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*Far Right, Left Out: European Far-Right Parties and the Implications for Refugees*

by  
Michelle Miller

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion  
of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies  
Croft Institute for International Studies  
Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College  
University of Mississippi

Oxford  
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*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2, NIV)*

*Abstract*

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

If you do not recognize the name Alan Kurdi, you will surely recognize his picture. Alan Kurdi became the face of the global refugee crisis when an image of the Syrian three-year-old's lifeless body floating onto the beaches of Greece went viral worldwide. TIME named the famous photo of Alan to their book of the *100 Most Influential Images of All Time* for its international significance (Walsh 2015). The picture of Alan Kurdi gave a big jolt to the public of the gravity of the refugee crisis, and overnight the picture converted into the literal illustration of asylum-seekers landing on the doorsteps of Europe. The image of Alan Kurdi face-down in the sand demanded a humanitarian and emotional reaction, but other voices in Europe have been growing in force that would not agree to such a benevolent response. There are differences of opinion on accepting refugees on both sides of the entire political spectrum, but very few voices from Europe's far right are in favor of accepting refugees.

This thesis attempts to find the effects of the far right on this refugee issue, but prior to analyzing any relationship, I want to establish the significance of the far-right party family. The following chapter gives a more detailed description, but briefly, the far-right family defines a wide spectrum of political parties unified by their strong nationalistic values, generally populist rhetoric, and fiercely anti-immigrant stance. These far-right parties find the most common ground in their common enemies—the foreigner, the European Union, or simply globalization—as causing losses of national identity. The latest wave of the far right started gradually in the 1980s, and since has become the fastest growing party family in Europe (Golder 2016, 478). The electoral success of the far right is both dramatic and unprecedented, and has presented

significant challenges to mainstream politics. These political parties are not simply in a handful of countries, but are making electoral gains throughout much of the European region and in key leading countries. In Austria, Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party campaigned for a zero-refugee policy and lost in the presidential election by a less than a percentage point in May 2016 (“Austrian”; Kimball). In Germany, the newly formed Alternative for Germany calls for a ban on mosques and in 2013 received the best electoral result for any party competing for the first time since 1953 (Arzheimer 536). In France, the National Front softened some of their harsher racist rhetoric and won 27% of the national vote in December 2015, and continues to garner support for the upcoming presidential election (“Europe’s” 2016).

Beyond their notable electoral gains, far-right parties prove interesting for mainstreaming anti-immigrant and anti-foreigner sentiments, which I argue influence collective responses to refugees. Their distinct inclination to blame foreigners and immigrants for the problems each country is facing is one of the binding characteristics of the far right. This inclination of ‘othering’ in political language can have immense consequences, not only on national policy but also on individual attitudes and experiences. While Europe faces the largest refugee crisis to hit the continent since World War II, the far-right movement could have an impact on the likelihood of refugees achieving asylum (UNHCR 2016). Historically, European countries have been instrumental in establishing the refugee system in place today through the United Nations, but currently, Europe may embody a different voice, being steered by the far right. The far-right parties provide an important critique to the forces of globalization that are changing the face of Europe. With this salient issue, I am especially interested in studying the impact that these parties have on one of their chief targets – the asylum-seeker.

Refugees and the asylum process are another interesting and multifaceted topic, but the far right produces a clear conflict to their acceptance. International refugee law became a global norm after the unparalleled numbers of refugees from World War II forever shaped the European continent. Since then, responses to refugees has been far from firmly established, especially with constant changes in migrant flows. Asylum policy is a complicated matter and can be quite costly – financially, politically and culturally. Although the ideology and norm behind asylum has been generally agreed on by the West, controversy comes in the details, especially the practical implementation of generosity and morality. If asylum policy is “the result of tug-of-war between international norms and morality loosening asylum on the one hand and national interests tightening it on the other,” then far-right parties may prove to be a difficult test for asylum (Steiner 2000, 13). The far right is especially interested in the national interests end of the asylum debate. It emphasizes the importance of putting native citizens and their interests first. This is particularly true as Europe is still recovering from the economic crisis of 2008, which may lend further substantial popular support to the right-wing parties. Political factors have always played a decisive role in immigrant and refugee matters, but Europe’s mounting far-right party family constitutes one of the most intense sources of opposition to refugees in recent history. While the global refugee crisis has played a large role in the growing public awareness of the asylum problem, the radical hostility to refugees on the part of the far right has raised the debate to a critical stage.

This study examines the relationship between the popularity of far-right parties and the impact on the asylum-granter on the one hand and the asylum-seeker on the other hand. Within this rationale, my first question asks if there exists an empirical relationship between the electoral support of the far right and the acceptance of asylum requests in Europe. My second

question then takes this another step further, by asking how asylum-seekers may choose their country of destination depending on the strength of far-right sentiment in the various European states. Both the far right and the asylum regime are complex issues hitting the heart of Europe, with many dynamics at work, from the ethnocentric multiculturalism dichotomy to the role of supranational organizations. I hope to detail the implications for refugees, when a political party targets keeping those very people out of the country. Starting in Chapter Two, I begin my analysis with a discussion of far-right parties, their distinctive political qualities, and the method I use to classify the far-right parties in the data. This chapter is intended to give a clear definition of the traits of far-right parties and a sample of the many observations made surrounding this party family. In Chapter Three, I give synopses of other relevant published literature on far-right parties, asylum recognition rates, and asylum distribution and choice. This section shows previous research linking political parties, often specifically the far right, to the asylum system. Chapter Four provides the theoretical framework for my two general hypotheses of the interaction between far-right parties and asylum, often citing literature as further support. Chapter Five explains the methodology and research design, with emphasis in the limitations of the variables. Chapter Six is focused on the data, both descriptive and regression statistics, with analysis of the empirical findings. Lastly, Chapter Seven concludes with the broader themes and implications from this research.

## Chapter Two: Defining the Far Right

Scholarly literature focused on right-wing populism in Europe is abundant and rapidly growing, although consensus is lacking in many areas. Defining the far-right party family appears to be a complicated task for scholars. Cas Mudde, a widely cited scholar of Europe's radical right, analyzed 26 definitions of right-wing extremism derived from the literature and found that only five features are mentioned by at least half of the authors: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and the strong state (2000: 11). In his more recent published work, Mudde defines the extreme right party characteristics as nativist, authoritarian and populist, labeling the key ideological feature as nativism—the combination of nationalism and xenophobia (2007: 22). According to Anton Pelinka in Ruth Wodak's *Right-Wing Populism in Europe*,

any kind of populism directed against an ethnically and/or nationally and/or religiously defined 'other' can be seen as 'right-wing' Left-wing populism does exist. But by definition it is not ethically exclusive. Political parties with an agenda aiming primarily at the exclusion of or discrimination against societies or different social groups follow a narrow ethno-nationalistic and potentially racist agenda claiming to speak on behalf of 'the people' – but the people they are speaking for are defined by the exclusion of others(7).

This nativism—the combination of nationalism and xenophobia—that Mudde discusses is clearly embodied in Pelinka's explanation of right-wing populism, which excludes outsiders by definition. Through these definitions, the language of exclusion is a defining rhetorical strategy of the far-right movement, and this also explains the label of right-wing while many maintain centrist economic platforms.

Another distinguishing feature of the radical right is in their fundamentally different way of competing for votes. Traditionally, parties moderate their position to appeal to the average

voter, while the radical right find their competitiveness in votes by holding their extreme positions. Tjitske Akkerman hypothesized that this notion will not hold once radical parties enter national office and be pressured to tone down their radicalness to form government coalitions. He found that this was not the case, as some far-right parties did indeed moderate policy positions while others further radicalized (1144-50). This furthers my claim that the nature of radical right parties has especially strong influence on national immigrant policy positions.

