

2021

The Failure of Europe's Social Contract and its Impact on the Rise of the Right Wing: Germany and UK Case Study

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Recommended Citation

Hazimeh, Wisam; Prius, Wendy; and Al-Khraisha, Mohammed (2021) "The Failure of Europe's Social Contract and its Impact on the Rise of the Right Wing: Germany and UK Case Study," *Jerash for Research and Studies Journal* *مجلة جرش للبحوث والدراسات* Vol. 22 : Iss. 1 , Article 23.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/jpu/vol22/iss1/23>

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Cover Page Footnote

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The Failure of Europe's Social Contract and its Impact on the Rise of the Right Wing: Germany and UK Case Study

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Received Date: 9/7/2020

Acceptance Date: 1/10/2020

Abstract

Homegrown terrorism, or domestic terrorism, has been on the rise in correlation with the number of refugee and migrant populations within Europe. Not only has radical Islamist terrorism become prevalent, but alongside this trend, Europeans find that far-right extremism is a mirrored manifestation of extremist Islamist ideology. While Europe fails to properly address the root causes of this crisis, European states propel further into individual identity crises that fester into extremism. Prejudice, divisive policies, and sectarianism leave societies to find legitimacy elsewhere as the harmonic order and social contract within society fails, and people revert to smaller factions as they cannot reap the benefits of a functioning social contract. This article utilizes Jean-Jacque Rousseau's social contract theory to analyze how a society that does not sufficiently adapt to multiculturalism and diversity, leads to extremist pockets in the long run. The analysis conducted draws upon statistical data from the European Commission's research on extremism within the Union, as well as scholarly research on identity theory and terrorism.

Keywords: Social contract, Terrorism, European identity, Extremism, Right wing.

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states, as seen with the UK's referendum which has now inspired stronger populist movements across Europe – the EU seems to be belittling the festering conflicts of nationalism and identity within European states.

Homegrown terrorism is a phenomenon that has become all the more prevalent in recent years throughout Europe. The scenario of European born and raised citizens carrying out attacks against their own home is seen more often than ever. What is it that motivates someone to commit violence against the country in which they live? This research will question whether the conflict of identity has any role in this multinational predicament effecting the EU and will delve further into the root causes of such ideological violence. Finally, a sub-question is posed of whether European citizens are drawn more towards the unifying ideology of extremist organizations over their nation due to the fragmented social contract within EU member states, thus exposing a profound identity crisis that manifests as extremism. For clarity, the term "extremist organization" applies to groups holding a range of ideologies from populism, to Islamism, to nationalist agendas, and so on.

The failure of the social contract is a phenomenon where the state fails to maintain order of those under its control, whether that be maintaining a just economic, social, or political order. Such a failure incites societies to rebel or find legitimacy elsewhere as the harmonic order within society is lost and the various sects that people connect to, divide society against one another. Essentially, there is no single body that society feels connected to. There is no feeling of nationality or national pride, and individuals revert to smaller factions for comfort and connection due to the fact that they are not reaping the benefits of an overarching social contract.

Germany is one of the largest acceptors of refugees and migrants ever since the onset of the Syrian refugee crisis in 2016. However, as more and more migrants attempt to integrate themselves into German society, they are finding further difficulty as integration programs fail to properly assimilate these new members of German society. Therefore, the world has witnessed multiple attacks carried about by German citizens against the homeland. As migrants are mistreated by Germans for their differences, is this phenomenon of German citizens attacking their own homeland an explicit example of the failure of the social contract? When it comes to the UK, the United Kingdom has witnessed a rapidly escalating presence of the far-right, ever since the refugee crisis. The rhetoric of these groups was manipulated into a successful Brexit campaign and to this day, Britain's minority populations struggle to unify with the British identity as divisive rhetoric escalates along with the presence of the far-right in Britain.

