
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Immigration and Its Impact on Europe's Societal Security: Examining the Rise of Far-Right Parties (2014-2024)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between immigration and the rise of far-right parties in Europe from 2014 to 2024, focusing on the implications for societal security. It explores how far-right parties have capitalized on immigration, framing it as a critical threat to national identity and social stability. Applying the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, the research analyzes how these parties have redefined immigration as a national security issue, thereby legitimizing more stringent immigration policies and exclusionary practices. The findings indicate that far-right parties have effectively utilized public anxieties and uncertainties surrounding immigration to influence the political discourse across Europe. This shift has significant socio-political consequences, posing challenges to the European Union's foundational principles of integration, democracy, and human rights. The study highlights concerns over democratic backsliding, the erosion of social policies, and threats to freedom of movement and human rights. Additionally, it examines the potential impacts on the EU's cohesion policy, foreign policy, enlargement process, and environmental sustainability. The research underscores a major transformation in Europe's political landscape with far-reaching implications for the stability of the European Union and its member states.

KEYWORDS

Europe, Far-Right Parties, Immigration, Securitization Theory, Societal Security.

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1. Introduction

Immigration, as a global phenomenon, has become one of the most important topics of discussion in Europe in recent decades. This issue, particularly in the context of societal security and related policies, has garnered significant attention. Driven by economic, political, and social factors, migration has significantly impacted host countries, affecting societal security systems and social policies (Castles & Miller, 2009). The recent dramatic increase in immigration has led to major political and social transformations, especially in social security and national identity, resulting in tensions that have contributed to the rise of far-right parties (Mudde, 2007; Givens, 2019). These parties have capitalized on public concerns, positioning themselves as defenders of national identity and social order, often using the perceived threats of immigration to welfare systems to gain electoral support (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018). This rise highlights the profound impact of immigration on social policies and societal security in Europe.

The literature on immigration and its effects on European societies is extensive, covering labor markets, welfare systems, and cultural integration. Migration affects welfare states by altering demographic structures and fiscal pressures, with migrants contributing to the economy and increasing demand for public services (Castles & Miller, 2009; OECD, 2018). While some economic analyses, such as those by Borjas (1999), suggest that migration can strain welfare systems, they also acknowledge the economic benefits of migration, such as filling labor market gaps. However, public perception often centers on potential negative impacts, leading to concerns about the sustainability of social security systems (Hammar et al., 1997). Far-right parties have exploited these concerns, using nationalist and anti-immigrant rhetoric to frame migration as a threat to national identity and social cohesion.

(Mudde, 2007). This framing resonates with voters who perceive migration as a challenge to social security systems, especially during economic downturns (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Alesina & Glaeser, 2004).

Research has shown that far-right parties strategically use migration-related anxieties to consolidate political power, emphasizing fears about job competition and cultural erosion (Givens, 2019; Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018). While existing studies provide valuable insights, gaps remain, particularly in understanding the differential impacts of various forms of migration on social security and the long-term effects on the electoral success of far-right parties. This research will build on existing work by providing a comprehensive analysis of the socio-political impacts of migration in Europe.

The central problem this research seeks to address is the relationship between immigration and the rise of far-right parties in Europe, with a specific focus on the implications for societal security. Although migration is frequently analyzed from economic and humanitarian perspectives, its socio-political impacts—especially how it affects electoral results and party dynamics, including the empowerment of far-right movements—are less thoroughly examined. Therefore, this research aims to explore how immigration impacts societal security in Europe by examining how the perception of immigration as a threat has fueled the rise of far-right parties and how these parties exploit public fears to gain power, along with the socio-political consequences of their success.

2. Research and Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. To address the research questions, the necessary information was gathered from library resources, academic articles and journals, official governmental and non-governmental publications, reports from international organizations, and previous studies and surveys. The data were then analyzed using content analysis methodology and framed within the theoretical perspective of the Copenhagen School. Before inclusion, the data were evaluated based on criteria such as credibility, relevance, and sufficiency.

3. Results and Discussion

The finding is structured into three comprehensive components, each examining a fundamental aspect of the research topic: migration, societal security, and the rise of far-right parties in Europe.

