# RISING FAR-RIGHT IN FRANCE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NATIONAL FRONT*

## Fransa'da Yükselen Aşırı Sağ: Ulusal Cephe Örneği**

### Hüseyin Pusat KILDİŞ**

## Abstract

*The far-right view has become a characteristic feature of European politics in recent years. With the increase in the waves of immigration, the extremist right-wing parties; which are also known as radical right; set up their policies on anti-immigration under the influence of populism and increased their votes. In this study, the current status of far-right in France will be examined. The increasing influence of extreme right in France will be examined with a detailed analysis of this ideology as well as the concepts forming it.*

**Keywords:** *France, Far-right, Migration, Islamophobia, Populism.*

## Öz

*Avrupa'nın genelinde görülen aşırı sağ son yıllarda Avrupa siyasetinde belirleyici bir unsur olarak ön plana çıkmıştır. Göç dalgalarının artmasıyla birlikte radikal sağ olarak da bilinen aşırı sağcı partiler oylarını arttırmış ve politikalarını popülizmin de etkisiyle göç karşıtlığı üzerine oturtmuşlardır. Bu çalışmada söz konusu durum Fransa özelinde incelenecektir. Çalışma, Fransa'da etkisini giderek arttıran aşırı sağı anlamaya yönelik tasarlanmış olup söz konusu ideoloji ve bu ideoloji oluşturan kavramların detaylı bir analizini amaçlamaktadır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Fransa, Aşırı Sağ, Göç, İslamofobi, Popülizm.*

# INTRODUCTION

Even though fascism which constitutes the extreme point of far-right, peaked with the Second World War, such "extreme" opinions were regarded as a threat after the war. Following the Second World War, a new political, economic and social order was formed in Europe. In this new order, liberal economy was adopted, and European states were forced to get closer against Soviet threat. This contributed to the creation of a common identity for the mentioned states and prevented strengthening of radical right parties in relevant countries.

Following the Cold War period, common enemy threat was vanished, and European societies have been directed towards alternative parties instead of central parties. In this period, parties using far-right, and populist discourses have gained strength with the impact of migration movements predominantly from Middle East and North Africa and made a come-back as the phrase goes.

In the 21st century Islamophobia, which was strengthened after 9/11 attacks and recent Middle East large migration movements have become themes frequently used by far-right parties. With the influence of populism, far-right parties within many European states have strengthened and become threatening central parties in relevant countries. In case that the above-mentioned parties join their forces, they will have power to change not only their countries but also the European Union (EU).

France, as one of the most important members of the EU, is the country with the largest Muslim population in Europe. Its population is 64 million and Muslims constitute approximately 5 million of its population. According to the 2017 data of World Bank, 970,302 refugees live in

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France.[1] For these reasons, strengthening of far-right in France poses a threat for both France and all Muslims and refugees living in Europe.

France is one of the countries where far-right finds its way into political arena at its utmost compared to other European countries. Radical right movements not only have demonstrated themselves as protest demonstrations and street movements but also have been embodied in the country under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, the leader of ultra-nationalist the National Front (Front National-FN) party. Despite radical opinions Le Pen represents, she was one of the outstanding candidates in French Presidential election in 2017.

In this study, while Islamophobia and far-right are explained, social constructivism, one of the international relations concepts, will be utilised. According to social constructivists, states are social actors having several distinct features of their own. This is reflected in state's security and interest perceptions. The reason why social constructivism is utilised in this study is the emphasis this concept puts on state's identities and their interaction.[2] A state's identity is one of the most important factors that constitute far-right in relevant country.

In the first part of the study, far-right will be defined and factors composing far-right will be examined. Additionally, Islamophobia and populism concepts, which are closely related with far-right, will be examined and ideas of these concepts in politics will be addressed. While studying these concepts, surveys conducted by various think tanks as well as analyses and data of international institutions and organisations will be benefited from.

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1  "Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Asylum", *Offical Website of the World Bank,* https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.REFG, (Date of Accession: 27.02.2019).

2  Bilal Karabulut, *Güvenlik: Küreselleşme Sürecinde Güvenliği Yeniden Düşünmek,* Barış Kitabevi, Ankara 2011, p. 76-77, . Kadir Ertaç Çelik-Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Aralık 2017 Ulusal Güvenlik Strateji Belgesi Bağlamında ABD'nin Karadeniz Politikası ve Türkiye", KARAM, 15(60), s. 102-105.

In the second part, far-right in France will be investigated, and Le Pen and her party will be addressed afterwards. In this part of the study, a historical assessment of far-right in France will be firstly conducted and then elections where far-right has come to the fore in recent years will be evaluated.

Purpose of the study is to define far-right in special to France and to explain how and to what extent this ideology is powerful. In recent years, far-right has not been gaining power only in France but in Europe in general. In this study, the reason why France has been chosen as an exemplar is the fact that there is a direct representative of far-right in France, compared to other European countries, and predominant position of France within the EU.

# FAR-RIGHT

## *REASONS OF FAR-RIGHT*

There are many sources that feed far-right. One of these sources is globalisation. In 21st century, people live in a global world where borders of national states are not as sharp as they used to be. In addition, states become more interdependent due to globalisation. This should not be considered only in the field of economy. Today, states need each other to ensure their security. Likewise, nowadays, a state cannot solve medium-large scale crises by its own. Therefore, many states generally have to intervene in relevant crisis in a harmonious manner to resolve regional and international crises. All these changing balances disturb the people who are formed as nation states and used to live in traditional ways.[3]

Another source feeding far-right is nationalism. According to right-

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3  Muhammed Onur Çöpoğlu, "Avrupa'da Yükselen Popülist Aşırı Sağ Partiler: Özgürlükler ve Uluslar Avrupası (ENF) Grubu Üzerine Bir İnceleme", *Uluslararası Sosyal ve Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 4(7), 2017, p. 3-4.

