

Drew University  
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French Women and the Right:  
Analyzing the Closing Gender Gap  
in Radical Right Electorates

A Thesis in International Relations

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Bachelor in Arts  
With Specialized Honors in International Relations

May 2017

## ABSTRACT

Populist, radical, right-wing political parties (PRRPs) have been overwhelmingly supported by men. However, the electorate of PRRPs has been transforming in recent years, with women voting for the radical right more than ever before. This increase in female support for PRRPs is following the international rise of radical ideology across the Western world. Not only have these parties received unprecedented levels of female support, they have been gaining high levels of electoral success. One of the most notable examples of PRRP electoral success is the National Front of France (FN). Under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, the FN has become a third-party contender in French politics. Utilizing anti-immigrant and anti-globalization sentiments while softening their rhetoric, these parties are accessing voters who typically would not cast their ballots for PRRPs. Through a case study of the National Front, a rise in female support for PRRPs can be seen, specifically in the past four French presidential elections. The 2017 French presidential elections saw this international rise in radicalism climax as Marine Le Pen ran against Emmanuel Macron, the leader of the newly established En Marche party. The entire world looked to France to see the results of the historic election and rejoiced when Macron won. However, attention should be paid to the closing of the gender gap in radical right voting, for Marine Le Pen finished the second round of the presidential election with the largest amount of support the party has ever seen, with more women voting for the party than men for the first time. Therefore, analyzing the factors and predictors that helped close the gender gap in the FN electoral is necessary to determine the consequences increased female supporters will have on the success of all PRRPs.

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Events of the past year, including the British exit, or Brexit, from the European Union and the surprise election of Donald J. Trump in the United States has cast a spotlight on the growing radicalism that is spreading throughout Western nations. This trend is evidenced through increasing support for radicalized, right-wing political parties, especially in Europe. There is not a generalized set of criteria that fully explains the rise of right-wing parties. These parties have been created in established democracies, post-industrial societies, as well as countries with the most educated and most secure populations in the world, all of which should spurn the growth of xenophobic ideals. However, some factors, such as immigration rates, levels of unemployment, and nationalistic attitudes predict voter support for these parties.

Marine Le Pen is one of the most notable leaders of a radical, right-wing party of the National Front (FN). Ms. Le Pen, the daughter of the National Front founder and his successor, has increased support for the National Front since her tenure began in 2011. Marine Le Pen has managed to transform the FN from a fringe movement into a threatening third party contender under her leadership. The FN has grown in support, with the culmination of this increasing support leading to the biggest electoral success the party has ever seen in the regional elections of 2015. Marine Le Pen hopes to continue this trend of increased electoral support as she campaigns for the French presidency in April 2017. At the moment, by the time of the 2017 Presidential in France, Marine Le Pen had 22% support of likely votes.<sup>1</sup> She ended up coming second in the first round of

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<sup>1</sup> OpinionWay, "PrésiTrack," OpinionWay, last modified August 2016, accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.opinion-way.com/fr/>.

presidential elections with 21% of the vote, losing to Emmanuel Macron, with 24% of the vote. By using the energy of the radicalism that occurred in the United Kingdom and the United States, Marine Le Pen easily made it to the second round of elections.

The FN platform calls for a Frexit, or French exit of the European Union modeled after that of Great Britain's referendum, the end of free movement of people at the French border, the return of asylum seekers to their countries of origin, and the creation of tariffs to protect French industry. Through this platform, Le Pen hopes to create history by becoming the first FN leader to win the French presidency. Despite her easy victory in the first round of elections, there are no opinion polls that predict Le Pen winning the second round against Emmanuel Macron. After a scandal centering around François Fillon, a former front-runner of the first round of elections, paying his wife and child a salary out of public funds, voters did not show support for the disgraced candidate.<sup>2</sup> The 2017 elections have proved to be one of the most unpredictable in French history. For the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic of France, there will be no mainstream parties in the second round of elections. The National Front and a newly created party, En Marche, are the two parties in the second round competing for the presidency.

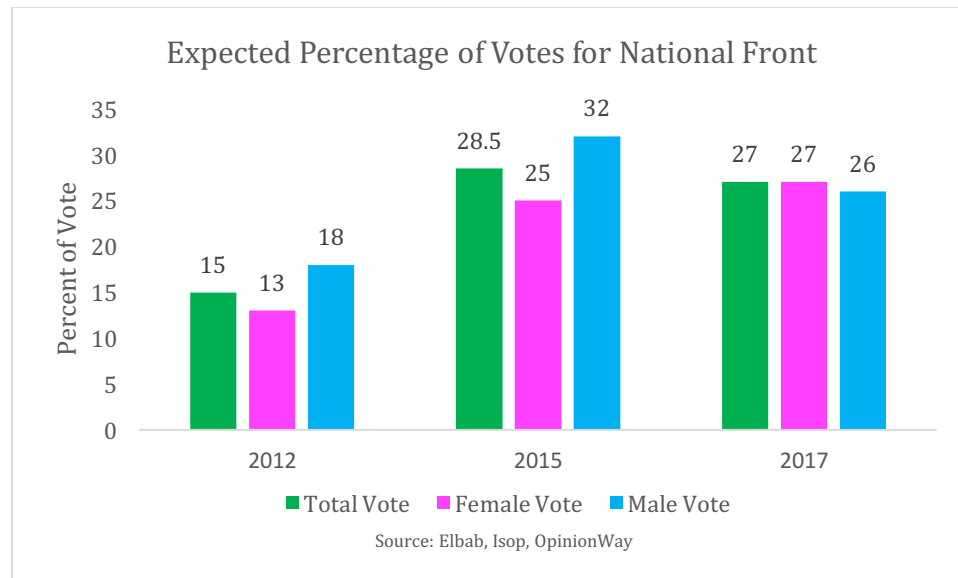
An interesting aspect that affects radical right parties' electoral success is the gender gap that occurs in their electorates. A majority of radical right parties are not successful in reaching out to female voters. In fact, many of the supporters of radical

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<sup>2</sup> James McAuley, "Scandal-hit François Fillon Stays in French Presidential Race, but Rivals Sense Openings," *Washington Post* (Washington DC), March 1, 2017, accessed March 1, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/scandal-hit-francois-fillon-stays-in-french-presidential-race-but-rivals-sense-openings/2017/03/01/c4666a84-fe72-11e6-8ebe-6e0dbe4f2bca\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.760c7245f6c8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/scandal-hit-francois-fillon-stays-in-french-presidential-race-but-rivals-sense-openings/2017/03/01/c4666a84-fe72-11e6-8ebe-6e0dbe4f2bca_story.html?utm_term=.760c7245f6c8).

right parties are male. However, over the past three elections in France, there has been a noticeable closure in the gender gap that normally hinders the success of many radical right political parties. This phenomenon could have enormous impact on the success of the FN in the upcoming presidential elections, for gaining relative gender parity would place the FN on the same footing as more mainstream parties in France.

**Figure 1**



As can be seen in Figure 1, there has been an increase in support for the FN based on opinion poll data taken before elections held in 2012, 2015, and 2017. Not only has there been an increase in the overall expected percentage of the voter share over time, the gender split between the party has slowly been closing. One of the most surprising findings of the graph is that in the most recent poll conducted by OpinionWay, females had a higher expected percentage rate of voting for Marine Le Pen than men by 1%. This result was found to be true after the first round of the 2017 election.

Understanding the closing gender gap in the electorate of the FN is crucial to predicting the results of the 2017 presidential election in France and the overall impact that gender parity might have for other radical right parties across Europe. We first need to explain who supports right-wing, populist parties, explore major radical parties active in Europe, identify factors of radical right support, and then examine a party at length. Therefore, the first section of this thesis will present a snapshot of the overall strength of these parties across Europe. Then, I review the factors that normally lead to radical right support. Unemployment rates, immigration rates, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments, education and income levels, and anti-globalization sentiments are all factors that are known to increase levels of radical right support.

Once a foundation has been established, I will analyze how the gender gap has kept in check the population of this political parties. The implications of this increasing parity may have tremendous effects on European politics in the future, with the first example of the closing gender gap occurring with the French presidential elections in 2017. However, as will be discussed, this gender gap is shrinking in France. To see the consequences of the closing gender gap, I analyze the National Front's evolution. After outlining the history of the party, I am especially interested in the FN under Marie Le Pen and her efforts to soften the party's image in an effort to make the party more electable. An examination of the causes of the closing of the gender gap will then be conducted to determine why this phenomenon is happening. To conclude, I will predict the outcome of the 2017 presidential election and the consequences these results will have in French politics and across Europe.

## I. Overview of Relevant PRRPs

In 2012, Cas Mudde, one of the leading authorities on populist radical right parties, or PRRPs, held that few truly radical right parties held any major power within their countries, with the average rate of support for these parties less than 10% of the electorates.<sup>3</sup> He continued by saying that these PRRPs are shunned by other parties in their political systems and therefore have little direct influence over public policy, likening these parties to “dogs that bark loud, but hardly ever bite”.<sup>4</sup> However, just five years after the publication of that article, radicalized parties across the Western world have been performing extremely well.

Radicalization is in the rise among Western democracies. The United Kingdom’s vote to leave the European Union and Donald J. Trump’s victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election are two noteworthy examples of this phenomenon. Figure 2 below, provides a snapshot of the overall strongest radicalized right-wing parties in Europe.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 2**

Party Name	Country	Seats in Government	Percentage of Vote	Leader	Gender
Freedom Party of Austria	Austria	40 of 183	35.1% (2016)	Heinz-Christian Strache	Male
Swiss People's Party	Switzerland	65 of 200	29.4% (2015)	Albert Rösti	Male
National Front	France	2 of 577	28% (2015)	Marine Le Pen	Female
Progress Party	Norway	29 of 169	16.3% (2013)	Siv Jensen	Female
Golden Dawn	Greece	18 of 300	7.0% (2015)	Nikolaos Michaloliakos	Male
Sweden Democrats	Sweden	49 of 349	12.9% (2014)	Jimmie Åkesson	Male
Lega Nord	Italy	15 of 630	4.1% (2013)	Roberto Maroni	Male
UK Independence Party	United Kingdom	1 of 650	12.6% (2015)	Paul Nuttall	Male
Finns Party	Finland	38 of 200	17.7% (2015)	Timo Soini	Male
Danish People's Party	Denmark	37 of 179	21.1% (2015)	Kristian Thulesen Dahl	Male
Law and Justice	Poland	216 of 460	37.6% (2015)	Jarosław Kaczyński	Male
Jobbik	Hungary	24 of 199	20.2% (2014)	Gábor Vona	Male
Vlaams Belang	Belgium	3 of 87	3.7% (2014)	Tom Van Grieken	Male
Party for Freedom	Netherlands	15 of 150	10.1% (2012)	Geert Wilders	Male
Alternative for Germany	Germany	0 of 630	4.7% (2013)	Frauke Petry	Female

Source: *Radical Right* by Pippa Norris

<sup>3</sup> Cas Mudde, 2012, pg. 14

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 2012, pg. 14

<sup>5</sup> Pippa Norris, *Radical Right* (New York City, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 54.



A majority of these parties have seen an increase in support over the past 10 years. The National Front has steadily become a serious contender in the 2017 presidential election. This success follows astounding election results for the party in the 2012 presidential election and the 2015 regional elections. Under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, the party has been softening its image in an effort to become more palatable for moderate voters. The party achieved a historic feat when it finished first in the 2015 regional elections, beating more mainstream parties by receiving 28% of the vote in the first round of elections.<sup>6</sup> This result allowed the National Front to finish above the right leaning mainstream party by a single percentage point. Though the party was denied victory in all 13 regions in France in the second round of elections, Marine Le Pen's political movement was felt across the country.

Other radical right parties are also doing well. During the 2014 European Elections, the Netherland's Party of Freedom received 13.35% of the voter share, earning 4 of the country's 26 seats in the European Parliament.<sup>7</sup> In the March 2017 elections, its leader, Geert Wilders, dubbed 'the Netherlands' Donald Trump', lost decisively to his opponent, Mark Rutte, but, the party increased its share of the vote and won 20 of 150 seats.<sup>8</sup> Greece's Golden Dawn won eighteen parliamentary seats out of 300 during

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<sup>6</sup> Jethro Mullen and Tim Hume, "France's National Front Thwarted in Regional Elections," *CNN*, December 14, 2017, accessed November 4, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/14/europe/france-regional-elections-second-round/>.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau, Pearce, and Aisch, "How Far Is Europe."

<sup>8</sup> Bill Chappell, "Geert Wilders, 'Dutch Donald Trump,' Takes Second Place In Closely Watched Election," *NPR*, March 16, 2017, [Page #], accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/16/520376715/geert-wilders-dutch-donald-trump-takes-second-place-in-closely-watched-election>.

elections in 2015.<sup>9</sup> Through, the party's top officials were under investigation for manslaughter, and the party still received 7.0% of the vote.

In Poland, the Law and Justice Party currently holds 216 of 460 seats in the lower chamber of the Polish parliament, averaging 37.6% of the votes in 2015.<sup>10</sup> It finished first in the 2015 parliamentary elections, allowing the party to lead the current government coalition in Poland. In Hungary, the Jobbik party became the country's third largest party in 2014 after earning 20% of the vote.<sup>11</sup> As of April 2016, Gabor Vona, the party's leader, began removing the more radical and extremist officials from the party's leadership, reportedly to make the party seem less aggressive in order to have the party be a contender in Hungarian government by 2018.<sup>12</sup> The Freedom Party of Austria's candidate was in first place of the first round of presidential elections in April 2016, only to lose the second round of elections by a margin of only 300,000 votes.<sup>13</sup> The Alternative for Germany, founded in 2013, has had remarkable success for the short time it has been in existence.<sup>14</sup> It is represented in 10 out of 16 German states' parliaments.

A recent public opinion poll finds that the Swedish Democrats is becoming one of Sweden's most popular parties.<sup>15</sup> The United Kingdom Independence Party led the movement to hold a referendum on Great Britain leaving the European Union, which

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<sup>9</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising."

<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, Pearce, and Aisch, "How Far Is Europe."

<sup>11</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising."

<sup>12</sup> Bryant Rousseau, Adam Pearce, and Gregor Aisch, "How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right?," *New York Times* (New York City, NY), March 20, 2017, accessed March 20, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html>.

<sup>13</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising."

<sup>14</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising Far Right: A Guide to the Most Prominent Parties," *New York Times*, December 4, 2016, accessed December 23, 2016,

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/world/europe/europe-far-right-political-parties-listy.html>.

<sup>15</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising."

ultimately led to the country voting to leave the EU.<sup>16</sup> Finland's Finns Party and Denmark's Danish People's Party, are finding their stride in the past two years, both gaining historic electoral success in 2015. The Finns Party is currently in a government coalition for the first time since its creation in 1995. The Danish People's Party became the second largest party in Denmark for the first time in 2015 and it holds a majority of Denmark's seats in the European Parliament.<sup>17</sup>

Although a majority of PRRPs are gaining support, some are not benefitting from the rise in radicalism across Europe. The Lega Nord of Italy, the Vlaams Belang of Belgium, and the Progress Party of Norway have experienced recent declines. Support for the Lega Nord fell from 10.2% in 2009 to only 6.2% of the vote in the 2014 European Elections.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the Progress Party fell from the second largest party in Norway to the third largest in the 2013 parliamentary elections, going from 22.9% of votes in 2009 to 16.3% in 2013.<sup>19</sup> The decline of support for Belgium's Vlaams Belang can be observed in its falling shares of seats in its Federal Parliament, with 18 seats in 2003, 17 in 2007, and only 3 seats in the 2014 parliamentary elections.<sup>20</sup>

When analyzing these radical right parties, it is interesting to note that only three of the fifteen countries in Figure 2 have female leadership. These leaders are Marine Le Pen of the National Front, Frauke Petry of the Alternative for Germany, and Siv Jensen of the of Norway's Progress Party. Many PRRPs have been undergoing a softening

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<sup>16</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, "Europe's Rising."