3.1 Migration – Definitions, Types, And Driving Factors

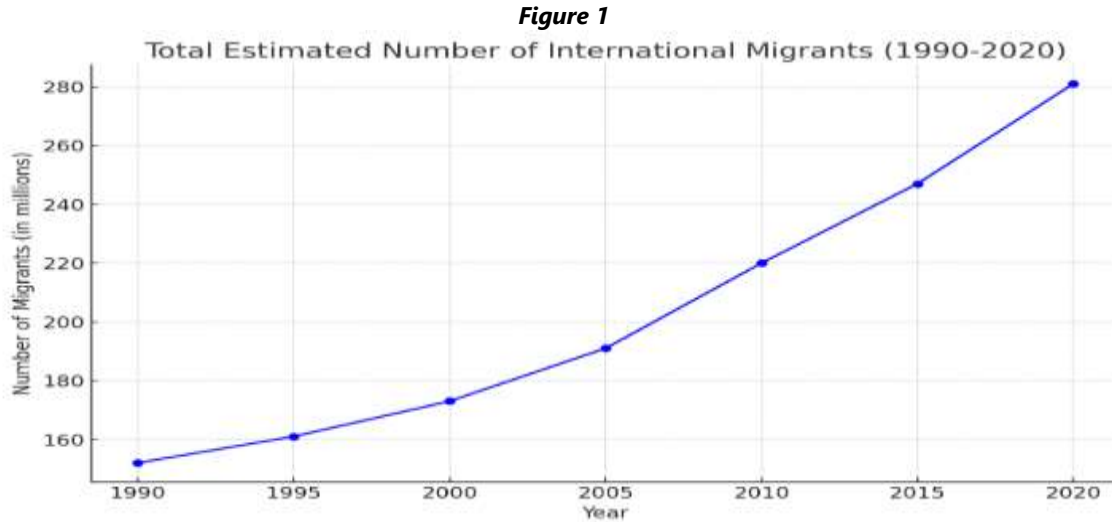
Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has been defined in various ways. Broadly speaking, it is understood as the movement of people from one place to another with the intent of settling temporarily or permanently in a new location. This process can occur within a country or across international borders, typically involving a change of residence from one geographic area to another. In alignment with this general understanding, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) specifically defines migration as “the movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within a state” (IOM, 2019). Similarly, Castles and Miller (2009) describe migration as a process involving the movement of people from one location to another, driven primarily by economic opportunities, political asylum, family reunification, or education. Moreover, they emphasize that migration is not merely a physical relocation but also a social process that impacts both the migrants and the societies involved.

Additionally, Everett S. Lee defined migration within the context of his push-pull model, where migration is seen as a result of factors that push individuals away from their place of origin (e.g., economic hardship, political instability) and pull them towards a destination (e.g., better job opportunities, safety, and security).

Migration can be categorized by scope, duration, motivation, scale, and legal status. Internal migration occurs within a country, often from rural to urban areas (Todaro & Smith, 2015), while international migration involves crossing national borders (Castles & Miller, 2009). Permanent migration involves relocating with no intention to return (Dustmann & Görlach, 2016), whereas temporary migration is short-term, usually for work or study (Hugo, 2013). Voluntary migration is driven by personal choice (Skeldon, 2013), while forced migration includes those displaced by conflict or disasters (UNHCR, 2020). Individual migration refers to personal moves, while mass migration involves large-scale movements (Andreas & Thomas, 1998, p. 27). Legal migration is authorized, while illegal migration lacks proper authorization (Andreas & Thomas, 1998, p. 27).

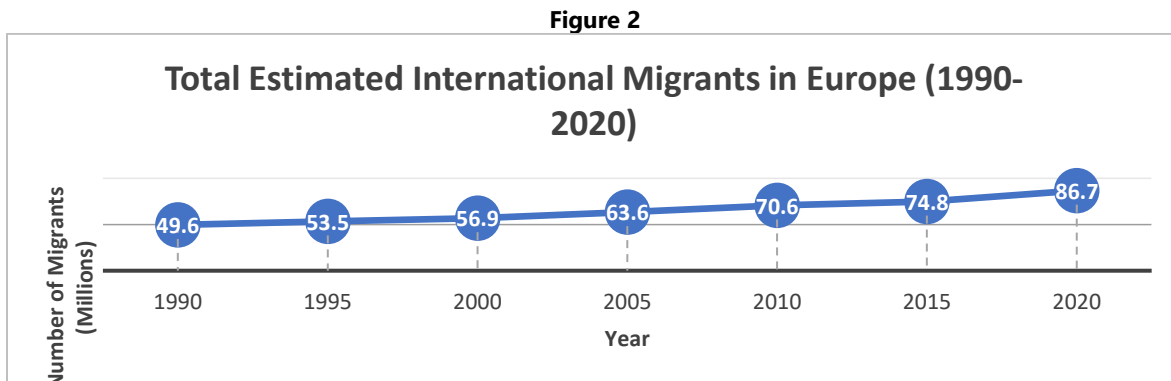
Migration is driven by “push” and “pull” factors. Push factors compel individuals to leave their homes due to negative conditions like economic hardship, political instability, or environmental threats (Lee, 1966; Castles & Miller, 2009; McLeman & Smit, 2006). Pull factors attract individuals to a destination with positive conditions such as better job opportunities, improved living standards, political or religious freedom, education, healthcare, and security (McLeman & Smit, 2006; Castles & Miller, 2009).