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wing extremists, interdependence of countries is, contrary to popular belief, unfavourable. Due to such dependence, states need each other and a state with a major emperorship, kingship or civilisation in the past should not accept this dependency state. Themes such as "nostalgia", "stress on national values, culture and family" and "opposing international organisations" are frequently used in extreme right wing. According to right-wing extremists, people fleeing from war or leaving their countries due to economic reasons are resided in the EU countries because the EU countries permit it. Therefore, countries that became a target of such immigration should leave the EU.

Another reason why these radical movements have increased is the enhancement of international interaction of terror groups thanks to technological developments. Today, there are terrorist organisations recording what they have done and trying to become popular by doing so, making propaganda via internet, supplying guns and money again via internet, being able to find followers all around the world and hack website of states thanks to dissemination of communication tools.[4] Therefore, individuals no longer feel themselves safe as they used to.

Another reason why extreme right is on the rise is changing security perception. It is proved with 9/11 attacks that even the United States of America (USA/US) is not safe. Following 9/11 attacks, "grey war" concept in the fight against terrorism has emerged. According to this concept, war with terrorism does not resemble war of a country with another one. According to this type of war, limits of war is uncertain, besides it not even clear if there is a true war or not. Geographical borders, fronts, rules to obey during warfare, even identity of enemy are unclear. In addition, due to the impact of weapons of mass destruction, power of enemy is almost limitless. Therefore, security understanding of states, particularly USA, has changed. New security understanding is not against a country or a block

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4  Also known as cyber attack.

unlike security understanding in the Cold War period. Now, war is in all over the World. This has been stirring anxiety among people. Furthermore, following 9/11 attacks, USA's attacking countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where majority of population is Muslim, and its definition of terrorism as "radical Islam" have caused Westerners to associate Islam with terrorism.[5] This situation is coupled with Islamophobia (Islam hostility-fear) concept.

Another source of extreme right is economy. People illegally living in a country generally work under the minimum wage. Even though this is profitable for employers, people from low-middle classes accuse foreigners, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees, living in their countries of stripping them of their jobs. Increasing competition in business world based on this situation divert several people to extreme right. Besides, many people accuse their state to "over-assistance" relevant refugees. According to these people, a state must priory deal with its citizens, resolve their problems, and then help asylum-seekers and refugees.

Link between extreme right and media is remarkable. Today, almost everyone uses mass media such as newspapers, television and radio to follow developments in the world. Thus, people perceive the information as media presents it. This situation not only affects individuals it also affects states. States, nowadays, can change their policies due to the media. Publication of a confidential document and policy change of relevant state based on this situation, a state's taking action as a result of the pressure general public imposes upon government due to elements such as famine, violence, war, which are broadcast on news, are all examples of this situation.[6]
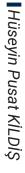
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5 Karabulut, *op. cit,* p. 235-240.

6 Mehmet Seyfettin Erol-Emre Ozan, "Uluslararası Krizler ve Medya: Dış Politika Kriz Yönetiminde Medyanın Rolü Üzerine Bir Deneme", Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, ed., *Krizler ve Kriz Yönetimi: "Temel Yaklaşımlar, Aktörler, Örnek Olaylar"*, Barış Kitabevi, Ankara/İstanbul October 2012, p. 126-128.

As media affects states, it is also affected by states. States try to direct general public through media. At this point, it should be indicated that domestic politics has further impact on individuals rather than foreign politics. According to this, if decision makers in media displays foreigners as criminals and the source of problems in these countries, public gets affected and votes for extreme right parties, which promise to deport immigrants. Occasionally, this is intentionally performed since governments always need somebody to put the blame on.[7]

Another point to stress on the media is the prevalence of fabricated news/false news. According to a survey conducted by PEW Research Center in 2017, most people living in European countries receive information through social media. However, videos and images released in social media are not under the control of any person/authority. For example, a video displaying the fight of two individuals and where one of them is killed or injured is published under the titles of "assault of an innocent by Muslim refugees" or "refugee killing an innocent who did not give money to him/her" by malevolent people trying to influence the uninformed.[8]

Another source of far-right is cultural problems. According to this, the EU was formed in the light of European awareness, and thus people living in European countries regard people coming out of the continent and being far away from their own values as "foreigners". In this context, according to some Europeans, people particularly of Middle East and Africa origin are a threat against their own cultures and lifestyles. "We" and "they" patterns frequently used by right-wing extremists in politics marginalise relevant people.[9]

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7  Ozan-Erol, *op. cit*, p. 128-131.

8  "Majorities in Most European Countries Get News from Social Media", *Pew Research Center*, http://www.journalism.org/2018/05/14/many-western-europeans-get-news-via-social-media-but-in-some-countries-substantial-minorities-do-not-pay-attention-to-the-source/pj_2018-05-14_western-europe_5-01/,     (Date    of    Accession: 22.01.2019).

9  Çöpoğlu, *op. cit*, p. 6.

One of the most important factors forming extreme right is populism. Origin of the word derives from the word "populus" in Latin, which means "people".[10] According to Cambridge Dictionary, this word is defined as "political ideas and activities that are intended to get the support of ordinary people by giving them what they want".[11] Mudde expresses that populism is established on the idea that societies are divided into two: "the people" and "the corrupted elite". According to this, populist leaders represent the people and almost depict adverse party as "an enemy advocating the corrupted elite". Although populism is not only used by extreme right, the most successful populists today mainly have radical opinions. According to Moffit, the pioneering populists today are Le Pen from France, Donald Trump from USA and Victor Orban from Hungary. These people not only are populists, but they also support anti-immigration and authoritarian regimes.[12] This means these 3 concepts are closely interconnected.