Meanwhile, the driving forces of such a dramatic political surge are commonly linked to the recent economic difficulties in Europe. Yet Daphne Halikiopoulou found far-right support “was limited among the countries most severely affected by the economic crisis” which indicates that far more than frustrations with unemployment are involved (288). Elisabeth Ivarsflaten examined grievances named by the far right to find what brought electoral success for the populist-right in Europe. She looked at whether the success was constructed around economic changes, political elitism and corruption, or immigration, and found that only the appeal to the immigration issue united all successful populist right parties (3). Although all three appeals are commonly used, right-wing populist parties could still find success in elections without appealing to economic or political woes, while all electorally successful parties appealed to the immigration issue. This conclusion was also found in Geertje Lucassen’s study, namely, that across 11 European countries, cultural threats of other ethnicities are a much stronger predictor of far-right preference than economic threats of other ethnicities (570). In other words, the stronger link of voters to the far right is the threat posed by other cultures, not the threat of a loss of jobs. This link to cultural threats is especially important in regards to asylum-seekers, as many come from regions quite culturally different than other types of immigrants. For example,

temporary migrant workers, which are often from other European Union member states, are likely to have less cultural and ethnic differences than their asylum-seeking equivalents.

Some aspects of right-wing populist rhetoric also can work against the party from receiving significant votes, as labels of xenophobia and racism commonly associated with the far-right party family also dissuade many voters, even if they have elements of those feelings. Although surveys reveal high levels of anti-immigrant attitudes across Europe, that does not necessarily mean that people who hold anti-immigrant views will vote for the far-right party. Scott Blinder demonstrates that “many majority-group individuals have internalized a motivation to control prejudiced thoughts and actions and that this motivation influences their political behavior in a predictable way [... and] strive to act in accordance with the ‘better angels of their natures’” (841). So, the harsher rhetoric embodied by right-wing populists may play into many citizens’ established fears, but also causes a response to either not vote for the far right or not publicly support the far right.

Many scholars have also noted that the sway of the far right reaches beyond their electoral gains. Daphne Halikiopoulou argues that far-right parties have redefined the immigration debate by presenting the narrative that the European Union violates the values of the nation-state by allowing foreigners into their country (285). With hopes of gaining back voters, some mainstream parties have responded to the success of the far right by adopting stricter immigration policies (Neumayer 166). And that is why Halikiopoulou believes that “one of the most significant implications ... is these parties’ potential indirect impact—that is, their ability to shift debate and change the political agenda” (288). In other words, far-right parties can still have significant effects on immigration policy – such as asylum – without directly possessing that power themselves, nor the expected increased electoral votes for the far right. This “potential

indirect impact” means that the percentage of far-right electoral votes does not necessarily correlate to increased rejection of asylum-seekers, as mainstream parties may employ such stricter policies on their own.

Using the previously established definitions of the far right as well as recognizing some distinctive features, this study must draw a line between which parties are far-right and which do not fall under this umbrella. To determine which far-right parties to include in my study, I used a combination of data from manifesto studies, expert surveys, and only when necessary, academic literature. Initially, I used the 2014 version of the European Election Studies: Manifesto Study Data. The European Election Studies look at manifestos for each party participating in the 2014 European Parliament election. I chose three variables to measure “far right” all scaled from 1-10: left to right, multiculturalism to ethnocentrism, and fully in favor to fully opposed to immigration. To be included as “far right”, I decided that a party had to score 8 or above in at least two of the three variables. A few parties I included in my data were not in the European Election Studies. Since the survey occurred in 2014, some parties were no longer active that were in prior elections, or had joined a coalition. Also, Switzerland and Norway were not included in the European Election Studies since they are non-EU members. In nearly all those specific instances, I used the party data from Marcel Lubbers and Pippa Norris, who both use expert ratings, using a combination of left-right wing score and immigration restriction scores, on 0-10 scales. The only parties that were used without one of these ratings - EES, Lubbers, or Norris - are Hungary’s Jobbik and Slovakia’s People's Party Our Slovakia, but after careful analysis of their parties, both still fall under this definition of far-right (Pirro; Hlavac).

**Table 2.1** List of Far-Right Parties

Country	Initials	Party Name (English)
Austria	FPO	Freedom Party of Austria
Belgium	VB	Flemish Block/Interest**
Bulgaria	Ataka	Attack
Cyprus	ELAM	National Popular Front*
Czech Republic	DSSS	Workers' Party of Social Justice*
Denmark	DF	Danish Peoples Party
Finland	SP-P (PS)	Finnish Party -- True Finns
France	FN	National Front
Germany	AfD	Alternative for Germany
Germany	NPD	National Democratic Party
Greece	LS-CA	Peoples Association -- Golden Dawn
Greece	LAOS	Popular Orthodox Rally
Greece	AE	Independent Greeks
Hungary	Jobbik	Movement for a Better Hungary**
Hungary	MIEP	Hungarian Justice and Life Party*
Italy	LN	North League
Latvia	NA/TB/LNNK	National Alliance / For Fatherland and Freedom
Netherlands	PVV	Party for Freedom
Norway	Fr	Progress Party***
Poland	Pis	Law and Justice
Romania	PRM	Greater Romania Party*
Slovakia	LsNS	People's Party Our Slovakia*
Slovakia	SNS	Slovakia National Party
Slovenia	SDS	Slovenian Democratic Party
Sweden	SD	Sweden Democrats
Switzerland	FPS	Freedom Party of Switzerland***
Switzerland	NA SD	Swiss Democrats***
Switzerland	SVP	Swiss People's Party***
United Kingdom	BNP	British National Party
United Kingdom	UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party

Notes: \* party was not measured by EES, \*\* party measured by EES, only met 1 variable min, \*\*\* not measured by EES, party falls outside of EU

## Chapter Three: Literature Review

Research connecting the surge in far-right politics to refugee policy is available, but with mixed results. Although discourse on the connection is common, empirical studies are somewhat scarcer and less conclusive. Nonetheless, significant research is available for certain key aspects of this study. Prior to reviewing those aspects, another relationship between far-right party popularity and refugee admissions could be argued as the reverse to my question. Could higher numbers of asylum-seekers or refugees *cause* increased votes for the far right? This question tends more to the driving forces of far-right parties, which lies outside my research intentions. Regardless, Pippa Norris analysis of such a theory presents that national support for a radical right party is unrelated to any indicators of ethnic diversity (172). He included variables such as the number of refugees, number of asylum-seekers, and estimates of foreign-born residents, and none were statistically significant in correlation to the percentage of radical right vote. The popularity of the far right is therefore more nuanced than the absolute number of refugees or foreign-born residents, but this thesis hopes to analyze the implications of the success of the far right rather than the causal factors.

### 3.1 Far-Right Party and Asylum Policy

In an analysis of immigrant and integration policy output based on the parties in government, Akkerman discovered that the parties in power have a significant effect on policy output. However, center-right parties had far more success in implementing restrictive immigration policies, while radical right parties had much less direct impact. Akkerman argues

this occurs because the ideological differences between center-right parties and radical right has diminished since the 1990s, as well as due to the organizational weakness of radical right parties in office (2012: 523). This conclusion contrasts with the link between electoral far right success and more restrictive asylum policy. Martin Schain counters this claim with the conclusion that electoral breakthroughs of the extreme right are responded to by established parties with supplanting some of extreme right's agenda into their own, thereby influencing policy more indirectly (287). This indirect policy influence is quite difficult to measure for the purposes of this thesis, but remains an important factor in my argument.

On indicators of migrant integration policy across 28 EU countries, Inken Koenemund found having the far-right party in parliament led to more restrictive integration policies, and was the only statistically significant relationship between the ideological position of a party and the openness of integration policy (50). Although Koenemund examines migrant integration policy and not asylum policy, this finding is similar to the theory behind my initial question relating to asylum policy. This may also prove for additional conclusions to the acceptance, integration, and adjustment experiences of refugees once accepted to a country, which lie outside the scope of this paper.

### 3.2 Asylum Recognition Rates

In a study of US asylum admissions, Idean Salehyan found that foreign policy goals, the media attention, and domestic demands influence asylum decisions - in both positive and negative directions. In terms of foreign policy, the US acceptance of certain countries depended on the state of foreign relations with that country. The media and popular pressures presence sometimes emphasized the humanitarian aspect of asylum applications, while other times the

popular attitudes and media emphasized enforcement, and the recognition rates reflected the different emphasis. Furthermore, the left–right partisanship dimension of the Congress had an effect on recognition rates.

