of xenophobia triggering a rise in nationalism within certain EU member states.

Finlayson notes that nationalism is unlike other political ideologies as it relies on appeals to emotion. Nationalism is said to be rooted in emotions rather than rational thought, and according to Smith (1991) this is illustrated through a consideration of national identity as a “collective cultural phenomenon”.<sup>26</sup> However, problems with national identity arise when this ideal becomes exclusionary: ‘we’ belong, but ‘the other’ does not. Therefore, national identity can be regarded as a possible barrier to European integration, and as support for a united Europe. Various researchers have studied how the emotional attachment to the nation-state can negatively

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<sup>22</sup> Delanty, Kumar, *The SAGE Handbook*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, Anthony, D. *National Identity* (Penguin, 1991), vi

influence feelings towards the EU. McLaren (2002) argues that the solidarity and cohesion of the EU does not rely as heavily on economics as many assume; rather, she hypothesizes that a perceived cultural threat affects the attitudes of EU citizens more than an economic one, as citizens are more disturbed with the deterioration of the nation-state in terms of national sovereignty and national identity.<sup>27</sup>

### **Xenophobia and Nationalism**

The refugee crisis in Europe has unquestionably caused many citizens to become concerned with national sovereignty and identity as many fear the influx of refugees will alter the make-up of their communities. Nationalistic pride has emerged with xenophobic undertones as right-wing political parties have gained ground in the EU with extreme nationalistic discourse. Xenophobia is the fear of difference embodied in persons or groups from foreign countries, and it personifies an intense or irrational dislike or fear of ‘the other’. Xenophobia is nothing new in the European landscape as incidents of prejudice and hate toward ‘the other’ can be seen throughout history with events like WWII, especially the atrocities that were committed against the Jewish people. Berezin (2006) states that:

Xenophobia has become a salient feature of the political reality and discourse in the former Western Europe. Acts of violence and vandalism against Jews and first and second generation immigrants from Africa and the Middle East coupled with the rise of ultra-nationalist populist parties suggest that contemporary Europe is intolerant at best and racist at worst.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> McLaren, Lauren, M. "Public Support for the European Union: Cost/Benefit Analysis or Perceived Cultural Threat," *The Journal of Politics*, (May 2002), doi:10.1111/1468-2508.00139.

<sup>28</sup> Berezin, Mabel, “Xenophobia and the New Nationalisms”, in *The SAGE Handbook of NATIONS and NATIONALISM*. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 273.

Acts of violence and intolerance, especially those fueled by ethnic, racial, and religious differences have led many scholars to assume that “xenophobia is directly responsible for the resurgence of nationalism in contemporary Europe.”<sup>29</sup>

In *The Outsider*,<sup>30</sup> Sniderman (2000) and his research team set out to determine how race intensified prejudice, using Italy as a case study. The results were surprising, and contrary to researchers’ expectations, race did not seem to matter, as Italians were more prejudiced against white refugees from Eastern Europe than black refugees from sub-Saharan Africa. The initial findings suggested that prejudice was more a perception than a fact of difference; thus, in order to interpret their results differently, they had to develop another system of analysis. Sniderman and his colleagues developed the ‘Two Flavors Model’ of prejudice. The first ‘flavor’ dealt with social psychological accounts of prejudice, and the second ‘flavor’ took a more rational approach to prejudice based on scarce societal resources; in other words, “we dislike immigrants because they take our jobs. Both ‘flavors’ rely on categorization - who is like us and who is not.”<sup>31</sup> However, Sniderman notes that at any given point in history there can be fluctuating levels of differences and scarcities in a society, thus he suggests that there is a social mechanism which triggers the proclivity to not only view others as different but to also actively dislike them because of that difference. Discovering this social mechanism, and understanding that it could be activated at any time, compelled Sniderman and his team to develop a theory of prejudice that blended both flavors – “the social psychological and the instrumental.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>30</sup> Paul M. Sniderman et al., *The Outsider: Prejudice and Politics in Italy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Berezin, “Xenophobia and New”, 280.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

This led to the creation of the ‘Right Shock Model’ which incorporated politics in the study of prejudice. The authors believed that differences of race, ethnicity, nationality, and various other disparities are always more or less present in a modern society, and it is only under certain circumstances that the inclination to classify others as dissimilar in negative ways emerges. Thus, ‘exogenous shocks’ to the social, economic and political system, such as a recession, can lead to this kind of prejudice. Indeed, using Europe’s current predicament as an example, a massive influx of refugees has transformed these social differences to take on negative connotations. Consequently, such ‘shocks’ contribute to the parliamentary success of right-wing parties that mobilize around these differences. Sniderman et al. conclude that when ‘exogenous shocks’ to the system occur, “most people, independently of the ideological labels they espouse, are likely to retreat to ‘authority’, or more colloquially put, pleas for law and order. The political party that exploits that commitment, whether left or right, is likely to garner electoral support.”<sup>33</sup> When looking at the current state of affairs in the EU, the call for law and order is loud and unrelenting. Intellectuals have theorized that although Britain’s exit from the EU had been simmering for some time, the final vote by Britons to leave the EU was based off fear of ‘the other’ as the enormous influx of immigrants created the ‘exogenous shock’ Sniderman et al. refer to as citizens followed the authoritative calls to reclaim national sovereignty from Nigel Farage’s Eurosceptic and right-wing populist party (UKIP).

### **Reaffirming Nationhood**

The resurgence and staying power of nationalism, and in turn right-wing political parties, suggest that long-term overarching structural changes and developments need to be implemented when trying to account for xenophobia and neo-nationalism in established nation-states. Berezin

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 280.

proposes that “much of what falls under the label of nationalism in discussions of xenophobia and ultra-nationalism is what students of nationalism have labeled ethnic nationalism – the notion of a community of memory based on primordial ties.”<sup>34</sup> Berezin goes on to say that with regards to nationhood, civic nationalism is the basis for all cultural, political and moral claims, and there is empirical evidence that suggests extremist politics and ultra-nationalistic ideologies strive to reaffirm nationhood from a range of external threats to the nation-state. De Master and Le Ro (2000) illustrate this idea with their study that concludes:

[There is] a positive relation between xenophobia and level of support for European integration within individual member states. Low support for continuing integration correlates with high feelings of xenophobia. This finding suggests: first, that immigration may pose a stronger threat than immigrants to European citizens; and second, that untangling the mechanisms through which xenophobia and European integration interact is a worthwhile enterprise.<sup>35</sup>

Diez-Medrano (2003) also conducted a study to determine how everyday European citizens regard Europe and how those perceptions influence their support for advancing European integration. The study found that an overwhelming number of “citizens’ relation to their own national histories and identities was a strong predictor of how they would feel about increasing the pace of European integration.”<sup>36</sup>

## **Issues of Religion**

Differences in religion also tend to play an active role in affecting mindsets when combined with xenophobic tendencies as citizens embrace national identities and narratives that share a sameness, so the epic arrival of refugees of a predominantly Muslim faith most definitely sets off alarm bells as many communities fear that such a vast difference in practiced religion

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. – Also, primordial ties relates to the argument that nations are ancient, natural phenomenon.

<sup>35</sup> De Master S, Le Roy MK, “Xenophobia and the European Union”, *Comparative Politics* (2000), 32: 419–436.

<sup>36</sup> Diez Medrano, Juan. *Framing Europe: Attitudes to European Integration in Germany, Spain, and the United Kingdom* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).

may very well alter the make-up of society. European nations have fought wars to protect one religion over another, but during the process of “nation-state building, every European country came to institutional terms with the issue of religion.”<sup>37</sup> Adjudicating religion was not as tense when the only two candidates vying for official status was Catholicism or Protestantism, but now with the recent influx of immigrants from Islamic countries who have certain needs such as to “build mosques and engage in religious practices, [they] have once more made religion an issue.”<sup>38</sup> For instance, France has had a long struggle when it comes to integrating Muslim immigrants into their communities. Since as far back as the late 1980s, we have seen the French nation grapple with this issue. There was an incident in 1989 when two young Muslim girls were expelled from school for wearing headscarves because France is committed to *laïcité*, which is a legalized ideology from 1905 that demands church and state to remain strictly separated. There was much public debate and consternation regarding the headscarf issue, and the girls were eventually allowed to return to school and wear their headscarves if they so desired. However, after 9/11 and the presence of a more radicalized Muslim community in France, the issue of religion arose once again which ultimately led to a law that was passed in 2004 which would ban the wearing of religious symbols in all state institutions.

## **Final Thoughts**

It is clear to see that xenophobic attitudes, especially when heightened by extreme differences such as religion, history, culture and language, can turn nationals against ‘the other’. Xenophobia is an explosive political and social phenomenon and it “tends to emerge as a response to challenges to territorially bounded geographical space. In the modern nation-state,

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<sup>37</sup> Marx, Anthony, W. *Faith in Nation: Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Berezin, “Xenophobia and New”, 281.

immigration has posed one such challenge, but arguably so has the accelerated process of European integration.”<sup>39</sup> History has shown us that an instinctual response to xenophobia usually entails a closing off of borders and an increase in ultra-nationalism, which is what we are now seeing in the European bloc. However, historically we have also seen a more rational response take shape after the initial rejection of ‘the other’, whereby an affirmation of nationhood occurs and the nation attempts to accommodate immigrants by aiding in their integration into society (post WWII). Typically, these matters are cyclical in nature and can resolve organically, but the present threat of nationalism and xenophobia is perplexing because of the current state of affairs in the world, especially in Europe due to the refugee crisis, increased globalization and the complex web of intricacies that bind European member states. The EU has been working for decades to create a new kind of nation, and its major goal of an ‘ever closer union’ between member states is at stake. The hope is that the EU will be able to stand in solidarity and overcome its current governance crisis, but with an already weakened Union, the first exit of a member state, an unprecedented number of migrants arriving on European soil, and staunch opposition from populist parties within various member states, this might very well be a make it or break it moment for the EU.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 282.

### III. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### i. The Syrian Crisis

The Syrian civil war has led to mass devastation and destruction in the region. The war has raged on for almost six years with no resolution in sight. During this time, we have seen a nation crumble into a failed state where the damage almost seems irreparable. The war has inflicted mass casualties, brought on an unprecedented refugee crisis, left millions of Syrians displaced within the country, birthed a new terrorist threat, and shaken the stability of the Middle Eastern region. Syria's critical infrastructures have collapsed, the economy is crippled and much of its natural resources has been seized by extremist groups like the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL). The country is ravaged daily with violence, bombs, and airstrikes. Sectarianism and radicalism have spread through the nation, and territories have been vastly fragmented. The conflict in Syria has developed into an intricately complex web, and it has become nearly impossible to discern the reasons for the war, the actors involved, and possible solutions to ease tensions. The fight has become so muddled that no one really knows what they are fighting for anymore, and all that is left is a decimated country with hundreds of thousands dead and millions more that have been internally displaced or that have fled the chaos in search of a new home. Peaceful negotiations have not been successful, and a working solution that will satisfy all parties seems almost impossible, especially with so many various actors involved including two large super powers who clash with each other (U.S.A. and Russia). Additionally, the



international community has been left to deal with the slew of side effects brought on by this terrible and unyielding conflict.