According to social constructivism, one of the factors forming state identity is history. According to this, many existing modern states are in fact heirs of previously founded states. Therefore, the Crusades, world wars and 9/11 attacks in recent history are factors constituting extreme right today. States have built their identities upon such events. Based on this, states' regarding foreigners in their countries as a threat is, in fact, not a new phenomenon. Indeed, this situation is a phenomenon lasting for centuries and further displayed itself today.

Just as states have identities, societies also possess identities. Eventually it is the societies that create states and events affecting societies also shape states within which these societies exist. Especially

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10  Juha Herkman, "Articulations of Populism: the Nordic Case", *Cultural Studies*, 31(4), 2017, p. 470.

11  "Popülizm", Cambridge Dictionary, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/tr/s%C3%B6zl%C3%BCk/ingilizce/populism, (Date of Accession: 20.02.2019).

12  David Molloy, "What is Populism, and What does the Term Actually Mean?", *BBC*, 6 March 2018, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43301423, (Date of Accession: 20.02.2019).

the search for identity and security that emerged upon the Cold War, is confused with the modern societies' feeling of uncertainty and thus Europeans gather under the roof of Christianity. However, as observed in history, a certain group always generate an opposing group. In this situation, the other group is "Muslims".[13] This situation worsens since states promote identity studies to unite societies. Encouragement of nationalism by countries having economic problems is another reason why this situation gains strength.

## ISLAMOPHOBIA

The term Islamophobia, which is directly related to extreme right, was firstly developed by political activists, non-governmental organisations and international institutions by the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000s to draw attention to harmful actions and discourses against Islam and Muslims in Western liberal democracies. The term not only expresses anti-Islamic feelings and opinions, it is also used to condemn people with these feelings and opinions. In addition to this, a definition of this term has not been agreed upon so far.[14] The word Islamophobia is derived from the word "Xenophobia". This word comes from the Greek words "xenos", which means foreign and "phobos", which means fear. If relevant "phobia" is towards Muslims, this is called Islamophobia.[15]

Bleich has indicated that even though there is no settled definition of Islamophobia, a definition can be produced based on common features of Islamophobia. According to this, Islamophobia is negative attitudes and feelings against Islam or Muslims without distinction. Bleich addressed

13  Polat S. Alpman, "Sosyal Teorinin Konusu Olarak Kimlik: Sosyal İnşacı Yaklaşım", *Sosyoloji Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 21(2), October 2018, p. 3-4.

14  Jonas R. Kunst-David L. Sam-Pål Ulleberg, "Perceived Islamophobia: Scale Development and Validation", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 37(2), 2013, p. 226.

15  Selcen Öner, "Avrupa'da Yükselen Aşırı Sağ, Yeni 'Öteki'ler ve Türkiye'nin AB Üyeliği", *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 13(1), 2014, p. 168.

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3 main features of Islamophobia while making this definition. The first is non-discrimination. According to this, every different attitude and feeling towards Islam cannot be classified as Islamophobia. For example, if a Muslim woman is raised in a society where Islam is interpreted to justify absolute obedience to men and female circumcision, she may have negative attitudes and feelings against some Muslim societies or some interpretations of Islam. This individual may question some teachings, sects, and principles of Islam and practices of some Muslim groups and even criticise them; and yet this cannot be interpreted as Islamophobia. In addition to this, if an individual condemns Islam as a whole or the entire Muslims based on these examples, this is Islamophobic.[16]

According to Bleich, the second feature of Islamophobia is, just like in racism and sexism, negative behaviours and feelings against people and groups of a different category. Islamophobia beginning with discontent and unwillingness may extend to hating, threatening, hurting or rejecting fundamental rights of relevant group. Third element forming Bleich's Islamophobia definition is the fact that these negative attitudes and behaviours are directed towards Islam or Muslims as a whole. Although in some cases anti-Islam and anti-Muslim are addressed separately, Islamophobia is usually melted in the same pot. In addition to this, according to the surveys, anti-Americanism does not mean hatred of American people. In other words, people opposing USA may not bear any enmity against American people. However, according to Islamophobic point of view, Islam and Muslims represent the same thing.[17]

Although Islamophobia concept has been newly introduced in the literature, Islamophobia has a long history. Throughout the history people have tried to impose superiority of their religion on others sometimes by

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16   Erik Bleich, "What is Islamophobia and How Much is There? Theorizing and Measuring an Emerging Comparative Concept", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 55(12), 2011, p. 1585.

17   Bleich, *op. cit*, p. 1586-1587.

force. Besides, religion provides identity to societies and unites them. Considering the fact that the Crusades commenced under the very leadership of the Pope himself to capture Middle Eastern lands under the dominance of Muslims, it can be understood that anti-Islam/anti-Muslim sentiment is not a new phenomenon.

In 20th century, religious wars were replaced by ideology wars; and yet by the end of the Cold War, the era of ideology wars was over. Nowadays, Islamophobia has revealed itself particularly in 9/11 attacks and their aftermath. Following communism, radical Islam has been defined as the source of terrorism and the new enemy of humanity. As communism and people supporting this ideology were displayed as enemies from the viewpoint of USA and its allies, Islam and those supporting Islamic doctrines have become new enemies as a result of 9/11 attacks. Although Bush government defined new enemy only as radical Islam, many thought that radical Islam=Islam=Muslims and for those people, Muslims were declared to be new "other". Another reason of this situation is the previously mentioned quest for identity. If there is going to be an "us", there needs to be "others". Following 9/11 attacks, the others have become Muslims.