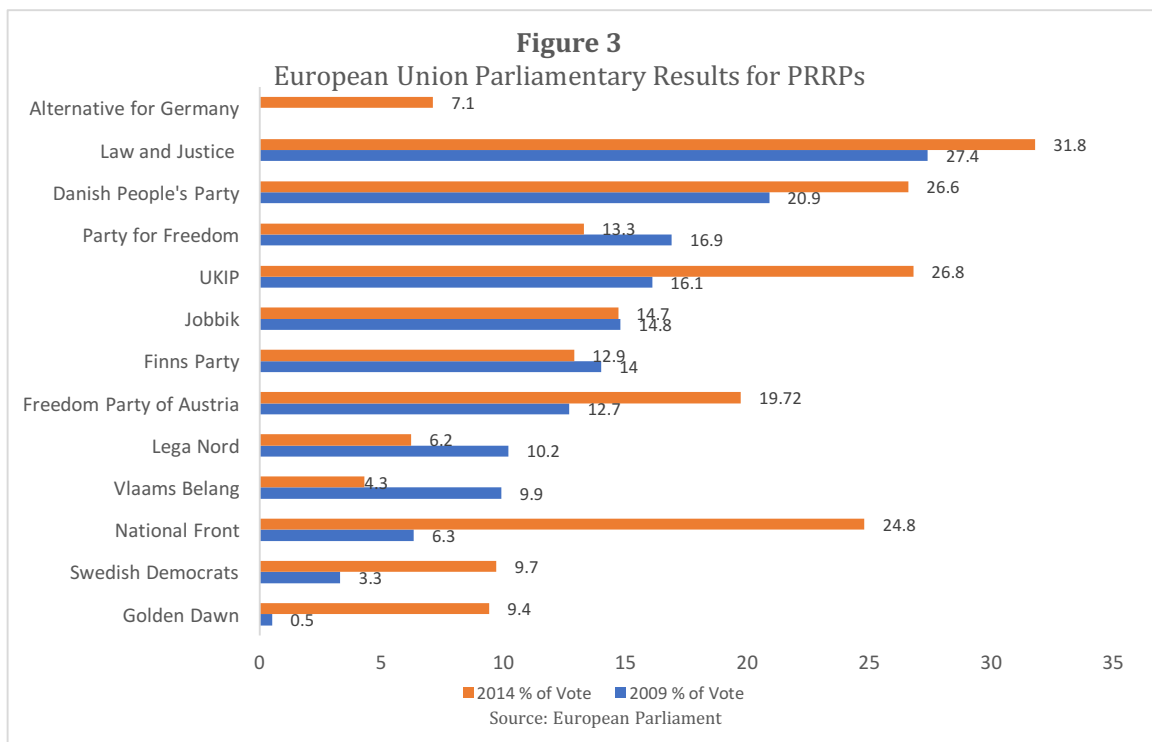
<sup>18</sup> Rousseau, Pearce, and Aisch, "How Far Is Europe."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, "How Far Is Europe."

<sup>20</sup> New York Times, "Europe's Rising."

process, which entails limiting negative rhetoric that ostracizes them as true political contenders. The process attributes to more moderate voters shifting political support in elections. It is interesting to note that the National Front, one of the most famous radical right parties, only holds 2 of the 577 seats in the French National Assembly. The differentiation of the number of seats a party receives within any given election ultimately depends on the electoral system used within the country. Moreover, the French runoff system allows for more mainstream parties to form coalitions to stop the advancement of the National Front, as was evidenced in the 2015 regional elections.

Figure 3 shows electoral support for radical parties within the European Parliament. The European Parliament has acted as a venue where PRRPs can achieve electoral success, due to the fact that low voter turnout in parliamentary elections lulls many into the idea that they can cast their ballot for whoever they wish without



consequences. Ultimately, this leads to greater electoral support for PRRPs in the supranational political realm.

When reviewing Figure 3, it is easy to see that the majority of PRRPs have increased their voter share within EU parliamentary elections. Some parties, such as the FN, nearly quadrupled their percentage of the vote, while parties, such as the Jobbik, has a relatively stable percentage of support within the EU parliament.

Due to the increasing electoral success within the EU parliament, some PRRPs have established a bloc to band together and form a unified front. This bloc, called the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENL), was created on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and has forty members.<sup>21</sup> This makes the ENL the smallest group within the EP. Marine Le Pen of France and Geert Wilders of the Dutch Party for Freedom established the caucus, and 20 of the 40 members of the members of the ENL are from the FN. In a recent ENL meeting in Koblenz, Germany, coalition leaders likened the election of Donald Trump as a sign of the political shift that will occur in Europe in 2017. Marine Le Pen stated that “this year will be the year of the people, the year of liberation, the year of the patriotic spring.”<sup>22</sup> According to ENL leadership, Brexit would have a “domino effect across the EU”, meaning that PRRPs within the EU would come into their own success just as radical parties or candidates found success in the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, there are signs of growing support for radicalized right wing political parties

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<sup>21</sup> Kate Brady, "EU's Right-Wing ENF faction Unites to Fight for 'Patriotism, Sovereignty and Identity,'" *Deutsche Welle*, January 21, 2017, accessed March 12, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/eus-right-wing-enf-faction-unites-to-fight-for-patriotism-sovereignty-and-identity/a-37224232>.

<sup>22</sup> "Marine Le Pen Hails Patriotism as the Policy of the Future," *BBC* (England), January 21, 2017, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38705176>.

<sup>23</sup> "Marine Le Pen Hails."

in Europe, making a breakdown of what constitutes the usual platforms of these parties and the factors that either increase or decrease support for these parties paramount to ultimately analyze what an increase of support means for the future.

## II. Factors of Support for PRRPs

Although media outlets are citing this as an unseen wave of radicalism, this increased radicalization is not new to politics. Hertz-Georges Betz first noticed this trend in the 1980s, stating that the decade was “marked by disenchantment with major social and political institutions and profound distrust in their workings.”<sup>24</sup> Betz also contended that the “weakening of electoral alignments and increased political fragmentation” as well as “electoral volatility” led to increased support for parties considered radicalized and right wing.<sup>25</sup> Before the 1980s, electorates were rigidly set. The left-wing parties held most of the worker vote, while the mainstream right-wing parties capitalized on the church-going voters, usually those who were middle to upper class.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, radicalized right-wing parties could not truly gain recognition as established parties within their respective political arenas in the 1980s.<sup>27</sup> However, when economies shifted away from manufacturing to more service based industries throughout the 1980s, these traditional electorates shifted.

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<sup>24</sup> Hans-George Betz, "The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 4 (July 1993): 413, digital file.

<sup>25</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 413.

<sup>26</sup> Terri E. Givens, "The Radical Right Gender Gap," *Comparative Political Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 2004): 30, PDF.

<sup>27</sup> Cas Mudde, "Fighting the System? Populist Radical Right Parties and Party System Change," *Party Politics* 20, no. 2 (2014): 217, PDF.

This movement of jobs from one sector to another negatively affected the ability for workers to mobilize and protest against mainstream parties. For example, it is easier to mobilize factory workers, yet it is much more difficult to mobilize hairdressers across the entire country to band together against a political party.<sup>28</sup> With no outlet to air grievances and no easy way to protest, the segment of the workers who lost their jobs when economies shifted away from manufacturing found they had no political support from mainstream parties. This economic shift away from manufacturing, as well as the increased secularization of European countries, which negated the traditional support of the right-leaning parties, created an unattached group of voters who had no allegiance. It was the radical right that profited most from these unattached voters. The PRRPs that existed created “a new wave of mobilization by campaigning on new or long-neglected taboo topics” as well as by “activating non-voters who were frustrated with politics.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, throughout the 1980s, the aforementioned displaced voters increasingly turned to PRRPs. These voters hailed from both the working and lower-middle classes, with their ages varying across the spectrum. Regardless of their age or socioeconomic status, voters who support PRRPs in the 1980s were known to have anti-immigrant beliefs, distrust in the government, and were predominantly male.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, early supporters of the radical right were small business owners and people who were self-

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<sup>28</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 30.

<sup>29</sup> Eelco Harteveld et al., "The Gender Gap in Populist Radical-Right Voting: Examining the Demand Side in Western and Eastern Europe," *Patterns of Prejudice* 49, no. 2 (2015): 106, PDF.

<sup>30</sup> Niels Spierings and Andrej Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote for Populist Radical-Right Parties," *Patterns of Prejudice* 49, no. 2 (2015): 139, PDF.

employed, as well as people who were unemployed.<sup>31</sup> Though PRRPs gained more electoral support, these parties did not gain real political power for years to come.

In fact, it was not until the 21<sup>st</sup> century that PRRPs gained political power through elections, with seven of these parties becoming a part of majority governments and three more taking part in minority governments within just the first decade of the century.<sup>32</sup> However, some countries where radical right parties exist find that these parties are not electorally relevant. For example, members of radical right parties have only been represented in ten national parliaments across Europe since 1980.<sup>33</sup> It becomes apparent that support for the radical right depends on electoral rules and the political climate at the time of voting.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the electorate for these parties has grown over time to include working and lower-middle class voters as well as unemployed voters.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, PRRPs are stated to be “the only new party family that is relevant in both Western and Eastern Europe.”<sup>35</sup> As the Great Recession of 2008 created a ripple effect across the Western world, fringe PRRPs utilized the economic downturn as a platform to increase their voter-share, just as the economic shift aided PRRPs in the 1980s. Political analysts have likened this Great Recession and its lasting effects to the Great Crash of 1929, linking the political movements of fascist parties that arose in the 1930s to the political

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<sup>31</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 120.

<sup>32</sup> Mudde, "Fighting the System?," 218.

<sup>33</sup> Mudde, "Populist Radical," 334.

<sup>34</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 133.

<sup>35</sup> Mudde, "Populist Radical," 333.



parties rising to power now.<sup>36</sup> Contemporary PRRPs have gained success by creating a “detoxified” image of themselves from radicalized parties from the past, in effect separating themselves from fascists movements and neo-Nazis, giving themselves legitimacy to segments of the electorate that would vote for them.<sup>37</sup> Modern PRRPs are “ideologically less extreme and thus a more acceptable” to female voters, which weakens the reluctance a woman has towards radical right parties.<sup>38</sup> An example that will be explored further is the FN under Marine Le Pen’s leadership, a woman who campaigned tirelessly to make the FN more palatable for moderate women. Therefore, although many PRRPs have shifted away from their past fascist ideologies, the stigma has persisted and still manages to scare more moderate voters away from casting their ballots of support for these parties.

Despite this softening of the image of many PRRPs, many have spoken out about the rise in radicalization, warning about what may happen if this radicalization trend continues. *New York Times* writer Paul Krugman went so far as to say that “democratic values are under siege” and stated that “ominous political trends should not be dismissed just because there is no Hitler in sight”.<sup>39</sup> The Socialist Faction leader in the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, wrote that what worried him about the rise in the radical right

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<sup>36</sup> David Art, "Rise of the Radical Right: Implications for European Politics," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 19, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2013): 128, PDF.

<sup>37</sup> BBC News, "French Election 2017: Who are the Candidates?," *BBC News*, March 1, 2017, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-38220690>.

<sup>38</sup> Mauro Barisione and Nonna Mayer, "The Transformation of the Radical Right Gender Gap: The Case of the 2014 EP Election" (speech, 4th European Conference on Politics and Gender, Paris, France, July 10, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radical," 130.

was “the persistent, permanent breach of taboos that makes extreme right-wing ideology respectable by clothing it in the garb of democratic legitimacy”.<sup>40</sup>

These parties are often identified by what they are not, such as orthodox or mainstream parties. To be classified as a mainstream political party, a party must have a recognizable and moderate platform that consists of programs that can be implemented to uphold the party’s ideals.<sup>41</sup> Hans-Georges Betz, the first academic to give a definition to these PRRPs, contended that they were “radical in their rejection of the established sociocultural and sociopolitical system and their advocacy of individual achievement, a free rejection of individual and social equality, and their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense.”<sup>42</sup> Some commonalities in PRRPs platforms are the label of outsider and the drive to be unconventional in policies and governing, the promise to ensure that dirty politicians are combated, the advocating on behalf of “the silent majority”, and the simplification of political stances in relatively black and white statements.<sup>43</sup>

Every PRRP differs in some stance or policy, but there are two commonalities that are found universally in them all: nativism and authoritarianism.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the three definitive characteristics of PRRPs are nationalism, authoritarianism, and populism.<sup>45</sup> Nativism is defined as “an ideology which holds that states should be

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<sup>40</sup> Mudde, "Populist Radical," 335.

<sup>41</sup> Florian Hartleb, "Here to Stay: Anti-Establishment Parties in Europe," *European View* 14 (June 18, 2015): 41, PDF.

<sup>42</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 414.

<sup>43</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 44.

<sup>44</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 110.

<sup>45</sup> Cas Mudde, "Three Decades of Populist Radical Right Parties in Western Europe: So What?," *European Journal of Political Research* 52 (2013): 18, PDF.

inhabited exclusively by members of the native group, the nation, and that non-native elements, persons, and ideas are fundamentally threatening to the nation-state's homogeneity."<sup>46</sup> Protecting the political and cultural identities of their nations is one of the most important aspects of PRRPs.<sup>47</sup> These parties also frame the problems plaguing their countries, such as economic downturn or immigration, with a nationalistic lens, believing that only through reviving nationalistic tendencies will the problems affecting the nation will be resolved.<sup>48</sup> In short, PRRPs appeal to "those disenchanted with their individual chances at life and the political system."<sup>49</sup> There are additional commonalities that differentiate PRRPs from others, most of which are more radical in ideology than mainstream parties.

The traditional values of PRRPs parties are an "opposition to immigration, a desire to protect the national identity, and a disenchantment to existing or more mainstream politicians, while economic plans are few and far between".<sup>50</sup> Typical PRRP voters hold negative sentiments toward immigrants, are dissatisfied with the democratic performance of their country, and are more socially conservative when compared to non-PRRP voters.<sup>51</sup> The lack of economic issues at the center of the agendas of these parties lies within the fact that a majority of radical support comes through emotional appeals, and it is difficult to make emotional appeals when talking of trade policies or finances.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Mudde, "Three Decades," 19.

<sup>47</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 42.

<sup>48</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radical," 128.

<sup>49</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 414.

<sup>50</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radical," 129.

<sup>51</sup> Jason E. Kehrberg, "The Demand Side of Support for Radical Right Parties," *Comparative European Politics* 13 (2015): 563, PDF.

<sup>52</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radical," 130.

PRRPs have benefitted from the massive levels of discontentment with incumbent politicians, higher rates of immigration, rises in unemployment, and increases in involvement with the European Union.<sup>53</sup> Within the current political climate, the topics that are ideological mainstays of PRRPs, such as immigration, European integration, and unemployment, are going to remain relevant topics of media coverage, thereby giving these parties more attention and ultimately earn them a large part of the voter share in their respective countries.<sup>54</sup> Fear is a driving factor of the radical right, with parties fostering fear, resentment, and xenophobia as main tenets of their platforms.<sup>55</sup> Many PRRP voters are “motivated by a concern for maintaining security”, and they wish to support parties that use “a message of a clear identity and protection against the changing world.”<sup>56</sup>

These parties “operate on the idea of a common enemy than a shared ideologies or coherent programs” such as immigrants, the European Union, and, in recent years, Islam.<sup>57</sup> Immigration is another important issue that oftentimes raises support for the radical right.<sup>58</sup> Success of these parties depends on their ability to stigmatize resentment and politicize it while creating programs that protect national identity.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, PRRPs target immigrants as “a threat to a cohesive national identity by drawing on differences in tradition, socialization, cultural institutions, and group identity.”<sup>60</sup> These

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<sup>53</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 30.

<sup>54</sup> Matthijs Rooduijn, "The Rise of the Populist Radical Right in Western Europe," *European View* 14 (June 3, 2015): 9, PDF.

<sup>55</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 42.

<sup>56</sup> Kehrberg, "The Demand," 555.

<sup>57</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 40.

<sup>58</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radicals," 135.

<sup>59</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 415.

<sup>60</sup> Kehrberg, "The Demand," 557.

parties attack any perceived threat to national identity, linking a change in culture with the downfall of their society. Immigrants, according to PRRP rhetoric, are economic and social threats to a country's citizens.<sup>61</sup> Within the past five years, there have been meteoric rises in immigration rates from Syria and other Middle Eastern nations into Western Europe. PRRPs utilize anti-immigration as an integral part of their policy platform to attract voters.

PRRPs find political traction within the current issues at the center of modern national debate across European countries. These issues, such as rising unemployment rates, increased terrorism, and increased levels in immigration, have become the cornerstones of PRRP platforms, mobilizing their constituents to increase electoral support. In a recent survey, conducted by the European Commission, respondents from all member nations of the European Union were asked to identify issues in order of importance of how they were affecting their country. To explore this data in relation to PRRPs, data was only taken from countries with strong radical right parties within their political systems. Out of the sixteen choices available for respondents, only the issues that are considered factors for PRRP support were taken into account: unemployment, terrorism, and immigration.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, "The Demand," 568.