## **ii. Syria Background**

Syria is a medium sized Middle Eastern nation that gained independence in 1945, and it has been led by the al-Assad family for over 45 years. In 2011 during the Arab Spring, hard-line Islamist leaders were being overthrown throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Although the Assad family are Alawites—a relatively liberal branch of Islam—and despite living under a regime that somewhat allowed religious and other freedoms, many Syrians were not fans of Bashar al-Assad and yearned for long-promised economic and political reforms. Encouraged by the Arab Spring, uprisings and protests began, but what started as “protests against President Assad’s regime in 2011 quickly escalated into a full-scale war between the Syrian government – backed by Russia and Iran – and antigovernment rebel groups.”<sup>40</sup>

In 2011, during the Arab Spring movement in the Middle East, some pro-democracy and grassroots protests erupted in Syria as protesters wanted “socio-economic and political reforms.”<sup>41</sup> However, President Assad’s heavy-handed response to the protests catapulted the peaceful demonstrations into a full-scale uprising. In the southern city of Daraa, some teenagers were arrested and tortured for painting revolutionary slogans on a school wall, and during protests for their release, security forces opened fire on demonstrators killing many. The violent reaction from Assad’s government spurred a backlash from citizens that demanded Assad’s resignation, but Assad’s staunch refusal to step down and his brutal use of force to repress the

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<sup>40</sup> “Civil War in Syria”. (n.d.). Retrieved December 8, 2016, from <http://www.cfr.org/global/global-conflict-tracker/p32137?cid=soc-twitter-in-gct-012416#!/conflict/civil-war-in-syria>

<sup>41</sup> "The Syrian Conflict: A Systems Conflict Analysis." ARK, February 2016, 1-78. Accessed December 8, 2016. <http://arkgroupdmcc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ARK-Syria-Conflict-Analysis-Digital-copy.pdf>.

dissent only further angered protestors, and by July 2011, “hundreds of thousands were taking to the streets across the country.”<sup>42</sup> Army defectors had loosely organized the Free Syrian Army and soon defectors and peaceful protestors quickly transformed into an armed oppositional force that was ready to stand its ground and defend itself against Assad’s security forces.

Violence between oppositional forces and Assad’s regime escalated and the country descended into total civil war as “rebel groups were formed to battle government forces for control of cities, towns and the countryside.”<sup>43</sup> Fighting eventually reached the capital city of Damascus and the second biggest city of Aleppo by 2012. The death toll of the conflict began steeply rising, and by June 2013 the UN reported that 90,000 people had been killed, but that number almost tripled to 250,000 by 2015.<sup>44</sup> Currently, approximately 450,000 deaths have been reported, 50,000 of which are children under eighteen years old.<sup>45</sup> To date, the crisis has left 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 4.8 million people have fled Syria and 6.3 million people are trapped or internally displaced by violence in the region.<sup>46</sup> A UN commission has determined that massive war crimes such as murder, rape, torture and kidnappings have been committed by all parties involved in the conflict, and the Assad regime has specifically committed crimes against its own citizens by deploying chemical weapons, bombing civilian concentrated areas, and by blocking access to food, water and health services. What began as a war between the Syrian citizens versus the Assad regime has turned into something much more

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<sup>42</sup> "Syria: The Story of the Conflict." BBC News. March 11, 2016. Accessed December 8, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26116868>.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Price, Megan, Jeff Klinger, Anas Qtiash, and Patrick Ball. "Updated Statistical Analysis of Documentation of Killings in the Syrian Arab Republic." The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, June 13, 2013. Accessed December 8, 2016. <https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/HRDAG-Updated-SY-report.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> "Death Count in Syria." I Am Syria. 2016. Accessed December 8, 2016. <http://www.iamsyria.org/death-tolls.html>.

<sup>46</sup> "Syrian Arab Republic Crisis Overview." United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2016. Accessed December 8, 2016. "Death Count in Syria." I Am Syria. 2016. Accessed December 8, 2016. <http://www.iamsyria.org/death-tolls.html>.

complex. Divisions between secular and religious fighters and between ethnic groups continue to complicate the politics of the conflict, and now the war also involves jihadist groups, as well as regional and international powers. The crisis in Syria is reaching its sixth year and the bodies are still stacking up.

### **iii. Consequences of War**

Philip Issa wrote an article for the *Independent* where he discusses five significant ways that the Syrian conflict has changed the world. He begins his analysis with the rise of ISIL, stating that the power vacuum in a deteriorating Syria left the doors open for a “terrifically violent branch of al-Qaeda [to grow] into the foremost terror group on the planet.”<sup>47</sup> Secondly, he talks about a “resurgent Russia” who has returned onto the global scene with a show of power and strength, defending Syria’s regime at all costs. British Foreign secretary Philip Hammond said recently that “There is one man on this planet who can end the civil war in Syria by making a phone call, and that’s Mr. Putin.”<sup>48</sup> Putin sent his forces to annihilate the Syrian government’s opponents, and it has been argued that Russia’s involvement brought on more violence. While “Russia’s designs for Syria are still veiled, ... whoever leads Syria next will largely owe the chair to Putin.”<sup>49</sup> A third repercussion of the conflict is a destabilized Europe, with over one million migrants flowing into its borders in 2015 alone, mostly refugees from Syria, a stream that “continues unabated, [and] has brought on both generosity and xenophobia, ultimately shaking the open-border arrangement to the core.”<sup>50</sup> Europeans are erecting barriers from Greece to

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<sup>47</sup> Issa, Philip. "Syrian Civil War: Five Ways the Conflict Has Changed the World." *Independent*. March 13, 2016. Accessed December 11, 2016. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syrian-civil-war-isis-how-it-changed-the-world-refugee-crisis-a6928796.html>.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Germany as member states have become overwhelmed with the influx and are having difficulties processing such large quantities of people, leaving many refugees stranded in squalid conditions in makeshift camps all over Europe.

Another negative effect resulting from the war is a destabilized Middle Eastern region, as many neighboring countries are also experiencing strain from the enormous amounts of refugees spilling into their borders. Europe's migrant crisis "is dwarfed by the wave of displacement that has washed into Syria's neighbors. Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan alone host around 4.4 million refugees from Syria; in Lebanon, they make up more than one-fifth of the population."<sup>51</sup> The conflict has also caused a reawakening of ethnic tensions in the region, such as in Turkey, for example, where the conflict has provoked concerns of a civil war with the Kurds. Finally, Issa (2016) states that the war in Syria has created perfect conditions for Iran to rise as it has "rebalanced regional axes of power."<sup>52</sup> Now, Shiite Iran's sphere of influence "extends from Beirut to Tehran, with dependent governments in Baghdad and Damascus."<sup>53</sup> Additionally, Saudi Arabia struggles to maintain support for the Sunni rebels it backs in Syria, while also staving off Iran-supported Shiite rebels in Yemen. Iran is also supported by Hezbollah, who has sent thousands of fighters to aid the Assad regime, and they continue to fortify their position along the northern border of Israel and Lebanon. The group also disregards Saudi-backed opponents in Lebanon's government causing further tensions in the region as opposing sides form alliances.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 8.

#### iv. **The European Predicament**

European countries are especially alert because the Syrian conflict has caused a large-scale refugee crisis that directly affects them. The European Union is having governance issues as they scramble to deal with the crisis. However, the massive influx of refugees to member states has caused a backlash and condemnation of migrants claiming asylum. Member states are re-erecting borders and suspending the Schengen agreement which allows for the free movement of people within the European bloc. The EU has attempted to impose refugee quotas on member states, but they are being rejected and many EU countries are reclaiming facets of their sovereignty that allow them to control their own borders.<sup>54</sup> The refugee crisis has caused huge problems for the EU and it is said that Brexit was partially brought on by a rejection of immigrants.<sup>55</sup> Currently, right-wing nationalist parties are flourishing in Europe and have been on the rise since the unprecedented influx of refugees.

The EU has attempted to build one nation by combining various nation-states of differing backgrounds, languages, and cultures. The idea was to create a 'European identity' that combines sovereignties, sheds borders and allows for the free movement of people; it is also supposed to be a community with shared economic and political structures. However, some argue that the EU has struggled to create a true 'European state' which becomes apparent in times of crises such as during the eurozone financial crisis, or currently with the Syrian refugee crisis. On these

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<sup>54</sup> Foster, Peter. "One year ago, Angela Merkel dared to stand up for refugees in Europe. Who else even tried? ." *The Telegraph*. August 24, 2016. Accessed February 18, 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/24/one-year-ago-angela-merkel-dared-to-stand-up-for-refugees-in-eur/>.

<sup>55</sup> Hjelmggaard, Kim, and Gregg Zoroya. "Exploding UK immigration helped drive 'Brexit' vote." *USA Today*. June 28, 2016. Accessed March 11, 2017. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/06/28/exploding-uk-immigration-helped-drive-brexit-vote/86424670/>.

occasions, disparities and divisions between member states become glaringly obvious, displaying a lack of unity within EU governance, leaving many to wonder how united the EU really is.

The EU's success relies on the willingness of member states to surrender certain facets of sovereignty for the greater good of the Union. However, increasingly, it appears that member states are becoming more attached to their national sovereignty, which we see in the case of Brexit, thus some hostility towards the EU has surfaced ranging from mild Euroscepticism to absolute anti-EU sentiments. Consequently, we see a changing political landscape manifesting throughout the continent with a discourse that is rooted in the desire for a returning of power to the nation-state, which creates a great challenge for the EU as these ideals go against the very core and fundamental principles that the EU is based on. The Brexit referendum and the vote to leave the EU has only highlighted a declining desire for unity and a rejection of globalization.

## IV. ANALYSIS

### i. Britain – The Case of Brexit

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, 2016, citizens of Britain shocked the world when they voted to leave the European Union (EU). This decision has sent waves of uncertainty throughout the island and the continent. One may ponder what aspects led to such a monumental event, and while the usual mix of economics and politics certainly played their part, one blatant factor rose above the rest, and that would be a renewed sense of nationalism. A right-wing English nationalism has gripped the hearts and minds of the British people. This group of voters represents an anti-Europeanism and anti-immigration narrative that exposes a profound disparity in ideals and aspirations among Britain's people and its political parties alike which allowed such nationalism to take hold and expand its reach. This particular breed of nationalism is one that is nostalgic for the glory days of British greatness and power. The divisive campaign dubbed as Brexit, which was to culminate in a referendum, split the country into two sparring factions, those who wished to leave versus those who wished to remain. Through polarizing rhetoric by key individuals, inflammatory campaign posters, targeted marketing and heightened emotions, nationalism won the day, and Britain now scrambles to face the consequences of such a decision.

### **Brexit: How Did We Get Here – Historical Background**

As previously noted, Gellner believes that the most important feature of a successful state is to have one unified culture or ethnicity, therefore, if we use this definition of nationalism to interpret the phenomenon of Brexit, it is clear to see why the British people would vote to leave the EU in a quest to preserve the 'state'. The Brits have always had a rocky relationship with the EU, and from the very beginning political elites have been resistant to integration. Perhaps we can explain this tension by looking back in history because as an empire builder and a major trading power, it seems obvious that Britain would want to remain a fully independent nation as a matter of pride. Also, it could be argued that because Britain is an island nation, it may have an insular mentality taking on an "arms-length attitude"<sup>56</sup> toward the rest of Europe. Wilson reinforces this notion by examining other island nations that are EU member states such as Ireland, Malta and Cyprus who welcome EU leadership, arguing that "it is Britain's island mentality, combined with that imperial hangover, that is at play – Britain is used to giving orders, not taking them."<sup>57</sup>

The early development of a unified Europe began after 1945 in the post-war era when many leaders had a desire to "tie Europe's nations so closely together that they could never again wreak such damage on each other."<sup>58</sup> In 1951, the European coal and steel industries were expanding which led to the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Britain was not involved with this union. Similarly, during this period six European nations (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) joined together to form the European Economic Community (EEC) by signing the Treaty of Rome in 1957, but Britain also declined an offer to join as if it was trying to maintain its superiority through segregation. However, the

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<sup>56</sup> Sam, Wilson, Britain and the EU: A long and rocky relationship, (2014, April 1). Retrieved November 20, 2016, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-26515129>

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.



economies of Britain's neighboring states flourished, while its own remained stagnant, so the Brits finally conceded, putting aside their imperial pride, and applied to join the EEC in 1961. Unfortunately, their bid to join was vetoed twice by French President Charles de Gaulle, who accused Britain of having "a deep-seated hostility towards European construction, and of being more interested in links with the US."<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, and albeit for selfish reasons, Britain sought to join the fold as it needed "a new sense of purpose and economic growth."<sup>60</sup> Only after de Gaulle left office in 1969 was Britain permitted to sign on to the EEC, with its membership becoming official in January, 1973, thanks to the leadership of conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath. However, in 1975, Britain went through another identity crisis led by Harold Wilson who pushed for a referendum to gauge whether citizens wanted to continue membership with the EEC, which was answered with a resounding 'yes' vote on June 6, 1975. This public consensus didn't ease tensions among political elites, and in 1983, there was opposition to EEC membership yet again. This time opposition came from Tony Benn and Michael Foot who were leaders of the Labor Party and who pushed for a dissolution of membership from the EEC; at this juncture, a pro-Europe wing of the party spilt off forming the Social Democratic Party (SDP).