Literature Review

When it comes to the existing scholarly literature on this topic, in relation to Islamism and the far-right movement, many scholars have already discussed Islamist movements and the rise in nationalism, as well as the far-right in Europe. Primarily, these subjects have been discussed individually, however, in Virginie Andre's article "Merah and Breivik: A Reflection of the European Identity Crisis" she connects the far-right movement with Islamism and correlates it with the EU identity crisis. Andre focuses on the attacks in Norway and France by Anders Behring Breivik and Mohamed Merah, as well as the Charlie Hebdo attack. Her theory is that even while the impact of social media and the internet does play a role in the radicalization process; this exposes larger, deep-rooted issues that exist in today's Europe. Those larger problems being a profound identity crisis that manifests as Islamist extremism in some regions of Europe, and far-right extremism in other regions. Furthermore, Virginie Andre focuses on highlighting the interconnectivity of Islamism and the far-right, even going as far to call them "mirrored manifestations of an identity crisis in Europe"¹.

The theory of Martin Mycielski's article, "The Crisis of European Identity and Awakening of Civil Society," is that the European Union is focusing on the creation of a supranational European identity while attempting to de-legitimize the awakening of civil society within European member states. He argues that the EU is ignoring the regional conflicts within nations and as a result of this, Euroscepticism and nationalism are gaining traction. Furthermore, national institutions are failing to gain the trust of the citizen population, just as the EU is losing the trust of European citizens. This source provides an outlet for conversation on the failure of the EU and national governments in meeting the needs of its citizens, thus allowing for citizens to turn to extremist organizations for what their governmental bodies fail to provide them².

This third source is primarily concerned with the psychological and sociological factors that motivate someone to turn to an extremist group. Jerrold M. Post analyzes a wide variety of extremist groups and emphasizes the point that citizens turn to extremist groups to belong to something that is greater than themselves. He theorizes that the fight or flight response that all humans are born with is a major factor of the radicalization process. Post theorizes that when citizens feel threatened by either their own state or other extremist groups, they will do whatever it takes to defend themselves – even if that means becoming an extremist themselves³.

Charlotte Galpin, Paul Thomas, Pete Sanderson, Douglas B. Klusmeyer and Stefanie Sinclair all analyze the situation within specific European nations.

Charlotte Galpin and Stefanie Sinclair both discuss Germany's recent move towards a stronger national identity. Galpin analyzes the conflicts the nation has been faced with presently and how such dilemmas have strengthened its national identity, furthermore, why that has caused Germany to "fall out of love with Europe." Stefanie Sinclair creates an analysis of Germany by discussing the ways in which Germany has been attempting to strengthen its national identity but at the detriment of minority populations. Sinclair specifically speaks about the German "headscarf" debate and the Ludin Case in regard to how such conflicts convey that German policies associate minorities with extremism and "irreconcilable difference"⁴. Douglas B. Klusmeyer also discusses Germany but does so by focusing on Germany as a case study for inclusion in European society. Klusmeyer analyzes the struggles that Germany has in creating a sense of nationalism within a society with such a diverse citizen population. It also creates a link between the rise in hate crimes and extremist politics, and the rising rates of diversity in the German population, by analyzing trends from as far into the past as WWII⁵. Paul Thomas and Pete Sanderson use the UK as their focus and discuss the lack of a national British identity within minority groups in the UK. This article examines the UK's extremist prevention programs such as the recent prioritization of Community Cohesion. It views the UK's initiatives with a critical eye and analyzes the British identity, as well as the impact of multiculturalism on British society and what this implies for policy⁶.

Max Haller and Regina Ressler examine the relevance of national identity in Europe amidst all the nationalistic forces and regional movements. Based on this, they ask what the role of a supranational Europe is in their article, "National and European Identity – A study of their meanings and interrelationships." This source provides the final paper with a platform to discuss the connection between societal issues, to be more specific, the connection between homegrown extremism and national identity on a broader level. Furthermore, the role that the European identity has despite all these factors⁷. Catherine E. De Vries and Erica E. Edwards discuss the link between extremist groups in the EU and Euroscepticism in their article. They theorize that today's political climate has increased the presence of extremist political groups from all ends of the spectrum. Furthermore, that such groups exploit the public's uncertainty in the European Union, in order to push forward their agendas⁸. The authors research is not limited to right wing extremism alone but considers left wing parties as well. Daniel Koehler furthers this particular subject by analyzing the terror attacks conducted by such right-wing extremists throughout Europe. He studies the strategies of such extremist groups in furthering their ideologies and what this means for Europe's future⁹.