Figure 4

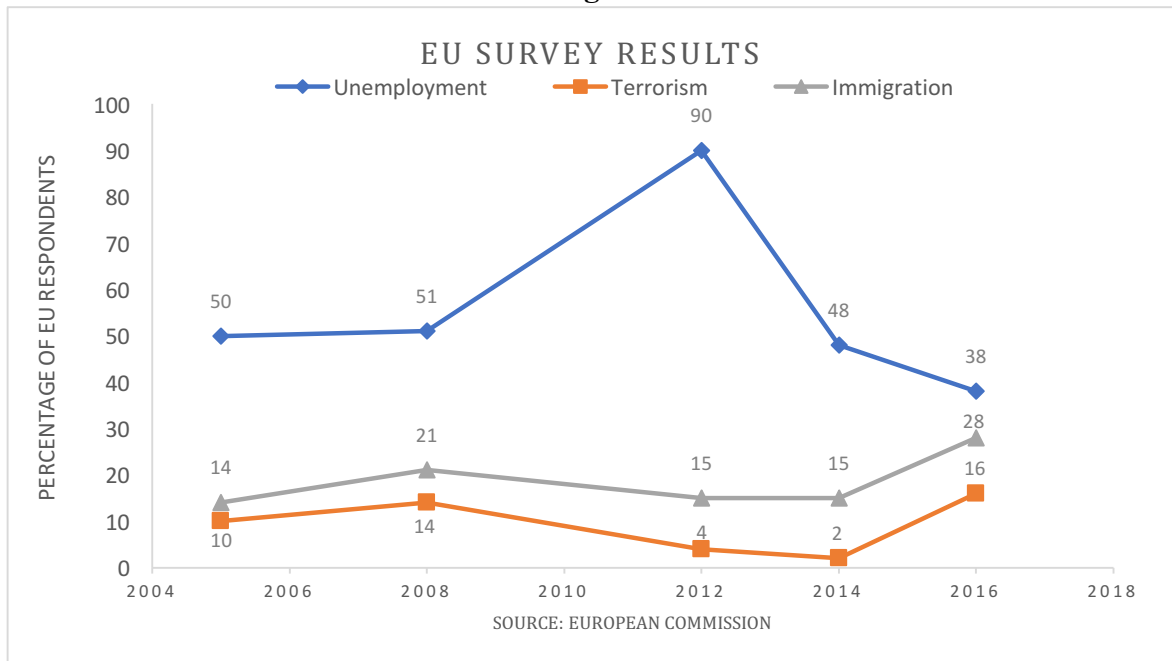
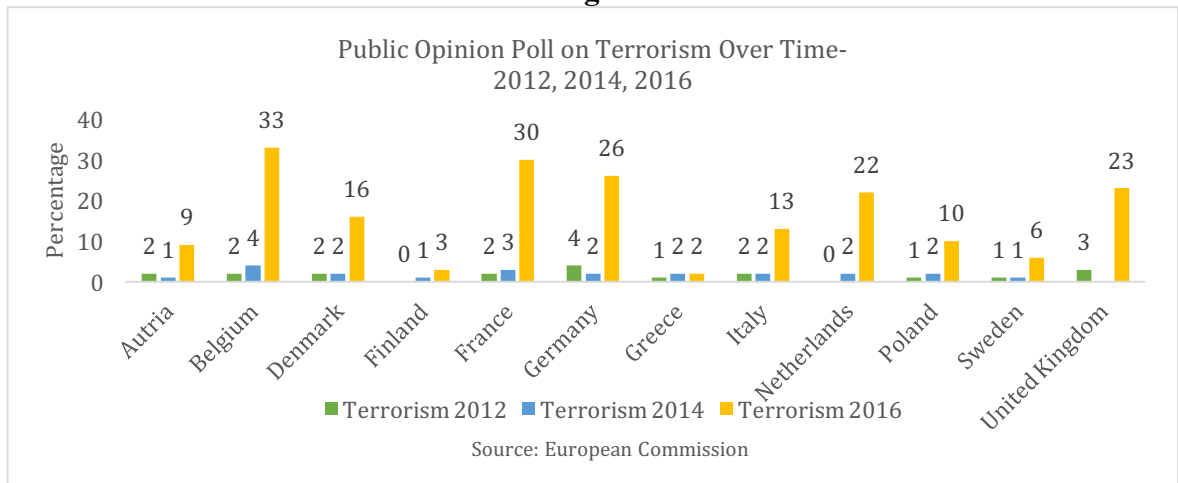


Figure 4 shows that EU citizens polled began seeing immigration as more of an issue over the years. This increase in anti-immigrant sentiments can be seen with 28% of respondents' poll believing that immigration is one of the biggest issues that their government is facing. The diminishing levels of concern over the unemployment rates over the years polled is also an interesting trend to observe, with the percentage of concern going from a high of 90% in 2012 to only 38% in 2016.<sup>62</sup> In fact, every country polled in 2016 experienced a rise in the belief that immigration is a great threat to the nation. Similar increases occur for the respondents' belief that terrorism is a threat to their countries. One of the most notable examples of this is from respondents in France, observed below in Figure 5, where only 3% respondents in 2014 believed that terrorism

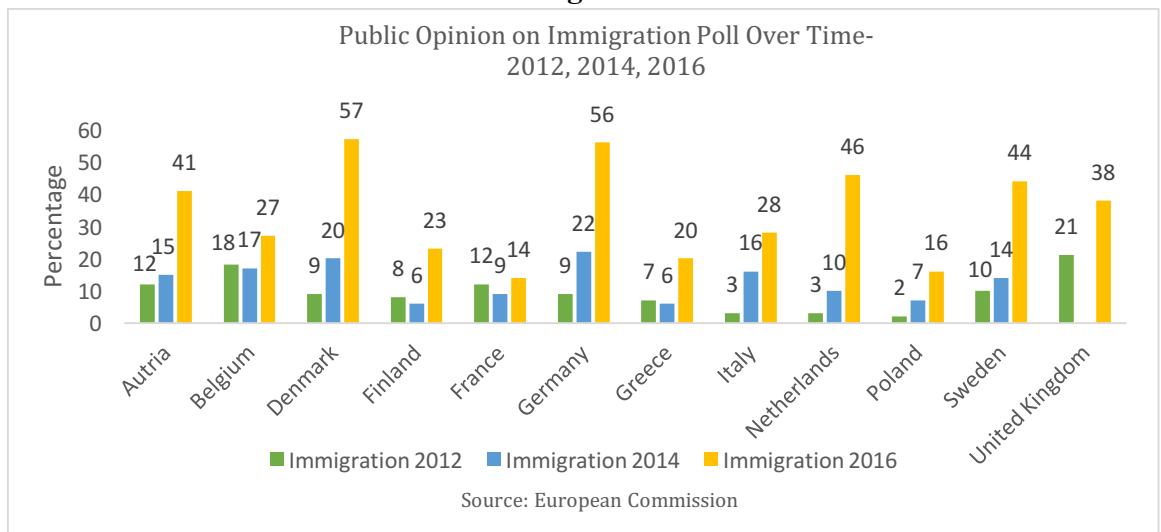
<sup>62</sup> European Commission, "Public Opinion," infographic, European Commission, May 2016, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/42/groupKy/208>.

was a threat to the country. That percentage greatly contrasts with the average from 2016, where 30% of respondents believed that terrorism was a true threat to France. Therefore, a majority of respondents in 2016 believed that both terrorism and immigration were large threats to a nation’s security. It can be seen that the large increase in refugees from Syria and other Middle Eastern nations has influenced the populations of European countries to become more anti-immigrant, especially in countries like Germany and France, where there are large numbers of these immigrants and attacks at the hands of Islamic terrorists.

**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**



One of the most telling things that can be seen from a review of Figures 5 and 6 is the increase in the belief that terrorism is a threat to a country. In 2012, the highest percentage of people who believed terrorism was a problem for their country was only 4%.<sup>63</sup> However, in 2016, the percentages increased dramatically. Percentages of people who believed that immigrants were a threat to their nation also increased, though not at a rate as dramatic as the rate of terrorism fears. Only 9% of German respondents believed immigration was a problem threatening the country in 2012, but this number exponentially increased to 56% in 2016.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, throughout Western European countries, there is are increased levels of fear of unemployment, terrorism, and immigrants, as shown in the survey results collected by the European Commission Public Opinion poll.

**a. Unemployment, education, income, and polarization**

Another issue that drives electoral support for PRRPs is unemployment. Unemployment rates within the European Union have increased over the years, despite the fact that the EU average of unemployment has decreased from 2015 to 2016.<sup>65</sup> Countries such as Greece have unemployment rates that are twice of their European counterparts, as seen in Figure 7 below. Therefore, there were high rates of unemployment when many PRRPs gained power, as seen in Figure 2.

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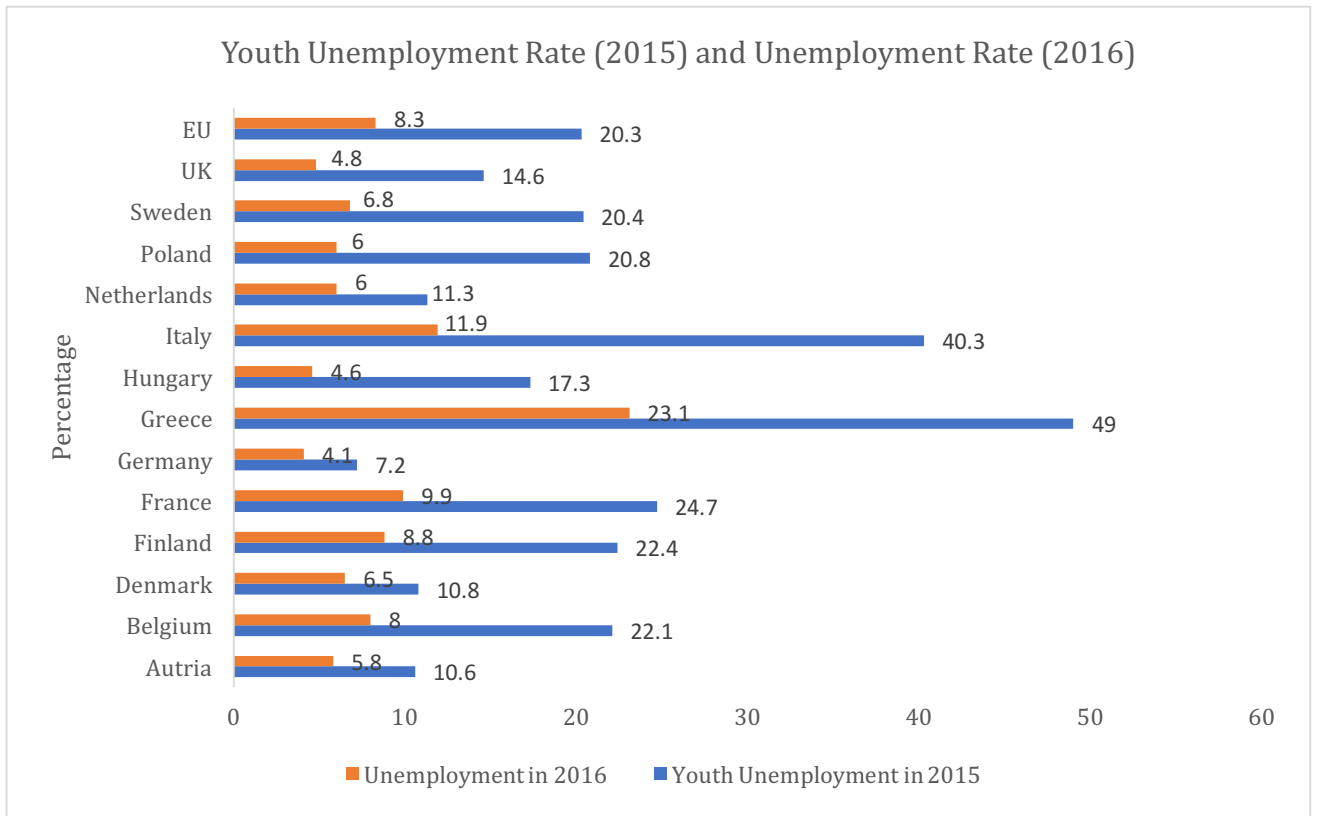
<sup>63</sup> European Commission, "Public Opinion," infographic.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, "Public Opinion," infographic.

<sup>65</sup> Eurostat, "Unemployment Rates, Seasonally Adjusted," table, Eurostat, December 2016, accessed March 23, 2017, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment\\_rates,\\_seasonally\\_adjusted,\\_December\\_2016\\_\(%25\)\\_F2.png#filehistory](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Unemployment_rates,_seasonally_adjusted,_December_2016_(%25)_F2.png#filehistory).



Figure 7



Source: Eurostat

It is not surprising that PRRPs are seeing high levels of support from young people, due to the fact that there are high levels of unemployment in these countries. Moreover, levels of support rise for PRRPs when unemployment rates are high.<sup>66</sup> A majority of the unemployed are in labor sectors where immigrants have taken many of the available jobs, in tandem creating more anti-immigrant sentiments within this unemployed segment of the population. This segment of the population is moderately less educated than those outside of the blue-collar sector. Workers in the labor market, a

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<sup>66</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 7.

sector that has become less and less protected from infiltration of immigrant labor over the decades, fear losing their identity and their jobs to immigrants.<sup>67</sup>

There is also a relationship between attaining high levels of education and having employment stability. People who attended and graduated college are far less likely to be unemployed than people who did not finish high school schooling. Moreover, the link between anti-immigrant beliefs and low levels of education allows a more reliable connection between education levels and radical right support to be made, more so than utilizing traditional indicators of political support, such as class or religion.<sup>68</sup> This demonstrates that those who have less educational attainment will be more likely to lose their jobs, especially when there are increases in immigrant labor, which makes educational attainment a reliable predictor when attempting to determine voter support for PRRPs.

Political disillusionment and party polarization attracts voters to PRRPs as well. Moreover, these parties manage to appeal to a subset of the population of unaligned, disillusioned voters, particularly if the radical right party aligns with these voters' anti-immigration and anti-globalization sentiments.<sup>69</sup> Political disillusionment appeals to voters who believe their mainstream political parties are untrustworthy and run by career politicians who do not defend the rights and lifestyle of the ordinary constituent. This makes radical right parties, which title themselves as outsiders, a viable option.<sup>70</sup> The

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<sup>67</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 6.

<sup>68</sup> Nonna Mayer, "The Closing of the Radical Right Gender Gap in France?," *French Politics* 13, no. 4 (2015): 401, PDF.

<sup>69</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 43.

<sup>70</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 6.

closer the political agendas of mainstream parties, for example, when left-wing and right-wing parties converge in their ideologies, PRRPs take advantage of the policy vacuum and gain electoral support.<sup>71</sup> As PRRPs gain more of the vote as a result of increased convergence, these parties succeed in shifting policies to the right.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the greater the convergence in ideology of mainstream parties, the more success these parties will have, since the electorate has trouble differentiating one mainstream party for another.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, the defining characteristics of radical right support are anti-immigrant sentiments, high rates of unemployment, anti-globalization and anti-European Union beliefs, and disillusionment with mainstream political parties.

**b. Anti-immigrant sentiments, anti-Muslim sentiments, and Economic Security**

One of the most controversial characteristics of radicalized right-wing parties is their rhetoric against immigrants and foreigners redundant.<sup>74</sup> The rejection of immigrants and foreigners has grown more pronounced since 2001, when anti-Muslim sentiments grew internationally after the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. When Europeans were polled by the Pew Research Center, there was a surprising percentage of respondents that had unfavorable views of Muslims. Figure 8 shows the level of anti-Muslim sentiments in European counties with active PRRPs.

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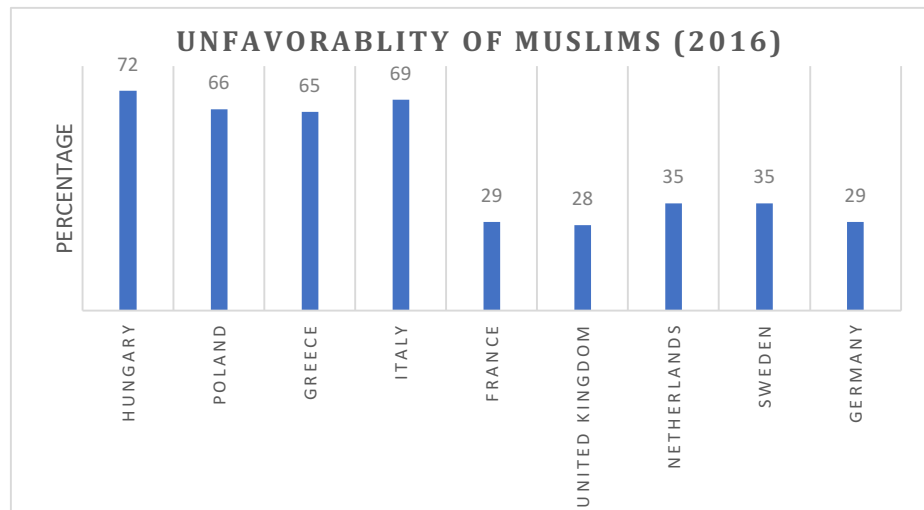
<sup>71</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 43.