In 1984, issues with EEC membership continued as Margaret Thatcher negotiated "a permanent rebate for Britain regarding EC contributions, because Britain received much less in agricultural subsidies than some other countries, notably France."<sup>61</sup> In 1988, Thatcher gave an uncompromising speech in Bruges, where she rejected the notion of a European super-state (Belgium) exercising dominance over Britain. However, at that time many Conservatives in Britain were pro-Europe, so the staunch opposition Thatcher took to European solidarity led to

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> James, Ellison, Is Britain more European than it thinks? *History Today*, (2012, February 2). 62(2). Retrieved November 20, 2016, from <http://www.historytoday.com/james-ellison/britain-more-european-it-thinks>

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, Britain and the EU

her eventual downfall. By 1992, Britain signed the Maastricht Treaty which called for a huge transfer of power from Britain to the new European Union, and although Britain opted out of the EU's single currency system there were still many critics who opposed the union in general, arguing that it "undermined the British tradition of the inviolable sovereignty of parliament."<sup>62</sup> Since the 1990s, Britain maintained its membership with the EU and even considered eventually adopting the single currency system, until the euro crisis hit in late 2009. The financial crisis ignited the European debate once more, and by 2013, history repeated itself as British Prime Minister David Cameron promised the British people another referendum regarding membership with the EU.

Professor Vernon Bogdanor (2013) illustrates this constant relational strain by claiming that:

Europe has been a toxic issue in British politics, and it has caused divisions, unlike most issues, it has caused divisions not only between the parties, divisions which perhaps could have been handled, but also deep divisions within the parties ... Some might argue that the fundamental conflict in Post-War British politics is not so much between left and right as between those who believe that Britain's future lies with Europe and those who believe it does not.<sup>63</sup>

Bogdanor further depicts this divide by stating that while Britain is geographically part of Europe, many tend to not see it as politically part of Europe, hence the endless debate.

Throughout history this deep division continually relates back to the central issue of politics with regards to sovereignty and the basic desire for a national identity that remains inherently 'British'. Ironically, when French President Charles de Gaulle vetoed Britain's membership to the EEC, it was because he thought that Britain "was insular, and maritime, and fundamentally

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Vernon, Bogdanor, Britain and the continent. (2013, February 17), 1. Retrieved November 20, 2016, from <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/britain-and-the-continent> -Transcript of a lecture

not European.”<sup>64</sup> which fits in line with what many Euro-sceptics and British politicians actually believe. Thus, since the 1970s a nonstop cycle of ‘in or out’, ‘with Europe or not’ has seized the British people, culminating in the most recent vote in 2016 to finally exit the European Union for good.

### **Major and Minor Players**

The most recent campaign for an exit from the Union has had specific voices charging the way for each side. In the past, the pro-European camp included Harold Macmillan, Edward Heath, Roy Jenkins, and Tony Blair, and anti-European sentiments came from Enoch Powell, Michael Foot, and Margaret Thatcher.

The major stakeholders for the 2016 Remain campaign included:<sup>65</sup> Prime Minister David Cameron, who called for the referendum, although he fervently fought against leaving the EU. Cameron attempted to persuade the British people from leaving the EU by warning of the economic dangers, but his rhetoric fell short and the referendum backfired, resulting in his resignation after the Brexit vote was final. Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labor Party whose ambiguous rhetoric confused voters and gave the impression of a divided party. Although the Labor Party wanted to remain part of the EU, Corbyn exuded an ambivalence to the issue which created disorder among the party’s Europhile MPs and activists who wished to persuade citizens to vote ‘remain’. George Osborne, the chancellor of the Exchequer who garnered support from the governor of the Bank of England (Mark Carney), the head of the International Monetary

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Britain's Brexit referendum: Key players. (2016, June 23). Retrieved November 20, 2016, from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-06-23/eu-referendum-the-key-brexite-players-from-cameron-to-carney> AND Robert, Colvile, 12 people who brought about Brexit, (2016, June 25). Retrieved November 20, 2016, from <http://www.politico.eu/article/12-people-who-brought-about-brexite-leave-remain-referendum-campaign-euroskeptics-tension/>

Fund (IMF, Christine Lagarde) and various other economic experts to warn of the devastating consequences leaving the EU would have. He commissioned informational brochures outlining a pro-Remain agenda to be sent out to the masses, but the British people felt that this was a bombardment and perhaps it was yet another mistake that fueled a Remain campaign loss in the end. Will Straw, the head of the pro-Remain group Britain Stronger In Europe, who also failed to mobilize voters to stay in the EU. Analysts have suggested that his managerial inexperience may have been the campaign's downfall.

The major stakeholders for the 2016 Leave campaign included:<sup>66</sup> Dominic Cummings, the campaign director for Vote Leave who spent months researching public opinion. It was Cummings who created the Brexit campaign slogan "Vote Leave, Take Control."<sup>67</sup> He carefully crafted messages of doubt and infiltrated British people's minds with bogus information like that Britain was sending outrageous sums of money as high as £350 million a week to the EU, and his camp also continually warned of Turkey's inevitable EU membership, creating fear and unrest as well as campaigning unrealistic promises to save the National Health Service (NHS). Cummings was also responsible for bringing his old boss Michael Gove on board and attracting Boris Johnson to the cause, consequently formulating a strong opposition and a legitimate Leave campaign. Boris Johnson, the former mayor of London and Tory cabinet minister who created an air of optimism for the Leave campaign stating that Britain needed to regain its sovereignty and control of its borders, arguing that the country would be able to prosper outside of the EU. Johnson also attracted attention for the Leave campaign by comparing the EU to Nazi Germany. Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary and a cabinet member of the Conservative Party who broke

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Colvile, 12 people who

away from his close ties with David Cameron by endorsing the Leave campaign, asserting that the U.K. would be a more free and fair society outside the EU. Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), who was one of the main voices against immigration and who put pressure on the Tories and David Cameron with regards to this issue. For a short while some senior figures of the Leave campaign viewed Farage as a liability because of his strong presence and extreme views on immigrants, but in the end, he did his job which was to motivate voters to leave the EU. Paul Dacre, the *Daily Mail* editor who set a media agenda that favored the Leave campaign and played a crucial role in affecting public opinion.

### **The Campaigns Begin**

Official campaigns started in October, 2015 and were comprised of business people and politicians. Politicians came from various parties such as the Conservative, Labor, Liberal, Democrat and Green parties. The Remain campaign donned the slogan ‘Britain Stronger in Europe’, while the Leave campaign’s official slogan became ‘Vote Leave’ which declared itself to be concerned with economic arguments more than those of immigration and identity. The latter were attached to a prior Leave campaign group known as the ‘Leave EU’ campaign, but this campaign dissolved, paving the way for one solid opposition with the ‘Vote Leave’ movement.

A key point in the debate for the Remain camp occurred during the European Union summit which took place in February, 2016. It was at this meeting that David Cameron proposed reforms of the terms of Britain’s EU membership, and a deal was negotiated that gave Britain a special status which permitted it to opt-out of the “ever closer union” clause found in the

Preamble to the 1957 treaty that would lead to the formation of the EU.<sup>68</sup> This meant that Britain could remain in the EU without deepening the path to full integration as other member states might have wished to do. Cameron also negotiated that restrictions were to be placed on benefits that EU migrants could claim in the U.K., and upon conclusion of the summit, Cameron announced that the referendum would indeed take place and that he would be campaigning for Britain to remain in the EU, since he believed that the EU reforms he negotiated were adequate and that there was no need for Britain to leave the Union. The negotiated deal became a platform for discussion and some members of Cameron's own Conservative party were not satisfied with the reforms, resulting in six cabinet members coming out in favor of leaving the EU. Opposition from within the party included Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary and one of Cameron's closest allies, as well as London Mayor Boris Johnson, a popular public figure who also pledged allegiance to the Leave campaign, and thus battle lines were drawn.

### **Opposing Rhetoric: The Remain Campaign**

The 'Britain Stronger in Europe' campaign basically argued that remaining in the EU would allow Britons to:<sup>69</sup>

- Gain better jobs, opportunities, and financial security.
- Take advantage of cheaper prices for food, fuel, energy bills, flights, and mobile roaming charges.
- Have a stronger global economy and currency.
- Enjoy a more powerful stature in the world as a major global stakeholder.
- Exercise free trade with the EU, thus creating economic growth at home.
- Have increased protected workers' rights.

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<sup>68</sup> Sionaidh, Douglas-Scott, Explaining the EU deal: An "ever closer union", (2016, February 22). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <https://fullfact.org/europe/explaining-eu-deal-ever-closer-union/>

<sup>69</sup> Britain Stronger In Europe. (2015). Retrieved December 6, 2016, from <http://www.strongerin.co.uk/#bkcMsJD24IK5D5x3.97>

- Enjoy enhanced public services like the NHS and better schooling.

The Remain campaign's main focus for a "Britain Stronger in Europe" was to relentlessly portray a Britain without Europe as weak. Remain campaign messaging highlighted the benefits of access to the single market, fiscal stability, economic risks of leaving and the free movement of people and ideas. The campaign was often criticized for scaremongering as its messaging concentrated on the instabilities and uncertainties that leaving the EU would bring, claiming that leaving would disrupt the status quo and bring about a future full of political and economic catastrophes. This type of messaging was reinforced with statements by significant advocates for the Remain campaign like Prime Minister David Cameron who stated to parliament that:

Leaving Europe would threaten our economic and our national security. Those who want us to leave cannot say if British businesses would be able to access Europe's free trade single market, or if working people's jobs are safe or how much prices would rise. All they are offering is risk at a time of uncertainty – a leap in the dark. I do not believe that would be right for Britain.<sup>70</sup>

Various voices from all over the world that supported the Remain campaign rallied around Cameron's sentiments. Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, warned that the consequences of Britain's exit from the EU "could possibly include a technical recession,"<sup>71</sup> and Christine Lagarde, managing director of the IMF said the impact on Britain's economy could range from "pretty bad to very, very bad."<sup>72</sup> Overseas leaders like U.S. President Barack Obama also weighed in saying that "The U.K. is at its best when it's helping to lead a strong European Union. It leverages U.K. power to be part of the EU. I don't think the EU moderates British influence in the world, it magnifies it."<sup>73</sup> Roberto Azevedo, head of the World Trade

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<sup>70</sup> On British government website – [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

<sup>71</sup> Krishnadev, Calamur, The 'Brexit' campaign: A cheat sheet, (2016, June 23). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/06/uk-brexite-guide/482730/>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Organization (WTO) mentioned that leaving the EU would cost Britons billions in import tariffs, stating that “Pretty much all of the U.K.’s trade [with the world] would somehow have to be negotiated.”<sup>74</sup> The Remain campaign’s rhetoric was clearly centered around global politics and the economy, which fell on deaf ears and did not seem to connect with the British people as much as the charged emotional narratives presented by the opposing Leave campaign.

### **Opposing Rhetoric: The Leave Campaign**

The ‘Vote Leave’ campaign essentially argued that leaving the EU would allow Britons to:<sup>75</sup>

- Save £350 million a week, which is what they claimed Britain paid for EU membership, consequently allowing the government to spend the money on NHS, schools and housing instead.
- Oversee and be solely responsible for their own borders again.
- Control immigration.
- Be free to trade with the whole world.
- Make their own laws.