This study's contribution is that it will investigate the state of national identity within Germany and the United Kingdom. It will then correlate this with how national identity corresponds with minority populations, this includes whether the identity is welcoming towards those that do not fit the existing concept of identity or not and how this contributes to trends of ideological violence. The analysis will utilize the previously mentioned scholarly works as well as data sets to create a qualitative and quantitative case study that will add to the existent conversation of identity and terrorism within the European Union. This will then be used to either support or disprove the theory that a supranational European identity is unfeasible within Europe's social and political climate today.

Methodological Plan

This study has been conducted through a neopositivist comparative case study. The analysis and conclusions have been made through a reliance on statistical data collected from both scholarly and research outlets. One specific outlet that has been utilized for data collection focusing on the analysis of societal aspects of European member states and public opinion is the *Eurobarometer*. The *Eurobarometer* is a public opinion survey conducted by the European Commission throughout its member states twice a year. Another that was consulted is the "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (2017)" from Europol, for its statistics on terrorism in European nations.

The independent variable in this study is national identity. There is difficulty in successfully pinpointing this variable, therefore the *Eurobarometer* will be used to obtain factual information and data sets concerning public opinion in European states. The dependent variable in this study is homegrown terrorism as the causes of homegrown terrorism are the focus of this paper. This paper's theory is that nationalism is what alters rates in homegrown terrorism, furthermore, it is presumed to vary from European state to state. As a result of this, such alterations will be analyzed through the independent variable of national identity. The case studies to be followed are Germany and the United Kingdom. These countries have been chosen specifically due to factors such as cultural and regional fractionalization within the state, trends in separatist ideals, migration, political parties, as well as others.

The Social Contract, Identity, and Extremism

According to Europol's 2017 Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TESAT), more than 5,000 individuals from the EU are believed to have traveled to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Individuals from Belgium, France, Germany, and the UK account for majority of this total, similar to what was seen in 2015 as well¹⁰. The growing far-right movement and Islamism are connected

on many more levels than one would initially assume. Such extremist movements are manifestations of a deep-seated identity crisis. Europe is at a loss on how to properly address the place of Islam within its changing social, cultural, religious and demographic landscape; otherwise known as its social contract. As leaders scramble to fix the ever-growing complexity of the situation, matters are only worsened as there is the long-held belief that the needs must be met of each individual/separate ethnic group, rather than addressing the situation as a concern of a community and common identities¹¹. For example, in Britain during the early 2000s, there was a push for community cohesion policies when approaching the subject of racism. This included focusing on inter-ethnic contact and community engagement, through the belief that “anti-racism” initiatives since the early 1980s have unintentionally hardened separate identities. However, this initiative went back on its intentions following the 7/7 terror attacks with the establishment of the Prevent policy agenda. Prevent’s anti-terror strategies took a sole focus on Britain’s Muslim populations, creating an “us vs. them” environment¹².

The United States led “War on Terror” following the September 11th attacks and the far-right’s exploitation of Islam as the enemy has given Islam a new visibility in today’s world. Islamophobia is the result of a mix of such variables and the adoption of illiberal policies such as the banning of headscarves in some EU states, including France and Belgium. European Muslims, as a result of such factors, feel marginalized and stigmatized, thus provoking radicalization in turn. Furthermore, these trends lead European Muslims to feel disconnected from their European society and are led to find connection and acceptance elsewhere. These defensive reactions towards one another are a natural response to when the social contract within a society is under threat. For example, as the influx of refugees grow, this is seen as a threat by those within the society as they assume this would topple the balance of power that is the essence of the social contract. There is an inherent fear that these “outsiders” will outnumber those that identify with the social contract and the national identity - and thus cause the disintegration of the social contract and national identity.