Having established a clear definition of migration, it is essential to examine the total estimated number of migrants, with a distinction between global figures and those specific to Europe. The number of international migrants has increased significantly from 1995 to 2020 as shown in **Figure 1**. According to the International Organization for Migration's 2024 report, the estimated number of international migrants worldwide was approximately 281 million in 2020, representing 3.6 percent of the global population.



Source: Author. The data were collected from the World Migration Report 2024.

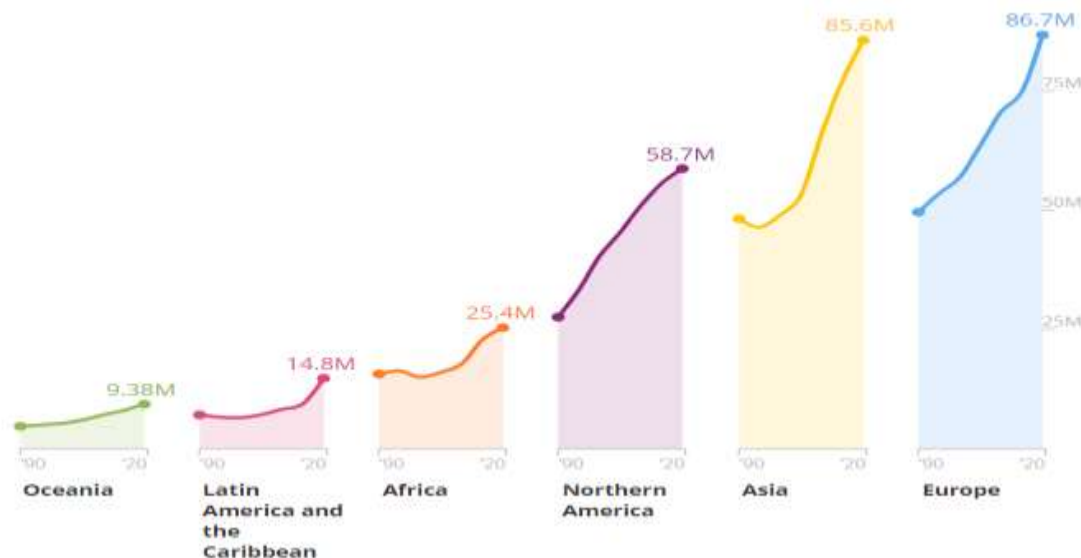
Similarly, from 1990 to 2020, the total estimated number of migrants in Europe increased consistently, as illustrated in **Figure 2**. In 1990, there were 49.6 million migrants, and by 2020, this number had risen to 86.7 million. This represents an overall increase of 37.1 million migrants over the 30-year period.



Source: Author. The data were collected from the World Migration Report 2024.

Furthermore, Europe and Asia each hosted around 87 and 86 million international migrants, respectively – comprising 61% of the global international migrant stock. These regions were followed by North America, with almost 59 million international migrants in 2020, or 21 percent of the global migrant stock; Africa at 9 percent; Latin America and the Caribbean at 5 percent; and Oceania at 3 percent. (World Migration Report 2024).

Figure 3
Total Estimated International Migration by Region (1990-2020)



Source: IOM website, Interactive - World Migration Report 2024

Overall, the number of international migrants has risen significantly over the past five decades. By 2020, an estimated 281 million individuals were residing in countries other than their countries of origin, representing an increase of 128 million compared to 1990 and more than three times the number estimated in 1970. This substantial rise in migration has contributed to complex social, economic, and political dynamics in both origin and destination countries.

3.2. Societal Security: Conceptualization, Encompassment, and Threats

3.2.1 Definition and Scope

Societal security refers to the ability of a society to maintain its traditional patterns of language, culture, and identity in the face of external and internal threats. This concept is integral to understanding how societies manage and adapt to changes that could potentially disrupt their traditional norms and values. According to Buzan (1991), societal security is crucial for the survival and cohesion of communities, encompassing not only the preservation of cultural values but also the stability of social structures and identities.

3.2.2 Encompassing Elements

Societal security encompasses several key elements:

1. **Cultural Continuity:** The preservation of cultural values, traditions, and identity is a central component of societal security. This includes maintaining linguistic diversity, religious practices, and cultural heritage, which are essential for the societal cohesion and identity of a community (Buzan, 1991; McSweeney, 1999).
2. **Social Stability:** Societal security involves the stability of social structures and institutions. This includes ensuring that social institutions such as family units, educational systems, and legal frameworks remain intact and effective in the face of societal changes (Wæver, 1995).
3. **Identity Preservation:** The protection of national and group identities against external influences and internal disruptions is crucial for societal security. Identity preservation ensures that societal values and norms are maintained despite changes or threats (Wæver, 1995).