The arguments outlined by the Leave campaign came together with their slogan “Vote Leave, take back control.”<sup>76</sup> This message relied heavily on nationalistic emotions and was constantly reinforced by employing sharp and divisive rhetoric that was presented by key players in the Leave camp. In a controversial interview with *The Telegraph*,<sup>77</sup> Boris Johnson equates the EU with Nazi Germany warning that bureaucrats in Brussels are using “different methods”, but they

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Why vote leave. (2015). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from [http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/why\\_vote\\_leave.html](http://www.voteleavetakecontrol.org/why_vote_leave.html)

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Tim, Ross, Boris Johnson: The EU wants a super state, just as Hitler did, (2016, May 15). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/14/boris-johnson-the-eu-wants-a-superstate-just-as-hitler-did/>



share the same aim of unifying Europe under one central authority. Johnson evokes warlike rhetoric claiming that the British people need to be “the heroes of Europe” again by setting the country free and saving it from an authoritative EU. The most notable and provocative comment he made was when he said that “Napoleon, Hitler, various people tried this out, and it ends tragically. The EU is an attempt to do this by different methods.”<sup>78</sup> His comments were followed by what he viewed as the fundamental issue with the EU, the idea that there is no underlying loyalty to a united Europe, and since there is no single authority that can be understood or respected, there is a need to “break away from a failing and dysfunctional EU system.”<sup>79</sup>

Another loud personality within the Leave campaign was that of Nigel Farage, the UKIP leader who was accused by the opposition of using Nazi-like propaganda tactics. Farage unveiled an anti-EU poster (see figure 1) depicting a line of mostly Middle Eastern migrants and refugees presumably marching towards Britain with a caption that read “We must break free of the EU and take back control.”<sup>80</sup> Farage incited feelings of hate and xenophobia as he took advantage of Briton’s fears of increased immigration, solidifying an anti-immigration rhetoric within the Leave campaign. Farage captured audiences with his anti-EU message that rejected the EU’s encroaching powers, and Britain’s loss of sovereignty and control of immigration. Farage’s aggressive stance on immigration angered fellow Remain advocates Johnson and Gove who did not agree with Farage’s severe xenophobic views and would rather the campaign not focus on anti-immigration messaging. However, in the end, Farage’s gamble with extreme messaging aided in a Leave campaign victory.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Krishnadev, Calamur, The 'Brexit' campaign: A cheat sheet, (2016, June 23). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/06/uk-brexit-guide/482730/>

<sup>80</sup> Ross, Boris Johnson: The EU

## **An Analysis of the Rhetoric**

Dr. Andrew Crines, a leading researcher of oratory and rhetoric in British party politics at the University of Liverpool, conducted an interesting analysis of Brexit rhetoric. He examined Brexit rhetoric through the lens of Aristotelean modes of persuasion which are pathos, logos and ethos. Pathos is an appeal to emotion and elicits an emotional response, logos is an appeal to logic and attempts to persuade through reason, while ethos is an appeal to ethics where the character and credibility of the persuader is most important. His findings help illustrate why voters eventually chose to leave the EU, as he describes how the Leave side employed rhetoric that appealed to pathos and ethos, while the Remain side relied more on logos-driven arguments. He clarifies this significant difference in rhetoric by stating that:

by appealing to pathos the Leave side were able to use fear of immigration and the potential risks of Turkey joining the European Union to instill a sense of dread of the future. Aided by a sympathetic media, the Leave side were well positioned to mold their narrative during the debates and through sympathetic tabloids. Contrasting this, the Remain side used logos by highlighting the economic benefits of immigration, the unlikelihood of an immediate application from Turkey to join the EU, and that the UK gains considerable social and economic benefits from membership.<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, if we measure success by using Aristotelean modes of persuasion, we see that the Leave side not only effectively applied pathos, provoking an emotional response from the voters, but it also successfully employed ethos using consistent and compelling characters such as Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage to spread its message. Aristotle's persuasion strategy relies not only on convincing an audience, but relating to them. The Leave campaign maintained that they understood and empathized with voter concerns, and they chose to identify with the 'baby

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<sup>81</sup> Andrew, S., Crines, The rhetoric of the EU Referendum campaign, (2016). Retrieved November 21, 2016, from <http://www.referendumanalysis.eu/eu-referendum-analysis-2016/section-5-campaign-and-political-communication/the-rhetoric-of-the-eu-referendum-campaign/>

boomer' generation arguing that the EU was a force that undermined British identity and that an influx of immigrants was overwhelming the system, thus creating a commonality of shared understanding and comradery with older sections of the electorate who were more likely to vote. The Remain campaign targeted their messaging towards the younger generation of 'Millennials', promoting the positives of a united Europe and the economic opportunities associated with the status quo. However, they were unsuccessful in delivering their message through captivating characters, and they did not manage to relate to their audience, thus failing miserably at applying effective ethos strategies.

### **Public Opinion and the Polls**

Before the referendum came about, public opinion towards immigration in Britain had been negative for a few years already and had consistently “ranked in the top five most important issues as selected by the British public.”<sup>82</sup> Blinder (2015) goes on to say that “Approximately three quarters of people in Britain currently favor reducing immigration ... [and the] concern about immigration applies to both EU and Non-EU migration.”<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the Leave campaign already had a built-in bias among Britons on which to exploit, so increasing nationalistic rhetoric and reinforcing patriotic ideals was already half of the battle won. Leading up to the referendum, a poll taken a couple weeks before the election showed that a major driver of support for the Leave campaign was the issue of immigration, as nearly a third of all Britons who planned to cast ballots singled out immigration as the No. 1 issue in the country. To put it in perspective, 73

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<sup>82</sup> Scott, Blinder, UK Public opinion toward immigration: Overall attitudes and level of concern. *The Migration Observatory*, (2015, August 20). Retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-of-concern/>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

percent of immigration issue voters backed Leave and only 23 percent preferred Remain (see figure 2).<sup>84</sup>

However, the same poll represented British voters as a whole to be evenly divided, and the poll illustrated an even split with 48 percent to Remain, an identical 48 percent to Leave and 4 percent that was undecided (see figure 3).<sup>85</sup> The even split was surprising considering many betting markets and general attitudes seemed to favor the Remain side. Betting markets were operating at a 60 to 37 percent margin in favor of Remain.<sup>86</sup> This poll was also conducted before the famed killing of pro-Remain lawmaker and Labor MP Jo Cox, who defended immigrants and expressed concern that xenophobia had overtaken the Brexit campaign. Her murderer, Thomas Mair, who is said to be an extreme rightwing terrorist shouted “Britain first” and “keep Britain independent” as he repeatedly shot and stabbed Cox.<sup>87</sup> Mr. Justice Wilkie who presided over the case said the crime was inspired by “white supremacism and exclusive nationalism, which is associated with Nazism in its modern forms.”<sup>88</sup> The heinous attack on Cox halted operations as both sides were forced to suspend campaigning close to the referendum, and many analysts believed this would hurt the momentum of the Leave campaign.

Public opinion regarding Prime Minister David Cameron was also waning close to the referendum with only 29 percent of Brexit voters satisfied with his performance as Prime Minister and 69 percent dissatisfied,<sup>89</sup> thus weakening his overall voice and authority when

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<sup>84</sup> Jon, Cohen, John, Lapinski, Poll: British voters split on Brexit but think EU exit vote will fail, (2016, June 17). Retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/brexit-referendum/poll-british-voters-split-brexit-think-eu-exit-vote-will-n594086>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ian, Cobain, Mathew, Taylor, 'Terrorist' Thomas Mair jailed for life for Jo Cox murder, (2016, November 23). Retrieved November 23, 2016, from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/23/thomas-mair-found-guilty-of-jo-cox-murder>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

urging voters to Remain. Cameron was also running in opposition with the views of his own party as the Conservatives had a higher majority of members who favored leaving.<sup>90</sup> In fact, the UKIP Party and the Conservative Party were both polling in favor of leaving, while the SNP, Labor, Green and Liberal Democratic parties polled in favor to Remain (see figure 4).<sup>91</sup>

Referendum day finally arrived, and one of the last polls taken before voting commenced displayed a victory for the Remain camp with 48 percent in favor of remaining and 46 percent voting to Leave (see figure 5).<sup>92</sup> However, on June 23, 2016, the outcome said something different, as the results of the Brexit referendum stunned the world with a shocking vote to Leave. The final polls came in at 51.9 percent of the votes for Leave and only 48.1 percent votes to Remain (see figure 6).<sup>93</sup> Interestingly, Northern Ireland, Scotland and London had the most votes to Remain, with the majority of regions voting to Leave (see figure 7)<sup>94</sup>, and so the world's most complex divorce began.

### **So Now What?**

In the months following Brexit, Britain has certainly undergone a 'facelift' with the issuance of a new Prime Minister, Theresa May, who now must tackle a laundry list of problems brought on by the decision to exit the Union. Two months after the referendum, economists were still assessing the damage to the British economy calling the vote an "act of self-harm", a "tragic split" and the "most stupid idea of the century."<sup>95</sup> Brexit is said to have cost U.K. companies

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> *Financial Times* Poll Tracker: <https://ig.ft.com/sites/brexit-polling/>

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> James, Moore, How Brexit has already changed Britain two months after the EU referendum, (2016, August 23). Retrieved November 23, 2016, from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/comment/brexit-britain-what-s-happened-so-far-and-what-to-expect-if-article-50-is-triggered-a7205071.html>

billions of pounds, and this price will continue to be paid in years to come. There is also speculation that some businesses may have to shift jobs to other European centers depending on how “passport rights” are negotiated, and the British pound which is known for its sturdiness and resilience continues to drop in value. Commercial and residential property prices have taken a hit, and real estate growth is “expected to slow to 2.5 percent in 2016 with residential property prices falling by 1.25 percent in 2017 before recovering in 2018.”<sup>96</sup> Trade agreements are also in a precarious situation, with many needing to be renegotiated, and it is not certain whether the U.K. will remain in the single market yet either.

Besides economics, other consequences for citizens are likely to arise, such as more expensive vacations abroad since the pound may be worth less, potential immigration status change for EU citizens living in the U.K., and higher inflation due to the devalued pound, seeing as how imports may well be more expensive. Additionally, interest rates might rise and a recession could occur. Overall, it is too soon to tell where Britain’s fate lies as the long-term outlook remains ambiguous, but it is this very uncertainty that negatively effects business, trading and growth. Britain still must go through exit negotiations with the EU, and it will be difficult to forecast what those outcomes will bring, but for now, everything hangs in the balance.

## **Final Thoughts**

Throughout history we have seen the British people constantly struggle to keep their identity separate from their European counterparts. This is a nation with a rich past full of wealth, power and superiority, but also a nation that embodies a distinct ‘Britishness’ that is

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

inherently different to many other Europeans. It is for this very reason that many Britons have felt nostalgic for times past and have wished to return to belonging to a British nation, not a European one. Globalization has debatably forced nations to become more intricately intertwined and interconnected. With the advent of the Internet, which connects the world, increasing global trade, growing cohesion among international organizations, and a young generation that expects a global society with free movement of people and ideas, it has become difficult to remain isolated from the global community. However, there is a rising shift with a rejection of globalization, severe anti-immigrant sentiments and a rejuvenation of nationalism and nationalistic ideals. With growing discrepancies among EU member states and failing EU leadership during times of crises, we see nations clamoring to reclaim their identities and take back their sovereignty. Britain is the first to regain its identity, embrace nationalism and break free from the EU. Now whether they will be the first of many or the first and last, only time will tell.

ii. **Germany – A Far Right Analysis**

We see the same rise in nationalism that occurred in Britain take place in Germany, with right-wing political parties like the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) gaining popularity. This sharp increase began taking shape during the epic surge of refugees from Syria into Europe in 2015. We saw a compassionate and welcoming Germany led by Angela Merkel opening Germany's borders to desperate Syrian refugees, letting in approximately one million refugees in a very short period of time.<sup>97</sup> However, Merkel's courageous humanitarian effort would soon cause her massive political upheaval as her grand gesture fueled anti-immigrant sentiments at home and caused a continent-wide rise in populism, of which Brexit was the most obvious expression.<sup>98</sup> Conversely, the rest of the EU combined took in a very small percentage of Syrian refugees compared to Germany,<sup>99</sup> and President Barack Obama announced that the United States, a much larger country than Germany would only take in 10, 000 Syrian refugees total.<sup>100</sup> However, Merkel, representing a Germany ever-aware of its past history with minorities, attempted to do the right thing, but the rise of the AfD asserts that many citizens are sensitive to the influx of migrants of a predominantly Muslim faith, which highlights a vast difference in cultures, creating an 'islamophobia' of sorts.<sup>101</sup> The AfD, which is led by Frauke Petry, is attracting a lot of disenfranchised voters including "non-voters, frustrated conservatives, [and]

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<sup>97</sup> Foster, Peter. "One year ago, Angela Merkel dared to stand up for refugees in Europe. Who else even tried? ." The Telegraph. August 24, 2016. Accessed February 18, 2017. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/24/one-year-ago-angela-merkel-dared-to-stand-up-for-refugees-in-eur/>.