It should be noted that, according to Huntington, with the collapse of communism, democratic liberalism ideology of the West gained a global victory and it surfaced that this ideology was globally valid. Therefore, Western societies tried to impose their own values to other societies. However, Eastern societies, many of which had newly gained independence, wanted to get rid of economic, military and cultural influence of the West. Besides, these societies became self-confident since they gained their independence. Additionally, Islamic and Chinese civilisations are culturally different from Western civilisation and according to their perspective; they have a superior cultural tradition. Therefore, in a global world, clash of Western civilisation and Islamic civilisation is already inevitable. In short,

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according to Huntington, the clash of two civilisations is not a cause but effect.[18]

Another reason why Islamophobia is on the rise in the 21st century is attacks of terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS with the purposes of "spreading true Islam" and "declaring jihad-caliph". As previously mentioned, in many Westerners' point of view, there is no distinction between radical Islam and Muslims. Thus, from the viewpoint of Westerners, attacks organised by these terrorist organisations are attacks made by Muslims. Following migration crisis, the surge in terrorist attacks in Europe reinforces this thought. For example, in 2017, terrorist attacks in Europe increased 45% compared to previous year.[19]

Economy has a major role in the strengthening of Islamophobia because throughout history, economic crises led to the prominence of radical parties. The most well-known example is the strengthening of National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) and its leader Adolf Hitler in a short time with the impact of the Great Depression that took place between 1929 and 1933.[20] In a similar way, following the 2008 Euro crisis, far-right gained strength in Europe. Unemployment rate increased due to this crisis and prejudice towards foreigners, especially refugees emerged. These people were almost declared to be scapegoats by extreme right parties and economic crisis was launched as if it was the fault of these people.[21]

In Europe, various surveys and research on people coming from other countries, particularly Muslims, have been frequently conducted. According to a survey carried out by European Union Agency for

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18  Huntington, *op. cit*, p. 268-271.

19  "Avrupa'da Terör Saldırıları Bir Yılda Yüzde 45 Arttı", *Hürriyet*, http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/dunya/avrupada-teror-saldirilari-bir-yilda-yuzde-45-artti-40873425, (Date of Accession: 04.03.2019).

20  "Ciddiye Alınmıyordu: Hitler 1933'te Nasıl İktidara Geldi?", *Sputnik*, https://tr.sputniknews.com/analiz/201801311032056494-ciddiye-alinmiyordu-hitler-1993te-nasil-iktidara-geldi/, (Date of Accession: 26.01.2019).

21  Öner, *op. cit*, p. 168.

Fundamental Rights over 23,500 people from 27 EU member states, one out of three Muslims living in Europe has expressed that he/she faced various kinds of discrimination over the past year and one out of ten Muslims was exposed to assault or humiliation. 40% percent of these people in question attribute the cause of these discrimination and attacks to their cultural origins. While 27% of Muslims, who are the citizens of their residence country, indicate that they were exposed to discrimination, it is observed that this rate is increasing to 41% for those who are not citizens.[22]

According to a survey conducted by PEW Research Center, in 2018, Muslim population in Europe corresponded to 6% of the continent population. Such surveys and research carry the meaning of a warning against the Christian World for many Westerner.[23]

According to social constructivist perspective, Islamophobia is, in fact, an effort to create an identity. According to this perspective, people, in nature, come together for the purpose of defence when they do not feel safe against an enemy.[24] Based on this, one of the easiest ways of uniting society is to target an external group, and if no such group exists, to create such a group. According to the far-right parties in Europe, generally Muslims are enemies because of the differences of religion, customs, traditions, and historical background. According to this, Europeans, who rallied against Muslims in the past (as in the case of the Crusades), must reunite against their common enemies. This can be considered as Europe's recovery of old identity.[25]

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22  Murat Aktaş, "Avrupa'da Yükselen İslamofobi ve Medeniyetler Çatışması Tezi", *Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi*, 13(1), 2014, p. 33.

23  Aktaş, *op. cit*, p. 33.

24  John Swinton, "Identity and Resistance: Why Spiritual Care Needs 'Enemies'", *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 15(7), 2006, p. 919-920.

25  Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, "Nazilerin Dönüşü ve Fişlenen Cami Cemaati", Milli Gazete, https://www.milligazete. com.tr/makale/857084/prof-dr-m-seyfettin-erol/nazilerin-donusu-ve-fislenen-cami-cemaati, (Date of Accession: 29.05.2019).

# THE NATIONAL FRONT

## *BACKGROUND OF THE NATIONAL FRONT*

In order to understand the power of the National Front, one should look at France's extreme right history. After the Second World War, although right extremists did not find support in public since they were associated with Nazism, this changed due to the impact of wars of the 1950s. The most distinguishing one among emerging groups was Young Nation (Jeune Nation) organisation, which was founded by officers protesting the great defeat of France in the 1st Indochina War. This organisation advocated concepts such as "anti-communism and anti-modernism", "xenophobia" and "protection of French Empire". The Algerian War of Independence beginning in the second half of the 1950s and lasting for years had deeply impacted the country. The Union for the Defense of Tradesmen and Artisans (Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans-UDCA), a right extremist party opposing the independence of Algeria and abandonment policy in relation to colonies, took 11.5% of votes in the 1956 French parliamentary elections. Clandestine operations of an organisation called the Secret Armed Organisation (Armée secrète) and following Algeria's independence eviction of 1 million French citizens living in the region strengthened far-right, and particularly anti-Arab sentiment, in France. One of the leading members of this organisation was Jean-Marie Le-Pen, founder of the National Front and father of Marine Le-Pen.[26]

In 1962, with the abolition of UDCA, radical right weakened in France and right extremists could not gather under the same roof. During the Cold War, radical opinions regained strength especially among the youth, and this time the enemy was communists. Jean-Marie Le Pen, who wanted to benefit from current situation, founded the National Front in 1972. This party is remarkable since it brings together many people of

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26  Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France.* Springer, Ottowa 2017, p. 7-8.