3.2.3 Threats to Societal Security

Societal security can be threatened by various factors:

1. **Globalization:** The forces of globalization can dilute local cultures and disrupt traditional social structures. The increased flow of information, goods, and people across borders can challenge existing societal norms and values, leading to concerns about the erosion of cultural identities and social stability (Giddens, 1999; Held et al., 1999).

2. **Political Instability:** Internal political instability and conflict can threaten societal security by undermining the effectiveness of social institutions and creating environments of uncertainty and division. Political crises can disrupt social cohesion and exacerbate existing social tensions (Kaldor, 2003).
3. **Economic Shifts:** Significant economic changes, such as recessions or major economic reforms, can impact societal security by affecting social stability and public welfare. Economic hardships can lead to social unrest and challenge the stability of societal structures (Stiglitz, 2002).
4. **Migration:** The interaction between migration and societal security is multifaceted and complex. While migration can bring economic benefits, cultural diversity, and community enrichment, it also poses challenges such as integration difficulties, social cohesion issues, and strain on public services, potentially leading to social fragmentation and tensions (Castles & Miller, 2009; Johnson & Smith, 2021). According to Huysmans (2000), migration threatens societal security by disrupting social order, challenging national identity, straining resources, and provoking political reactions. Moreover, Choucri (2002) emphasizes that the connection between migration and security is inherently subjective, contingent on who defines security and how it is defined. This subjectivity shapes the perception of risks associated with migration and the conditions under which societal security is deemed threatened. The perceived threat of immigration to societal security, therefore, is not an objective or universal risk but is heavily influenced by how a state perceives its identity (Weiner, 1992-1993). For instance, some states might view multiculturalism as a threat to traditional values, while others celebrate and embrace cultural diversity. Heisler and Layton-Henry (1993) observe that many European countries have shifted from homogeneous societies to diverse states, leading to concerns about the impact of immigration on national identity. In contrast, Canada's support for multiculturalism since 1971 highlights a different approach, viewing immigration as essential to growth, whereas Germany emphasizes assimilation over the preservation of diverse identities (Esses et al., 2006).

3.3 Far Right Parties: Terminology, History, Characteristics and Emergence

3.3.1 Terminology

Far-right parties are political organizations that advocate for ultranationalist, authoritarian, and often xenophobic ideologies. These parties typically emphasize the preservation of national identity, often at the expense of immigrants and minority groups, and oppose liberal democratic values like multiculturalism and immigration. Far-right parties may also promote strict law and order policies, a strong centralized government, and, in some cases, a return to traditional or conservative social norms.

Following World War II, far-right movements were largely marginalized, with neo-fascist and racist parties failing to gain electoral success, suggesting that far-right politics would not reemerge. However, in the final decades of the 20th century, the collapse of communism and rising migration fueled the resurgence of far-right populist parties, marking what is known as the third wave of the far right. This wave differed from earlier movements by distancing itself from overt racism. These parties and their supporters reject the "far-right" label, preferring terms like "patriot" or "nationalist" to avoid negative connotations (Mohammadi & Nourbakhsh, 2017).

The academic community lacks consensus on defining the far right, often debating whether it includes underground neo-Nazi groups. Buhr (2017) characterizes the "radical right" by two main features: exclusive national identity and anti-system sentiments. Various terms have been used to describe these parties, such as "challenger," "protest parties," and "populist xenophobic far right" (Hainsworth, 2008). Camus argues that the far right's anti-elite, anti-globalization, and Eurosceptic stances resemble those of the radical left. Betz also uses "far right," highlighting its anti-elitism, Euroscepticism, and patriotism. Other terms include extreme right, radical right, right-wing populist, and neo-populist parties (Mudde, 2007; Hainsworth, 2008). Mudde (2019) notes that these definitions are often imposed by outsiders, such as academics, anti-fascists, and journalists, rather than the far right itself. Moreover, he believes that far-right parties are either radical or extremist in their ideologies. Radicalism calls for fundamental reform of the political and economic systems without necessarily seeking the abolition of all democratic forms, whereas extremism is fundamentally opposed to democracy. In this research, the term "far right" is used to encompass all types of right-wing radical parties.