<sup>72</sup> Mudde, "Fighting the System?," 6.

<sup>73</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 6.

<sup>74</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 335.

Figure 8

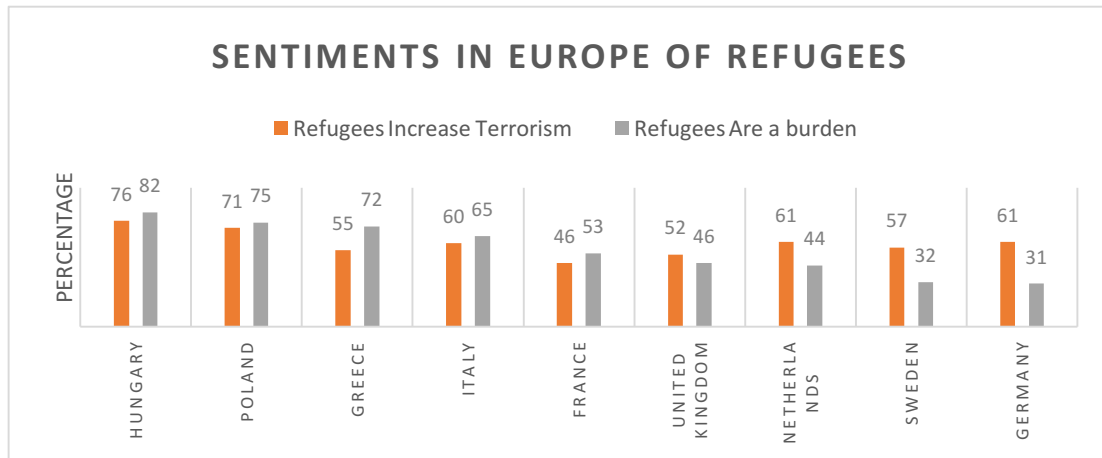


Source: Pew Research Center

Countries, such as Hungary, Italy, and Poland, have rates of anti-Muslim sentiments that are astoundingly high. Others, such as France and Germany, where a majority of the Syrian refugees have taken residence, have relatively low rates of anti-Muslim sentiments in comparison.

Other Pew polls asked respondents if refugees in their countries were related to terrorism or were a burden to individual countries and the social benefits within those countries. These questions asked if refugees increase terrorism and if refugees were a burden. Hungary had the highest percentage of respondents who stated that they believed refugees in their borders would increase terrorism and that the increased number of refugees were a burden to their society and social programs. Moreover, in countries that have seen high levels of support for PRRPs, there is a noticeable growing level of anti-Muslim sentiments. In these countries, citizens have begun to connect Muslim immigrants to a drain of resources meant for natural born citizens.

Figure 9



Source: Pew Research Center

There is also a perceived fear the increases in Muslim immigrants will in turn increase the number of terrorist attacks. When asked if these Muslim immigrants would assimilate to their country's customs and culture, almost every single country where PRRPs have a strong presence had respondents who believed that Muslim immigrants would not assimilate to the new culture and would be distinct from the customs of the country they migrated to.<sup>75</sup>

Many who support radical right parties see Islam and those who practice it as threats to Western values.<sup>76</sup> To many in PRRPs, differences in ethnicity and culture are "basic, immutable, and potentially destructive features of political life", which translates into these parties promoting anti-immigration policies that are much more radical than their political counterparts.<sup>77</sup> In fact, many parties have outwardly anti-immigrant

<sup>75</sup> Pew Research Center, "Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs," Pew Research Center, last modified July 11, 2016, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/>.

<sup>76</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 339.

<sup>77</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radicals," 135.

policies, such as the closing of borders, which appeals to nationalistic voters.<sup>78</sup> This differs the radical right greatly from traditional right parties. However, studies show that voters are more likely to hold anti-Muslim sentiments the farther right they place themselves on the political spectrum.<sup>79</sup>

This negative reaction to immigration, specifically from Muslim countries, stems from the fact that European countries transformed into heterogeneous societies, a stark contrast from the homogeneous countries that existed in Europe in the 1960s. Countries adopted policies that aimed to attract foreign workers when domestic labor shortages arose and accepted asylum seekers, creating multiethnic nations that PRRPs fear will destroy the culture of their nations.

PRRPs gain support where countries have high levels of immigrants. For example, in Switzerland's 2011 parliamentary elections, the Swiss People's Party, a radical right-wing party, received 26% of the vote.<sup>80</sup> Switzerland has an immigrant population of over 20%.<sup>81</sup> PRRPs create a dialogue that points to the economic burden that refugees place on host countries and the overwhelming effect increased numbers of refugees and immigrants will have on social services, not to mention the jobs that would be taken away from citizens of the country.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, evidence has shown that the number of immigrants within a nation directly correlates with the success of that nation's PRRP due to this dialogue.<sup>83</sup> The increases in immigration inevitably leads more

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<sup>78</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 382.

<sup>79</sup> Pew Research Center, "Europeans Fear," Pew Research Center.

<sup>80</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 30.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, "The Radical," 30.

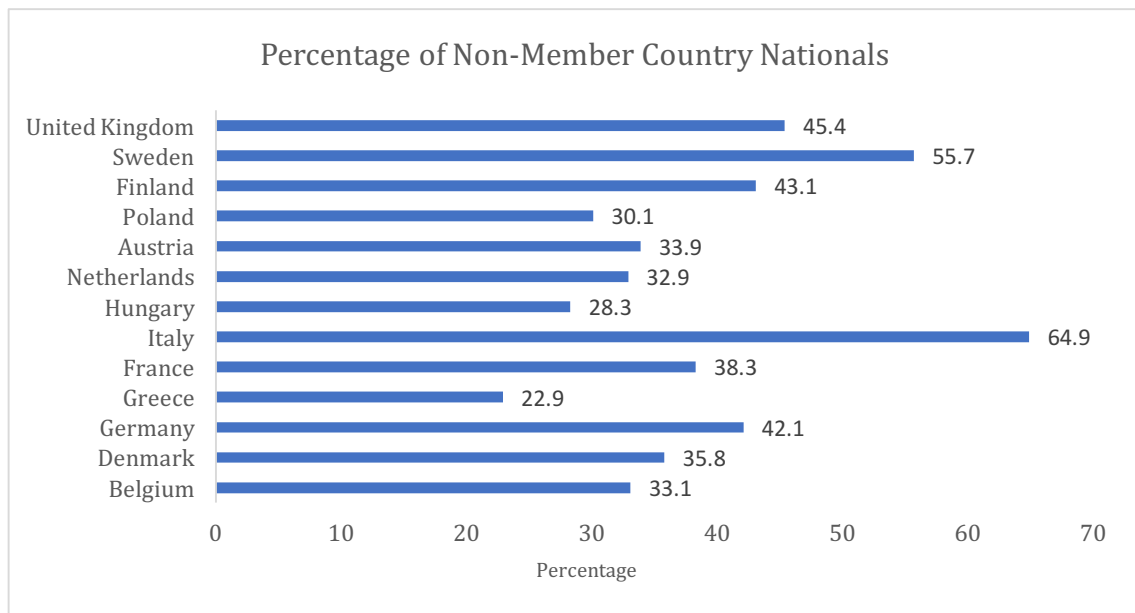
<sup>82</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 416.

<sup>83</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 7.

radicalized members of the electorate to voice nationalistic ideals and, in turn, support PRRPs.

Furthermore, when rates of both immigration and unemployment are high, some voters blame their situation on immigrant workers, with the belief that these workers are stealing jobs from national-born workers.<sup>84</sup> A relationship can be seen between anti-immigrant sentiments and low levels of education, which makes education a predictor of voting patterns and determining electoral support.

**Figure 10**



Source: Eurostat

When discussing the levels of anti-immigrant sentiments, it is important to understand the immigration rates that countries with PRRPs are facing. Figure 10 shows percentage rates of non-natives who are not from the EU in countries with active PRRPs. Many of these countries that have non-EU and non-native citizens have rates ranging

<sup>84</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 381.

from 30-50%, with Italy being the outlier with 64.9% of immigrants within the country coming from outside of the EU. It is necessary to differentiate between EU citizens living within the nation and non-EU nationals. There has been an increase in non-EU immigrants in countries with active PRRPs.

Workers who are employed in sectors that are primarily affected by immigrants infiltrating the workforce, such as lower social strata laborers, are heavily represented in the electorate of PRRPs.<sup>85</sup> It is no surprise that parties like the Alternative for Germany or the National Front are gradually gaining support, for there are large influxes of immigrants entering their country every year due to the increases in migration. Germany has approximately 884,900 refugees living within its borders, and France has 339,900 immigrants in the country.<sup>86</sup> These immigrants need housing, employment, and aid transitioning to a new culture and country, which spurs anti-immigrant sentiments. It is interesting to note that although Hungary has the lowest percentage of immigrants from outside of the EU, the country has the highest rates of anti-Muslim sentiments. Moreover, voters from countries with high rates of immigration, especially from Middle Eastern nations, are attracted to these parties for the policies they propose to combat the danger immigrants present. These policies, which include some plans to “dismantle the welfare state in order to create free markets so that there can be fair competition between members of the native-born populations”, were crafted to directly address the problems radical right constitutes view as social problems, such as unemployment rates and higher

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<sup>85</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 108.

<sup>86</sup> Eurostat, "Immigration by Citizenship, 2014," table, Eurostat, May 2016, accessed March 23, 2017, [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Immigration\\_by\\_citizenship,\\_2014\\_\(1\)\\_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Immigration_by_citizenship,_2014_(1)_YB16.png).



levels of immigration.<sup>87</sup> Many of these workers vote for the radical right because of the nativist ideology that is often espoused.

These workers, labeled “losers of globalization”, have beliefs that are in direct opposition to the people who are “winning globalization”.<sup>88</sup> Winners of globalization are people who hold attitudes of European integration and cultural diversity as they profit from increased globalization efforts.<sup>89</sup> “Losers of modernity”, commonly referred to as “angry white men”, oftentimes feel left-behind and left out of the rapid changes that occur in post-industrialized countries.<sup>90</sup> These people inevitably shift their votes to PRRPs, due to this resentment of both the political elite and immigrants. In conjunction with fear of immigration, voters for the radical right also fear increased globalization and wield extreme Euroscepticism.<sup>91</sup> Within the context of the increasingly globalized world, this divide between the educated who benefit from globalization practices and the uneducated, unskilled workers who are deemed losers to globalization demonstrates why more voters with low levels of education turn to radicalized political parties.<sup>92</sup> This can be seen time and time again through the rising levels of PRRP support. This is because PRRPs are more in line with their values than mainstream parties.

Throughout the European Union, there are high rates of immigrants from outside of the EU participating within the workforces of the countries where they reside. PRRPs argue that these immigrants, which have rising rates of active participation of female and

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<sup>87</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 381.

<sup>88</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 6.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, "The Rise," 6.

<sup>90</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 108.

<sup>91</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 42.

<sup>92</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 405.

male immigrants. Higher levels of active participation in the labor force of immigrant workers takes jobs from native-born citizens. The higher population of male immigrant workers can help explain why a gender gap persists within electoral support for PRRPs, for immigrant men are more likely to take employment opportunities from other men, primarily men who are not highly educated. Therefore, a majority of scholars on the radical right notice the correlation between increased levels of globalization and deindustrialization. Due to the fact that factory jobs are being replaced by jobs in the service sector, workers who became unemployed in this shift become enchanted by the promises of the radical right, who guarantee stability and value laborers.<sup>93</sup> PRRP support relies heavily on these disadvantaged workers. However, levels of polarization between political parties also influence the level of voter support for PRRPs.

### **c. Gender Gap Background Information**

The average, mainstream political party receives almost an equal percentage of voters from both men and women; this gender parity within the electorate is not seen in PRRPs, for these parties earn a larger share of male votes than female votes.<sup>94</sup> This reluctance for women to vote for radicalized right-wing parties was first noticed by Hans Georg Betz, with the observation resulting in limited research about the reasons behind and effects of less women voting for the radical right. There are many theories that address why women are statistically less likely to vote for the FN than men. Possible explanations include the increased levels of educated women, the levels of women

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<sup>93</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 381.

<sup>94</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 147.

working in the public versus the private sector, the levels of religiosity of women, and the level of support for political violence or extremism.<sup>95</sup> The increase in globalization and competition between native and immigrant workers has also been a known factor in causing gender gaps in voting. Shifts in cultural values also have negative effects on the percentage of women voters for a radical right wing party.

Key studies within the field have identified the gender gap and analyzed its importance. Betz in 1994, argued that, “as if following some unwritten law, radical right-wing populist parties have consistently attracted a considerably higher number of male than female voters”.<sup>96</sup> Another study held a year later saw that men are overrepresented in an overwhelming majority in PRRPs, with as 60-40 or 70-30 margin.<sup>97</sup> In a study of 17 European countries where radical right parties exist, it was found that male support for PRRPs is 32% higher than women, making the ratio between male and female support for these parties 3:2.<sup>98</sup> This study also found that it was easier to use usual determinants of voter support to determine male preferences better than the preferences of women.<sup>99</sup> In 2005, Pippa Norris added to the discussion by discovering that twelve out of the sixteen countries where she studied radical right parties had overrepresentation of men within their electorates.<sup>100</sup> An overabundance of male representation within these parties is not an uncommon notion. In fact, it is a consistent finding within the field.

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<sup>95</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>96</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 417.

<sup>97</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 402.

<sup>98</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 122.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., "The Gender," 124.

<sup>100</sup> Pippa Norris, *Radical Right*, 78.

Betz identified religiosity, age, labor force participation, and occupational stratification as factors that are believed to have great ability to predict the likelihood of women voting for the radical right.<sup>101</sup> There is also a theory that gender support of PRRPs is dependent on factors relating to mediation or moderation.<sup>102</sup> Mediation is defined as the “differing on key characteristics and attitudes that influence a person’s propensity to vote for radical parties.”<sup>103</sup> Moderation is defined as the saliency of an issue based on the gender of the voter; meaning that some issues are more important to women than they are to men.<sup>104</sup> For mediation, gender is considered as indirect determinant of voter preference. With this explanation, the only reason that explains why women do not vote for PRRPs in higher numbers is because most do not have the same characteristics and attitudes as males that correlate to predicting support for radical right parties. For example, women do not have jobs in labor sectors or harbor many anti-immigrant sentiments.<sup>105</sup> If women and men were given the same attributes that have been proved to correlate to PRRP support, then the level of participation of women would be nearly identical to that of male participation.<sup>106</sup> Most issues of PRRPs are more pressing and important to men. Women do not support these parties based solely on the content of PRRPs political agendas.<sup>107</sup> The difference in gender support for the radical right may be due to the differences in importance men hold various issues, for some topics hold more

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<sup>101</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 426.

<sup>102</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 102.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 104.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 105.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 106.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 125.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 105.

weight with men than women, or vice versa.<sup>108</sup> For example, the issue of reproductive rights would be an issue of greater importance to women than men, an importance that inevitably factors into which political party they vote for in elections. Therefore, a majority of the factors that have been sighted as influencing women support of PRRPs are interwoven determinates. For simplicity, they have been separated for analysis.

Employment is considered by many in the field of radical right study as the defining factor that leads to the gender gap. In fact, many believe “voting has less to do with values than with the occupational sector.”<sup>109</sup> An increase in women participation in the workforce and a growing fight for equality has led to insecurity among men, especially within the subset of the population that felt marginalized by globalization and modernization.<sup>110</sup> Just as men are overrepresented in manual unskilled work, women are more heavily involved in either the private sector or non-manual jobs, meaning that women are inherently less likely to be adversely affected by increases of immigrant workers.<sup>111</sup> This can be attributed to the fact that increased modernization and globalization leads to blue-collar industries to be adversely affected.<sup>112</sup> Blue-collar workers, especially workers who specialize in manual labor, are increasingly finding that their jobs are being outsourced to countries that will perform the necessary labor for a cheaper cost. Through this phenomenon, a large number of blue-collar workers have lost

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<sup>108</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 106.

<sup>109</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 380.

<sup>110</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 33.

<sup>111</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 402.