Contrasting with US asylum rates, Daan Bronkhorst’s analysis of recognition rates in the Netherlands revealed that the admitted number of asylum seekers was very stable, despite drastically rising numbers of applications. He concludes that, “not determination of the asylum seekers’ background, but the bureaucracy of planning seems to have been the major factor in the granting of asylum” (155). However, it should be noted that both this study and Salehyan’s are based on the rates of a single country, which cannot be simply generalized as recognition rates patterns for all of Europe. The next three studies provide research on regional-level analysis.

Nazli Avdan researched European asylum recognition rates in response to terrorism, domestically and internationally. The data showed overwhelmingly that terrorist attacks on domestic soil had very negative impacts on asylum recognition rates (464). This further displays the role of domestic security and perceived safety as very impactful on the generosity of host countries, which theoretically means recognition rates are susceptible to outside forces, beyond the merits of individual cases.

Citing the vast differences in recognition rates, Eric Neumayer conducted empirical analysis on Western European asylum recognition, even differentiating between the different levels of asylum status. He found no relationship from either level of asylum status (full or partial) and the electoral success of right-wing populist parties. Dimiter Toshkov’s analysis of asylum applications and recognition rates follows many of the same theoretical frameworks and research designs as this thesis. Toshkov includes all 27 EU countries (as of 2011) plus Norway and Switzerland, and analyzed data annually both within country and between countries, from

1987 to 2010. Toshkov uses advanced statistical techniques, but found major limitations when using asylum recognition rates since even statistically significant effects are practically very small. He found no evidence that government positions on immigration influenced the government's recognition rates for asylum-seekers. (210). He argues that asylum policy and recognition rates seem to be “much more insulated from current political and economic context than suggested by political rhetoric and received wisdom” (194).

The initial conclusions of this research reveal the complicated picture behind my theory. In the case of the United States, influences from media coverage, popular demand and political parties have statistical effects on asylum recognition, which supports my hypothesis. In the Netherlands, asylum recognition appears to be planned by the government, rather than based on individual asylum cases, providing more basis to my argument. Across European countries, terrorist attacks have a clear negative impact on asylum recognition, giving evidence to my argument that asylum recognition is greatly influence by national interests. However, far right party popularity did not reveal an established impact on asylum recognition in Europe by either Toshkov or Neumayer, which stands in contrast to my hypothesis. Nonetheless, my data expands upon their analysis by including the most recent surge of far-right parties and asylum requests.

### 3.3 Perspective of Refugees

Forced migration research approaches the factors influencing asylum-seekers with a mixed set of results. Researchers disagree over the amount of knowledge and power that asylum-seekers possess in making these decision, as well as the effect of asylum policy on asylum-seekers.

According to Will Jones, refugees “prioritize reaching the location where they feel they are most likely to be protected” (8). This claim is furthered by current examples of refugees fleeing crisis in Syria, Africa, and more who refuse to request asylum in less preferred countries of Europe (Stavropoulou 8). Christiane Berthiaum contends that in the “tight little world of asylum-seekers, word of mouth functions very well.” He then cites an example where in 1992-1994, Europe faced a dramatic increase in demand for asylum requests so nearly all nations implemented stricter asylum policy, but the Netherlands did not implement similar policy and received increased requests from those being refused elsewhere, eventually enacting new asylum legislation in 1995.

Meanwhile, Lucy Mayblin contends that the “pull factor thesis” – the idea that certain countries encourage more asylum-seekers through generous policy – is an imaginary constructed by the West, an overly simplified version of the forced migration regime, and lacking in empirical evidence (825). An extensive study on a sample of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom revealed that narrative through interviews. Only a third described actively choosing the United Kingdom for seeking asylum, while others ended up there by chance, circumstance or the recommendations of other agents in the network of forced migration. The asylum policies in the United Kingdom had no effect on their decision, nor did any of the asylum seekers have any detailed understanding about the asylum system prior to arrival (Crawley 18). The study acknowledged that agents and smugglers may be more knowledgeable of asylum policies and act accordingly, and thus asylum policy could influence asylum seekers’ destinations without individuals being informed.

Koenemund found that EU countries with more open migrant integration policies had higher numbers of asylum applications (38). This correlation represents an aspect of asylum

benefit that is not included directly in my data analysis, but remains an important factor to consider. The positive draw of open integration policy as measured by social and economic factors reveals another possible element of a “pull factor” but that may not be as initially obvious to measure as restrictiveness to granting residence to migrants, but has correlation nonetheless. As mentioned earlier, Koenemun also had found far-right parties were linked to less open integration policies. If parliaments with far-right parties are linked to less open integration policies, and countries with more open migrant policies had higher numbers of asylum applications, then logically parliaments with far-right parties should have lower number of asylum applications.

One study specifically included right-wing populism on a countries’ share of asylum seekers. After testing a long list of possible variables on asylum destinations, Neumayer found that “a higher voting share for right-wing populist parties is associated with a lower share of asylum seekers” (174). Previously existing asylum communities showed the strongest positive correlation in his study, followed next by the negative correlation with right-wing populist votes. This conclusion falls in line with my question and hypothesis, but is limited to Western Europe and from the years 1982 to 1999. Regardless, this study provides a substantive argument for continuing the question to encompass today’s Europe.

This thesis adds to the existing research in a few distinctive ways. First, my thesis looks at the period from 1999 to 2015. The scholarship I have analyzed above has not studied this period, nor has it looked at the interplay of the refugee crisis with the rise of far-right parties since 2011. Second, this thesis includes all European Union member countries as well as Norway and Switzerland, whereas much of the previous research has been case studies of individual countries, cross comparisons of two or three countries, and a few studies at regional levels, rarely

including anything beyond Western Europe. Hence, this data is more comprehensive of Western, Central and even some Eastern European dynamics in both far-right parties and asylum protections.

## **Chapter Four: Theory**

### 4.1 The far right and asylum generosity

What are some of the possible consequences for asylum seekers of the growing influence of far-right parties across Europe? As previously established in Chapter Two, far-right parties in Europe demonstrate distinctive elements of xenophobia, ethnic nationalism, exclusive discourse, and often, but not always, populism. All electorally successful far-right parties are unified by their strong opposition to immigration (Ivarsflaten). Abundant literature on far-right parties reveal the powerful political impact—both directly and indirectly—of these parties.

Directly, European far-right parties have been gaining significant electoral support in the most recent decades, often entering domestic and European parliaments for the first time. Electoral success and therefore parliamentary seats should allow them much greater access and ability to implement their preferred policy – stricter immigration. Although their electoral growth as a party family is substantial, it should be noted that their electoral success is still limited relative to mainstream parties and should not be overstated to the effect that they appear to reach majority status in most countries (Mudde 2013). Regardless, parliamentary seats allow far-right parties a voice in policy-making decisions, or at minimum a presence. This position would likely translate as stricter immigration policies, and as a crucial component of European migration, therefore could be measured by stricter asylum admissions.

Although their electoral figures often do not put them in first place, electorally relevant far-right parties also have shown to indirectly influence their respective countries in differing ways than mainstream parties. As radical and extreme parties mostly distinguished by a single-

issue (immigration), far-right parties, drawing salience to the issue of immigration, can indirectly require mainstream parties to respond to their public demands. Not only do far-right parties draw attention to the issue of immigration, but Schain argued that “in virtually every case where there has been an electoral breakthrough of the extreme-right, established parties have reacted by co-opting some aspects of their program in an attempt to undermine their support” (286) Contrary to my argument in the previous paragraph, he continues that “the parties of the extreme-right have been far more successful in indirectly influencing the political agenda than in gaining direct participation in policy-making” (287). So perhaps a better measure of the influence of the far right is not in their direct policy making, but rather the influence they yield on drawing immigration to the forefront of the political agenda. In response to the electoral success of far-right parties, mainstream parties on both sides of the political spectrum may react to order to appeal to those far-right party voters by adjusting their own political agendas, thus displaying the ‘contagion effect’ of anti-immigrant parties (van Spanje 564). Furthermore, coalitions formed between far-right parties and mainstream right-wing or center-right parties allow even more access to policy influence than their electoral votes would normally yield. Through the distinctive nature of the far-right party as radical or extreme, far-right parties can influence immigration policy and the debate surrounding the issue at points far beyond their parliamentary seats.