different opinions (Nazis, opponents, activists, right-wing intellectuals). In its official ideology, purpose of the party is expressed as "defending the French". At the time when the party was established, it did not manage to be successful since subjects of security, nationalism and migration were not leading themes. During the 1980s, the party gained strength due to economic crisis, softening migration policies, most of the North African workers whom had been decided to become immigrants, increasing numbers of mosques and a leftist party whom have governed for a long time could not solve these issues. The National Front took 14.4% of votes in the 1988 presidential elections and 11.7% of votes in the 1989 European Parliament (EP) elections. Although the party stayed popular in the 1990s, it weakened due to internal conflict it went through in 1998-1999.[27]

The National Front gained a huge success in 2004 elections, and yet, it failed in 2007 elections. Jean-Marie Le Pen was seen as the reason of this failure. Based on this, supporters of the party embarked on a quest of a new leader who will not change the party's line and yet have more modern opinions. As a result of the 2011 voting, Marine Le Pen, daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen, was elected party leader. In 2012 legislative elections, the National Front received 13.77% of votes and in 2014, they obtained control of 11 municipalities. According to these results, the party has gained great power. During 2014 municipality elections and EP elections, the party made history of its own. In EP elections, the party became the first part in the country by receiving 25% of total votes in France. With this vote rate, the National Front under the leadership of Le Pen became the most successful right extremist party in Europe. The party continued its success during 2015 elections.[28]

Le Pen has transformed the party into a more modern and political order by trying to keep it away from her father's racist identity, and thus

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27  Stockemer, _op. cit_, p. 10-18.
28      James Shields, "The Front National: From Systematic Opposition to Systemic Integration?", _Modern&Contemporary France,_ 22(4), p. 492-493.

been able to draw more people into the party. In addition to this, Le Pen has continued to accuse other parties, like her father did, with hypocrisy and pragmatism and by doing so she has been able to draw people who have not been at ease with the system or their parties to her party. Economic crisis in France, political corruption and search of many French for a new party have been of service to Le Pen.[29]

One of the areas where Le Pen is powerful is the fact that she has managed to bring together right extremists under the same roof while drawing individuals who do not have radical opinions to her party. Even though she expressed that when she comes to power, she will ban same-sex marriage, her party has more homosexual members than other political parties. Even the closest advisor of Le Pen is a homosexual. Homosexuals defines the situation as; economy has a greater problem than the others and massive Muslim oriented immigration worries them the most.[30]

Far-right in France has had its share from populist discourse. For example, while Le Pen has refused feminism, which she has regarded as an instrument of leftists and stood clear from subjects like gender quotas in politics, she advocates that Muslims admitted to the country harm women's rights in France.[31]

Le Pen plays upon public fears, which is one of the features of populism. For instance, in 2015 she released three pictures of ISIS' terrifying massacres via Twitter, to intimidate people against Muslims.[32]

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29 Gizem Araz, "Marine Le Pen'in Önlemez Yükselişi", *Uluslararası Politika Akademisi*, http://politikaakademisi.org/2014/10/22/marine-le-penin-onlenemez-yukselisi/, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

30 Will Chalk, "Fransa'da Aşırı Sağcı Marine Le Pen'e Eşcinsellerden de Destek Var", *BBC*, http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-39666412, (Date of Accession: 05.01.2019).

31 Angelique Chrisafis-Kate Connolly-Angela Giuffrida, "From Le Pen to Alice Weidel: How the European Far-right Set Its Sights on Women", *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2019/jan/29/from-le-pen-to-alice-weidel-how-the-european-far-right-set-its-sights-on-women, (Date of Accession: 25.02.2019).

32 Agence France-Presse, "Marine Le Pen Charged for Posting Violent Isis Images on Twitter", *The Guardian,* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/01/marine-le-pen-charged-for-posting-violent-isis-images-on-twitter, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

The French have been influenced by migration crisis like other European societies and this is reflected in politics. According to a survey conducted by PWE research Centre in 2016, 70% of French people are not satisfied with EU's way of dealing with migration, 66% with EU's economic policies and 47% with the EU itself.[33] Le Pen, who is aware of this dissatisfaction, established her policies accordingly.

Islamophobic attacks occurred in France in 2015 with the impact of Syrian crisis and ISIS attacks increased 500% compared to the previous year.[34] In local elections held in the same year, remarkable increase of the vote rate of the National Front proves that Islamophobia has strengthened Le Pen. By receiving 28% of total votes, the party became the first party in the first round.[35] Although the party was not successful in the second round of elections, it is obvious that these elections are a remarkable success for Le Pen

In January 2017, Le Pen came together with leaders of right extremist parties taking place in EP, such as Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland-AfD) leader Frauke Petry, Matteo Salvini, leader of Northern League (Lega Nord-LN) in Italy and Geert Wilders, leader of Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid- PVV).  During the meetings, Le Pen stated that she appreciated Brexit and the election of Trump and believed that these events will set off a domino effect which will demolish current order.[36]

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33 Bruce Stokes, "Euroskepticism Beyond Brexit", *Pew Research Center*, http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/06/07/euroskepticism-beyond-brexit/, (Date of Accession: 28.02.2019).

34 Enes Bayraklı, "Fransa'da İslamofobik Saldırılar 2015 Yılında Yüzde 500 Arttı". *Siyaset, Ekonomi ve Toplum Araştırmaları Vakfı (SETA),* https://www.setav.org/fransada-islamofobik-saldirilar-2015-yilinda-yuzde-500-artti/, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

35 "Fransa'da Yerel Seçimlerden Aşırı Sağ Zaferle Çıktı", *Deutsche Welle*, http://www.dw.com/tr/fransada-yerel-se%C3%A7imlerden-a%C5%9F%C4%B1r%C4%B1-sa%C4%9F-zaferle-%C3%A7%C4%B1kt%C4%B1/a-18898573, (Date of Accession: 05.01.2018).