<sup>112</sup> Tim Immerzeel, Hilde Coffé, and Tanja van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender Gap in Radical Right Voting: A Cross National Investigation in 12 Western European Counties," *Comparative European Politics* 13, no. 2 (July 2013): 267, PDF.

their jobs or are forced into taking lower-paying jobs.<sup>113</sup> As previously stated, a majority of the men who vote for the radical right consider themselves ‘losers of modernization’.<sup>114</sup> The blue-collar jobs that are at-risk are primarily held by men.

It is no coincidence that there is a direct correlation between overrepresentation of men in the low-education, labor intensive, blue collar occupations and an overrepresentation of men in the electorate of the radical right.<sup>115</sup> Women are traditionally less likely to be employed in these economic sectors and more likely to be employed within the service sector or in positions that aid the welfare state, which are both rewarded by globalization, unlike the blue collar occupations.<sup>116</sup> The lowered economic output from Western Europe has forced a “blurring of the border between manual and non-manual positions, with both white-collar women in service jobs and blue-collar men in manufacturing being increasingly exposed to part time and low paid, insecure position.”<sup>117</sup>

There are also religious and social factors, that play into the presence of a gender gap within the electorate of radical right parties. Across all PRRPs, support is likely to be low from voters who are elderly and voters who are religious; it just so happens that “women are more likely to be both.”<sup>118</sup> Despite increased secularization within many Western nations, women are still more likely to be religious and more likely to

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<sup>113</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 30.

<sup>114</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 417.

<sup>115</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>116</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 385.

<sup>117</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>118</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 107.

consistently attend church than men.<sup>119</sup> In fact, women are on average more religious than men.<sup>120</sup> Traditionally there are two types of women who are unwilling to vote for PRRPs, like the FN. A modern gender gap is seen between men and young educated women, who are more progressive and left-wing, an ideology that does not lend itself to voting for the FN.<sup>121</sup> In contrast to the modern gender gap, there also exists a traditional gender gap between men and elderly women, who are more religious and therefore more likely to support conservative mainstream parties rather than the radical right.<sup>122</sup> Due to the fact that there is still a large portion of elderly women in France who attend services every week more than men are more likely listen to the warnings of Church officials.<sup>123</sup> The xenophobic and wholly in-egalitarian rhetoric radical right parties have been condemned by Christian places of worship, for the tenets of radical right parties contrast greatly with the message of followers of Christianity.<sup>124</sup> The rhetoric of the PRRPs are anti-Christian and ensure that voters remain loyal to the traditional conservative parties.<sup>125</sup>

By conflating the increase of Islamic immigrants to the downfall of Western culture, many PRRPs have earned the support of people who fear for their own security and freedom. Parties like the FN, therefore, are “gendering the immigration issue and presenting Islam as a threat to women’s right.”<sup>126</sup> The FN often relays the message that

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<sup>119</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 335.

<sup>120</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 122.

<sup>121</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, "The Transformation."

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, "The Transformation."

<sup>124</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 337.

<sup>125</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 107.

<sup>126</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

Islamic influences will limit the equality between the sexes and the rights of LGBT community, stating that Islam is a “threat to freedom and equality with respect to the position of women and homosexuals.”<sup>127</sup> This means that religiosity has historically served as a predictor for voting against PRRPs. However, with the overpowering anti-Muslim sentiments that have washed over the West, it may soon be seen that religiosity can be used as a predictor for PRRP support.

One of the most important predictors of PRRP support is the existence of nativist, anti-immigrant attitudes within a potential voter.<sup>128</sup> The nativist and xenophobic rhetoric that is present in many radical right politics has been proposed to have more of an effective method to attract male over female voters. The spread of feminist ideals, the desire for gender equality, and the increased presence of women in the work force are all seen as potential threats to masculine supremacy, which inherently breeds insecurity and creates authoritarian, anti-feminist votes for the radical right.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, it does not come as a surprise that more men vote for radical right parties that propagate anti-globalization and anti-immigrant narratives.<sup>130</sup> In fact, one of the most important factors that define voters, both male and female, for the radical right, is their opposition to immigration.<sup>131</sup> The rhetoric about the dangers of immigration is a defining characteristic of the radical right, which is what differentiates the parties like the FN from other, more mainstream parties.<sup>132</sup> A majority of men and women cast their ballot for PRRPs like the

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<sup>127</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 143.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, "Gendering the Vote," 150.

<sup>129</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 335.

<sup>130</sup> Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender," 269.

<sup>131</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 158.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, "Gendering the Vote," 138.



FN solely based on their views on immigration and how that immigration will affect them in the future. The competition between native workers and immigrant workers for scarce employment opportunities and resources causes the native workers' livelihoods to feel threatened.<sup>133</sup> Immigrants primarily compete with workers in the lower economic strata, which contains a majority of male workers within this class.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, it is then more likely for men to be more nativist and outwardly xenophobic than women, for women do not have to face the same level of competition as blue-collar men. By voting for radical right political parties, men find that they can vote for a political party that shares similar concerns with them.

Political alignment and identification is another factor that may affect the levels of female support for PRRPs. Just as women in the United States began supported Democrats in the 1980s since they gained enfranchisement, women within Western Europe have done the same, voting for more left-leaning parties than their male counterparts.<sup>135</sup> The fact that women tend to lean to the political left, "a gender gap could simply be the result of a difference between men and women in their left-right wing positions."<sup>136</sup> By distancing themselves from right-leaning, conservative parties, it can be stated that women prefer the policies of the left. For example, women who lean to the left oppose spending cuts in social spending, due to their greater reliance on welfare programs and are often employed in the public sector.<sup>137</sup> Mostly men who are right-wing

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<sup>133</sup> Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender," 268.

<sup>134</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 32.

<sup>135</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 118.

<sup>137</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 141.

economically vote for PRRPs like the FN; so, this means that the FN had an increase in female voter share, due to the fact that the FN shifted its economic policy in the last few years to be more left-wing in nature.<sup>138</sup> This movement to the left can be attributed to a rising level in education for women and their subsequent entrance into the workforce, the secularization of society, the dissolution of traditional family units, and the feminist movement, for all of these factors encourage self-expression and individualism in young women.<sup>139</sup>

To understand the gender gap, it is important to first understand why people support PRRPs. There are two models that explain voter support for PRRPs, called the policy model and the discontent model. The policy model states that voters cast their ballot for a political party based on the fact that they agree with the party's policies on issues important to the voter.<sup>140</sup> Many voters are not aware of every single policy a party holds, therefore, it is commonplace for a voter to decide on a specific party while they lack detailed information on each candidate. This model has been consistently predicted the levels of support for PRRPs, especially when reviewing policies on immigration.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, an understanding of the model makes it easy to define the predictors of support for the radical right. According to the policy vote model, voters are more likely to support a PRRP if they are self-defined as right-wing in ideology, hold nativist attitudes, are nationalistic, fear immigrants, and if they believe in "a strictly ordered society, in

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<sup>138</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 151.

<sup>139</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>140</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 110.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 110.

which infringements of authority are to be punished severely.”<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, if a voter self-identifies with the right and exhibits a majority of the characteristics that are held by the radical right, the person is more likely to vote for the radical right even if they do not know the party’s policies. Due to the fact that women are less likely to hold this ideology, men are more likely to vote for the radical right.

Another model that explains voter patterns for PRRPs is the discontent model. This model states that voters support the radical right to “express discontent with the political elite.”<sup>143</sup> In fact, there are higher levels of distrust and dissatisfaction with politics within the ranks of the PRRP electorate. Women have been shown to have lower levels of political efficacy than men do, which translates into low levels of distrust and dissatisfaction.<sup>144</sup> This explains why women are disproportionately represented in lower numbers than men within the PRRP electorate. Some scholars believe that levels of political self-confidence also add to the contribution of the gender gap. Men traditionally have higher levels of political confidence, which translates easily into supporting radical right parties.<sup>145</sup> In contrast, women are less likely to have political self-confidence, meaning they are less likely to be confident enough to cast a protest vote.<sup>146</sup> However, when a PRRP becomes more mainstream and accepted by a larger number of people, more women will vote for that party.<sup>147</sup> When the party is more well-known, there is no

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<sup>142</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 110.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 109.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 109.

<sup>145</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 110.

<sup>146</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 110.

<sup>147</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 140.

need for a woman to feel insecure in their voting choice.

According to the socio-structural model of voting, potential supporters “rely on their social positions as a cue to determine their vote”, such their level of nationalism.<sup>148</sup> This is why Cas Mudde stated that PRRPs are “ordinary pathological responses to socio-economic and political developments.”<sup>149</sup> Along with increased globalization, there has also been a transformation of cultural values across all societies. This cultural transformation has led to egalitarian attitudes with regard to gender.<sup>150</sup> The erosion of traditional values caused males in Western cultures to feel a loss of status.<sup>151</sup> Therefore, more men vote for radical right parties who react against post-modern values by voting for political parties that promote traditional cultural values. Changes in how political parties deal with nationalistic attitudes have led voters to search for a party with similar views that embrace nationalism, such as the National Front and the Le Pens.<sup>152</sup> Though increased participation of women in the workforce causes some men to vote for the radical right, it can be seen that masculine insecurity is inevitably a major component that leads to radical right support.<sup>153</sup> Another contributing factor is the fact that women are statistically more likely to vote for more established political parties over parties considered fringe or outsiders.<sup>154</sup> This means that in countries where radical right political parties are less mainstream, then women are less likely to vote for them. The

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<sup>148</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 107.

<sup>149</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 159.

<sup>150</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 415.

<sup>151</sup> Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender," 267.

<sup>152</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 33.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, "The Radical," 33.

<sup>154</sup> Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender," 269.

more votes a party collects during an election, the more normalized it becomes.<sup>155</sup>

Furthermore, a gender gap will either increase or decrease depending on the electoral success of the radical right party.

Aside from religious figures warning against the hateful speech of these parties, young women who consider themselves feminists oppose the platform of radical right parties due to the reliance these parties put on traditional values.<sup>156</sup> This diffusion of feminist ideals throughout all levels of society can be seen as a threat to masculine supremacy and may have a negative reaction in which more people vote for PRRPs in reaction to the feminist movement.<sup>157</sup> A majority of young women do not wish to support a party that holds that women reduces women to solely spouses or mothers.<sup>158</sup> Not only are PRRPs associated with traditional family structures and structured, patriarchal family life, these parties advocate for “traditional gender roles and gendered divisions of household labor.”<sup>159</sup> Nationalistic beliefs that are present within PRRPs obviously lend themselves to the need for nation-building, which means there is an emphasis on reproduction as a way to strengthen the country in the long-term.<sup>160</sup> Some scholars believe that women who vote for PRRPs are solely focused on the differences between who they perceive to be diametrically opposed to their values, such as themselves and immigrants or themselves against left-wing women.<sup>161</sup> These sentiments lead to women

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<sup>155</sup> Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender," 268.

<sup>156</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 335.

<sup>157</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>158</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 340.

<sup>159</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 143.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, "Gendering the Vote," 143.

<sup>161</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 384.

wishing to separate themselves from others with the mentality of having others who are unwanted stay in their own space. For example, women PRRP voters wish for men to stay “out of their kitchens” or for immigrants to stay “out of their country.”<sup>162</sup>

Girls today are still raised differently than boys, for many families teach their daughters to be peaceful, not violent or aggressive.<sup>163</sup> This is why, when women are surveyed, a majority consistently say they are not in favor of war or conflict of any kind.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, when asked about moral issues, men prefer tough law and order responses, whereas women prefer “collective and care-oriented” approaches.<sup>165</sup> Due to the fact that women are less assertive than men on average, they are less likely to be politically ambitious and cast their vote for ambiguous, unknown, or outsider political parties like the FN; in fact, the higher the percentage of people who dislike a political party ultimately leads to a smaller share of female votes.<sup>166</sup> However, many PRRPs are becoming more accepted within their political systems and are even beginning to “de-masculinize” and normalize their positions in attempts to become more appealing to women, especially women who fit the characteristics of a typical PRRP voter but still does not vote for those parties.<sup>167</sup> This softening of the party’s image could explain why more women are supporting the FN in recent elections, which will be further examined in a case study.

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<sup>162</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 384.

<sup>163</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, "The Transformation."

<sup>165</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 141.

<sup>166</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>167</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 159.

#### **d. Questions to consider**

When studying the radical right, there are certain questions that scholars are still attempting to answer. In fact, debates are still held on why people support these parties in the first place, and the factors outlined above are merely an adapting list of factors outlined by radical right scholars. Therefore, the case study below on the National Front of France will attempt to answer questions still left open-ended within the realm of PRRPs. Why do people support PRRPs, or why do French voters support the National Front specifically? What are the factors in France that increase or decrease support for the National Front? If the National Front, is doing so well electorally, why does it not have more representation within the French government? Why do PRRPs suffer a gender gap, and why is that gap closing in France? Is the closing of the gender gap serve as a good omen for the National Front in the 2017 presidential elections? Therefore, through a case study of the National Front, I will attempt to provide answers to these questions.

### **III. Case study of FN**

#### **a. Jean Marie Le Pen's FN**

Radical right parties have existed in France since the end of World War II, with the dissolution of Marshall Petain's Vichy government and the reinstatement of the democratic system under the Fourth Republic. Only loose, unorganized groups of nationalists, authoritarians, and populists remained, on the fringes of the political system with only negligible influence.<sup>168</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen, the creator of the National Front,

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<sup>168</sup> Michelle Hale Williams, "A New Era for French Far Right Politics? Comparing the FN under two Le Pens," *Análise Social* 46, no. 201 (2011): 681, PDF.

sought to form a political movement as an anti-taxation movement that originally had no tie to right wing philosophy but quickly moved in that direction under Le Pen's guidance. Subsequently, the National Front was formally established on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1972. Jean-Marie Le Pen did not worry about demonstrating the ability for the FN to govern, unlike his daughter.<sup>169</sup> Mr. Le Pen only goal was to gain the support of sympathetic French voters, who were disillusioned by globalization and increasing numbers of immigrants. The party achieved little success or recognition for a decade after its creation.

However, that changed in the early 1980s, for the FN saw localized electoral success by gaining low levels of public office.<sup>170</sup> In that time period, there was mass immigration from non-European countries into Western European nations. It did not take long for immigrants from Africa, Asia, and South America to outnumber immigrants from European nations, which created "anxiety and resentment" in the populations of many European nations, including France. This success can be attributed to the fact that increases in French immigration caused citizens to fear for the security of their nation, the integrity of its culture, and the sanctity of its language.<sup>171</sup> Another factor that contributed to the electoral success of the FN was the personality of Jean-Marie Le Pen, a strong, vocal politician, for it is necessary for leaders of the radical right to "have strong rhetorical skills, to be media savvy, and to know how to appeal to ordinary voters".<sup>172</sup> This same style of leadership is seen exhibited in Marine Le Pen.

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<sup>169</sup> Williams, "A New Era for French," 692.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, "A New Era for French," 683.

<sup>171</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 417.

<sup>172</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 8.



Since its initial success, the FN has grown in spurts, gaining increasing electoral support, though that support has not traditionally translated into political power. A defining moment of the party came in 2002, when Jean-Marie Le Pen received the second highest percentage of the popular vote on the first round of elections in the presidential race.<sup>173</sup> Le Pen was then defeated by an overwhelming majority in the second round. Unfortunately, this success did not lead to increasing influence. The party's electoral results were lackluster in the 2007 presidential election, as the party was unable to recreate the performance of the 2002 election. This stagnation of the FN success changed when the party transitioned from Jean-Marie Le Pen to his daughter, Marine Le Pen in 2011.

Despite the fact that the FN has been one of the most successful PRRPs in Western Europe, that success has translated into little political power. Even though the FN gains a good number of votes, the French electoral system has built in rules that stop the party from taking much parliamentary power.<sup>174</sup> This is due to the fact that the French political system allows for other political parties to band together to stop the FN from gaining any political representation.<sup>175</sup> By having a two-round election system, political parties and voters alike have time in between the first and second election to re-evaluate the parties they support or form coalitions to stop other parties from winning. The cooperation of other political parties against the FN was most recently seen in the French regional elections of 2015, after Marine Le Pen won the first round and was boxed out as

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<sup>173</sup> Williams, "A New Era for French," 690.

<sup>174</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 30.

<sup>175</sup> Mudde, "Fighting the System?," 219.

the mainstream parties merged together in key regions to beat the FN out. However, this need to stop the FN through banding together, a practice that was unnecessary in the 1970s and 1980s, demonstrates that public opinion towards the FN is becoming more favorable. The FN, in its efforts to distance itself from its extremist past, “now attracts many voters who previously voted for one of the major parties”.<sup>176</sup> Some of these new voters are coming out of demographics that were traditionally out of reach for the FN.