Virginie Andre emphasizes the harms of such a disconnect, “While some young European Muslims find a sense of belonging and an affirmation of their identity in Islamic extremism, as is particularly indicated by the number going to fight alongside the Islamic State in Syria, European governments have hardened their policies and Muslims are becoming increasingly securitized”¹³. Due to the bristling of European states towards its population of European Muslims, as shown through their adoption of prejudice regulations such as the headscarf ban, European Muslims leave the environment that is hostile to them and move elsewhere to find acceptance from those that identify with them in their fight to

belong. To worsen this situation, European governments only become more hostile and adopt stricter legislation, instead of acting to better the situation of Muslims in Europe. Furthermore, anti-Islam movements are not on the fringe of society anymore, they have come to the forefront of European society through radical populist far-right movements and are gaining more and more popularity and visibility in political life. These movements are advocating for a return to and the preservation of national identities, to do this they are channeling “anti-Muslim sentiment and resentment of the multiculturalism, ongoing austerity measures and high unemployment rates”¹⁴. Such destructive discourse finds its resonance with ordinary European citizens who feel disadvantaged and overlooked by local governments, especially those with conflicts that could easily be directed towards a scapegoat, in this case the scapegoat being minority populations.

Islamist extremism and the rise of the far-right are reactionary movements, they gain traction and fuel from one another and only exist as a result of each other. They have been born out of the failure of democratic societies to meet the changing social landscape of Europe. To bring in exigency into this subject, 2017’s *Standard Eurobarometer* 87 included a question that asked European member states to rate what they believe to be the two most important issues facing the Union, at the time of the research. Results concluded that terrorism was given the highest rating across all EU nations, besides a handful such as Denmark and Germany, rating terrorism second to immigration¹⁵. Furthermore, the Islamist and far-right movements are growing stronger and more violent by the passing day as exemplified through the terror attacks that both sides execute to make fear grow within the European populations in order to foster more support for their own causes. An example of this phenomenon is prevalent in the 2011 Norway attacks when Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik committed two acts of terror as a protest against multiculturalism and the Islamic faith that he saw as a threat to the country of Norway and to European Christian civilization overall.

Case Studies

I. Germany

In response to the recent crises affecting the European Union, Germany has moved towards a stronger national identity and interests, with the German population viewing such problems solely as a *European* crisis. In recent years, the German population has been faced with debate on the “normalization” of a European identity within Germany, amongst an emergence of a more self-confident German national identity. According to Charlotte Galpin, Germany has moved towards pursuing policies of open self-interest in lieu of the common

"European" interest. Galpin further theorizes in her article that the Eurozone crisis that has been presumed to exacerbate this desire for Germany to pursue policies that are directly beneficial to the homeland, with Germany's reluctance to contribute large sums of money to protect the Euro further proving her point¹⁶.

Germany has wrestled with the question of what it means to be German, who is included and who isn't in that social contract, ever since it's unification. As any other liberal democracy of its time, the nation has confronted societal problems of xenophobia, nationalistic right-wing movements, political extremism, and so on¹⁷. All throughout this, Germans still to this day are divided multiple ways on where to draw the boundaries of their national community. In 2010, nearly all respondents to *Eurobarometer 71* stated that they feel they share the national identity of the country they live in, as a percentage that chalks up to 94%, compared to 85% percent of Germans stating that they do feel that they are European as well. To define this concept of German national identity, Germans were asked in *Eurobarometer 71* what they believed to constitute "being German." 39% of Germans stated that to be German one had to be born in Germany, 30% replied that one could feel that they are German, and 57% stated that mastery of the German language was a necessary trait. Furthermore, 61% of Germans believe that people from other ethnic groups enrich Germany's culture, rather than diminish its identity¹⁸.

Even while these statistics are seemingly positive at first glance, Germany continues to struggle with xenophobia and the growth of extreme nationalism in the midst of Europe's political climate today. With Europe's so-called migration "crisis" in recent years, German public opinion and the nation's social climate evolved as shown in 2017's *Standard Eurobarometer 87*. When Germans were asked what they believed to be the most important factor facing Germany, immigration was the number one most frequently mentioned and terrorism was a close second¹⁹. When looking at statistics, terror was in fact extremely prevalent at the time the survey was conducted, in 2016 alone 135 people were killed in "jihadist terrorist attacks" in the EU, in total 13 terrorist attacks were reported and out of the 13, 4 of them occurred in Germany, 4 in Belgium, and 5 in France. On December 19th, 2016, a truck drove into a Christmas market in Berlin, killing 12 and injuring 56 people. The Islamic State claimed responsibility and called the attacker, a Tunisian national who had arrived in Europe 5 years earlier, a "soldier" who "carried out the attack in response to calls to target citizens of the *international coalition*"²⁰.