36 "Avrupalı Aşırı Sağcılar Almanya'nın Koblenz Kentinde Buluştu", *Euronews*, https://tr.euronews.com/2017/01/21/avrupali-asiri-sagcilar-almanya-nin-koblenz-kentinde-bulustu, (Date of Accession: 26.02.2019).

## *2017 FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION*

The importance of French presidential elections held in 2017 is the fact that these elections not only sealed France's fate but also the EU's. The major candidates in these elections were anti-European Unionist Le Pen and pro-European Unionist Emmanuel Macron. It should be remembered that the EU was born out of the friendship of Germany and France. The Union, which was shaken by Brexit, would either entirely transform if France left or this situation would be the deathblow for the EU.

French president is elected according to a two-round election system. According to this, if a candidate gets more than half of the votes in the first round, election is completed after the first round. Otherwise, 2 candidates getting most of the votes in the first round will qualify for the second round. The first round of elections was held on 23 April 2017 and 10 candidates participated in this round. The leading candidates were Le Pen and Macron. Le Pen is an experienced politician who used to work as a lawyer and entered politics through her father. Le Pen was a regional councillor in 1998 and became a member of EP in 2004, and in 2011 she became the leader of the National Front and ran for presidency in 2012. Discharge of Jean-Marie Le Pen due to inappropriate discourses in 2015 proved that Le Pen brought the party into a new path, which is far more modern and able to draw further people. Le Pen sides with radical and protectionist economic decisions. According to this, France must leave the EU and abolish Euro system and return to Frank. For Le Pen, this situation symbolises re-birth of French economy. In addition, production should be localised, and more taxes should be collected from companies that manufacture abroad.[37]

Le Pen wants to abolish dual citizenship applied in France. She gives the example of Israel and indicates that Jews need to make a choice
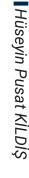
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37 Kazım Keskin-Hacı Mehmet Boyraz, "Fransa'da Aşırı Sağın Yükselişi ve Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimleri", *SETA*, 200, April 2017, p. 8-20.

between France and Israel and this rule should apply for all countries except for Russia and EU member states. Le Pen also advocates that France's current migration policies are "too generous".[38]

Le Pen's policies can be summarised as "temporarily suspending migration", "closing Islamist mosques", "France's leaving the EU (Frexit)", "withdrawing from NATO's army", and "prioritising France's interests". Le Pen refuses far-right label and defines herself as "patriot".[39]

Macron, the other pioneering candidate of elections, joined the Socialist Party in 2001, became the Deputy Secretary General of the Élysée in 2012, and worked as Minister the Minister of Economy and Finance from 2014 to 2016. After having differences of opinion with the President and the Prime Minister, he founded En Marche (On the Move) party on 6 April 2016 and resigned from his duty to run for president on 30 August 2016. Macron expresses himself as "neither rightist nor leftist". In addition to this, his discourse is closer to liberal left. Unlike Le Pen, Macron advocates that the EU and NATO institutions are necessary for permanent peace in Europe and therefore these institutions should be strengthened. While Le Pen wants to limit migration to France with 10.000 people, Macron believes that more refugees can be received since it can make positive contribution to French economy. Macron intends to liberalise French economy. Strengthening of Euro zone, preparing stimulus packages and cutting French public spending can be examples of this situation.[40]

While Macron and Le Pen have different agendas, these two leaders also have common features. According to this, two leaders are

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38 "Le Pen: French Jews will have to Give Up Israeli Citizenship", *World Bulletin*, https://www.worldbulletin. net/europe/le-pen-french-jews-will-have-to-give-up-israeli-citizenship-h184541.html, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

39 Kayhan Karaca, "Macron-Le Pen: Fark Nerede?", *Deutsche Welle,* http://www.dw.com/tr/macron-le-pen-fark-nerede/a-38733319, (Date of Accession: 05.01.2019).

40 Keskin ve Boyraz, *op. cit*, p. 21-23.

millionaires, they see themselves neither in right-wing nor in left-wing and they lead parties that have never been in power before.[41]

It is not a coincidence that two candidates mostly discuss migration and security issues. Since 2015, asylum applications made to France has been regularly on the rise. Although applications made to France is lower than applications made to other European countries like Germany, the consistent surge of the number worries people. In addition, France has suffered more terrorist attacks than many European countries. Due to terrorist attacks occurred between January 2015 and March 2017, more than 320 people lost their lives in France. Right extremists like Le Pen associate this problem with Muslim- dominated migration movements. Moreover, many people joining ISIS and possibility of these people's organising an attack in France raise security concerns of French people.[42]

In the first round of election, Macron took 24% of total votes, and Le Pen took 21.3% of total votes. Additionally, Le Pen took nearly 800.000 more votes compared to previous election.[43]  43% of people voted for Macron expressed that they voted for Macron to prevent Le Pen's coming to power. While Le Pen mainly received votes from the northern and south-eastern parts of France, where unemployment and low wages are more frequently observed, Macron received votes from metropolitans such as Paris and Bordeaux, that are economically powerful and where educated people reside.[44]

After the first round, Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, and German Chancellor Angela Merkel

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41   Tony Cross, "Macron Wins French Presidential Election but Abstentions Highest since 1969", *Radio France Internationale,* http://en.rfi.fr/france/20170507-macron-wins-french-presidential-election-abstentions-highest-1969, (Date of Accession: 26.02.2019).

42   "5 Grafikle Fransa'da Cumhurbaşkanlığı Yarışı", *BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-39210972, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

43   Murat Ünlü, "Fransa'da Aşırı Sağ Oylarda Rekor", *Anadolu Ajansı,* http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/fransada-asiri-sag-oylarda-rekor-/803822, (Date of Accession: 05.01.2019).

44   "Fransa'nın Yeni Cumhurbaşkanı Emmanuel Macron", *BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/live/haberler-dunya-39838424, (Date of Accession: 25.02.2019).

congratulated Macron, while Wilders congratulated Le Pen. For the first time in French presidential election history, centre-right and centre-left candidates could not run for the second round.[45] This demonstrates that French politics has been changing as it is the case in most of the continent.