FN support generally depends less on normalized determinants of voters, such as religion or class, and rests more with the level of education of the voter and gender.<sup>177</sup> This can be seen throughout the election history of the FN as the electorate for the party fluctuates based on the current situations within the French state. For example, the state of the economy will most likely determine if voters who do not traditionally support the FN cast their ballot for the radical party. If the economy is strong, meaning there are low rates of unemployment, then the chance of voters who do not normally support the FN voting for the party are low. However, when there are economic recessions, voters who feel neglected by the parties in power or adversely affected by globalization, these voters are more likely to support the FN. Both Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen score the best among voters who have low levels of educational attainment, such as those who did not pass the high school exit exam or stopped schooling altogether at the high school level.<sup>178</sup> Rising levels of nationalism and increased levels of immigration also have influences on electoral support for the FN.

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<sup>176</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 9.

<sup>177</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 401.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, "The Closing," 404.

We begin our election analysis with the election in 1984, where supporters for Jean-Marie Le Pen mostly consisted of right wing, Catholic, well-off members of the bourgeoisie who were exasperated by the 1981 victory of the “socialo-communists.”<sup>179</sup> Voters who supported the FN held a fear of growing populations of immigrants from non-European countries, for PRRPs are “particularly astute in translating these sentiments into political gains without couching them in outright racist terms.”<sup>180</sup> The cohort of supporters from the 1984 elections deserted the party in 1986 during the parliamentary elections by returning their votes to the moderate right coalition. The parliamentary election in 1986 saw that all major parties in France attracted similar levels of support from both men and women, with the stark exception of the National Front, which managed to hold 12% of the male vote yet only 7% of female votes within the French electorate.<sup>181</sup> The presidential election of 1988 saw that support for the FN spurred from small shopkeepers and artisans, with which the party earned 19% of the vote.<sup>182</sup> After, his support came from the working class voters, due to their disappointment in the socialist government and the austerity measures it enacted. In the presidential elections of 1995, Jean-Marie Le Pen supported mostly by skilled and unskilled manual laborers with a margin of 21%, a subset of the electorate that is usually voters for its leftist parties.<sup>183</sup> Within the presidential elections of 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen saw support for his candidacy growing with rural and small town

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid, "The Closing," 410.

<sup>180</sup> Betz, "The New Politics," 416.

<sup>181</sup> Deborah R. Levy, "Women of the French National Front," *Parliamentary Affairs* 42, no. 1 (January 1989): 107, PDF.

<sup>182</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 402.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, "The Closing," 409.

citizens who were concerned with increasing rates of crime and violence spilling out of the cities and into their suburbs or villages. The support of farmers doubled from only 10% in 1995 to 22% in 2002.<sup>184</sup>

After the FN started achieving electoral success, an understanding developed that the mainstream parties within the French political systems would unite against the FN to ensure the party did not gain power.<sup>185</sup> The electoral success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002 presidential election is a prime example of this phenomenon. After the initially success of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the Socialists as well as the other left-leaning parties urged their supporters to vote for Jacques Chirac, a leader of the center right. This is due to the fact that “although the center left opposed many of his policies it was the only way to ensure that the National Front did not win the presidency.”<sup>186</sup> This unification led to Jean-Marie Le Pen losing the second election and was one of the causes of the declines of the party’s success in 2007. Moreover, in 2007, when the party’s electoral success was declining, Jean-Marie Le Pen, with only 10% of the votes, received the most support from manual workers.<sup>187</sup> The decline that existed within the FN’s electoral support was largely forgotten after the transition of power from Jean-Marie Le Pen to his daughter, Marine Le Pen in 2011.

#### **b. Marine Le Pen’s FN**

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<sup>184</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 411.

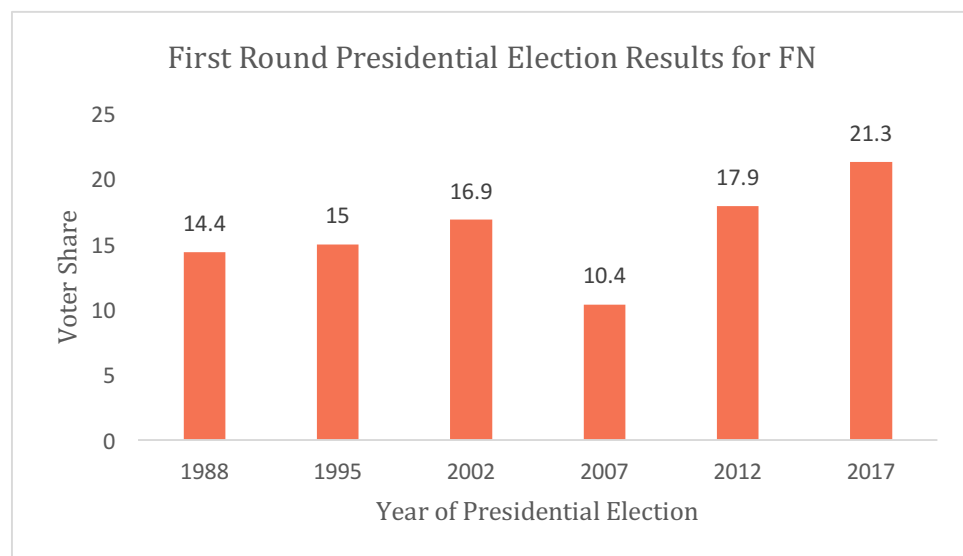
<sup>185</sup> Alissa J. Rubin, "National Front Gets a Boost in French Regional Elections," *The New York Times* (New York City, NY), December 15, 2015, accessed January 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/08/world/europe/marine-le-pen-and-national-front-get-a-boost-in-french-regional-elections.html>.

<sup>186</sup> Rubin, "National Front."

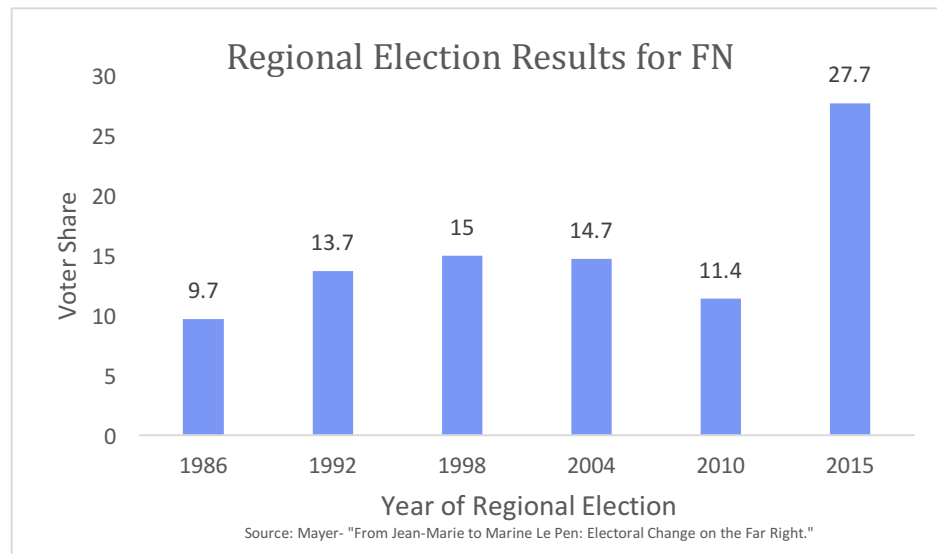
<sup>187</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 405.

Controversy plagued the party for a short amount of time after Marine Le Pen took power, for it was rumored that Le Pen forced her father out of party leadership.<sup>188</sup> Despite the discord following the transition to power, the new Le Pen in power has done a tremendous job of transforming the party into a third-party contender in French politics. Under Le Pen's guidance, the FN began effectively responding to current events to their political advantage, which can be seen in the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks and Nice terrorist attack that saw Marine Le Pen utilizing these tragic moments to propagate her party's immigration policies. She has effectively altered the party's platforms to match voters' concerns. In doing so, Le Pen has led the vanguard in the expansion of the FN electorate. Below are two graphs that track the electoral success of the National Front in both presidential and regional elections. Reviewing these graphs will show that there has been a general increase in support for the FN over time, with the greatest levels of success being achieved after Marine Le Pen began leading the party.

**Figure 11**



<sup>188</sup> Hartleb, "Here to Stay," 42.

**Figure 12**

It can be seen in the two graphs above that there is in fact a rise in electoral support for the FN in both presidential and regional elections. The reasoning behind this increase in support, especially under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, can be explained by reviewing the elections both holistically and individually. Special attention will be paid to the regional elections in 2010 and 2015, seeing as the electoral disparity between the two elections is quite exceptional.

Marine Le Pen is unlike any candidate the National Front had before, creating a new look of the normally radical right political party. A mother of three children, divorced twice, currently living out of wedlock with her partner, Marine is nothing like the presence of her father aside from the similar ideals, yet she manages to soften them and make them more accessible to a wider electoral audience.<sup>189</sup> This legitimization occurred through two difference strategies: distancing from radical figureheads who were

<sup>189</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen's Front National Makes Political Gains after Paris Attacks," *The Guardian*, December 1, 2015, accessed March 13, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/01/marine-le-pen-front-national-political-gains-paris-attacks>.

frequently cited by Jean-Marie Le Pen and hiding its racist discourse in its policies.<sup>190</sup>

The FN no longer idolizes men like Charles Maurras or Alexis Carrel, due to the inflammatory statements these figures made in the past.<sup>191</sup> The disassociation allows Marine Le Pen to recreate the party not as one of racist xenophobes but as a party of nationalistic patriots. The second part of the methods Le Pen employs to normalize her party is embedding the traditional racist discourse within bigger concepts of French society and policy, such as the secular policy of *laïcité* and state sovereignty.

Marine Le Pen has also changed the self-identification of the party. Unlike her father who did not oppose the FN being labelled with the terms radical right or extreme right, Marine Le Pen labels the FN as a republican party that is embedded in and respects the Fifth Republic of France.<sup>192</sup> Despite Marine Le Pen's efforts, a majority of the supporters of the FN have distinctively a "ethno-centrist and authoritarian vision of the world", which contrasts from the ideology of more moderate members of the French electorate.<sup>193</sup> Her father, a man who was infamous for Holocaust denial and spewing anti-Semitic and inherently racist views, is a shadow that Marine Le Pen will always have following her. To counteract the damage her father did to the public image of the FN after her father's offensive comments, Marine Le Pen condemned anti-Semitism and made statement that the Holocaust was the "summit of human barbarism."<sup>194</sup> Le Pen even

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<sup>190</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 320.

<sup>191</sup> Charles Maurras was a French critic known for intense nationalism, or integral nationalism. See his work, *Maurrassisme*. Alexis Carrel was a French biologist who believed in eugenics. See his work, *L'Homme, cet inconnu (Man, the Unknown)*.

<sup>192</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 322.

<sup>193</sup> Nonna Mayer, "From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right," *Parliamentary Affairs* 66 (2013): 167, PDF.

<sup>194</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 173.

went as far to say that she “understands women who abort even if she is opposed to the practice.”<sup>195</sup> These remarks have lessened the hardened image of the FN that Jean-Marie Le Pen carefully constructed under his reign, making voting for the party “less morally reprehensible, less difficult, for women to vote for her”.<sup>196</sup> This more modern, respectable outlook stems from the strategy of dédialisation, or the process of decontamination.<sup>197</sup>

Marine Le Pen is effectively making her party more of a political contender in the French political arena, focusing more on social policies, such as a creating a more protective state, adding public services, with protectionist and anti-EU overtones that women are receptive too. Though the party has made moves toward becoming less extremist, there are still many who are skeptical and wary of the FN. Manuel Valls, the Socialist prime minister of France, warned the FN was still “anti-Semitic and racist”, making any electoral gains the party earned would harm the French state.<sup>198</sup> Instead of being right-wing, the FN, according too Marine, is simply radically different than the mainstream parties.

Under Jean-Marie Le Pen, the FN attracted mainly protest votes; however, Marine Le Pen has managed to build a “base of locally elected officials to target the top levels of power” after taking over the party in 2011 and radically changing the party’s political strategy.<sup>199</sup> By capitalizing on anti-EU sentiments within the French electorate during the

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<sup>195</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 175.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, "From Jean-Marie," 165.

<sup>197</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 319.

<sup>198</sup> Angelique Chrisafis, "Front National Wins Opening Round in France's Regional Elections," *The Guardian*, December 7, 2017, accessed March 14, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/06/front-national-wins-opening-round-in-frances-regional-elections>.

<sup>199</sup> Chrisafis, "Front National."



2014 European elections and the economic crisis, the FN campaigned that the EU “allowed for the outsourcing of manual labor jobs”, encouraged French deindustrialization, deprived France of its national sovereignty, and forced France to take immigrants from non-European countries.<sup>200</sup> Though promoting anti-EU sentiments and increased Euroscepticism, the FN has poised itself perfectly to be the sole party that is against the international organization, becoming the only party that “defends and respects the interests of the Eurosceptical electorate.”<sup>201</sup> The FN has been successful in three different arenas: public opinion, membership, and elections.<sup>202</sup> Public opinion of the French electorate has transferred from viewing the FN as an extremist party to an alternative to the two mainstream parties.

It is true the FN has become the third party in France, and it is also the only party within the country with a growing base of support. The growing levels of support stem from Le Pen’s careful and strategic responses to global crises and national events. For example, Francois Hollande’s response to the attacks were stringent security measures, including “border controls, more armed police, and revoking the citizenship of convicted terrorists with dual nationality who were born in France”, which were policies that Le Pen had public championed years prior to the attacks.<sup>203</sup> Marine Le Pen responded to these policies by stating that they “were picked from the saddlebag of the National

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<sup>200</sup> Gabriel Goodliffe, "Europe's Saliency and 'Owning' Euroscepticism: Explaining the Front National's Victory in the 2014 European Elections in France," *French Politics* 13, no. 4 (2015): 335, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.drew.edu/politicalscience/docview/1729211965/6F891B357FDA4850PQ/1?accountid=10558>.

<sup>201</sup> Goodliffe, "Europe's Saliency," 329.

<sup>202</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 321.

<sup>203</sup> Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen's."

Front”, going as far to say that they were a personal tribute to her.<sup>204</sup> Therefore, the beliefs held by the FN are becoming more accepted in the mainstream political parties. The work of the FN has made the party a true contender, which is a far cry from the status of the party at its inception in 1972.

After the electoral success of the party in 2015, Marine Le Pen is building a compelling campaign for the 2017 presidential election, where she reached the second-round runoff election easily.<sup>205</sup> Marine Le Pen has transformed the French political landscape by establishing the National Front as a viable alternative to the Socialist party, led by current President Francois Hollande who currently has the lowest approval rate of any democratic leader in France, and the Republicans, a center-right party.<sup>206</sup> By appealing to voters who are economically strained, feel neglected by political leaders they deem elitist or out of touch, and are angered or frightened by increasing waves of immigration that could pose a threat to national security or the national identity, Marine Le Pen has been able to maximize the discontentment of a wider electorate than the traditional members who support the FN.<sup>207</sup> In the FN, core electorates like voters with low levels of education, blue-collar workers, and voters dissatisfied with the French political system are continuing to support the party. This demonstrates that educational attainment, occupation, and satisfaction levels are accurate predictors of who in the electorate will vote for the FN.<sup>208</sup> This appeal led to the FN gaining control of a few cities

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<sup>204</sup> Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen's."

<sup>205</sup> Chrisafis, "Front National."

<sup>206</sup> BBC News, "French Election."

<sup>207</sup> Rubin, "National Front."

<sup>208</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 322.

in France in 2014. The party's influence has expanded in 2015, after the attacks in Paris left 130 dead shook the nation.

The attacks allowed the FN to establish credibility to its platform as it controlled key regions within France, most notably they areas around the city of Calais, which had been struggling with a large encampment of thousands of migrants, most of whom fled from Syria.<sup>209</sup> Sylvain Brouard, a political scientist at the Center for Political Research at Sciences Po, sees the issues that plagued the French electorate during the 2015 regional elections, such as a focus on defense and security over issues with unemployment, have not overshadowed economic issues in the past fifteen years.<sup>210</sup> Brouard believes that the salience of these issues over economic problems creates a context "which made the stakes very favorable for the National Front."<sup>211</sup> The party's electoral gains in both local and European elections are crucial components to build the basis of support that Marine Le Pen will need to make a strong bid for the presidency in 2017.<sup>212</sup> By forcing out her father, the extremely radical Jean-Marie Le Pen, she solidified the transformation of the FN from a political outsider to a true contender. Therefore, the FN is reshaping the political sphere as a wave of nationalistic right-wing populism is sweeping over the country, as well as the larger international community.