One of the keyways in which terror can be combatted from its roots is through proper integration of minority populations within a European social contract. While homegrown terrorists have been shown to spawn from second or third generation migrant families, the fact of the matter is that they were not

properly or effectively integrated within European society to the point that grievances stemming from marginalization were entirely snuffed out²¹. When looking at extremist propaganda today, Islamist groups cater to those that are left to their own devices within a “Western” community, targeting those that feel alone or subjugated to the “white man.” Propaganda messaging effectively exploits the disconnect that immigrants feel within their country. The organizations utilize rhetoric such as “soldier” to provide attackers with a sense of security and belonging with their newfound group and polarizing them by emphasizing that the “*international coalition*” is against them and is their enemy – everyone is their enemy, but their group.

Thus, to combat the effectivity of propaganda messaging and online recruitment of individuals, integration needs to be given upmost importance in order to decrease trends in terrorism – both Islamist and right-wing as the two work hand in hand. In order to do this, a strong social contract that equally addresses all members of society is necessary and this can only be achieved through measures that address social cohesion. This includes the dismantling of prejudice regulations, social programs that provides lower income neighborhoods with opportunities to climb the social ladder, effective integration programs for migrant families so that integration is achieved early on within migrant generations, and so on.

On July 24, 2016, a 27-year-old Syrian detonated a suicide bomb in Ansbach, killing himself and 12 other people, injuring 3 others severely. The man had entered Germany in 2014 and applied for asylum only to be denied a year later, he had been allowed to stay in Germany anyway because of the war in Syria. He had been known to the police because of two failed attempts to kill himself, as well as being enrolled in psychiatric care. After the attack, he was called a soldier of IS by the A’maq News Agency, also stating that he had been responding to the groups calls to target countries part of the US-led coalition in Syria and Iraq²². Such an occurrence exemplifies the efficiency of targeting mistreated refugees and immigrants, while Germany fails in integrating and unifying its population, they are providing extremist organizations the ability to effectively recruit those that feel like outcasts.

Not only has Germany failed to properly integrate minority groups into society, but it has gone so far to even enact discriminatory legislation, further separating them from German society. Take the Ludin Case for example, the German ministry judged Fereshta Ludin to be abusing her position as a teacher by refusing to remove her hijab when teaching. Their concern was that Ludin would manipulate her pupils into accepting Islamic fundamentalist ideas. Furthermore, her refusal was interpreted by the ministry to be an act of intolerance and “political instrumentalization of a religious symbol,” one that is

harmful to processes of integration and a threat to the social peace of Germany. This case led to a domino effect across Germany's federated states, one that went from banning teachers from wearing headscarves, to a ban that included civil servants, to one that accumulated in the banning of full-face veils in schools, polling stations, universities, and finally government offices in early 2017²³.

Germany has stated that after a 2011 investigation into the National-Sozialistischer Untergrund (NSU - National Socialist Underground), as well as more investigations into groups such as the Old School Society in 2015, that the growing formation of right-wing terrorist networks cannot be excluded from having the same public attention and severity level of Islamist extremism. Especially following the increase in attacks in 2016, such as the detonation of two explosives in April at two asylum seeker homes in Freital, and another one at an "alternative living project" in Dresden by 5 members of Gruppe Freital. Right wing extremist activities, such as crimes against asylum accommodation are often committed by individuals or loosely coordinated networks/groups. However, a high number of perpetrators of these attacks remain unknown²⁴, due to the fact that right wing extremism is not given the same visibility or importance as Islamism. This is conveyed through how every attack in Germany mentioned earlier was given extensive media attention and the attackers were found and named, as well as having their entire background and ethnicity specified - whereas the same is not done with RWE. A national statistic from 2016 states that practically 50% of all known right-wing extremists in Germany are prone to violence. Such a fact is proven by the increased number of attempted murders, as well as the use of explosives and incendiary devices against migrants and migrant shelters in 2016. Furthermore, the same statistic includes that Germany also faces a rapidly increasing number of first-time offenders who had previously been unknown to authorities as extremists. Following the migration crisis of 2015, Germany has resumed border controls and improved checks which have led to decreasing numbers of new migrants in 2016, however xenophobic and racist criminal acts continue to escalate in number and degree of violence²⁵.