Even more subtle and harder to measure, far-right parties’ rhetoric about immigration influences media, public attitudes, and perceptions. Specifically, in regards to refugees and asylum-seekers, the terminology used for these people groups shapes public perceptions – both positively and negatively. These descriptors are intentionally and strategically utilized by not only the far right, but most political parties to create specific connotations. Far-right parties

simply provide distinct examples of the choice words used to describe refugees to emphasize more negative connotations. In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, campaign slogans are analyzed in Sweden, Austria and Denmark as examples to show the emphasis on discursive language in the creation of imagined communities and the distance of the perceived ‘other’ by radical right-wing populist parties. Kristina Boréus specifically defined the negative perception of “other” by defining discursive discrimination as “unfavorable treatment through the use of language; it is discrimination manifested in discourse” (294). She shows that word choice surrounding people of foreign descent differs across and within countries, citing the level of ethnic nationalism in a culture as one of the driving variables. In Danish and Austrian radical right-wing parties, campaign slogans used harsher descriptor words of ‘immigrants’ or ‘foreigners’ (more akin to the term ‘aliens’) than their respective mainstream parties used, or even the Swedish extreme right party. Additionally, attention is brought to the sorting criteria language used by authorities for refugees - as asylum-seeker, immigrant, and economic migrant – which generally produce subsequently decreasing levels of empathy. The legal rights as well as perceptions of refugees are significantly different than that of asylum-applicants and economic migrants, and thus can create consequences of discursive discrimination across political, social, and cultural contexts as well.

Ruud Koopman also analyzed the role of discursive language in media to influence radical right violence in Germany in the 1990s. Koopman reveals that shifts across targeted groups of radical right were “systematically related to the differential discursive opportunities open to the radical right” (219). He shows clearly that radical right violence surged against asylum-seekers that were designated in public discourse as ethnically distinct and when asylum was a salient issue. Additionally, the refugees who were considered “Aussiedler” experienced

very little attacks from radical right violence, even though they were economically more competitive, because they were broadly considered to have ethnic Germany identity and therefore their presence was not controversial (221). From these arguments and Koopman's empirical proof, it is clear that far-right parties can have real sway on public opinion by varying the discourse surrounding immigration, and particularly in regards to refugees, and therefore affect both individual's attitudes and actions.

In summary, electorally successful far-right parties have impacts on asylum migration through direct policy-making, indirect political agenda setting, and discursive elements, especially portrayed in the media and campaigns. But how much can those influences truly affect asylum-seekers? Although immigration is a highly controversial issue in every country, refugees and asylum-seekers are a separate and specially defined category of immigration. Refugees have official legal rights (ideally) recognized in every country included in this analysis and all countries as state members of supranational bodies (such as UN and EU) committed to standardizing those rights. Asylum is a well-established international norm through refugee law, but asylum still relies on moral authority and the principle of burden sharing, which are both weak and easily fluctuate. Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) has limited ability to force states to adhere to their international legal obligations, lacks power to oversee state compliance, and does not have any ability to formally sanction states that do not adhere to international refugee law (Betts 94). The UNHCR Office discusses some of the significant and continuing political hurdles that go against asylum, especially the principles of burden sharing and moral authority. The Office continues that so long as we are "in an era in which states are concerned about terrorism and border security and states facing growing economic constraints on their willingness to provide resources and rights to non-

citizens, asylum will remain under threat” (Betts 95). Therefore, since states can adhere to refugee law according to their own interests, asylum is likely highly vulnerable to other forces, such as the politics of states, with noticeable disparities in burden sharing as well as a lack of enforcement mechanisms and disciplinary actions for failure to adhere to asylum norms.

Preferably, at least for refugees, the asylum outcomes would be entirely founded on the humanitarian merits of individual cases, but as other scholars and clear empirical variation show, asylum recognition rates in Europe are highly arbitrary (Bronkhorst 151). Even when controlling for origin countries or the condition of the country of origin, recognition rates are still highly varied (Neumayer 2005). Recent events have brought the refugee crisis to the forefront of numerous national debates, and far-right parties have in large numbers protested the acceptance of refugees into their respective countries, such as Austria’s FPÖ ‘Keep them out’ demand (Wodak). Since asylum recognition rates are so varied, states are not held to binding obligations, asylum determinations come from biased actors, asylum norms are subjected to the state’s moral authority, I argue that asylum outcomes would be susceptible to the voice of the far-right, whether by direct or indirect power. To measure this cumulative effect, my theory follows the rationale that a growing far-right party influence would be reflected by less generous (stricter) asylum outcomes.

*Hypothesis 1: As far-right party influence increases in a country, asylum generosity in that country decreases.*

#### 4.2 The far right and asylum preference

The previous theory poses a link between the political situation of a country and its consequent response in asylum admissions. However, that only tells, at most, half of the story. In

fact, the decision-making behavior of a migrant, or in this case, an asylum-seeker is perhaps even more relevant to policy and outcomes. How much does the influence of a far-right party deter an asylum applicant from seeking refuge in a destination country?

Before we even begin to answer that question, though we must establish certain key assumptions. First, an asylum-seeker must have some degree of agency, or the ability to act independently and make a choice where they want to relocate. Secondly, an asylum-seeker must have access to information about destination countries, or at least be given indirect knowledge of this information (an agent). And lastly, the asylum-seeker (or agent) must value this information to the extent that it becomes a factor in their decision-making process.

The amount of agency a refugee possesses in relocating is highly varied. According to interviews conducted with refugees living in the United Kingdom, forced migrants had “very limited choices about which countries they could feasibly reach and their key aim was to reach a place of safety” but “within the confined choices available to them there was clear evidence that asylum seekers made active value judgements about the different countries to which they could travel, in order to secure the best future open to them [including] images of the characteristics of those countries” (Robinson 37). Multiple refugees from one origin country cited rumors that another country was deporting asylum seekers, and therefore chose the United Kingdom as a better option. If the asylum seeker opted to use an agent (often if they had the financial means), then the agent provided another source of information on preferred destination countries, but besides the likelihood of acceptance, the policy and benefits of refugees did not seem to be important. Regardless, the analysis concluded that although facing limited options, many asylum seekers are active decision-makers in the migration process (63).

In the European context, the Dublin Regulation is another important factor on the country in where asylum-seekers lodge their application because it stipulates where asylum-seekers are supposed to file their application for refugee status. The Dublin Regulation was adopted across European Union member states in 2003 to determine which state is responsible for examining an asylum application: normally it is the state where the asylum seeker first entered the EU (Lyons). There are exceptions to the rule, such as family reunification, and most migrants try to avoid registration in the country they first enter, typically Italy or Greece. If an asylum-seeker moves on from the initial entry country without falling under an exception, officially they can be sent back to that first country as a Dublin transfer. In practice, per data provided by Eurostat, only at most a few hundred Dublin transfers have occurred in any country, except for the year 2015. Regardless, the Dublin Regulation does not work in practice and is already considered “outdated,” since the rule relies on the unreasonable expectation that first entry countries can solely host massive migrant flows such as the recent refugee crisis (Tassinari). The Dublin Regulation may play a factor in where asylum applications are lodged, especially for a few years included in this study, but there remains enough variation to still measure the preference of asylum-seekers.

To return to the question of the agency of an asylum-seeker, specific examples in the recent refugee crisis reveal that individuals have noticeable preference in destination country. In August 2015, Germany’s Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that the EU rules and border controls for Syrian refugees would be waived. The country subsequently received incredible inflows of migrants – later counted to 1.2 million people. By the following month, Germany had reinstated the previous temporary border checks (Tassinari). Although the ‘open border’ policy was short lived, the rapid and massive response by migrants shows that there is a clear link

between the reception of refugees and the preferred destination of asylum-seekers. Yet this case is a clear anomaly, and the welcoming policy acted as a positive pull factor, as opposed to a negative factor (i.e. far-right party popularity). Regardless, as revealed in the Dublin Regulation, many asylum-seekers try to avoid applying for asylum in border states which shows the fact remains that asylum-seekers display an element of choice in determining where to apply for asylum.