This upswing in success is shown through Marine Le Pen's performance within the 2012 presidential election, where she garnered nearly 18% of votes within the first round of elections. In the first round of the 2012 presidential election, Marine Le Pen

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<sup>209</sup> Rubin, "National Front."

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, "National Front."

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, "National Front."

<sup>212</sup> BBC News, "French Election."

achieved the best election result the FN had in a presidential race, improving her father's percentage of votes by one percentage point and 1.6 million votes.<sup>213</sup> This is an 8% increase in the votes her father received in 2007, when he only earned 10% of the vote.<sup>214</sup> The FN's performance in the 2012 legislative elections allowed the party to earn two party seats in the National Assembly.<sup>215</sup> The FN received 14% of the total percentage of voters.<sup>216</sup> A survey of FN voters in the 2012 elections showed that, just as with her father's constituents, they believed that stopping illegal immigration was the most important issue to them.<sup>217</sup> The second most important issue for Marine Le Pen voters was unemployment, followed closely by the need for security.<sup>218</sup> This differed from the mainstream electorate when surveyed, which valued socioeconomic issues over anything else. Despite this impressive result, Marine Le Pen only finished one point higher than Jean-Marie Le Pen in his 2002 presidential race.<sup>219</sup>

The results of the 2014 European Elections saw the FN as one of the first parties in France as the party earned one of its best results ever, with 25% of the total vote.<sup>220</sup> Success was not limited to solely the FN. In fact, the United Kingdom Independence Party and the Danish People's Party in Denmark also attained 25% of the votes, making these three PRRPs the biggest parties in their countries.<sup>221</sup> This percentage of the vote

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<sup>213</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 172.

<sup>214</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 321.

<sup>215</sup> Jethro Mullen and Tim Hume, "France's National Front Thwarted in Regional Elections," *CNN*, December 14, 2017, accessed November 4, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/14/europe/france-regional-elections-second-round/>.

<sup>216</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 319.

<sup>217</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 168.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, "From Jean-Marie," 168.

<sup>219</sup> Art, "Rise of the Radical," 134.

<sup>220</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 321.

<sup>221</sup> Rooduijn, "The Rise," 4.

allowed the FN to win 24 seats in the European Parliament.<sup>222</sup> The past electoral success, albeit not gaining much in political positions, was indicative of the success that was to come for the FN.

Since the 2010 regional elections, the FN has managed to appeal to a wider electorate, for the party managed to capture three times as many voters in the second round of the elections than it could in 2010.<sup>223</sup> This roughly translates in a rise of five million more votes, for the FN only managed two million votes in the 2010 second round election but earned seven million votes in the 2015 second round election.<sup>224</sup> At the end of the first round of the 2015 regional elections, the FN had the most votes in six regions out of the thirteen regions within the country.<sup>225</sup> This is the first time in its history that the FN finished first in six regions, a fact that becomes more startling when reviewing the fact that the FN had never held a leadership in a French region before the 2015 elections.<sup>226</sup> Marine Le Pen earned over 40% of the vote in a traditional FN stronghold, Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, and Marion Marechal-Le Pen, Marine's niece, won the majority of the vote in Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur.<sup>227</sup> The FN also won the most votes during the first round of elections in Centre Val de Loire, Alsace-Champagne-Ardenne-

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<sup>222</sup> Mullen and Hume, "France's National."

<sup>223</sup> APCO Worldwide, "France: After the Regional Elections, is the Presidential Race for 2017 More Uncertain than Ever?," French Political Diary, last modified December 15, 2015, accessed March 24, 2017, [http://www.apcoworldwide.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/Thought-Leadership/political-note-france\\_regional-elections\\_dec2015.pdf](http://www.apcoworldwide.com/docs/default-source/default-document-library/Thought-Leadership/political-note-france_regional-elections_dec2015.pdf).

<sup>224</sup> APCO Worldwide, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>225</sup> APCO Worldwide, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>226</sup> Chrisafis, "Front National."

<sup>227</sup> Jon Henley, "French Elections: Seven Regions for Centre Right, None for Front National – as it Happened," *The Guardian*, December 13, 2015, accessed March 16, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2015/dec/13/french-regional-elections-2015-live#block-566dee44e4b052107bd8b740>.

Lorraine, Bourgogne Franche-Comté and Languedoc-Rousillon Midi-Pyrénées.<sup>228</sup> The Republicans captured 27% of the vote, and the Socialists only managed to gain 23% of the vote.<sup>229</sup> This success translates into the FN winning more votes than in all of its previous election results combined.<sup>230</sup> However, Marine Le Pen could not convince a majority of the French electorate to vote for the FN, despite her efforts to normalize and mainstream the party. Though the mainstream parties failed to win FN supporters, the majority of French voters turned out during the second round of the regional election, with participation rates of 60% coming out to the polls to block the FN from winning any region, despite the fact that many of these voters did not support either the policies of the Socialist Party or the Republicans.<sup>231</sup>

In conjunction with the Socialists pulling their candidates from the second round of elections in two key regions to aid in the defeat of the FN in December, 2015, the increase in voter turnout managed to slow the electoral success of the FN.<sup>232</sup> The voting participation rate of the 2015 regional election rose 10% points from the rate in 2010.<sup>233</sup> This increased turnout in voting, especially within areas that are FN strongholds, suggests that voters mobilized in a deliberate effort to beat the FN.<sup>234</sup> Despite the fact that it failed to win any of the regions, the FN managed to triple their number of regional councilors across France, now having 316 councilors as compared to 708 councilors for the

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<sup>228</sup> Henley, "French Elections."

<sup>229</sup> APCO Worldwide, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>232</sup> Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen's."

<sup>233</sup> APCO Worldwide, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>234</sup> Henley, "French Elections."

Republicans and 551 for the Socialists.<sup>235</sup> Although Marion Maréchal-Le Pen lost to her opponent in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Marine fell to her opponent in Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, the party still managed some success in the second round. In Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, the FN will act as the sole opposition force within the local governments.<sup>236</sup> Without the tactical withdraw of the Socialist party candidates in between the first and second round elections and the strong turnout of more moderate voters in the second round, the FN would definitely have had more electoral success.

The 2015 regional elections are the perfect example to explore when attempting to understand how the FN became deeply rooted in the French political system, moving from the fringe onto center stage in the political arena. The 2015 elections also saw more support for the FN, especially after the terrorist attacks in Paris. In fact, the FN was one of the only parties to make electoral gains in the aftermath of the attacks, gaining 28% of the vote in regional elections as compared with the 11% earned within the 2010 regional elections.<sup>237</sup> The results of the 2015 regional election prove that the party has definite supporters and no longer only gains protest votes from disillusioned people in the French electorate. Moreover, Marine Le Pen has managed to expand her father's electorate by utilizing the 2008 economic crisis to attract voters who are most vulnerable to unemployment and most discontent with the policies of Hollande.<sup>238</sup> Le Pen also utilized the refugee crisis and the growing number of Muslim migrants to France as a method to

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<sup>235</sup> APCO Worldwide, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, "France: After," French Political Diary.

<sup>237</sup> Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen's."

<sup>238</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 401.

gain supporters as well. In fact, polls have demonstrated that the November 13, 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris managed to increase the popularity of the FN, due to the fact that Marine Le Pen was able to appeal to the French concerns centering around radical Islam, increased migration and immigration, the growing refugee crisis, lackadaisical border controls, and national security fears.<sup>239</sup> All of these are areas in which the FN has consistently taken a hardline stance, which is gaining the attention of voters who normally would not side with a radical right party.

Marine Le Pen achieved a personal high level of support of more than 40% of the vote in the northern region of Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie. This region happens to be the poorest mainland region with a population bigger than Denmark's.<sup>240</sup> This region had controversies with the thousands of refugees living in a makeshift refugee camp there called 'the Jungle' by the region's inhabitants, which increased anti-immigrant sentiments in Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie. Le Pen managed to earn more than 50% of the vote in the first round of regional elections in 2015.<sup>241</sup> Only after the other parties banded together, just as they did before with Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002, did Marine Le Pen lose to her center-right opponent Xavier Bertrand with a 56% majority to Marine's 44% of the total vote.<sup>242</sup> The inability of the FN to make significant grounds within the 2015 French political landscape, Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls still felt the need

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<sup>239</sup> Henley, "French Elections."

<sup>240</sup> Chrisafis, "Front National."

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, "Front National."

<sup>242</sup> Mullen and Hume, "France's National."



to stress that there was no room for complacency for the French, for “the danger of the far-right is still around.”<sup>243</sup>

This fear stems from the fact that, despite not winning any region within France, the party still managed to hold a share of over 27% of the vote in the second round of elections, which is a significant proportion of the electorate for a radicalized party.<sup>244</sup> Marine Le Pen herself stated that the increasing share of the total vote that was nearly triple that of what the FN scored only five years before showed that the FN is “the main opposition force in most of the regional councils of France.”<sup>245</sup> A political analyst and public opinion specialist for the Center for Political Research at Sciences Po, Bruno Cautrès, contends that the FN, “more than ever has become the heart of the French political life and the political party around which the others situate themselves.”<sup>246</sup> This can be seen the second round of the 2015 regional elections, where the two mainstream parties pulled their votes together in order to overpower Marine Le Pen. After other mainstream parties came together to quell the success of the FN, Marine Le Pen stated that her party “had been the victim of calumny and defamation by the government”, adding that nothing could now stop the National Front’s advance in the coming presidential election.<sup>247</sup> The increasing support for the FN over the past elections cycles makes the upcoming 2017 presidential race one that the world will be watching closely.

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<sup>243</sup> Mullen and Hume, "France's National."

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, "France's National."

<sup>245</sup> Ibid, "France's National."

<sup>246</sup> Rubin, "National Front."

<sup>247</sup> Henley, "French Elections."

Going forward, in the 2017 presidential election, this diminishing gender gap within the FN electorate may have profound effects on the French political system. After announcing her candidacy in February, 2017, Marine Le Pen officially became the first candidate in the French presidential race.<sup>248</sup> The electoral success of the 2015 regional elections, which aided the FN in consolidating its growth and building its support outside of voters who traditionally voted for radical right parties, serves as a harbinger of things that may come to pass. Marine Le Pen hopes to reach the second round of the presidential election, a feat, based on the recent track record of the party, does not seem far-fetched. The party's platform is expected to center on increased security, strict regulations on immigration, anti-EU measures, and a focus on reinstating the 'lost' French values.<sup>249</sup> Even if Marine Le Pen does not win the presidency, which many in her own party doubt it will end in her victory, reaching the second round in a presidential election would still be considered a great achievement. This is due to the fact that the last time a candidate from the FN reached the second round was 2002, when Jean-Marie Le Pen beat Lionel Jospin to run against Jacques Chirac in the run-off election.<sup>250</sup>

The first round of presidential elections in 2017 shows that Marine Le Pen's favorability is increasing. If this trend continues, she will assuredly perform well in the second round of elections on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017. However, her supporters fear that her candidacy in the second round of elections in 2017 will inevitably end in a loss as other

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<sup>248</sup> Marta Lorimer, "The 2017 French Presidential Election: The Race Has Started... and so Far It Has More Candidates than Voters," EUROPP, last modified June 1, 2016, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/06/01/the-2017-french-presidential-election-the-race-has-started-and-so-far-it-has-more-candidates-than-voters/>.

<sup>249</sup> Lorimer, "The 2017," EUROPP.

<sup>250</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 401

mainstream parties unite in order to defeat her. This phenomenon was observed in the second round of the 2015 regionals elections.<sup>251</sup> The international community is also attempting to quell the rise of the FN and Marine Le Pen. This is evidenced in the fact that the European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker stated that the European bloc would do “all in its power, including economic sanctions, to ensure that no anti-mass migration party would ever come to power in Europe.”<sup>252</sup> Only time will tell if the FN can overcome the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that will be in between Le Pen and the presidency in 2017.

#### **a. Women and the FN**

There has been a noticeable increase in female support for the FN over the past ten years. This trend of women supporting the FN is evidenced in the differences of electoral results between the 2002 and 2012. The 2002 electorate of the FN that led to the historic finish of Jean-Marie Le Pen was predominantly comprised of male voters.<sup>253</sup> In 2012, Marine Le Pen demonstrated her ability to attract both male and female voters alike, a feat that had yet to be accomplished with the party in its history until that point. This means that, though the gender gap in FN voting adversely affected Jean-Marie Le Pen in his 2002 presidential election, this gender disadvantage did not have such a negative impact for Marine Le Pen in her 2012 presidential bid.<sup>254</sup> Moreover, a small gender gap returned in the 2014 European Elections, showing that men were more likely

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<sup>252</sup> Waterfield and Crossland, "Juncker Vows."

<sup>253</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special."

<sup>254</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

to vote with the radical right than women, though some women were still voting for the FN.<sup>255</sup> Therefore, the FN has succeeded in gaining the votes of women, especially those who with anti-European sentiments, a fear of immigration, and an attraction to the personality of Marine Le Pen.<sup>256</sup>

The wave of immigrants coming from the Syrian civil war has inspired fear among women within France, who are afraid for themselves and their families. Marine Le Pen has successfully used the increase in immigrants to appeal to women. In response to these refugees, Marine Le Pen contended that the mass number of sexual assaults that occurred on New Year's Eve in Cologne was the fault of migrants, going so far as to say that these migrants were adversely impacting women's liberties in Western Europe.<sup>257</sup> She went so far as to say, "I am revolted today by the unacceptable silence and therefore tacit consent of the French Left in the face of these fundamental attacks on the rights of women. I am scared that the migrant crisis signals the beginning of the end of women's rights."<sup>258</sup> In an opinion piece written in the French daily newspaper *l'Opinion*, she called for a referendum on the French migration policy and stated that women's rights were being violated by the influx of refugees within the country.<sup>259</sup> This will work in Marine Le Pen's favor when she runs for the presidential election in 2017, for she will have a

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<sup>255</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 402.

<sup>256</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special."

<sup>257</sup> Nicholas Vinocur and Sofia Melo, "Marine Le Pen's Feminist Front," *Politico*, January 8, 2017, 24, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.politico.eu/article/marine-le-pen-feminist-front-national-gender-equality-migration-cologne/>.

<sup>258</sup> Vinocur and Melo, "Marine Le Pen's."

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid*, "Marine Le Pen's."

wider electorate to potentially gain support from to bring her to the second round of elections as predicted.

The supporters of Marine Le Pen are ideologically similar to those of her father, with the only differing characteristics being the gender of her supporters. Marine Le Pen appeals to a wider range of women within the French electorate, who have historically been reluctant to support the radical right.<sup>260</sup> This increase in support is evident in the diminishing gender gap of National Front electoral support over the past five presidential elections. Moreover, the most votes for the FN come from blue collar workers with the lowest levels of education, income, and social status.<sup>261</sup> As for women, only 17% are present in the blue-collar sector, with 47.5% of women working in non-manual jobs.<sup>262</sup> The lack of women within a sector that was at risk of globalization translated into less female support for the radical right. However, the job security that has traditionally protected women from feeling at risk by immigrant workers was jeopardized after the 2008 economic crisis and the large influx of Syrian migrants as the civil war within the country rages on indefinitely.

Once the recession affected the French economy, the first workers to be affected were manual laborers; however, the recession continued to reverberate throughout the economic sectors, ultimately affecting women who were “overrepresented in unwanted part time and temporary contracts”, making them more exposed to falling into unemployment.<sup>263</sup> This inevitably leads to women increasing their support for PRRPs.

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<sup>260</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 177.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid, "From Jean-Marie," 173.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, "From Jean-Marie," 167.

<sup>263</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 409.

Therefore, there is a distinct effect of employment on the likelihood of women supporting PRRPs like the FN.<sup>264</sup> This is in line with the moderation theory of support, meaning that, since men are more sensitive than women to their economic footholds within an economy that they perceive as a disadvantage to them, they ultimately focus on this when they go to the polls.<sup>265</sup> The occurrence of “pocketbook voting”, which is the tendency to vote for whichever party will get a voter more capital, is also more common with men than women.<sup>266</sup>

With France, a country that is traditionally Catholic, women are consistent with the international trend of being more religious; women in France are also more likely to be more receptive to the warning of Church officials.<sup>267</sup> For example, these religious women were far less inclined to vote for Jean-Marie Le Pen in the 2002 presidential election, creating a widening gender gap as a result of elderly Catholic women who regularly attended church voting for the mainstream right party.<sup>268</sup> However, this religiosity can also be used against the concept of tolerance that is preached within the Catholic religion, as some congregations feed on anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments in the growing waves of Islamophobia and the polarization of societies against people of the Muslim faith.<sup>269</sup> With PRRPs like the FN increasing their opposition to growing populations of Muslim people, especially after recent terror attacks, increases in

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<sup>264</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 392.