3.3.2 History of Far-Right Parties

After 1945, Western European countries experienced stable political systems, partly due to victory over fascism, economic growth, and low unemployment, which hindered the rise of far-right parties. However, by the late 20th century, the gap from the 1930s–1940s widened, and new far-right parties began gaining significant support (Hainsworth, 2008). Initially synonymous with neo-fascism, far-right parties, like Italy's MSI, remained marginal until the 1980s. By the mid-1990s, their influence grew, with parties like France's National Front securing around 10% of votes, and by the 21st century, these parties intensified efforts to join governments and retained their supporters (Goodwin, 2011; Kitching, 2011). Austria's FPÖ gained prominence in 1999, becoming

the first EU party with National Socialist ties to join a national coalition, despite protests from other EU states (Liebhart, 2020). The French National Front, rebranded as the National Rally in 2018, evolved from a minor party to a major political force, achieving significant electoral success, particularly in the 2017 presidential election, where Marine Le Pen secured 34% of votes (Nourbakhsh, 2019; Ray, 2018). In Italy, the Lega, formerly Northern League, became part of the government between 2018-2019 and led in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, with its leader Matteo Salvini taking a strong stance against immigration (Feldman & Tucker, 2020). The 2015 migrant crisis further boosted far-right support, particularly in Germany, where the AfD secured 12.6% of the vote in the 2017 election and performed strongly in the 2019 European Parliament elections (Foreign Affairs, 2019; Lilley, 2020).

3.3.3 Characteristics of Far-Right Parties:

The following provides a brief overview of some of the most prominent features of far-right parties:

- **Nativism:** Far-right parties often emphasize nativism, advocating for policies that prioritize the interests and rights of native-born citizens over immigrants (Mudde, 2007). This perspective includes a strong focus on preserving national identity and cultural heritage, frequently positioning immigrants as a threat to these values (Hainsworth, 2008).
- **Hostility to Immigrants:** A notable feature of far-right parties is their hostility toward immigrants. These parties frequently advocate for stricter immigration controls and often use anti-immigrant rhetoric to garner support, portraying immigrants as a burden on public resources and a threat to national security (Mudde, 2019; Wilson & Hainsworth, 2012).
- **Euroscepticism:** Far-right parties are typically Eurosceptic, criticizing the European Union and its policies. They argue that the EU undermines national sovereignty and cultural identity through policies like open borders and economic integration (Mudde, 2019; Bartlett et al., 2011).
- **Populism:** Populism is a central feature, with far-right parties presenting themselves as the voice of the "silent majority" against a corrupt elite. They often employ an "us versus them" narrative, claiming to represent the true will of the people against a perceived out-of-touch establishment (Rzayev, 2017; Betz, 2003).
- **Authoritarian Tendencies:** Some far-right parties exhibit authoritarian tendencies, opposing democratic norms and advocating for more centralized control. This can manifest in opposition to representative democracy and support for stronger executive powers (Ignazi, 2003; Hainsworth, 2008).
- **Nationalism and Ultra-Nationalism:** Ultra-nationalism is a hallmark of many far-right parties, which focus on national pride and identity, sometimes at the expense of human equality. This extreme nationalism often includes xenophobic and exclusionary policies targeting minorities and immigrants (Carter, 2005; Rydgren, 2007).
- **Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism:** Far-right parties frequently display Islamophobic and anti-Semitic attitudes. In Western Europe, this is often reflected in anti-Muslim rhetoric, while in Eastern Europe, anti-Semitism remains prevalent (Mudde, 2019; Zick et al., 2011).

These features collectively define the ideological and policy stances of far-right parties, shaping their political agendas and electoral strategies.

3.3.4 Immigration and the Rise of Far-Right Parties in Europe

The rise of far-right parties in Europe is driven by various factors, including globalization, political dissatisfaction, Islamophobia, and nativism, but immigration stands out as a key driver. Studies indicate that many Europeans view immigration as a significant challenge. For instance, Betz found that 71% of German voters see immigrants as a major issue, while in France, immigration ranks as the second most critical concern (Goodwin, 2011). Mudde argues that populist radical right parties often frame mass immigration as an existential threat, with extreme right groups even alleging a "white genocide" due to immigration and multiculturalism (Mudde, 2019).