<sup>98</sup> Herrchen, Neda Laura. "Pride and Prejudice: The Proliferation of Nationalism and Islamophobia in the context of the European Refugee Crisis." Public Governance Across Borders, June 30, 2016, 5.

<sup>99</sup> Harding, Luke, Philip Oltermann, and Nicholas Watt. "Refugees welcome? How UK and Germany compare on migration." The Guardian. September 2, 2015. Accessed March 11, 2017. Refugees welcome? How UK and Germany compare on migration.

<sup>100</sup> Garza, Frida. "Germany is taking in more refugees in 2015 than the US has in the past 10 years." Quartz Media. December 7, 2015. Accessed March 11, 2017. <https://qz.com/567469/germany-is-taking-in-more-refugees-in-2015-than-the-us-has-in-the-past-10-years/>.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.



even left-wing people.”<sup>102</sup> There are concerns that the party establishment in Germany is deteriorating and Merkel and her party must make huge strides if they are to quash rising nationalism in Germany and the popularity of the AfD.

### **Coalition Government: The Christian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party**

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was founded after World War II, and has since been Germany’s main conservative party. The CDU is a German center-right political party that supports free-market economy and social welfare programs. However, they tend to be conservative on social issues.<sup>103</sup> The CDU has also been a strong supporter for an integrated Europe. Since 1949, five out of eight chancellors who have led the Federal Republic have been from the CDU Party.<sup>104</sup> The CDU Party stems from the Center Party, which was a Catholic political party founded in 1870. Traditionally, the CDU has a stronghold in southwest and western Germany.

The CDU shares its power with the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The SPD is a center-left Party which was rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century labor movement and is Germany’s oldest political party, founded in 1875. The SPD specifically represents the interest of the working class and most of its support comes from the large cities of traditionally protestant northern Germany which was a former coal-mining and steel producing region.<sup>105</sup> In the 1970s, the SPD’s first chancellor Willy Brandt led the West German reconciliation with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The party has led governing coalitions for 20 of the 60 years of the Federal Republic, and

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<sup>102</sup> Beaty, Thalia. "Xenophobia and nationalism are on the rise in Germany." PRI. March 14, 2016. Accessed February 18, 2017. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-03-14/xenophobia-and-nationalism-are-rise-germany>.

<sup>103</sup> Conradt, David P. "Christian Democratic Union (CDU)." Encyclopaedia Britannica. December 16, 2015. Accessed February 21, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christian-Democratic-Union-political-party-Germany>.

<sup>104</sup> "A Quick Guide to Germany's Political Parties." Spiegel Online. September 25, 2009. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/where-do-they-stand-a-quick-guide-to-germany-s-political-parties-a-651388.html>.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

they have ruled as junior coalition partners with Merkel's CDU Party since 2005. Over the years, the SPD has suffered from waning support, and it has lost its status as Germany's largest party to the CDU.<sup>106</sup>

Chancellor Angela Merkel breaks the norm of traditional CDU leadership, as she is a Protestant who grew up in communist East Germany. She is also a divorced, remarried woman with no children. While these qualities make her quite the outsider, they also helped propel her astonishing rise. Merkel is known to be an excellent politician who, since early on, was a "brilliant, ferociously motivated student."<sup>107</sup> A political associate once said that she had weapons, and "those weapons were intelligence and will and power."<sup>108</sup> Merkel studied physics at Leipzig University and earned a doctorate in quantum chemistry in Berlin. Throughout her graduate studies, Merkel was an active member in the Free German Youth, which she viewed as an opportunistic endeavor. Her participation in youth politics paid off, and in 1989, a month after the Berlin wall fell, there was an opening for her to participate in democratic politics with a group called Democratic Awakening.

By March, 1990, Merkel was appointed as the deputy spokesperson for the "country's first and last democratically elected Prime Minister, Lothar de Maiziere,"<sup>109</sup> and by October, 1990, Merkel had won her first seat in the new Bundestag (German parliament) in Bonn, the first capital of a reunified Germany. After working for a few years in a cabinet position as the minister of women and youth, Merkel eventually joined with the CDU after Democratic Awakening merged with it. She rose through the ranks of the CDU, and by 1999 she had risen to the secretary-general position. During this time, there was a campaign finance scandal going on

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Packer, George. "The Quiet German." *The New Yorker*. December 1, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

with the CDU, and Merkel called for the party to break with its longtime leader Helmut Kohl. Merkel said that “the Party must learn to walk now and dare to engage in future battles with its political opponents without its old warhorse [A phrase Kohl was known by].”<sup>110</sup> Merkel took a huge gamble with her career by going after Kohl like that, but it paid off, and within a few months she had been elected Party chairman. This was the moment when Germans learned who Merkel was, and her career only flourished after this point. Indeed, by 2005 she was named Chancellor of Germany. A position which she still holds today, assuming she does not lose the upcoming 2017 federal elections over her controversial open migration policy. The CDU has lost support to the rising right-wing party AfD, but experts predict that despite criticism of Merkel and her sinking support, the majority of voters still support the idea of her remaining Chancellor.<sup>111</sup>

### **Germany’s New Rise in Nationalism**

Germany is experiencing a new wave of patriotism, and after decades of being ashamed of a sordid past, Germans are slowly beginning to take pride in their history and achievements. At first glance, it seems innocent, as a younger generation of Germans are celebrating German literature, art, music, film, and a burgeoning economy. Having never experienced the country’s more shameful history, young people are cultivating Germany’s newfound sense of self-worth. However, as a seemingly innocent national pride surges, some experts are apprehensive about where such a mindset could lead. After all, “with a history mired in conflict, some fear a revival

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Foster, Alice. "When is the German federal election 2017? Will Angela Merkel LOSE power? ." Express. January 25, 2017. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/713430/German-election-2017-federal-vote-will-Angela-Merkel-lose-prediction-AfD-CDU-SDP-polls>.

of the aggressive characteristics that have repeatedly led into wars – often with devastating consequences – will quietly re-emerge and take its citizens by surprise.”<sup>112</sup>

With a renewed vigor and sense of pride, Germany has become a strong presence in the EU, and due to its massive economic gains, Germany is flexing its muscle and becoming more vocal on certain topics, like other EU member states’ fiscal mismanagement, suggesting that financially irresponsible countries should be removed from the eurozone. German citizens are also becoming more outspoken on once considered taboo subjects, as citizens are now openly expressing hostility towards immigrants in their nation. According to a survey by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation reported in *Der Spiegel*, one-third of Germans think the nation is in serious danger of being overrun by foreigners.<sup>113</sup> One-third believe that foreigners have come to take advantage of the welfare state and that when jobs are scarce foreigners should be sent back to their own country.<sup>114</sup> One-sixth feel Jews have too much influence, while more than half want the practice of Islam to be restricted, even though it would violate the country’s constitution.<sup>115</sup> The survey concludes that “the basis for right-wing extremist attitudes in Germany remains high.”<sup>116</sup> The survey also notes that another factor behind the trend in extremist attitudes is contributed by the “erosion of solidarity” as some members of society, such as the unemployed and the homeless, are struggling to get by. Survey researchers claim that education is a leading “protective factor,” as those who have completed tertiary education are far less likely to hold such extremist views as those who do not.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Pack, David C. "Germany's Renewed Nationalism." *The Real Truth*, October 2015.

<sup>113</sup> "Far-Right Attitudes Increase in Germany." *Spiegel Online*. November 12, 2012. Accessed February 18, 2017. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/friedrich-ebert-foundation-far-right-attitudes-increase-in-germany-a-866701.html>.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

This rise in xenophobia and nationalism falls in line with prior stated theory, as the fear of ‘the other’ is taking shape in Germany and citizens are afraid that the influx of refugees will alter the make-up of their society. Sniderman’s ‘Right Shock Model’ theory is at play here where Germany has suffered an ‘exogenous shock’ to the social, economic, and political system by way of one million refugees entering its borders which is causing prejudice and leading to negative ways to classify ‘the other’.<sup>118</sup> Consequently, such ‘shocks’ contribute to the parliamentary success of right-wing parties that mobilize around these issues. Sniderman et al. conclude that when ‘exogenous shocks’ to the system occur, “most people, independently of the ideological labels they espouse, are likely to retreat to ‘authority’, or more colloquially put, pleas for law and order.”<sup>119</sup> In Germany’s case, this ‘retreat to authority’ is displayed in the growing popularity of the AfD, and a far-right resurgence in Germany is distinctively disturbing, both because of its history and because of its dominant position on the continent.

### **Germany’s Far Right Movement**

An article in *The New Yorker* characterizes Frauke Petry the leader of the AfD as “a mother, a scientist, and the leader of the country’s most successful nationalist phenomenon since the Second World War.”<sup>120</sup> The AfD was founded in 2013, not as a populist party, but as a single-issue party which advocated for Germany to leave the eurozone and return to the deutschmark. Early supporters of the AfD tended to be college-educated individuals who were conservative economists and mild eurosceptics that did not wholly agree with many of Merkel’s actions ranging from her billion-euro handout to the EU’s financially insecure members, to her securing housing and welfare for Muslim migrants who had snuck into the Schengen Zone

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<sup>118</sup> Sniderman, Paul, M. et al. *The Outsider: Prejudice and Politics in Italy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Meaney, Thomas. "The New Star of Germany's Far Right." *The New Yorker*. October 3, 2016.

illegally. It would only be a matter of time before the AfD's policies translated into a broader nationalistic narrative which became amplified when Frauke Petry took over the party from Bernd Lucke. Petry's staunch anti-immigrant views grew in popularity after more than a million asylum seekers entered Germany in 2015. Petry capitalized on this division and dissatisfaction, using campaign slogans like "stop the asylum chaos,"<sup>121</sup> and her party's approval ratings have soared ever since.

Petry has metamorphosized the far-right movement, which for decades has been a limited force with easily recognizable supporters, "nicotine -stained ex-Nazis in the sixties and seventies, [and] leather-clad skinheads in the eighties and nineties."<sup>122</sup> However, these days the AfD attracts an array of supporters, and many of them are not the usual suspects. In 2014, the AfD won its first seats in regional parliaments, and by early 2016, support for the AfD reached 16 percent in national polls,<sup>123</sup> a huge win for a right-wing party and three times more votes than any previous right-wing party had achieved. This win was a big upset for Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Social Democratic (SPD) coalition partners. The CDU also suffered devastating defeats to more left-leaning parties in the Baden-Württemberg region, an area dominated by the CDU since the end of the second world war.<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, the AfD overtook Merkel's party in a local election for the first time in the northeastern state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and scored 14.2 percent in a Berlin state election, which traditionally

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<sup>121</sup> Robins-Early, Nick. "This Is The Anti-Refugee Party That Won A Big Victory In Germany." Huffington Post. March 14, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/afd-germany-anti-refugee\\_us\\_56e6c77ae4b0b25c91826a82](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/afd-germany-anti-refugee_us_56e6c77ae4b0b25c91826a82).

<sup>122</sup> Meaney, "The New Star"

<sup>123</sup> Goulard, Hortense. "Far-right AfD hits new highs in Germany-wide poll." Politico. September 23, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.politico.eu/article/far-right-afd-hits-new-highs-in-germany-wide-poll-state-elections/>.