II. The United Kingdom

Understanding the concept of the "Ummah" in the Islamic faith is key to understanding the unity that Muslims feel with the global community of those identifying with Islam. This is especially prevalent when considering the social discrimination that Muslim communities face in Western society. Muslims view themselves as a part of a global community and when their counterparts face disenfranchisement abroad, it further isolates them at home as they view Islam as under attack both at home *and* abroad²⁶. According to *Eurobarometer 71*,

only 52% of respondents stated that minority groups enrich the cultural life of the UK, 57% responded that people from other ethnic groups lead to insecurity and 59% believes that the presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment²⁷. To go further, 57% of the public polled in favor of a burka ban in 2016²⁸. Such discriminatory attitudes conveyed through 2017's *Eurobarometer 71* show that the nationalistic attitudes of the British public that carried the Britain through a successful Brexit vote are still existent in society even after the Brexit vote.

The British population seemingly voted in favor of leaving the European Union without knowing full well what the vote would imply for the future of the United Kingdom. 2017's *Eurobarometer* reported that 46% stated that Britain would better face the future outside of the EU, 39% disagreed and 15% said they did not know²⁹. It is now a widely acknowledged fact that the campaigns on either side of the debate leading up to Brexit touted misinformation, barely discussed key topics, and by nature of both the Leave and Remain campaigns, left the British public in confusion³⁰. The Leave campaign had a budget of 7 million Euros to spend on their campaign, with three additional Leave campaign affiliated sources spending a prohibited combined total of 757,750 Euros as coordination between campaigns is illegal under UK electoral law. The money the campaign utilized came from and went to firms and companies with specialties in psychological warfare and propaganda³¹.

British politician Michael Gove made unfounded claims that resonated with those desiring stricter immigration laws, stating that Turkey will soon be joining the EU, leading "millions of people" to flock to the UK³².

After the Brexit vote, right wing extremists believed they were now liberated to advocate for their agenda on a much more public scale, they perceived that by such a vote, they now had the perfect opportunity to infiltrate and manipulate public opinion. In December of 2016, the UK proscribed a right-wing extremist group for the first time: labeling the National Action group as the most active and well-organized RWE group in the country, following the groups increased recruitment campaigns and attendance to other RWE events as compared to 2015. Also, since the referendum there has been a sharp increase (41%) in the number of racially and religiously aggravated offences, compared to data from 2015. Furthermore, negative online rhetoric towards migrants, refugees and foreign workers has increased and continues to do so³³.

Right wing extremism has also come on the rise, feeding off the polarization of minority groups in response to factors affecting the EU such as migration and extremist Islamist terrorism, to gain a foothold in society. Such extremists utilize migration and the perceived threat of Islamism as key topics on their agenda.

The deadly June 2016 attack on a Labour Party MP in the UK demonstrated that there is a very real threat coming from the right-wing ideology and such extremists do not necessarily have to have a close connection with extremist groups, but instead could work as lone actors. Based on the June attack and a variety of other physical attacks against politicians that occurred throughout the EU in 2016, public figures, political parties, and such groups have taken a critical view of the right wing ideology and/or advocate for pro-migration policies - however those that do so also realize that they are potential targets of right wing extremism³⁴.