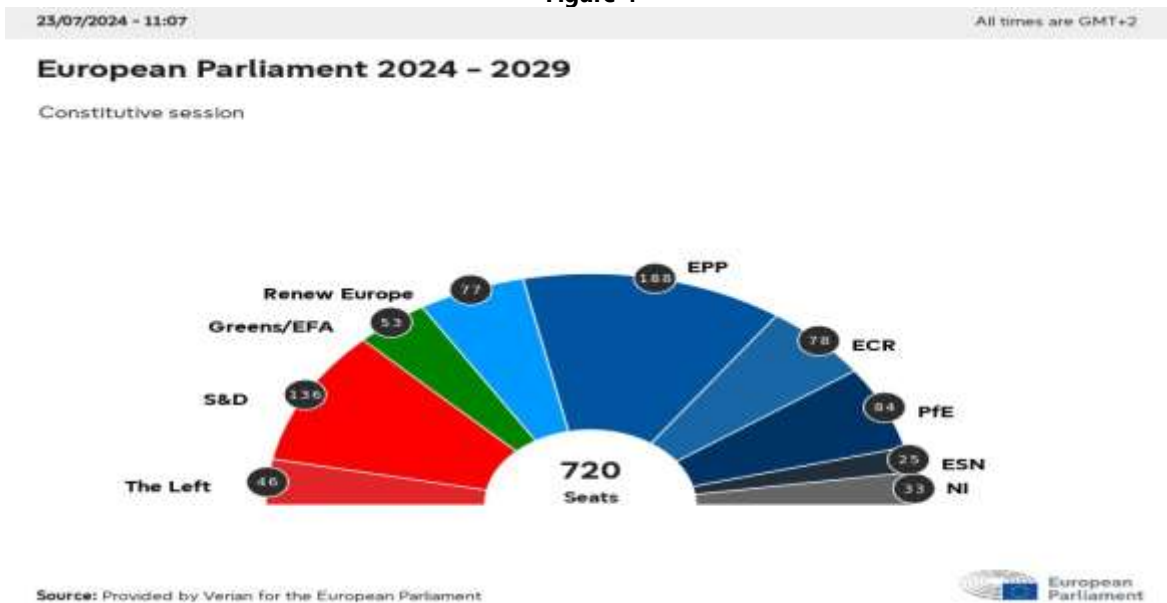
Far-right parties prominently feature immigration in their campaigns (Williams, 2006). Ignazi and Hainsworth both identify immigration as a primary factor in the success of far-right parties in France and beyond (Hainsworth, 2000). Additionally, concerns about immigration are frequently tied to security issues (Ivaldi, 2004). Surveys from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway show that far-right support is higher among those dissatisfied with current immigration policies and who perceive high immigration rates. Roumina et al. link migration from the Middle East to the rise of the far right and challenges to European integration (Roumina et al., 2020).

A September 2017 Ipsos study revealed that only 5% of Hungarians and 15% of Poles view immigration positively, with 67% of Hungarians and 51% of Poles advocating for closed borders to refugees (Krastev, 2018). The 2015 refugee crisis saw a dramatic increase in asylum applications, with over 700,000 in the first eight months of 2015 alone (Rzayev, 2017:33). Mudde notes that this crisis intensified nationalist and Eurosceptic sentiments in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in response to Germany's welcoming policy, leading to nativist backlash and stringent anti-immigration measures (Mudde, 2019). According to the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR, 2023), 62% of Europeans believe immigration has a negative impact on their countries,

reflecting widespread apprehension about the effects of both legal and illegal immigration. A 2022 Pew Research Center survey found that majorities in Italy, Hungary, and Poland view immigration as a threat to national identity and security.

In the 2024 European Parliament election, as illustrated in **Figure 4**, far-right parties made significant gains, reshaping the political landscape and elevating the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group to the fourth largest faction, surpassing the centrist Renew Europe group. The ECR Group, which includes Poland's Law and Justice Party (PiS), Italy's Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia), the Czech Republic's Dawn of Direct Democracy, Finland's Finns Party, Sweden's Sweden Democrats, and Austria's Freedom Party (FPÖ), is characterized by nationalist and conservative stances, strong anti-immigration policies, and skepticism towards further European integration. These parties emphasize national sovereignty and frequently critique the EU's influence. The ECR Group has experienced fluctuating success in recent European Parliament elections. In the 2014 elections, the ECR gained 70 seats. However, in the 2019 elections, their representation slightly decreased to 62 seats, reflecting shifts in the political landscape with the rise of other far-right and populist groups. By the 2024 elections, the ECR Group had regained momentum, increasing its seats to 78, indicating a resurgence in support for center-right and reformist parties across Europe (European Parliament, 2024).

Figure 4



Another far-right coalition, Patriots for Europe, which includes France's National Rally and Hungary's Fidesz, secured the third-largest representation in the European Parliament, with 84 seats. Furthermore, the newly established right-wing group, Europe of Sovereign Nations, emerged as the smallest recognized faction in the European Parliament with 25 seats, underscoring the growing fragmentation and rise of right-wing populism across Europe (DW, 2024; Politico, 2024).

As shown in the table below, the increasing influence of far-right parties in the European Parliament elections from 2014 to 2024 reflects the growing nationalist and populist sentiments across Europe. This trend has led to the consolidation of these parties into more structured and influential groups within the Parliament, which could have significant implications for EU policymaking, particularly in areas such as immigration, national sovereignty, and relations with external powers like Russia.