The second round of elections was held on 7 May 2017. According to election results, Macron received 66% of total votes while Le Pen received 34% of them. According to this result, Macron became the youngest president of French history.[46]

Although Le Pen lost presidential elections, she has kept working. After the elections, she firstly lifted her father's honorary president status in the party and then at the party congress on 11 March 2018, she changed the party's name from the National Front to the National Rally (Rassemblement National-RN). It is thought that this was due to the preparation for EP elections to be held in May 2019. Accordingly, the party name change was made to attract more people to the party, emphasizing that the party was no longer related to the father Le Pen.[47]

Le Pen has started to increase its importance with the impact of protest demonstrations called the yellow vests movement (gilets jaunes) which began due to recent economic problems in France and became too powerful to jeopardise Macron's power. Like right extremists, the protestors do not trust mainstream media and political elites. Although the protests have nothing to do with radical right, people from both extreme groups also have taken part in these demonstrations. Since there is no

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45 "Fransa Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimi: Macron ve Le Pen İkinci Tura Kaldı", *BBC*, https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-39687576, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

46 "As it Happened: Pro-EU Macron Wins Key French Presidential Election", *France 24*, https://www.france24.com/en/20170507-liveblog-live-france-presidential-election-macron-le-pen-second-round-run-off, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

47 "Fransız Aşırı Sağında Yeni İsim: Ulusal Birlik", *Euronews*, https://tr.euronews.com/2018/03/11/frans-z-as-r-sagc-partinin-ad-degisiyor, (Date ofAccession: 01.03.2019).

hierarchy in the group, people get organized through social media and everyone can join in these demonstrations, it will be easy for individuals with radical opinions to infiltrate into this group.[48] Le Pen supported the demonstrations of yellow vests and indicated that this movement was a "revolution" against Macron's policies.[49]

Like in other countries, right extremists in France have not only targeted Muslims. Jewish cemetery attack occurred on 19 February 2019, which is presumed to be organised by a group within yellow vests, demonstrates that anti-Semitism has exacerbated just as anti-Muslim sentiments. According to a survey, while there were 311 anti-Semitism attacks in 2017, this number increased to 541 in 2018. In other words, anti-Semitism in France rose 74% in 2018. Jewish cemetery attack was not the first anti-Semitic action of the group since the demonstrators included people denying the Holocaust and shouting anti-Semitic slogans and carrying such banners.[50]

According to a survey conducted by French IFOP Company, with the impact of yellow vests movement, 21% of French people think of voting for Le Pen while 19% think of voting for Macron in EP elections. According to this survey, even though Macron won the election, far-right has been rapidly increasing in France.[51]

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48  Cécile Guerin, "France Has An Antisemitism Problem – and not Just from the Gilets Jaunes", *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/22/france-antisemitism-gilets-jaunes, (Date of Accession: 25.02.2019).

49  Andrew Higgins. (16.12.2018). "France's Far Right Sees Gold in Yellow Vest Movement", *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/16/world/europe/france-national-front-yellow-vests.html, (Date of Accession: 14.09.2019).

50  Cécile Guerin, "France has an Antisemitism Problem – and not Just from the Gilets Jaunes", *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/22/france-antisemitism-gilets-jaunes, (Date of Accession: 25.02.2019).

51  Hüseyin Koyuncu, "Fransız Aşırı Sağ Partisi Avrupa Parlamentosu Seçim Anketinde Önde Gidiyor", *Euronews*, https://tr.euronews.com/2018/11/05/fransiz-asiri-sag-partisi-avrupa-parlamentosu-secim-anketinde-onde-gidiyor, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

## *EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS*

Elections were held in 23 and 26 May 2019 to determine members of European Parliament. EP elections are significant since they determine the future of the EU. The Parliament has the authority to oversee the budget and policies of the EU. According to this, in case of Parliament where far-right parties are influential, these parties will have the potential of disseminating their own policies to the entire EU. Together with the impact of populism, if far-right parties have sufficient vote rate, they may be able to change many internal and external policies of the EU, particularly migration policy, by acting together in the Parliament.[52]

As vote rates of far-right parties have increased in recent years, central parties have invited Europeans to ballot box through various campaigns during 2019 EP elections. Far-right parties took advantage of low voter turnout in previous elections. Similarly, far-right parties sought ways to establish a far-right alliance within EP by holding meetings with each other before the elections.[53]

In the extreme wave of right-wing extremism in Europe, the EP elections also had their share and the far-right parties increased their votes. In a similar way, Green parties has also increased its votes, while votes of parties in central right and central left have decreased.[54]

According to Macron, EP elections were a struggle between "Europe-friendly progressives and Eurosceptic far-right nationalists". In the elections, the National Rally received 23,31% of total votes and became the top-rated party in France and took half million more votes compared

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52 "European Elections", *The Official Page of the European Parliament,* https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/elections, (Date of Accession: 01.03.2019).

53 "European Elections 2019: What We Know", *BBC,* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48415362, (Date of Accession: 18.09.2019).

54 Yusuf Hatip, "Far-Right, Greens Strengthen in European Election", Anadolu Agency, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/far-right-greens-strengthen-in-european-election/1489899, (Date of Accession: 10.09.2019).

to previous elections. According to election results, Le Pen's party won 22 seats in the Parliament, while Macron's party won 21 seats. Total number of seats in the Parliament is 751.[55] According to Korkmaz, the migration policies of the EU and anti-EU sentiment in the country underlies Le Pen's success.[56]

According to EP election results, 170 out of 751 seats, 23% of the Parliament, won by anti-immigrant, populist and far-right parties. Even though these parties have not reached a consensus among themselves, there is a potential cooperation.