This raises the question of the element of a far-right party on refugee preferred destination preference. Since a country with stronger influence of far-right parties would likely have displayed more overt opposition to refugees, that country would be perceived as a less desirable destination for an asylum-seeker. Popular sentiments may be openly and explicitly less welcoming and even hostile. Asylum policy may be more restrictive and protectionist and thus make applicants less likely to be accepted into the country, which would be a principal deterrent. Refugees may receive fewer rights and benefits, more difficulty in obtaining employment, and more barriers to social and cultural integration. Any of these possible effects would create a less desirable destination country in a rational individual. Even if a refugee is not directly aware of such a political situation, migrant networks, agents, and other social connections can work in more subtle ways to direct asylum-seekers away from the deterrent factor of a far-right party. If a refugee or another influence (i.e. agent) has access to this information, and values those factors, and has agency in the migration process, then a rational individual would not request asylum in that country. Holding all these true, as far-right popularity increases, then a country should be a less popular destination for asylum-seekers.

*Hypothesis 2: As far-right party influence increases in a country, preference for asylum in that country decreases.*

## **Chapter Five: Research Design and Methodology**

### **5.1 Research Design**

This thesis intends to demonstrate a negative correlation between far-right party influence and the generosity of a state's asylum policy, as well as a negative correlation between the far-right party influence and the preference of asylum seekers, specifically in Europe. This investigation limits its scope to European countries, since the recent far-right party phenomenon is mostly concentrated in Europe and the European region provides a unique perspective on asylum implications and the unique role of European Union as a supranational body. Countries included in my research are all 28 EU member countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) and two non-EU members, Norway and Switzerland. My data analysis runs country year units from 1999 until 2015.

### **5.2 Measuring the Far Right**

Measuring the influence of the far right is not easily accomplished. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the far-right party family has shown significant influence in different ways than traditional mainstream parties often behave. The influence on policy, public attitudes and opinion, and perceptions is very difficult to measure accurately. Due to ease of accessibility and comparability, I used electoral data for national parliaments to determine the percentage of vote for far-right parties in each country. This allowed the data to be universally measured across the

region. Although parliamentary electoral data does not wholly capture the influence of far-right parties, for the purposes of this investigation, electoral data remains the best option. I use the percentage of vote for far-right parties to act as the independent variable since I am examining for any measurable relationship to the asylum process. The percentages of the vote for each parliamentary party were available by Parliaments and Government (ParlGov) database for all European Union countries and Norway and Switzerland, allowing for consistency of data across countries (Döring). Elections occur in European countries mostly every four or five years, with a handful of variations. To calculate the data annually, I use the same percentage of far-right party vote each year from one election until the next election.

### 5.3 Measuring Asylum Generosity

Measuring asylum generosity requires another difficult to measure variable. Asylum generosity may be viewed as the willingness of a country to grant asylum. Calculating willingness becomes a difficult task since statistics give far from a comprehensive picture of ‘generosity’. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this thesis, I use two dependent variables to measure asylum generosity: the acceptance rate of asylum applications and a country’s share of positive asylum decisions across all 30 countries in this study.

For both asylum sections, asylum generosity and asylum preference following this one, I use the data source Eurostat, which is said to be “one of the best regional-level migration data systems in the world” (Singleton 2). It should be noted that the Eurostat database still receives data from individual countries, but the strength of the Eurostat asylum data lies in its regulatory structure and increasingly comparable data across countries. Within the European context,

Eurostat is considered significantly more accurate than the official data released from the UNHCR, although Eurostat does not release data as often or timely as the UNHCR. (Singleton)

The acceptance rate of asylum applications is calculated by the percentage of all positive decisions over the total number of asylum application decisions. A positive decision is considered one in which the applicant receives one of the following: refugee status, subsidiary protection status, or humanitarian reasons status.

- (1) A decision resulting in ‘refugee status’ means a person’s status as “defined in Art.2(d) of Directive 2004/83/EC within the meaning of Art.1 of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967” (Eurostat).

The exact wording of the 1951 Geneva Convention definition of refugee is as follows someone “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UN General Assembly, 1951).

- (2) A decision resulting in ‘subsidiary protection status’ means “a third country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious

harm and is unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country”(Eurostat).

- (3) A decision resulting in the permission to stay for ‘humanitarian reasons’ means a person who is “not eligible for international protection as currently defined in the first stage legal instruments, but is nonetheless protected against removal under the obligations that are imposed on all Member States by international refugee or human rights instruments or on the basis of principles flowing from such instruments. Examples of such categories include persons who are not removable on grounds of ill health and unaccompanied minors” (Eurostat).

All three of these determinations allow the applicant to be granted some form of protection in the country. If an applicant does not receive asylum on one of these three statuses, then the applicant is considered rejected. The applicant is rejected from any protection or asylum of the country to which the person has requested.

The data is run on the first instance level of the asylum procedure, so decisions that are initially rejected, appealed and then changed to another decision in subsequent levels of the asylum procedure are not represented in the analysis. First-time applicants are the only ones included in this analysis to eliminate the risk of counting the same applicant multiple times. Applications that have no decisions yet are also excluded, which does leave a significant gap in the analysis. The data show that many countries have significant backlogs of asylum applications every year. Although significant backlogs of pending applications play an indirect role in the asylum recognition rate, it would be inaccurate to determine the pending applications as either accepted or rejected for my analysis. In summary, the acceptance rate is an annual percentage for

each country, calculated by the sum of positive decisions (refugee, subsidiary, humanitarian) divided by the total number of decisions of asylum applications each year.

The other dependent variable calculated to represent asylum generosity is a country's share of positive asylum applications across all 30 countries in this study. To calculate this 'positive asylum share,' I use data annually as follows:

$$\frac{\text{a country's sum of positive applications}}{\text{sum of all 30 countries' positive applications}}$$

In other words, the 'positive asylum share' is calculated into a percentage of the total positive asylum decision of the 30 countries. By calculating a country's share instead of using the country's total positive asylum decisions, I can compare the percentage of all positive asylum decisions per destination country, so annual data is more comparable across time.

#### 5.4 Measuring Asylum-Seeker Preference

Asylum preference is intended to measure the agency or decision-making aspect of the asylum-seeker through this process. Asylum preference is determined by the country which the asylum-seeker selects to apply for asylum. To determine this "preference," I calculate the yearly application totals received for each destination country, divided by the total applications received for all 30 countries in this study. This is total applications, not simply positive decisions, which was used in measuring asylum generosity. The dependent variable is determined as a country's share of applications over all the other countries in this study, so it is represented by a percentage. Once again, I use a percentage as opposed to totals so that drastic increases (as in a

surge of refugees) are normalized, relative to the total applications received in the European region.

### 5.5 Control Variables

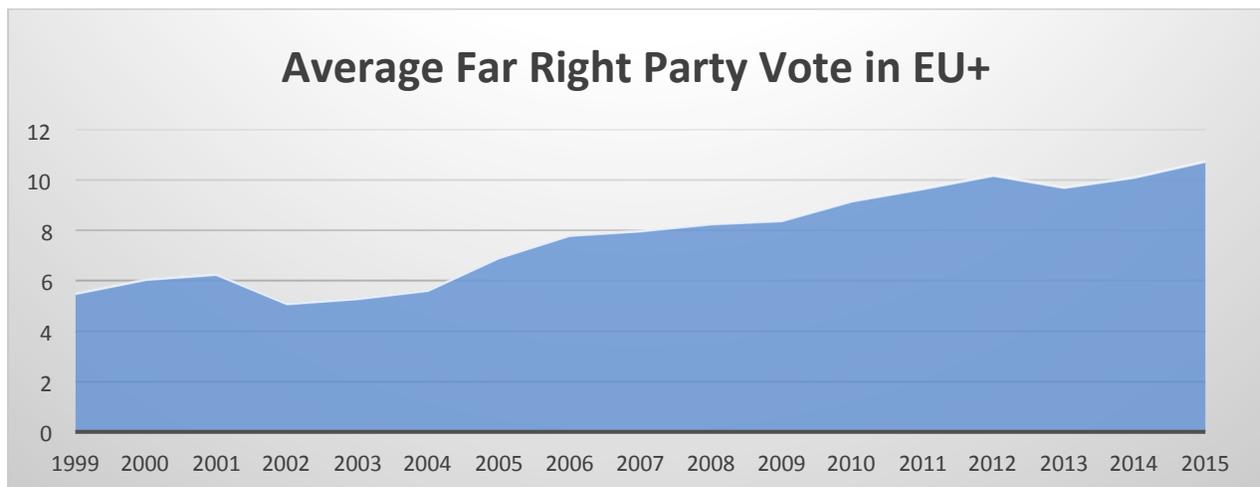
In addition to political factors, the economic figures for a country are also frequently included as factors in both asylum policy and asylum preference. This data controls for GDP per capita and unemployment rate to represent economic indicators of a country, and I used the figures provided by the World Bank. The GDP per capita is measured at the purchasing power parity (PPP) in current international dollars. The unemployment rate is measured as a percentage of total labor force. These two independent control variables give a general frame the prosperity of a country by the income level of citizens and the likelihood of finding employment. Of course, many other factors could be included into the data analysis such as colonial links and physical distance, but due to the limitations of this research, no other factors on destination are included.