<sup>124</sup> Oltermann, Philip. "German elections: setbacks for Merkel's CDU as anti-refugee AfD makes big gains." March 14, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/13/anti-refugee-party-makes-big-gains-in-german-state-elections>.

is a social-democratic stronghold. While the AfD has no MPs in the federal parliament in Berlin, it now has seats in 10 out of 16 regional state assemblies in Germany.<sup>125</sup> After winning three of Germany's state legislatures' elections in 2016, the AfD has managed to enter all three state parliaments, winning double-digit portions of the vote in Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Saxony-Anhalt, and it is predicted that the AfD will become the country's third major party after the 2017 federal elections following the gains it has made against Merkel's the CDU.

The AfD's success during the 2016 election cycle included a mixture of disillusioned CDU voters and new voters. Fifty-six percent of AfD voters said they opted for the party because of the refugee crisis, and as many as forty percent of voters had previously been non-voters.<sup>126</sup> Petry attributes the AfD's rise to Angela Merkel's actions in taking in one million refugees, and she believes that Merkel's response to the humanitarian crisis, as well as her calling on Germans for national solidarity on the subject with her infamous "We can do this" slogan, achieved the opposite effect.<sup>127</sup> Petry says that Merkel's actions "electrified" the German Right, which accused Merkel of "selling out the country in order to burnish her cosmopolitan image abroad,"<sup>128</sup> consequently causing a surge of support for the AfD from voters who related to their messaging, many of them fleeing from Merkel's own party.

### **Far Right Rhetoric**

Petry might be seen as somewhat of a wholesome figure—she is a mother of four, married to a Lutheran pastor and is a former businesswoman with a Ph.D. in chemistry—but her rhetoric is far from virtuous. Petry has quite an extremist view which is illustrated by her

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<sup>125</sup> Hortense, "Far-right AfD"

<sup>126</sup> Oltermann, "German Elections"

<sup>127</sup> Meaney, "The New Star"

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

rhetoric. For example, when discussing the recent influx of Syrian refugees, she claimed that “the police might have to shoot people crossing the border illegally,”<sup>129</sup> she also mentioned that head scarves should be banned in schools and universities.<sup>130</sup> Her party has also called for a: Referendum on whether to leave the euro; for the expulsion of Allied troops, who have been stationed in Germany since 1945; and for school curriculums that focus on positive, identity- uplifting episodes in German history and less on Nazi crimes. Most contentious of all was the declaration [that] Islam does not belong in Germany.<sup>131</sup>

Petry shares some shocking similarities with newly appointed American President Donald Trump. While nothing like him in character, she makes up for it with her execution of rhetoric. She, like him, often works by allusion, exacerbating right-wing conspiracy theories to inflame grievances and to unite members together with a sense of shared beliefs. Another commonality between the two is the constant opposition to the media. Petry regularly chastises the media for liberal bias, while mastering the art of dominating the news cycle as she remains a top story, thriving on media attention.

Petry does not hide her distaste for refugees in Germany. When asked in an interview if she had ever met a refugee, Petry noted that she had made an official visit to an asylum shelter and remarked “I saw food on the walls, excrement as well – I saw how they behaved, and I thought, this is not going to work.”<sup>132</sup> She further commented on refugee behavior regarding appointments saying that “asylum seekers must appear for appointments in order to have their status reviewed, but they are often late by one or two hours ... if you’re a German and you’re

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



fifteen minutes late to a court date, that's it, it's over!"<sup>133</sup> Petry's abhorrent view of refugees is frequently echoed by other AfD party members; Kay Nerstheimer, an AfD politician elected to Berlin's state assembly, had posted comments on Facebook in 2012 adoring Germany's Nazi past and calling refugees "disgusting worms."<sup>134</sup> Comments like these fuel hatred of 'the other' and reinforce extremist anti-immigrant tendencies among supporters. At one point, Petry caused political uproar with her anti-immigration and xenophobic rhetoric when she compared multicultural societies with migrants and refugees to a "compost heap."<sup>135</sup> She admonished other German political parties' calls for diversity as she argued for an ethnically homogenous nation, stating that refugees were a threat to modern German values and referencing Germany's separation of church and state.

Petry's remarks are often criticized as "repulsive" and "despicable" by other German political figures, and this sentiment was reiterated by the interior minister of Baden-Wuttemberg Thomas Strobl who said "The strategy of [the AfD] is to make people scared. Therefore, we should not even get involved with them ... [The AfD] is not the savior but the traitor of the Western world ... they live for crisis and have no other goal but to expand this in everyday life."<sup>136</sup> Petry was further lambasted by Andreas Stoch of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Germany who said, "Once more the AfD has shown their hateful face. This blunder reaffirms that the AfD is by no means a bourgeois, but rather deeply inhuman,"<sup>137</sup> and the German trade unionist and SPD politician Leni Breymaier said, "Ms. Petry's miserable hatred has at least reached the next level of language. People are systematically humiliated and played

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Hortsense, "Far Right AfD"

<sup>135</sup> Sims, Alexandra. "Leader of Germany's right-wing AfD party 'compares immigrants to compost'" Independent. October 6, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/frauke-petry-leader-germany-right-wing-afd-party-compares-immigrants-compost-a7348531.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

against each other. It is not the diversity that threatens social peace in Germany - it is the AfD".<sup>138</sup> Yet, Petry and her party continue to garner support as many Germans retreat to old attitudes and embrace nationalistic tendencies. Negative events involving migrants have also strengthened these views as fear of 'the other' intensifies.

### **Major Incidences Involving Migrants: Increasing Xenophobia and Fear of "The Other"**

Several events that have taken place in Germany have heightened right-wing populist support. The worst of which occurred on New Year's Eve 2016 as approximately 1,200 women were sexually assaulted in the German cities of Cologne and Hamburg. A leaked document alleged that around 2,000 men of North African and Middle-Eastern descent were responsible for the attacks.<sup>139</sup> The attacks provoked further hatred and 'islamophobia' toward the one million Muslim refugees even though a larger percentage of the attackers were North African, and the incident increased opposition to Merkel's welcoming refugee policies. The attacks also led to stricter sexual-assault laws in Germany that make it easier for courts to sentence those involved in such crimes.<sup>140</sup> The new law also makes it easier for refugees to be deported if they are convicted for such acts, creating a sort of double punishment. Migrant-related attacks continued to occur in 2016; such attacks included (see figure 8):<sup>141</sup>

- On July 18, a teenage Afghan refugee pledging loyalty to ISIS began hacking away at passengers with an axe on a train in Wuerzburg, killing five people.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Noack, Rick. "Leaked document says 2,000 men allegedly assaulted 1,200 German women on New Year's Eve." *Washington Post*. July 11, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/10/leaked-document-says-2000-men-allegedly-assaulted-1200-german-women-on-new-years-eve/?utm\\_term=.b5855d6fb6ad](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/10/leaked-document-says-2000-men-allegedly-assaulted-1200-german-women-on-new-years-eve/?utm_term=.b5855d6fb6ad).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> "Germany attacks: What is going on?" BBC News. December 20, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36882445>. AND Boyle, Darren. "Germany's year from hell: How the country has been rocked by seven terror attacks leaving 22 dead". December 20, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4052696/Germany-s-year-hell-country-rocked-seven-terror-attacks-leaving-22-dead.html>.

- On July 22, a German teenager of Iranian heritage shot nine people dead in Munich.
- On July 24, a young Syrian refugee killed a woman with a machete and wounded five others. Later, on the same day another Syrian refugee whose refugee application had been denied blew himself up outside a bar in Ansbach wounding fifteen people.
- On December 19, a Tunisian man plowed a truck into a busy Christmas market in Berlin killing twelve people and injuring forty-eight.

The continued attacks quickly became established by public imagination as a largely Islamic phenomenon,<sup>142</sup> and Petry once again used the public's feelings as an opportunity to reprimand German political leaders and the news media for not reporting migrants' connection with the attacks in a more negative way, stating that "she saw [this] as a liberal tendency to suppress politically inconvenient truths."<sup>143</sup> The attacks highlighted an intense dissatisfaction among citizens with immigrants (specifically of Muslim faith) living in their communities, as many Germans felt less safe and more dissatisfied with Merkel's government and leadership. Growing frustrations among citizens and the ever-increasing popularity of the AfD finally propelled Merkel and her party into action.

### **Merkel and the CDU's New Stance and Rhetoric**

Merkel has begun backtracking from her pro-refugee stance significantly as she tries to quell rising nationalistic tendencies. In an interview with Reuters, Merkel apologetically stated that "[She] didn't embrace the problem in an appropriate way."<sup>144</sup> She said that she believes her "We can do this" slogan was "an almost empty formula" and she sees that she gravely

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<sup>142</sup> Interview with Abenheim, Donald. "Understanding the "Alternative for Germany": Origins, Aims and Consequences." Josef Korbel School of International Studies and Colorado European Union Center of Excellence, November 16, 2016.

<sup>143</sup> Meaney, "The New Star"

<sup>144</sup> Kirschbaum, Erik, and Andrea Shalal. "Merkel admits mistakes made in Germany, EU with refugee crisis." Reuters. August 30, 2016. Accessed February 20, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-germany-idUSKCN1152IU>.

underestimated the challenges involved.<sup>145</sup> Regarding the Schengen zone, she also admitted that she didn't properly "protect the external border."<sup>146</sup> After the sexual assaults on New Year's Eve, Merkel began aggressive expedition processes to deport refugees who had committed crimes. She also cut a deal with the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in an attempt to reduce the number of Syrians crossing into Europe.

Falling in line with Merkel's renewed stance on immigrants, Merkel's Interior Minister, Thomas de Maiziere, demanded a ban on burqas in various public domains, a mandate usually called upon by the AfD, which displayed an about face for the CDU.<sup>147</sup> Merkel's administration also announced a new Integration Law that "gives the state power to determine where refugees can live and requires them to learn German and to take classes on the country's history and culture."<sup>148</sup> Critics from the left claim that the new Integration Law is unproductive and unhumanitarian as migrants are deprived the choice of residence and are grossly underpaid, creating a generation of second class citizens. Merkel's party faces many challenges. They are in a precarious position as they try to remain a mostly moderate people's party while attempting to address and reconcile issues from the right and the left.

These extreme measures have managed to keep Merkel's leadership intact for now. She was re-elected as the leader of the CDU, running unopposed and winning 89.5 percent of delegate votes in December, 2016.<sup>149</sup> The vote came after Merkel introduced a surprising change in policy by formally endorsing a full burqa ban.<sup>150</sup> She made the announcement at a CDU

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<sup>145</sup> Meaney, "The New Star"

<sup>146</sup> Kirschbaum, Shalal. "Merkel admits mistakes"

<sup>147</sup> Meaney, "The New Star"

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Awford, Jenny. "Merkel Bounces Back, Angela Merkel Re-elected leader of Germany's Christian Democratic Union despite immigration backlash." *The Sun*. December 6, 2016. Accessed February 21, 2017. <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2341610/angela-merkel-re-elected-leader-of-germanys-christian-democratic-union-despite-immigration-backlash/>.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

conference saying that it was fair to expect full integration from migrants, and she stated that “the full veil must be banned wherever it is legally possible.”<sup>151</sup> Merkel also appeared more stern on the migrant issue at the conference, declaring that there would not be a repeat of the huge migrant influx and claiming that “a situation like the one in the late summer of 2015 cannot, should not and must not be repeated.” Merkel emphasized to party delegates, “that was and is our, and my, declared political aim.”<sup>152</sup>

Although the CDU formally re-nominated Merkel, this will still be her toughest campaign yet. With a steady increasing rise in nationalism around Europe in countries like France, Austria and Italy, and following the election of Donald Trump in the United States, populist movements are catching on, and Merkel will have to work twice as hard to subdue the rise of right-wing nationalism at home. The AfD has successfully caused division among voters, capitalizing on fears about the influx of refugees in order to gain momentum, but analysts claim that despite their popularity, the AfD will not win the federal election. However, their sheer presence has shaken up politics in Germany and set off alarm bells, causing the CDU to vastly shift its usual rhetoric heading into the 2017 elections.<sup>153</sup> Peter Beyer, a CDU member of the Bundestag (Germany’s parliament) said that “they [the AfD] are there, we have to take them seriously and they are a serious political new power.”<sup>154</sup> He continued on to say that “they will not be so strong that they will be part of any coalition in Berlin, but it’s 100 percent sure that they will be elected to the Bundestag next year, maybe even with more than 10 percent.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Schultheis, Emily. "Will anti-immigration party's rise pull Germany to the right?" CBS News. December 8, 2016. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/germany-angela-merkel-afd-populist-far-right-election-europe/>.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

Although the AfD has made enormous gains, there is still much optimism that Merkel will very likely win another term as chancellor. Thanks to her current attempts to deal with the refugee crisis and enforce stricter laws and procedures, polling shows that she and her CDU Party have recovered in recent months; “in the latest poll from the German polling firm Forsa, the CDU stood at 36 percent; AfD, meanwhile, had fallen slightly to 10 percent.”<sup>156</sup> That said, the political environment in Germany has not seen such turbulence in decades and it would be wise for Merkel and her party to stay alert and aware. The 2013 elections saw Merkel and the CDU “win the biggest victory since Germany’s reunification in 1990,”<sup>157</sup> but the 2017 elections will be quite different since the “AfD has proven itself to be a legitimate political force”<sup>158</sup> with its 10 seats in the country’s 16 state parliaments.