Although the far right in the EP elections increased their votes, this increase has not occurred at the expected level. In fact, pro-Europeans still have the majority in the Parliament. Bayraklı has pointed out that the reason why far-right parties could not receive votes as expected is that more pro-European liberal and left-wing voters are going to polls. While voter turnout in 2014 EP elections was 42%, this rate has risen to 51% in these elections.[57] According to Alkan, the reason underlying the increase in EP elections is Brexit crisis and the European support of the EU after this crisis.[58]

In June 2019, Le Pen and Salvini joined their forces and established the first right-wing group in EP. This far-right group founded under the name of "Identity and Democracy" has 73 seats and this number makes

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55  Angelique Chrisafis, "EU Vote Confirms French Far-right as Macron's Main Opposition", *The Guardian*, 27 May 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/27/eu-vote-confirms-french-far-right-marine-le-pen-national-rally-as-emmanuel-macron-main-opposition, (Date of Accession: 10.09.2019).

56  Nuri Korkmaz, "Avrupa Parlamentosu Seçimleri ve Yeni Avrupa'yı Tahayyül Etmek", *ANKASAM*, https://ankasam.org/avrupa-parlamentosu-secimleri-ve-yeni-avrupayi-tahayyul-etmek/, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2019).

57  Enes Bayraklı, "AP Seçimlerinde Şaşırtıcı Sonuçlar! Seçmen Hangi Mesajı Verdi?", *SETA*, https://www.setav.org/ap-secimlerinde-sasirtici-sonuclar-secmen-hangi-mesaji-verdi/, (Date of Accession: 18.09.2019).

58  Özge Eletek, "Aşırı Sağ ve Popülizm Tamtamları Arasında Avrupa Parlamentosu Seçimi", *Ankara Kriz ve Siyaset Araştırmaları Merkezi (ANKASAM)*, https://ankasam.org/asiri-sag-ve-populizm-tamtamlari-arasinda-avrupa-parlamentosu-secimi/, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2019).

this group the largest far-right group in the European Parliament and the largest 5th group in the Parliament.[59]

In this group, there are nationalist deputies from Germany's AfD, Austria, Finland and Denmark. Le Pen has suggested that this group will change the balance in the EU.[60] The group has officially declared its focus is creating job opportunities and growth, increasing security, tackling illegal immigration, and making the EU less bureaucratic.[61]

# CONCLUSION

Examining France as a sample, power of the National Rally party and Le Pen is clearly seen. The party which has taken place in French politics for a long time has gone through a major transformation after Le Pen, and together with the impact of migration movements and populism as well as this transformation, it has achieved to bring together right-wing voters under its roof.

As can be seen from the surveys utilized in this study, increasing vote rate of the National Rally in the recent years is a result of the discontent felt against the EU and central parties in many European countries. Even though leaders and voters close to far-right do not define themselves as fascists or right extremists, they take action against foreigners in their countries and especially Muslims. Le Pen's security and migration policies also reflect this situation.

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59  Jennifer Rankin, "MEPs Create Biggest Far-right Group in European Parliament", *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/13/meps-create-biggest-far-right-group-in-european-parliament, (Date of Accession: 14.09.2019).

60  Alissa de Carbonnel, "France's Le Pen Unveils New Far-Right European Parliament Group", *Reuters*, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-jobs-lepen/frances-le-pen-unveils-new-far-right-european-parliament-group-idUSKCN1TE1IG, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2019).

61  "Parliament Group Priorities: Identity and Democracy", *The Official Page of the European Parliament*, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20190712STO56963/parliament-group-priorities-identity-and-democracy, (Date of Accession: 15.09.2019).

## ISING FAR-RIGHT IN FRANCE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NATIONAL FRONT

*Hüseyin Pusat KİLDİŞ*

The 2017 French presidential elections are important in terms of understanding far-right in Europe, especially in France. If Le Pen had won these elections, the EU might have no longer existed. Even if Le Pen lost the election, the current situation shows that far-right in France powerful enough to jeopardize the EU itself. Le Pen received one vote out of three in the second round; this means that one French citizen out of three supports Le Pen's opinions or at least he/she is close to the thoughts of Le Pen.

The EP elections, on the other hand, demonstrate that Le Pen has gained strength even if she lost presidential elections. Besides, Le Pen is not alone in EP. By allying with other far-right parties within the Parliament, she formed a new far-right group, and she, maybe, will be the face of this group. All these developments prove that Le Pen is a threat not only for France but the entire EU.

Le Pen is a successful politician, who keeps pace with changes, knows French people well and benefits from people's weaknesses. She even discards her father since she believes he harms the party. This proves how ambitious and unflinching leader she is. In addition, dismissal of father Le Pen from the party by her daughter is remarkable in terms of the connection between fascism and far-right. Even though fascism cannot find followers for itself under the name of fascism, it can find supporters only by supressing its edges under the name of far-right. This is embodied in Le Pen's dismissing her father from the party, transformation of the party to anti-Islam, which is more popular than anti-Semitism, and her more modern opinions compared to her father's.

As a result, although Le Pen lost the presidential elections, she becomes stronger every day. Le Pen is one of the few people who can be the new face of far-right rising in Europe. No matter what radical opinions she has, her ability to take the pulse of society distinguishes her from her rivals.

From social constructivist theory perspective, radical right cannot only be degraded to dealing with migration waves. The wave of Islamophobia beginning with 9/11 attacks rose with migration movements and this has embodied the relation between "Muslims" and "others", "French people" and "migrants" in Western countries like France. Parallel rise of Islamophobia, populist discourses and far-right prove that these concepts take power from each other. In short, even though far-right has recently attracted attention, in fact, this has developed in many years. Therefore, without analysing and understanding this ideology and taking due measures, it seems impossible that this ideology disappears in a short while.

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