Far-Right Parties' Votes and Seats in European Parliament Elections (2014, 2019, 2024)

No#	Party	2014		2019		2024	
		Percentage of votes	Seat	Percentage of votes	Seat	Percentage of votes	Seat
1	National Front	25.0	24	23.34	22	31.37	30
2	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)	7.10	7	11.0	11	15.90	15
3	German National Democrat Party NDP	1.0	1	0.30	0		
4	Lega (formerly Northern League)	6.15	5	34.26	28	8.97	8
5	Party for Freedom (PVV)	13.32	4	3.53	0	16.97	6
6	Swiss People's Party (SVP)						
7	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	19.72	4	17.20	3	25.36	6

8	Danish People's Party	26.60	4	10.76	1	6.37	1
9	Golden Dawn	9.39	3	4.87	2		
10	Progress Party						
11	Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	14.67	3	6.34	1	0.99	0
12	National Attack Union (Ataka)	3.0	0	1.07	0	0	0
13	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	2.7	0				
14	Finns Party	12.90	2	13.80	2	7.60	1
15	Sweden Democrats SD	9.67	2	15.34	3	13.17	3
16	Flemish Interest	4.26	1	11.68	3	14.50	3
17	United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)	26.77	24	3.22	0	The United Kingdom officially exited the European Union on January 31, 2020	

Source: Author. Data were collected from the European Parliament website.

3.3.5 Strategies of Far-Right Parties: Framing Immigration as a Threat

Far-right parties in Europe employ several strategies to capitalize on immigration as a perceived threat to societal security. The following outlines these strategies:

1. Utilizing Media and Social Media

Far-right parties heavily use media and social media to spread sensationalized information about immigration, fueling public fear and gaining support. For instance, the Lega in Italy, under Matteo Salvini, has used social media platforms to share alarmist posts about immigrant-related issues, contributing to anti-immigrant sentiment (Lega, 2023). Similarly, the Finnish Finns Party has utilized social media to propagate anti-immigrant messages and rally support for stricter immigration policies (Perussuomalaiset, 2024).

2. Employing Populist Rhetoric

Far-right parties employ populist rhetoric to frame themselves as defenders of the "ordinary people" against an out-of-touch elite that supposedly supports liberal immigration policies. This strategy includes portraying immigration advocates as part of a corrupt establishment that ignores the will of the people. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) used this strategy extensively during the Brexit referendum, framing the EU's immigration policies as harmful to British interests and sovereignty (UKIP, 2016).

3. Exploiting Economic Concerns

Far-right parties also leverage economic concerns related to immigration. They argue that immigrants place a burden on public services and welfare systems, which could otherwise benefit native citizens. This economic argument is used to advocate for reduced immigration and more stringent welfare policies. For instance, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has argued that immigrants strain Austria's social welfare systems and contribute to economic instability. This narrative was prominently featured in their 2019 electoral campaign (FPÖ, 2019).

4. Emphasizing Cultural and National Identity Threats

Far-right parties often portray immigrants as a threat to national culture and identity, arguing that large-scale immigration undermines traditional values. For example, Italy's Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia) frequently argue that high levels of immigration dilute Italian culture and traditions (Meloni, 2023). Similarly, the Swedish Democrats have positioned immigration as a threat to Swedish cultural norms and societal cohesion (Sverigedemokraterna, 2024).

5. Portraying Immigration as a Security Threat

Far-right parties frequently depict immigration as a major security risk, arguing that it leads to increased crime and instability. This narrative is used to justify stricter immigration controls and enhanced surveillance measures. For instance, the French National Rally (formerly National Front), led by Marine Le Pen, frequently emphasizes the link between immigration and crime. They argue that rising crime rates and terrorism are directly connected to the influx of immigrants, particularly from Muslim-majority countries (Le Pen, 2023). Similarly, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany has emphasized alleged links between immigration and crime in their election campaigns (AfD, 2023).

These strategies have proven effective in many European countries, allowing far-right parties to gain significant electoral support by presenting themselves as the only political force capable of addressing the so-called immigration crisis.

3.3.6 The Socio-Political Impact of Far-Right Parties' Ascendancy in Europe

The rise of far-right parties in Europe threatens the EU's socio-political achievements across various areas, including peace, democracy, social policy, freedom of movement, cohesion, human rights, foreign policy, enlargement, environmental issues, and judicial cooperation.

In terms of peace and stability, the far-right's nationalist rhetoric and Eurosceptic stance challenge the foundational principle of European integration, which has contributed to over seven decades of peace on the continent. By prioritizing national sovereignty over collective decision-making, far-right parties risk reigniting historical tensions between member states and undermining the cooperative framework that has maintained stability. For instance, the insistence on prioritizing national interests over EU policies by parties like Hungary's Fidesz or Italy's Lega has already led to conflicts within the EU, potentially eroding the diplomatic channels essential for maintaining peace (Bickerton & Invernizzi, 2024).

Similarly, democracy and the rule of law are at risk. Far-right parties often challenge the EU's emphasis on these principles, leading to democratic backsliding in countries where they hold power. The erosion of judicial independence and the weakening of checks and balances in Poland under the Law and Justice Party (PiS) exemplify how far-right governance can undermine democratic institutions (Wojcik, 2024). This trend not only affects the domestic political landscape but also weakens the EU's ability to enforce its core values across member states, potentially leading to a fragmented union with divergent standards of governance.