## Chapter Six: Data and Analysis

### 6.1 Overview of Data

Before my discussion of linear regression, I want first to give an overview of the statistics across the variables chosen to give a broad picture. Starting with the primary independent variable analyzed, **Figure 6.1** shows the average of far-right party vote across all countries included in the study from 1999 to 2015. In 1999, the average vote for far-right parties was 5.53%, while in 2015, average vote had increased to 10.75%, nearly doubling in a 17-year span. This figure therefore gives evidence of the substantial increase of the far-right party votes across Europe, and the subsequent argument that their popularity and influence is swelling as well.

**Figure 6.1** Average Far-Right party vote across all countries studied, as a percentage of all votes



It should be emphasized that Figure 6.1 represents all the European countries studied as an average. When we look at a breakdown per country of far-right party vote averages, we see

much more variation, as displayed in **Table 6.1**. Seven countries had no far-right party achieve any electoral vote— Croatia, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain. (Czech Republic can also be included). Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, Bulgaria, and the Netherlands had limited electoral success, all under 6%, at least when averaged from 1999 to 2015. However, all of them have much stronger showings in recent elections than those average figures might imply. Greece, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Belgium, Latvia, France and Denmark have moderate electoral success of the far right, from 6% through 13%. Switzerland’s Swiss People’s Party took the lead, with Slovenia, Poland, Austria, and Norway close behind, and all of those countries averaged a quarter to a fifth of the electoral vote for the far-right party.

**Table 6.1** Average Far-Right party vote per country, from 1999 to 2015 (as a percentage)

Croatia	0	Czech Republic	0.20	Greece	6.18	France	10.44
Estonia	0	Germany	1.79	Finland	7.11	Denmark	12.70
Ireland	0	United Kingdom	3.21	Slovakia	8.47	Norway	18.72
Lithuania	0	Sweden	3.88	Hungary	8.82	Austria	21.42
Luxembourg	0	Italy	4.89	Romania	8.94	Poland	22.21
Portugal	0	Bulgaria	5.08	Belgium	9.42	Slovenia	23.82
Spain	0	Netherlands	5.58	Latvia	10.35	Switzerland	26.55

Next I will continue with statistics on the mean of my dependent variables on asylum. Beginning with the asylum generosity variables – acceptance rate of asylum applications and the positive asylum share. As discussed in the previous chapter, the acceptance rate of asylum applications is all positive asylum application outcomes as a percentage of all asylum applications that receive a decision.

**Table 6.2** Average acceptance rate of asylum applications

Greece	5.7%	Czech Republic	20.7%	United Kingdom	27.1%	Netherlands	38.4%
Ireland	11.7%	Romania	21.1%	Austria	28.2%	Norway	40.8%
Slovenia	12.7%	Belgium	21.9%	Latvia	28.3%	Bulgaria	42.3%
France	14.0%	Luxembourg	22.6%	Slovakia	28.6%	Denmark	43.3%
Spain	14.6%	Estonia	23.7%	Finland	34.0%	Lithuania	44.7%
Croatia	14.9%	Germany	23.9%	Portugal	35.0%	Italy	44.9%
Hungary	18.6%	Poland	25.8%	Sweden	36.6%	Switzerland	51.9%

**Table 6.2** displays that the range of asylum acceptance rate is wide, from Greece's 5.7% to Switzerland's average of slightly more than 50%. The wide range continues with the previous theory that variance among asylum recognition rates is not representative as a fair picture of the legitimacy of asylum claims, instead reflecting other elements such as the state's interests. However, Switzerland exemplifies both a country with the strongest electoral far-right support and the highest asylum acceptance rate, in direct contrast with my hypothesis.

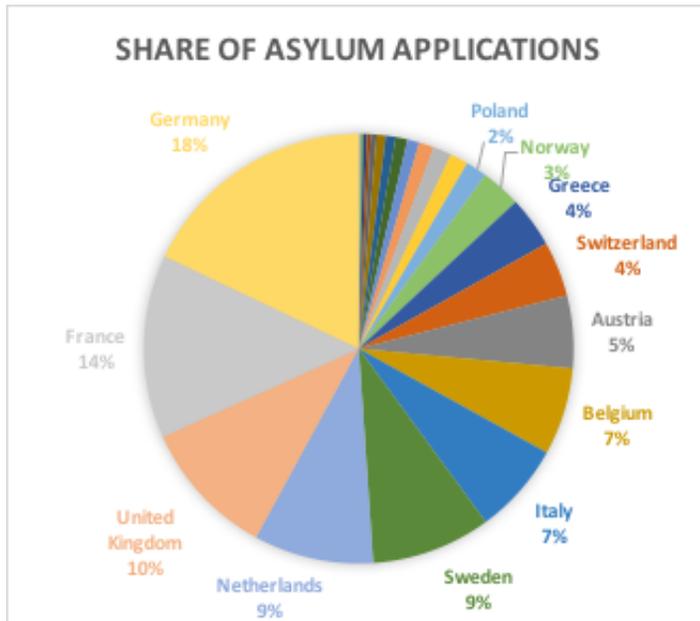
A superficial glance at the other two dependent variables suggests that a country's positive asylum share and asylum application share percentages are very similar, despite variations in asylum acceptance rates shown in the previous table [6.2]. **Figure 6.2** represents asylum application share, with **Table 6.3** detailing countries whose percentages are at 1% or below, and therefore do not fit into the diagram. **Figure 6.3** represents positive asylum share, with **Table 6.4** detailing countries whose percentages are at 1% or below, and therefore do not fit into the diagram.

In both positive asylum share and asylum application share, the seven countries with the largest shares make up 75% or more of the total. Meanwhile, the fifteen countries with the smallest shares carry 1% or less of the total. The highly unequal distribution of asylum grants and asylum requests coincide with the prior discussion of the failure of the principle of burden

sharing to address refugee populations, at least as distributed by granting relocation into a safe third state. In other words, a handful of countries share the vast majority of the ‘burden’ of refugee populations, while the bulk of other EU countries hardly contribute to 1% respectively of the total asylum applicants – a textbook example of free-riding. Specifically, in regards to my two hypotheses of the role of far-right parties, all the seven countries that have the largest shares of asylum requests and applicants also have an established far right party, although mostly of limited electoral success. Of those seven, two countries in the positive asylum share have moderate or significant far right party voting percentages – France and Switzerland - and in the asylum application share, it is France and Belgium. Notably France shows the most dramatic decrease (-43%) from asylum application share (14%) to positive asylum share (8%). In other words, their rank as the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest acceptance rate (of 14%) of applications is revealed by a significant decrease from their share of applicants to their share of accepted applications - which speculatively could be related to the political weight of the National Front. Belgium, as the only other state with moderate or significant far right party in the top seven of applicant share, also decreased its share from applicants to grants from 7% to 4%, another rate of -43%. Germany is the only other country to decrease its share (-17%), while all the other remaining top countries increased their share from applicants to positive grants. Although these two unequal distributions give evidence to support the theory that asylum applicants have a degree of choice in their destination and that granting asylum is highly subjective in nature, the mere presence of far-right parties in a country does not appear to contribute significantly to the country’s accepted asylum share nor act as a deterrent to asylum seekers in comparison to countries without far-right parties, but the level of electoral support in specific countries may tell a different story. Also, notably countries without any far-right parties were mostly ranked lowest on both the share of

asylum applicants and share of positive outcomes. More on this relationship will be discussed later in the chapter. These next three sections are dedicated to linear regression analysis of my hypothesis.