Thus, while Frauke Petry might not be the next German chancellor, the AfD still has the potential to be a spoiler and create instability in the system. So, for Merkel this means “walking the line to hold onto the center that has served her so well electorally, and working to appease the base of her party -- especially the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Bavaria-based branch of her party known for its socially conservative views.”<sup>159</sup> While Merkel won’t totally change her stance on all her views, she certainly will be more attentive to what the public wants, and although she may have opposed scaling back dual citizenship rights for Germans with foreign roots, she did endorse the burqa ban and has professed that “[Germany’s] law takes precedence over codes of honor, tribal or family rules, and over sharia law -- that [must] be spelled out clearly.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

## Consequences of the AfD's Rise

Although the AfD might not become the ruling party in Germany (for now anyway), there have been some major consequences of its rise. Many German citizens have reverted back to old ways of thinking by rejecting globalization, multiculturalism and European integration. The massive influx of refugees into Germany has created an atmosphere of fear and hatred leading to an increase in nationalistic pride and xenophobic tendencies. Refugees and migrants have become categorized as 'the other', who would steal German jobs, take advantage of the welfare system, and make communities less safe. Germany has long had a history of 'never forget', an idea that is ingrained into every German's mind from early on. 'Never forget' how fear and hatred of a minority led to unspeakable atrocities and countless deaths. Yet these very attitudes have re-emerged under the guise of nationalism and, once filtered into the system of shared beliefs, has only expanded its reach with leaders like Frauke Petry with her fear-mongering xenophobic rhetoric.

The AfD's popularity has also engendered a change in the political system. Annalena Baerbock, a member of parliament from the Green Party, illustrates this point by saying that the AfD is unquestionably moving other parties to the right, and that worries her more than the AfD itself.<sup>161</sup> She elaborated on this idea by saying that "[her] biggest fear [was] that the conservatives—and the part of the conservatives that come from Bavaria, CSU—[were] already so nervous that they moved their party program to the right," she went on to say that "this moving, in my point of view, is more dangerous ... than actually what the right party (AfD) is doing."<sup>162</sup> Exactly how to combat the AfD, and more so what they stand for, will be challenging

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid AND Interview with Abenheim, Donald. "Understanding the "Alternative for Germany": Origins, Aims and Consequences." Josef Korbel School of International Studies and Colorado European Union Center of Excellence, November 16, 2016.

for centrist politicians in Germany. Like Donald Trump in the United States, the AfD attracted a large majority of non-voters and mobilized a new group of people, but they also siphoned many votes from other major political parties, not just the CDU. Following in the footsteps of other far-right populist movements, the AfD has opened a Pandora's box of deep discontent with the political establishment among citizens, exacerbated by the refugee crisis, but eventually moving beyond it<sup>163</sup> with a new wave of voters that feel left behind and left out by their traditional government so that they are willing to take a risk on something new and radical.

### **Final Thoughts**

It is clear to see based on the above analysis that nationalism has re-emerged in German society. The rise of the AfD, a populist right-wing party, has garnered an unprecedented amount of leverage in the German political system and has become a force to be reckoned with. The rhetoric they espouse and the beliefs they promote are of an anti-immigrant nature, rejecting 'the others' in society and pooling together German citizens that share a national identity. Earlier, this paper defined nationalism as an ideology that gives a nation a sense of unity by imposing a set of characteristics such as a linguistic, a cultural and a historical identity that is homogenous among citizens. Thus, if certain persons do not fit into these shared identities then they do not fit into society. This is the case made by the AfD, that refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers do not fit into German society since they do not share a language, the same values, or a cultural history with Germans, and therefore do not belong.

Angela Merkel did not believe that Germans had to adopt such a narrow view of society and she attempted to promote multiculturalism and humanitarianism by welcoming said 'others', but her plan backfired, only fueling the AfD's popularity. After a massive influx of refugees

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<sup>163</sup> Interview with Abenheim, Donald. "Understanding the "Alternative for Germany"



flooded Germany's borders, Merkel had major problems with governance and integration of these migrants, causing her and the ruling party to lose public support. Xenophobic attitudes, especially the phenomenon of 'islamophobia' grew among citizens, particularly after many refugee related attacks took place all over Germany. Merkel and her government had to retreat from their welcoming stance in order to gain back support and control of the country, so their rhetoric shifted to the right and new stricter laws were imposed on refugees.

Many other political parties in Germany have also altered their messaging to lean more to the right, and this is a cause for concern, not only for Germany, but for Europe, too, as nationalism is definitely on the rise. Populist parties are gaining ground in many other EU member states, and what is happening in Germany is a warning sign that cannot be ignored. Merkel may very well escape with an electoral victory in 2017, but the AfD has made its mark and is not going anywhere. They have stunned the political system in Germany and from now on German leaders are going to have to remain vigilant, for nationalism has reared its ugly head and must not be allowed to expand its reach.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

By examining and comparing both case studies, a pattern emerges regarding how nationalistic and xenophobic sentiments engendered clear divisions among the citizens of Britain and Germany. These tendencies seem to have led to a drastic change in the political landscape, causing a rise in right-wing political parties and total political upheaval. If we look back to our main category of analysis, nationalism, which was operationally defined using four variables working together as a feedback loop, we see that the proposed model played out as key public figures introduced campaigns and rhetoric that focused on nationalism. When major incidents occurred regarding refugees, those helped to reinforce and then amplify the rhetoric of the key figures. As new incidents occurred, public sentiment was influenced, which in turn influenced governments to introduce domestic laws that penalized refugees/migrants, and in some cases, violated international law. These actions by governments then reinforced and amplified key figures and rhetoric, creating a loop of rising nationalist sentiment. This idea of a feedback loop is depicted in the below chart.

VARIABLES	BRITAIN	GERMANY
Key Public Figures/Political Parties Driving Nationalism	Dominic Cummings (Campaign Director) Michael Gove (Conservative Party) Boris Johnson (Former London Mayor) Nigel Farage (UKIP)	Angela Merkel (CDU) Frauke Petry (AfD)
Rhetoric	Cummings: “Vote Leave, Take Control.” – meaning gain sovereignty/control our borders. Gove: U.K. will be a more free and fair society outside the EU. Johnson: Compared EU to Nazi Germany. Farage: Unveiled anti-EU poster depicting a line of migrants pouring into Britain – caption read: “We must break free of the EU and take back control.”	Merkel did not purposefully drive nationalism, but her welcoming rhetoric that allowed approx. one million refugees into Germany increased nationalism by default.  Petry capitalized on this division and dissatisfaction, using campaign slogans like: “stop the asylum chaos,” and spouting hateful rhetoric by referring to refugees as “disgusting worms” and comparing multicultural societies to a “compost heap.”
Major Incidences	2013 brutal murder of British soldier Lee Rigby by two homegrown Islamist terrorists.  2016 Murder of Labor MP Jo Cox, who defended immigrants’ rights. She was stabbed several times by an extreme right winger who shouted, “Britain first” and “Keep Britain independent.”	Several migrant related attacks have occurred in Germany that have heightened xenophobic feelings and right-wing populist support. The worst of which was the New Year’s Eve 2016 sexual assaults.
Laws/Legal Actions	Britons voted to leave the Union – Brexit.	Strict sexual assault laws introduced that made deporting refugees easier. Integration law introduced restricting refugee rights. Merkel imposed a burqa ban and took a more aggressive stance on refugee deportation by cutting a deal with Turkey.

Britons stunned the world by voting to leave the EU as a group of voters that were swayed by anti-European and anti-immigration narratives, nostalgic for the glory days of British greatness and power, ran Britain out of the Union. Polarizing rhetoric by key individuals, inflammatory campaign posters, and targeted marketing drove nationalistic tendencies in Britain, leading to the momentous Brexit. Although Brexit was a long time coming, Will Somerville from the Migration Policy Institute states that:

The key driving force behind Leave's success was significant hostility to immigration, which galvanized a coalition of those implacably opposed to migration (around one-quarter of the public) with a further fourth of voters who are anxious about the cultural and economic impacts and lack confidence in the government's ability to manage migration competently, which they blame on being part of Europe and unable to act unilaterally. Analysis of public opinion suggests that immigration is a "state of the nation" issue and that many other concerns are refracted through it. However, the signal in the noise is crystal clear: immigration must be better controlled. Political leadership—and the leading Brexiteers Johnson and Michael Gove are natural centre-right liberals—will have to accommodate this reality.<sup>164</sup>

Although the issue of immigration in Britain began before the Syrian refugee crisis, the crisis created the "exogenous shock" that heightened anxieties further, and with EU governance pushing member states to take in certain quotas of Syrian refugees, Britons became fed up with their lack of control over domestic issues and wanted out of the Union. Thus, with a rejection of globalization, rising anti-immigrant sentiments and a rejuvenation of nationalism, Britons chose to reclaim their solely British identities and take back their sovereignty. This move marked the beginning of an anti-establishment, nationalistic wave that has swept through Europe as right-wing parties have gained ground and citizens continue to embrace nationalism and nationalistic ideals.

In Germany, we saw the right-wing political party, the AfD, gaining popularity after Angela Merkel welcomed an astounding number of refugees from Syria. The rise of the AfD displayed growing xenophobic tendencies, as German citizens were sensitive to the influx of migrants of a predominantly Muslim faith. They were concerned that these refugees would alter the make-up of their society, which led to feelings of insecurity and dissatisfaction among citizens. Frauke Petry, the leader of the AfD, capitalized on these feelings causing a rift between voters and further pushing a nationalistic and xenophobic agenda, which in turn garnered an

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<sup>164</sup> Somerville, Will. "When the Dust Settles: Migration Policy after Brexit." Migration Policy Institute. June 2016. Accessed March 24, 2017. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/when-dust-settles-migration-policy-after-brexite>.

unprecedented amount of leverage for the AfD in the German political system. After a series of migrant related attacks ravaged Germany, Merkel and her coalition government had to retreat from their pro-immigrant agenda in order to gain back control of the country, so their rhetoric shifted to the right as new stricter laws were imposed on refugees. However, German leaders are delicately balancing the incorporation of right rhetoric to appease voters, while still attempting to promote EU solidarity.

In both cases, we saw how nationalism emerged, changing the political order of things. Populist parties and nationalistic agendas are rising rapidly throughout Europe, and what happened in Britain and Germany is only a small piece of the puzzle as Italian, French, Austrian, and Dutch citizens follow suit by supporting extreme right ideologies. As mentioned earlier, Italians voted ‘no’ to an important referendum on political reforms, a decision that gives EU skeptics in Italy a stronger mandate to push their extreme nationalist agenda.<sup>165</sup> Additionally, a right wing populist party is gaining ground in France with Marine Le Pen’s National Front who prompted center-left French president Francois Hollande not to seek reelection due to his unpopularity among French citizens. He stepped down to mitigate a situation that might garner more support for Le Pen.<sup>166</sup> Austria had far-right leader Norbert Hofer as a presidential candidate, who if victorious would be the first populist leader since World War II, and in the Netherlands, Islamophobic, EU- hating, far right leader Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom (PVV) were strong contenders in 2017’s general elections. Luckily, both Austrian and Dutch citizens ultimately rejected both leaders, but that does not mean Europe is in the clear.