<sup>265</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 109.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid, "The Gender," 109.

<sup>267</sup> Barisione and Mayer, "The Transformation."

<sup>268</sup> Ibid, "The Transformation."

<sup>269</sup> Ibid, "The Transformation."

electoral support has followed an increase in xenophobic rhetoric utilized by PRRPs.<sup>270</sup>

These parties, especially the FN with Marine Le Pen at the forefront, have made the argument that Islam directly conflicts with Western Christian values and traditions.

However, there has been an increase in female voter share for the FN over the last three elections in France. This increase in female support can be attributed to the fact that the FN has adopted increasingly left-leaning economic policies along with their traditional anti-immigrant rhetoric.

The increase demonstrated that more women shifted their vote from the left to the radical right during the rise of the FN under Marine Le Pen.<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, the FN has gained the votes of women who are economically left-wing because of their new economic policies.<sup>272</sup> It seems that the transition of the FN's economic policy to one that is more left-leaning has garnered more votes for the party from women. Many people do not vote for the FN solely based on the party's perception in the political realm. This means that the perceived gender gap exists as a result of the "differences between men and women in the perceived distance to the radical right."<sup>273</sup> This perception of the radical right often dissuades women from voting for the party, even if they happen to share similar values. Studies show that women are more likely to be dissuaded for voting for radical parties like the FN based solely on their characteristics, such as the party's political style, history of violence, or ideologies.<sup>274</sup> Oftentimes, the perception of a party

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<sup>270</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 143.

<sup>271</sup> Spierings and Zaslove, "Gendering the Vote," 151.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid, "Gendering the Vote," 154.

<sup>273</sup> Hartevelde et al., "The Gender," 129.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., "The Gender," 129.

differs from reality.

The loss of these traditional family values, according to the FN, is what is driving up rates of juvenile delinquency, prostitution, recreational drug use, homosexuality, and the spreading of AIDS, since women are outside of the home working instead of rearing the children properly.<sup>275</sup> In fact, the FN is so committed to the importance of women staying home that some party officials have pushed for wages for housewives.<sup>276</sup> This discourse not only persuades women not to vote for radical right parties, it makes them more critical of the party's ideals, leaders, and policies.<sup>277</sup> When the two different images of femininity are presented, "the modern woman and the happy homemaker", it is easy to see why there is gender gap in support for the FN.<sup>278</sup> And yet, with Marine Le Pen at the helm of the FN, this traditional homemaker image is transforming, for she embodies so few of the characteristics her own party held dear. Therefore, there are different ideologically different groups of women who consistently do not support radical right parties, young women who are often college educated and older women who are often retired, religious, and widowed.

Aside from the two separate groups of women who shirk supporting the radical right, there are other underlying reasons why women, even women outside of the two former groups mentioned, are less likely to support radicalized parties that lean to the right. Some radical right parties also have reputations of verbal or physical violence,

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<sup>275</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 382.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid, "When Women," 382.

<sup>277</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 168.

<sup>278</sup> Levy, "Women of the French," 109.



sometimes both. For example, the National Front has long been labeled with negative stigmas due to their pre-war and extreme right reputation.<sup>279</sup> This infamous reputation repels potential women voters from supporting radical right political parties, such as the FN. Moreover, the populist discourse of radical right parties has been labelled typically masculine, which is another reason why women are less likely to vote for these parties.<sup>280</sup> A majority of radical right parties are operated by patriarchal, hierarchical structures, creating policies that tend to be anti-abortion and welfare programs that benefit women.<sup>281</sup> The less a radicalized party uses rhetoric considered populist or masculine and sheds its outsider image, women are more likely to vote for these radical right parties, in effect closing the gender gap.<sup>282</sup> This transformation of a radicalized party into one that is inherently less extreme and more accepted is the FN under the leadership of Marine Le Pen.

This ideal that the more mainstream a party is, the more electoral success it will have can be explained through a supply and demand metaphor. The metaphor compares the electoral arena with the free market economy.<sup>283</sup> In this marketplace, supply relates to the ability of businesses, or in this case politicians, to respond to a demand for a certain goods, or policies; demand in this scenario refers to the potential buyers, or the electorate.<sup>284</sup> To be considered successful, a business, or politician, must be able to

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<sup>279</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 162.

<sup>280</sup> Immerzeel, Coffé, and van der Lippe, "Explaining the Gender," 265.

<sup>281</sup> Givens, "The Radical," 31.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid, "The Radical," 31.

<sup>283</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 319.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid, "Introduction to the Special," 319.

persuade potential buyers, or voters, to buy its product, or his or her policies. The more potential buyers that are convinced to by the product increases the success of the business, just as the larger number of voters the politician convinces, the more successful the political party.<sup>285</sup> Therefore, as a party gains more support among voters, it in consequence convinces more voters to support the party. This means that as more women begin voting for the FN, then the likelihood of other women voting for the party increases, seeing as the party becomes more legitimate in the eyes of the French political system. A majority of the literature available on the gender gap center contend that women support the radical right due to family values or fear of immigrants.<sup>286</sup>

Marine Le Pen has not won many votes among educated voters, especially educated women. In fact, she earned the lowest electoral score with teachers, college-educated students, and people who work in the fields of advertising and information.<sup>287</sup> By leading a campaign to “detoxify” the party’s platform and isolate the party from the “racist, jackbooted, anti-Semitic platform of her father”, Marine Le Pen has widened the party’s appeal to a larger electorate.<sup>288</sup> Through this process of detoxification or de-demonization, Marine Le Pen has managed to make the FN more credible with issues other than immigration.<sup>289</sup> This has allowed the FN to diversify its formally homogenous electorate. However, she has not altered the party’s strict stances on immigration, specifically the immigration of Muslims into France, only decreased the outward hostility

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<sup>285</sup> Stockemer, "Introduction to the Special," 322.

<sup>286</sup> Rippeyoung, "When Women," 383.

<sup>287</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 406.

<sup>288</sup> Chrisafis, "Front National."

<sup>289</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 163.

and altered the rhetoric to a message of protecting France from an increasing number of immigrants.

Since the terrorist attacks in Paris, the key concerns of the FN, like the growing numbers of refugees in the country, security, Islam, and the survival of the French identity, have become a part of the national discourse. Through masking some of the xenophobic ideals of her party's platform with coded language and modulating her message for the modern age, she is able maintain the tenets of her father's party while attracting a larger percentage of the electorate.<sup>290</sup> Marine Le Pen presents herself as a defender of French secular republican model that she believes is threatens by the increase of Muslim immigrants.<sup>291</sup> By tapping into the fear and anger that prevailed after the Paris attacks, the FN expanded its campaign on raising security through linking terrorism to immigration based on the fact that at least two of the terrorists in the Paris attacks entered Europe posing as refugees.<sup>292</sup> She is doing this successfully during a time when the traditional, mainstream parties in France are splintering due to their inability to properly address the economic concerns of the diminishing middle class, quell the negative consequences that globalization is having on the French way of life, or convince their electorates that extremism and immigration are not threats to France.<sup>293</sup>

Marine Le Pen has added "laïcité", a word roughly translated as secularism, to the

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<sup>290</sup> Rubin, "National Front."

<sup>291</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 172.

<sup>292</sup> Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen's."

<sup>293</sup> Mondon, "The Front," 312.

core values of French society of liberty, equality, and fraternity.<sup>294</sup> This term has evolved to meaning the forsaking of any display of religious affiliation in the public sphere of life; some opponents of this policy contend that limiting a show of religious identity is a veiled form of anti-Muslim sentiments.<sup>295</sup> Le Pen also believes that France must once again become proud of its “founding values” and “authentic Frenchness”, often commenting publically about the French nation and its need for total sovereignty.<sup>296</sup> This line of discourse directly aims to attack immigrants who do not assimilate to the French way of life. Ms. Le Pen utilizes the possibility of an Islamic takeover of France as an example of why the French must vehemently oppose raised levels of immigration. This discourse has personally benefited Marine Le Pen, which is demonstrated in her unprecedented electoral success during the 2015 regional elections. In the most recent years, Marine Le Pen has managed to continue xenophobic and nationalistic ideas through more veiled methods, allowing the small electorate of women who consistently supported the party to remain while gaining support of women who would not expressly state those ideals.

As seen in Figure 13 below, there is a discernable gender gap present within the French electorate that noticeably shrinks during the 2012 presidential election. The percentage of women voting for the FN candidate was seven percent lower than that of men voting for the FN candidate in 1998. The gap shrinks marginally in 2002 and grows

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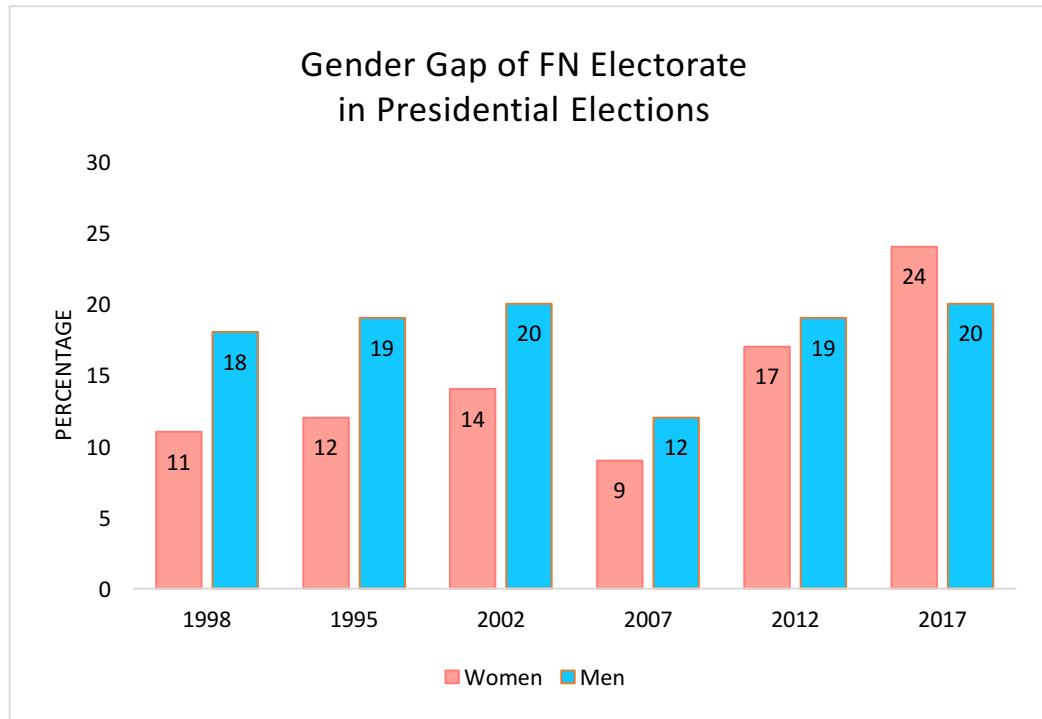
<sup>294</sup> Rubin, "National Front."

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, "National Front."

<sup>296</sup> Mondon, "The Front," 313.

closer again in 2007. This gap closed even further in 2012.

**Figure 13**



Sources: Mayer- "From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right.", OpinionWay

However, the gap in the 2017 presidential election seems to have been reversed, with more women voting for the party than ever before. This is the first time this has happened in the electoral history of the FN.

Moreover, there has been a change in the electorate of the FN over the course of the past five years, since Marine Le Pen transitioned into the leadership role of her father's party. Within the 1980s, when the party first gained electoral success primarily with blue-collar men with low levels of education, few women supported the party. For example, in 1986, all of the major parties within France had nearly equal levels of both male and female support. However, the National Front had a definite gender gap within

its electorate, with 12% of men voting for the FN while only 7% of women in the French electorate voting for the FN.<sup>297</sup> This stemmed from the fact that the party promoted an archaic image of women, viewing them as the stereotypical housewife from the 1950s, who cooked, cleaned, and cared for the children while standing dutifully behind her husband.<sup>298</sup> Throughout the tenure of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the FN glorified the ideal of the housewife, with both male and female supporters believing that the sexes are equal yet “built for different work”, for example, contending that women made good secretaries but not soldiers.<sup>299</sup> This caused contention between the modern women in France and those who subscribed to those antiquated ideas, for the modern women saw the position of the FN as regressive and a threat to women’s rights.<sup>300</sup> However, some women who supported the party at the beginning of its electoral success did so due to the party’s offering of security. The FN, which has traditionally been hard on immigration and unemployment as per the policies of Jean-Marie Le Pen, addressed the need to halt the feelings of insecurity within these women.<sup>301</sup> Though the margin was negligible, there were female supporters for the FN since the beginning of its success in the early 1980s.

Ideals of nationalism, often giving supporters of the FN the labels of extremely patriotic and fiercely proud, the issue of immigration makes these supporters especially sensitive.<sup>302</sup> For example, in an analysis of women who vote for the FN, two such women

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<sup>297</sup> Levy, "Women of the French," 358.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid, "Women of the French," 353.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, "Women of the French," 356.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, "Women of the French," 356.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid, "Women of the French," 354.

<sup>302</sup> Levy, "Women of the French," 352.

believed that Marine Le Pen was the only choice of political candidate that would be able to adequately address the growing concerns of the negative impacts of increased levels of immigration. One supporter, a 67 mother of six, stated, “Everyone is afraid of more attacks at any time. Marine Le Pen predicted this and it’s only her who can save us.”<sup>303</sup> Another female supporter, a small business owner, said that Marine Le Pen has warned of the dangers presented by radical Islam and immigration for decades and that the attacks only prove that Le Pen was correct.<sup>304</sup> The latter supporter went on to say that the attacks “should have been avoided” and that “the president is now telling us to wave flags and be patriotic, when our ‘red, white, and blue’ stance was for years called racist. We’re not racists, we’re realists.”<sup>305</sup> As can be seen in the presented quotes, many of the female voters who support the FN do so out of fear after the Paris attacks.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

There are many possible explanations for women to beginning supporting the FN within the last elections cycles. Many scholars attribute this increased support from a formally unreachable electorate to the transition of Marine Le Pen to power and her alterations of the FN’s image to the public, making it more acceptable to less radicalized voters without losing the following of voters who already supported the party. In fact, the electorate for Marine Le Pen are ideologically similar to those of her father, with the startling exception of the appearance of women within the electorate of the FN.<sup>306</sup> Marine

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<sup>303</sup> Chrisafis, "Front National."

<sup>304</sup> Ibid, "Front National."

<sup>305</sup> Ibid, "Front National."

<sup>306</sup> Mayer, "The Closing," 410.

Le Pen appeals more to women, who have been reluctant than men to support the extreme right within France.

The traditional values upheld by the FN since its inception in the 1980s, such as the importance of the family, a rejection of the decadence of French culture, and a repudiation of modern sexuality, including homosexuality, abortion, and couples living together out of wedlock, are slowly transforming under the leadership of Marine Le Pen.<sup>307</sup> She has done so by softening the parties image through turning from the anti-Semitic rhetoric of her father, adopting LGBT+ friendly legislation, and “presenting herself as a defender of the French secular republican model she considers threatened” by increased immigration of Muslims into France.<sup>308</sup> Le Pen has also utilized the fear from the numerous terrorist attacks in France as a political tool to gain voters, which she has done successfully as the numbers of attacks have increased since her 2015 victories. Since the 1980s, female supporters of the National Front have traditionally agreed with the party’s xenophobic sentiments, nationalistic ideals, and beliefs that unemployment was attributed to increases in immigration levels.<sup>309</sup>

It seems that Macron will take the presidency in the end. However, polls have shown that Marine Le Pen will not get destroyed in the second round, as was the fate of her father’s campaign. If this trend of increased female support for the National Front continues, I predict that she will lose by no more than ten percentage points of Emmanuel

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<sup>307</sup> Levy, "Women of the French," 357.

<sup>308</sup> Mayer, "From Jean-Marie," 162.

<sup>309</sup> Levy, "Women of the French," 349.



Macron in the run-off election. No matter the results, the closing of the gender gap is a harbinger of electoral success to come for the party. By achieving gender parity, the FN, with Marine Le Pen as the party's leader, will become an even more formidable force in upcoming election. In fact, it can be argued that any electoral result that increases Marine Le Pen's voter share from her performance in the first round is a significant success for the National Front. This is because more people decided to vote her the National Front than ever before in the party's history in a presidential race. Moreover, it truly is the age of PRRPs, just as Marine Le Pen stated so confidently. In modern times, a wave of radicalism is coming to a crest over Europe, just waiting to splash over the unassuming heads of the public.

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