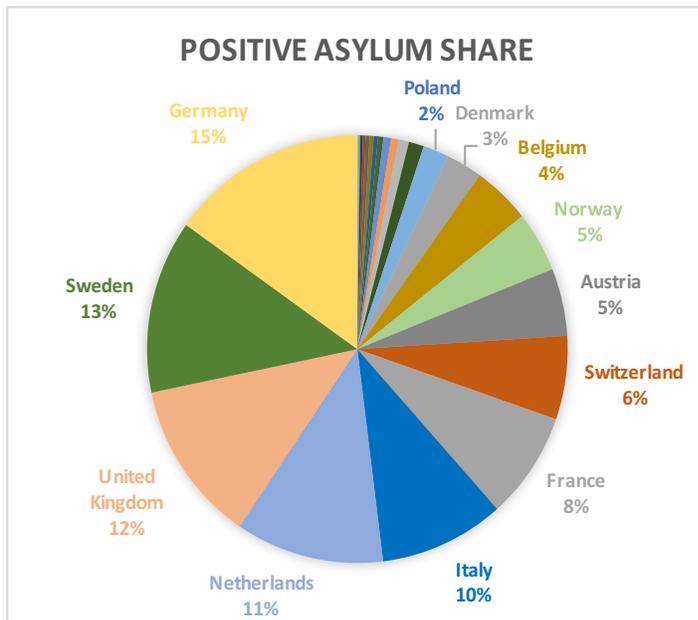
**Figure 6.2** Asylum application share



**Table 6.3** Asylum application share, countries 1% or below

Estonia	0.01%
Latvia	0.02%
Croatia	0.05%
Portugal	0.06%
Lithuania	0.08%
Slovenia	0.18%
Romania	0.32%
Luxembourg	0.32%
Bulgaria	0.51%
Slovakia	0.80%
Hungary	0.85%
Finland	1.02%
Czech Republic	1.03%
Ireland	1.31%
Denmark	1.59%
Spain	1.60%

**Figure 6.3** Positive asylum share



**Table 6.4** Positive asylum share, countries 1% or below

Estonia	0.01%
Latvia	0.01%
Croatia	0.02%
Slovenia	0.04%
Portugal	0.08%
Slovakia	0.11%
Romania	0.24%
Lithuania	0.24%
Luxembourg	0.36%
Greece	0.36%
Czech Republic	0.39%
Ireland	0.49%
Spain	0.68%
Hungary	0.69%
Bulgaria	0.92%
Finland	1.36%

## 6.2 The far right and the asylum acceptance rate: linear regression and analysis

Dependent Variable: acceptancerate	Coef.	Robust Std. Error	t	P> t
(Constant)	0.198	0.066	2.24	0.006
frpartiesvote	0.005	0.002	0.95	0.033
gdppercapita	1.310E-06	0.000	-0.35	0.352
unemployment	-0.001	0.003	3.00	0.730

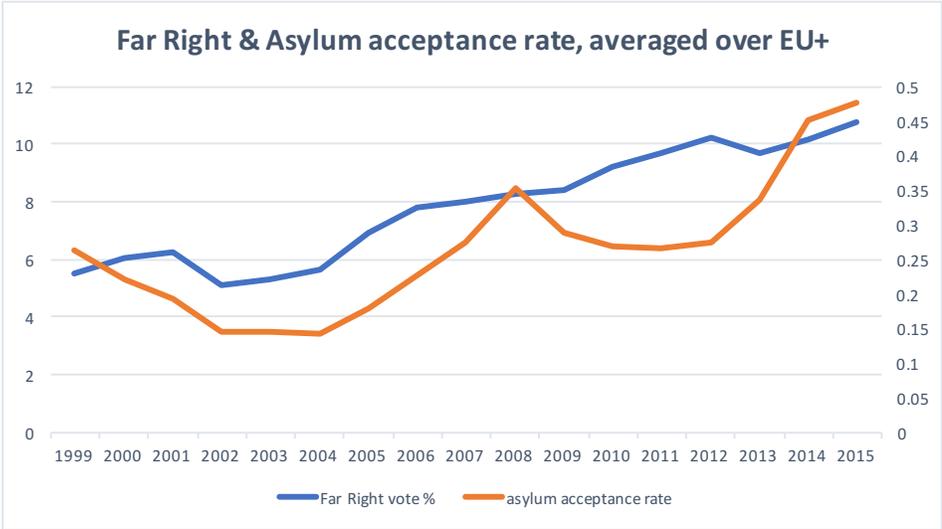
*Hypothesis 1a: As far-right party influence increases in a country, asylum generosity as measured by asylum acceptance rate in that country decreases.*

In my hypothesis, I estimate that there is a negative relationship between far-right party vote increases and asylum acceptance rate. The linear regression analysis shows that far right party vote and asylum acceptance rate has a positive relationship – the opposite of my hypothesis, albeit at the small coefficient value of 0.005. Far right party vote is the only significant independent variable at p-value .033, as the controls of GDP per capita and unemployment are both insignificant. Based on this analysis, we can conclude that there is a small but statistically significant positive relationship between far-right party vote and asylum acceptance rate. The possible reasons for this are examined below.

So, the higher the vote for the far-right party, the higher the acceptance rate of asylum applications. Although I was not expecting to see such a result, the relationship proves interesting on numerous levels. On the one hand, higher asylum admissions could encourage the perception of a country’s voters – in this case, an accurate perception – that more refugees are entering one’s country. As previously discussed, far-right voters are most dominantly driven by sentiments that their ethnic, cultural or national identity is threatened by immigrants. Other voters are also driven by the economic threats of immigrants, that immigrants will take their jobs and receive undeserved welfare benefits. In this way, far-right voting may increase in a country as the asylum acceptance rate increases. Countries may also increase their “asylum generosity”

and this perception of too much generosity may encourage voters to switch to far-right parties to express their opinion on asylum policy. Or still another case may be – probably the most likely – that the far-right party vote and asylum acceptance rate are not all that related, and their small positive relationship is better seen through the lens of time. To demonstrate the plausibility of such an argument, I created a graph of the two variables, simply using the averages over all countries from the years in study (1999-2015).

**Figure 6.2 Far right vote and asylum acceptance rate, annual averages**



**Figure 6.2** indeed displays some degree of correlation between the two variables, as both appear to increase over time at relatively similar rates. However, I see reasons to believe that asylum recognition rates would increase over that period simply due to the migratory forces at work, especially from 2011 onward. The Syrian conflict broke out in 2011, as well as numerous other refugee producing crises across the Middle East and Africa region. These crises have well documented and widely known elements of persecution, hostility and overall extremely dangerous environments, which would increase recognition rates. Additionally, increasing harmonization of asylum recognition has been a specific objective for the EU towards asylum, especially in the last decade. Also, the spike in 2008 of asylum recognition is likely explained by

the change in the Eurostat’s methodology of asylum statistics. Prior to 2008, Eurostat used the respective countries’ definition of each category of application outcome. After 2008, asylum statistics were provided under the provisions of the same EU regulatory framework. This means the process and the asylum data since 2008 should be more accurate across countries. Although this could be another possible factor to the increase in asylum recognition rates since 2008, I do not believe it has as much of an impact. Asylum recognition rates—most likely due to the massive influx of refugees to the EU region—have experienced a noticeable upward trend, seen in the graph starting in 2012. This upward trend also coincided with the increasing popular vote for far-right parties across Europe, which is also affected by the refugee crisis. Regardless, this positive correlation contrasts my hypothesis that asylum recognition rates are negatively subjected to the influence of the far-right party. This correlation gives possible evidence to the demand-side aspects of the far right, but explaining the factors driving far-right popularity lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

### 6.3 The far right and positive asylum share: linear regression and analysis

Dependent Variable:	Coef.	Robust Std. Error	t	P> t
posasylumshare				
(Constant)	0.058	0.034	1.73	0.094
frpartiesvote	0.000	0.001	0.25	0.803
gdppercapita	0.000	0.000	0.56	0.581
unemployment	-0.004	0.002	-2.10	0.045

*Hypothesis 1b: As far-right party influence increases in a country, asylum generosity as measured by the positive asylum share in that country decreases.*

In my other hypothesis of the same theory, I predict that there is a negative relationship between far-right party vote increases and the share of positive asylum applications. The linear regression analysis shows that far right party vote and positive asylum share has a statistically

very insignificant relationship with a p-value of .803, and the coefficient value is 0. GDP per capita is also statistically insignificant while my control variable of unemployment is the only significant variable at p-value .045, at the coefficient value of -0.004. So there exists a negative relationship between a country's positive asylum share and unemployment. We can safely accept the null hypothesis – there does not appear to be an empirical relationship between a country's far-right party vote and their positive asylum share.