Social policy advancements, particularly those aimed at fostering inclusivity and equality, are similarly vulnerable. Far-right parties often oppose policies that promote social inclusion, particularly those benefiting immigrants and minority groups. This opposition can lead to the rollback of progressive social policies integral to the EU's social model. For example, the Swedish Democrats' influence has already led to a more restrictive approach to immigration and social welfare policies, potentially undermining the EU's broader goals of social cohesion and equality (Ohlsson, 2024). The principle of freedom of movement, one of the EU's most tangible achievements, is also under threat. Far-right parties frequently campaign against open borders, advocating for stricter immigration controls and even the reintroduction of national borders within the Schengen Area. The impact of such policies could be profound, potentially reversing decades of integration and limiting opportunities for European citizens to live, work, and study across the continent (Di Cesare, 2024).

Cohesion policy and regional development, aimed at reducing disparities between EU regions, may be weakened by the far-right's focus on national rather than EU-wide interests. This could lead to reduced funding and support for less developed regions, particularly in Eastern Europe, where EU cohesion funds have been critical in driving economic growth and development (Lynch, 2024). Human rights and anti-discrimination efforts are also at risk. Far-right parties often adopt rhetoric hostile to minority groups, including immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and religious minorities. This can lead to the normalization of discrimination and the weakening of legal protections that the EU has worked hard to establish. The Polish government's stance on LGBTQ+ rights, which has drawn criticism from the EU, highlights how far-right influence can undermine human rights within member states (Wojcik, 2024).

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) could be weakened as far-right parties often favor isolationist and nationalist approaches, undermining the EU's collective diplomatic and security efforts. This shift could reduce the EU's global influence and responsiveness to crises, as seen in varied responses to Russia's aggression in Ukraine (Bickerton & Invernizzi, 2024). Additionally, far-right opposition to EU enlargement, especially regarding countries with significant Muslim populations, might stall efforts to integrate the Western Balkans and other regions (Ohlsson, 2024).

Finally, judicial cooperation, a cornerstone of the EU's internal security and legal framework, could be undermined by far-right governments resisting the harmonization of legal standards and the enforcement of EU laws within their borders. This could weaken the EU's ability to combat cross-border crime and ensure the uniform application of justice across the Union (Wojcik, 2024).

Overall, the rise to power of far-right parties in Europe presents a significant challenge to the EU's socio-political achievements, threatening to reverse decades of progress in key areas that have shaped the Union's identity and influence both within Europe and globally.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research findings indicate that the period from 2014 to 2024 has witnessed a significant transformation in Europe's political and societal landscape, driven predominantly by the rise of far-right parties and their strategic emphasis on immigration. The substantial influx of migrants, notably during the 2015 refugee crisis, has been utilized by these parties to frame immigration as an existential threat to national identity, societal security, and cultural cohesion. By exploiting public anxieties and

uncertainties surrounding immigration, far-right parties have effectively employed securitization strategies to position themselves as the protectors of national interests against perceived threats.

The securitization theory, as articulated by the Copenhagen School, offers a valuable framework for understanding how far-right parties have redefined immigration as a central issue of national security, thereby justifying more stringent immigration policies and exclusionary measures. This redefinition has enabled these parties to garner substantial electoral support across Europe, disrupting traditional political structures and altering the political discourse.

The socio-political ramifications of this far-right surge are profound and multifaceted. It represents a direct challenge to the core principles of the European Union, including integration, democracy, and human rights. The rise of far-right nationalism threatens to unravel decades of progress in fostering peace, stability, and cooperation within the EU. Democratic institutions and the rule of law face significant risks, as evidenced by instances of democratic backsliding in certain member states. Social policies designed to promote inclusivity and cohesion are increasingly under threat, and the principle of freedom of movement is being contested.

Additionally, the far-right's growing influence risks undermining the EU's cohesion policy, reducing support for less developed regions, and compromising collective efforts to uphold human rights. The EU's foreign policy may be jeopardized by a shift towards isolationism and skepticism, and the process of EU enlargement could face obstacles due to far-right opposition. Environmental policies might also suffer as economic growth is prioritized over sustainability under far-right governance. Lastly, judicial cooperation within the EU could be significantly weakened, impairing the union's capacity to address cross-border challenges effectively.

Overall, the ascendancy of far-right parties in Europe over the past decade signifies a major shift in the political landscape with extensive implications for societal security, European integration, and the future stability of the European Union. The ability of the EU and its member states to effectively address these challenges will be crucial for preserving the resilience and cohesion of European societies in the future.

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