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<sup>165</sup> E.P. Licursi, "Italy Approaches Its Own Choice Between Liberalism and Populism," *The New Yorker*, December 3, 2016.

<sup>166</sup> Cockburn, Harry. "Francois Hollande to step aside from French elections to help stop 'extremism' winning," *The Independent*, December 1, 2016, , <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/francois-hollande-france-election-will-not-stand-a7450661.html>.

Nationalistic, xenophobic, and extremist ideologies have become deeply rooted in European societies and that is a fact that cannot be ignored, especially with notoriously xenophobic nations like Hungary and Romania that are already part of the Union.

Rising nationalism is not only a concern for individual countries, but for the EU in its entirety because as each country becomes more patriotic, xenophobic, and isolated, intense Eurosceptic sentiments are taking shape which have the ability to destroy EU solidarity with massive consequences in the long run. Currently, the feedback loop discussed earlier is a model that can be seen and explored in many countries in the Global North, including in the U.S.A. In Europe, this model occurs on a micro level within individual countries and then on a macro level within the European Union itself. Applying this model enables an examination of emerging nationalism, xenophobia, and populist ideals in and between nations, allowing for comparisons and further discoveries to be made, including the risks of continued globalization. Further research could also be conducted using the feedback loop to study nationalism in the EU and in the United States – looking to see how the same variables affect similar outcomes in totally disparate nations. However, in the meantime where rising nationalism and the EU is concerned, nothing is predictable. Only time will tell if the EU will be able to remain one Union in solidarity, overcoming nationalistic surges, or if the Syrian refugee crisis was indeed the tipping point that led to a fractured EU.

VI. APPENDIX

*Figure 1*

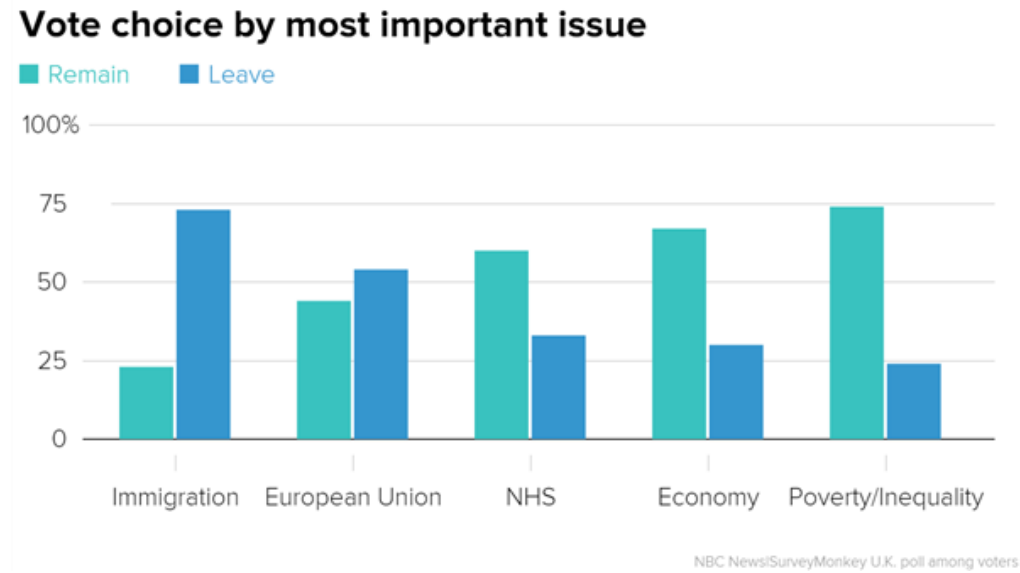


Polling Figures:

This NBC News|SurveyMonkey U.K. poll was conducted online June 8 to 15 among a national sample of 3,533 British voters who say there's a chance they'll vote in the Brexit referendum.

Results have an error estimate of +/- 2 percentage points

**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**

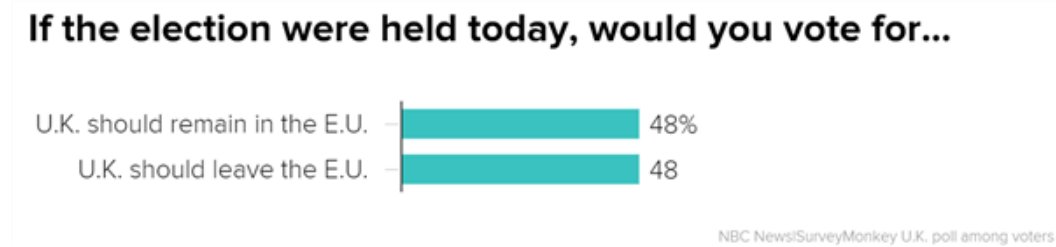




Figure 4

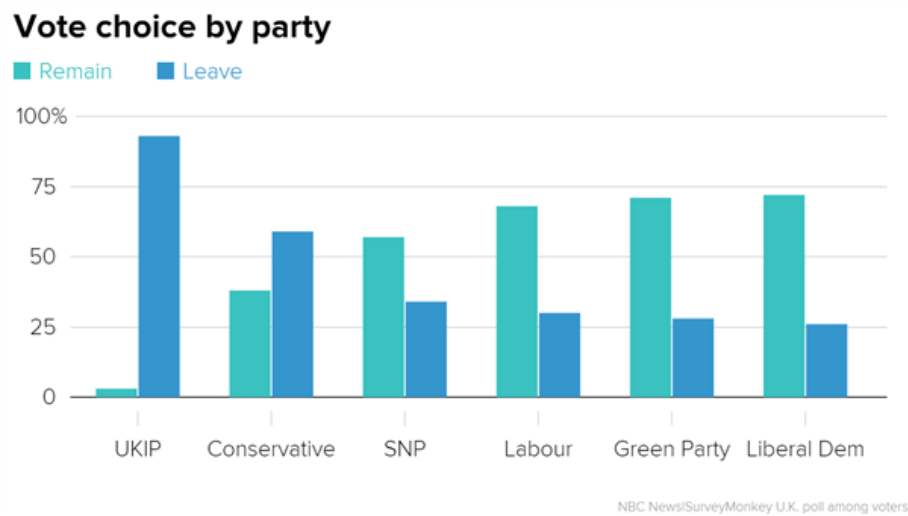


Figure 5

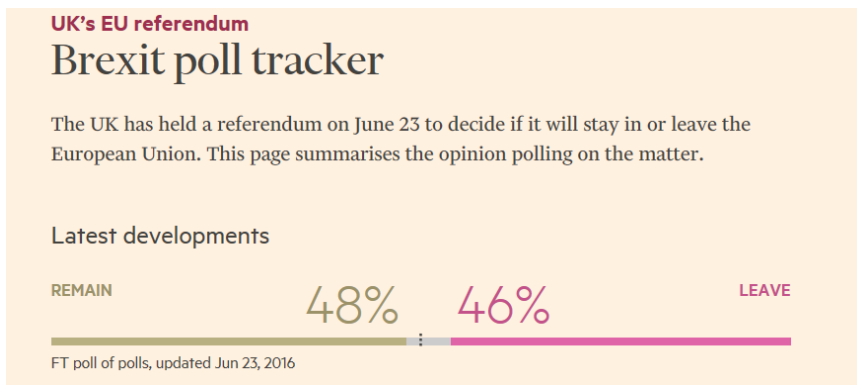


Figure 6

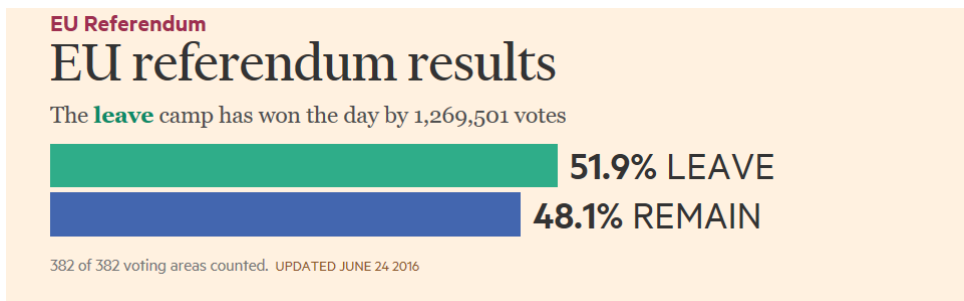


Figure 7

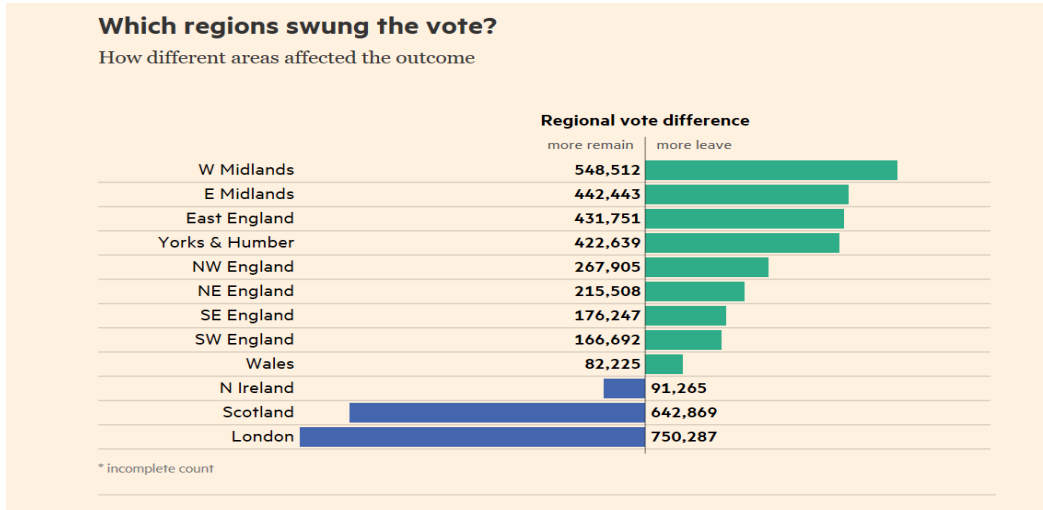
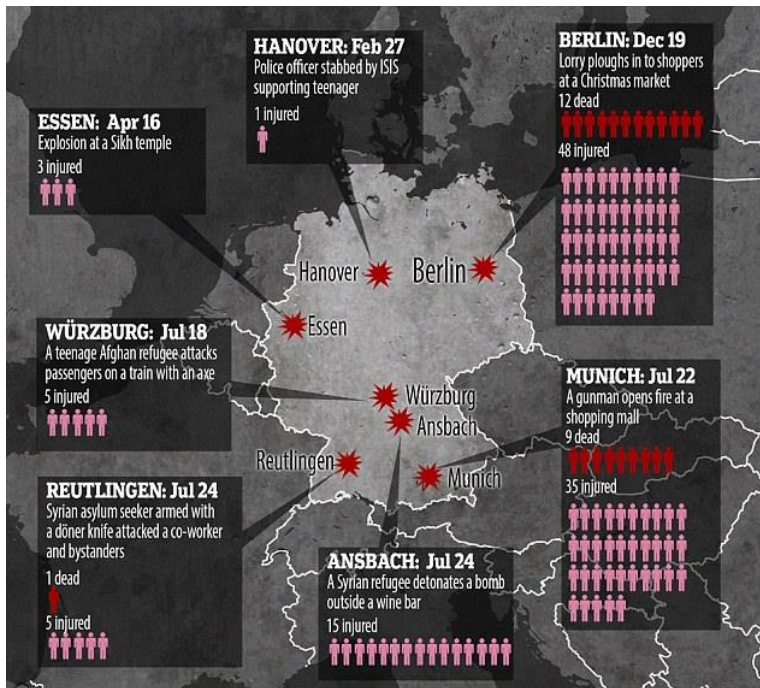


Figure 8



[dailymail.co.uk](http://dailymail.co.uk)

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