The small negative correlation between unemployment and positive asylum share is logically sound for numerous reasons. Countries with high levels of unemployment would likely be unattractive to the refugee due to the difficulty in finding a job. Similarly, countries with high levels of unemployment would find it undesirable and probably highly contested to grant refugee benefits or allowing the applicants to take some of the employment already scarce in the country. Additionally, western and northern European states, with on average much lower rates of unemployment, have much longer and established legacies of asylum norm, as seen in Figure 6.2, where seven countries take in over three-fourths of all asylum-seekers in Europe. The remaining countries, especially those in central and eastern Europe, that have comparatively very low shares of positive asylum applications (or even asylum requests) as well as, on average, higher rates of unemployment.

The measure of positive asylum share is calculated to examine the results of refugee claims, without being skewed by the recent refugee crisis. In other words, if country X experiences an increase of the far-right party vote, then the country would administer stricter asylum admissions. During a massive influx, Country X's total value of positive asylum outcomes still increases from the previous year because of the sheer number admitted the influx. So, then the far-right party would appear to have no effect on the asylum admission rate.

However, if we use a value that is country X's share of all positive asylum outcomes in the region for that year, then the Country X's asylum grants are calculated relative to other states. Even if the inflow was ten times as many as the year before, so long as the country itself has a smaller share of the number of positive asylum outcomes in the region, then the stricter asylum policy would be statistically recognized. Yet the data does not show any empirical relationship between these two variables. A potential flaw in the calculation of this variable is that other states may employ stricter asylum policies at the same time, so the relative asylum share may not decrease. However, in linear regression of the total accepted applications, far-right party votes are still statistically insignificant, thereby ruling out that possibility. Another explanation could be to the effect that the asylum process is not as easily influenced by a country's political situations as I assumed. Although there are large variations in asylum statistics across countries, variation within countries is not as dramatic. Countries may set up quota systems, which are susceptible to a degree to political situations, but likely not as dramatic as I theorized. Furthermore, the top six countries of the asylum application share are also the top six countries of the positive asylum share. Their rank changes between these two, but overall the asylum regime likely works in a way that might be normalized over time by individual countries. For example, Germany has been a dominant leader in refugee "generosity" for years, and as the data shows, the growth of a political party against this policy likely does not quickly change that fact. Another case might be that far-right parties specifically do not play as much of a distinct role in decreasing asylum admissions as governments, whether due to their relative minority status in parliaments or the possibility that governments with lesser or no far right party popularity may set stricter immigrant agendas too.

6.4 The far right and application share: linear regression and analysis

*Hypothesis 2: As far-right party influence increases in a country, asylum preference as measured by asylum application share in that country decreases.*

Dependent Variable: asylumappshare	Coef.	Robust Std. Error	t	P> t
(Constant)	0.048	0.029	1.64	0.112
frpartiesvote	0.000	0.001	0.29	0.777
gdppercapita	0.000	0.000	0.53	0.597
unemployment	-0.002	0.001	-1.47	0.153

In my hypothesis regarding asylum preference, I predict that there is a negative relationship between a country’s far-right party vote increases and their share of asylum applications. The linear regression analysis reveals that far-right party vote and asylum application share also has an insignificant relationship with a p-value of .777 as well as the coefficient value of 0. This means the data shows an increase of far-right party vote leads to no change in the share of asylum applications. The high p-value also signifies that this correlation of 0 is insignificant, further denoting that there is no correlation between these two variables. The controls for GDP per capita and unemployment are also both statistically insignificant. Once again, we can assume the null hypothesis; there does not exist an empirical relationship between a country’s far-right party vote and its asylum application share.

This supported null hypothesis is not as surprising since the degree to which far-right party electoral translates into fewer requests by asylum-seekers warrants numerous dynamics to hold even a possibility of being significant. For this hypothesis to work as theorized, asylum-seekers must have explicit decision-making in where they seek asylum, which has been recognized in studies and interviews to a degree but is not as feasible as one might assume. Furthermore, even less awareness of the details or specifics of a destination country (even such

factors as influential as asylum policy) is known by refugee actors, as seen in the literature. And lastly, the negative aspects of a strong far-right party in a destination country may not be of much importance or even considered significant to a refugee. This logic may seem especially relevant when one considers that refugees by simple virtue of being a refugee have proven experiences of persecution, torture, and/or threat of death. The harsh rhetoric and xenophobic sentiments likely would not seem as important as simply finding refuge in a safer place than their origin. This has been documented in the previously referenced interviews with refugees, that finding safety was the initial priority, regardless of where that safe place was or what was in that country. This result contrasts my theory of the impact on asylum-seeker preference, but I believe would likely prove more influential in the possible reception and integration of asylum-seekers in a country.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the empirical evidence of outcomes on refugees and asylum-seekers as caused by the growing influence of the far-right party in Europe. The variables examined have real-life implications for millions of people, and serve both as an interesting and meaningful topic. After a lengthy analysis of the literature surrounding these two subjects, the empirical results nonetheless provided evidence to the contrary of all my hypotheses. Votes for far-right parties do not correlate to lower levels of a state's generosity for asylum nor do far-right party popularity discourage asylum-seekers from requesting asylum – at least statistically speaking. I emphasize the role of data in giving an unbiased conclusion, as I found substantial amounts of literature on far-right parties, of which many drew conclusions from qualitative analysis as opposed to quantitative analysis. I hoped to add to research by using figures and not simply rhetoric. Yet empirical data also presented a problem in representing my hypothesis fairly, especially due to the wide variation in asylum variables. Although there is noticeable variance in such figures as asylum preference and country's shares of refugees, explaining the outcomes by measurable factors is incredibly difficult. Another possible fallacy could be simply in the assumption that the electoral participation of a minority of a country can have national-level aggregate consequences on the treatment and decision-making of refugees and asylum-seekers. As mentioned in the literature review, other research attempts on similar theories between radical right wing populist groups and asylum recognition rates also found no statistical relationship, and I can now add my research to the list. I do not conclude with the notion that these variables do not influence each other, but rather that statistical evidence is not found within the definition of my question.

Another observation of far-right parties that is relevant to my conclusion is a straightforward critique of far-right scholarship itself. Cas Mudde claims in his 2012 article that the gross disproportionate scholarly attention overemphasizes and creates many assertions around the importance and power of the far-right party family. He argues for greater focus on empirical and systematically proven evidence, as well as acknowledging the data limitations and difficult natures of many aspects discussed around the far-right party family. In summarizing my research, I would claim very similar notions, as the copious amount of scholarship available and the media portrayal of these parties would lead a beginning student of this problem to believe these parties are taking control over Europe in every aspect of life. And although these political parties are interesting in their unique sway of social and national norms, the reality that they are dangers to democracy or destroying the progress of Europe is far from the truth. Asylum recognition rates are on the upward trend across the continent, despite these political parties growing. I also felt this growth is often overstated in media, as electoral support for these parties in most European countries is less than 15%. Furthermore, even highly successful electoral support for far-right parties often does not produce policy either at all or at the extremeness the more radical statements might imply. In the words of Mudde, radical right-wing populist parties are a lot of bark, and little bite.

This research topic touches on several different themes of social and political science, and allowed for a few simple assumptions to be given much more depth through their interactions, from international relation theories of burden sharing to sociology concepts of discursive discrimination. Although adding to the excessive amount of far-right party literature was never a goal for this project, the conclusion that far-right parties do not have direct empirical relationships with asylum practices as I assumed may help to encourage other scholars and

academics to research other political anomalies in Europe and globally. Regardless, the desires of the far-right party pose a thought-provoking juxtaposition to mainstreamed multiculturalism, and the contrast becomes an especially salient topic as the post-modern world must cooperate to address the largest refugee crisis since World War II.

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