In 2016 alone there was a total of 142 failed, foiled and completed terror attacks reported by eight EU nations - more than half of them (76) were in the United Kingdom. There was also a total of 149 arrests reported by the UK related to extremism, whether they were Islamist, left/right wing, separatist, etc. was not specified. Majority of reported incidents however were related to Northern Ireland and domestic terrorism, instead of Islamist terrorism as primarily reported by other EU states. Although, the UK did report in 2017 an increase in the number of women, families, and minors traveling to conflict zones in Syria and Iraq. Ethno-national and separatist terrorism has also become prevalent in recent years, especially in the UK. In 2016, there was a total of 99 foiled and completed attacks carried out and labeled as ethno-national and separatist terrorism throughout the EU, with 84 arrests on top of that figure. All reported datasets from the UK indicate that the threat of terrorism from Northern Ireland has been raised from "moderate" to "substantial" in 2016³⁵.

Concluding Statements

A social contract in its essence is to provide a society with *equilibrium* – the provision of public order, social justice, and so on. Even more modernly, the social contract sustains equilibrium between the obligations and expectations of the institutions in power and those in the rest of society³⁶. The current state of affairs in European member states are not up to par with what is required of a functioning and adequate social contract. As analyzed in Germany and the UK, when the social contract failed to meet its responsibility to provide a satisfactory life for its people – they responded to the call of extremism. These Islamist and nationalistic groups offer the community what a failed social contract does not provide.

As such, the European Union has a lot to work on in regard to revitalizing the social contracts existent within European member states in such a way that all members of society are satisfied and feel as though they are a legitimate part of that society. Furthermore, these governments must disseminate proper information and keep its citizens better informed of conflicts affecting their

nations so that campaigns run on misinformation are less likely to prove successful, as seen in Brexit's Leave campaign. This conclusion is made due to the fact that through the research this paper has conducted on public opinion in EU member states, many statistics were found to convey a vast misunderstanding of both the EU itself and the critical problems affecting European society, migration most of all. For example, when Europeans were asked if they feel they are well informed about immigration and integration related matters, only a small fraction of the EU population responded that they feel well informed - 37%³⁷. Right wing extremists take advantage of such a lack of understanding in their propaganda messages in order to exploit qualms that citizens feel to their advantage. The migration epidemic affecting the entire European continent and the apparent threat from Islamism have continuously been key topics on the RWE agenda and in turn have been utilized to cater public opinion towards adopting xenophobic and Islamophobic thoughts. Such subjects are exploited to spread fear which is the right wings greatest ally in achieving success. Events such as the Paris 2015 attacks, Berlin in 2016, and Cologne's New Year's Eve 2015/2016 sexual assaults provide the RWE with justification for xenophobic offences, claiming that authorities and the EU failed the public to protect them - so it is the job of right-wing extremists to protect society from these threats³⁸.

Extremism aside, it ultimately comes down to the functionality of the European Union itself and questioning whether the RWE is right in that the EU has failed Europe's civil society. From the EU's conception, it was portrayed as a utopian idea come to life, the solution and end to hundreds of years of destructive conflict through the synergy of forming an exclusive community as a whole, one that is worth more than the sum of its parts alone. Eurosceptics tout the message that this EU community is now crumbling under the weight of its overgrown ambition, however this simply is not true. It is the growing trends of populism, nationalism and the right wing that are symptoms of the demise of the European identity³⁹.

The failure of modern European society to evolve to encompass diversity and inclusion is what truly plagues the EU as the social contracts of these nations are trapped in archaic times. The enemy stems from within the EU, rather than being the entire system of the Union itself. All these trends that are attempting to delegitimize the EU are legitimate complaints of those in civil society that feel they are being left behind by an intangible system, to find a scapegoat - in some cases the scapegoat lies in migrants, in others Islam, and often the EU itself.

Therefore, in conclusion, European nations must reevaluate what they deem to be the norm in their civil society and work to cohesively to create a modern,

constantly evolving society that welcomes diversity and the integration of those of all backgrounds without subjugating anyone to systemic disenfranchisement. Through this, Europe's social contracts will be better evolved to address the modernity of today's society. Furthermore, the overall body of the EU must work on better keeping its citizens informed of its work and fix the misconceptions Europeans have of the EU, in order to repair its reputation. As a result, if this is successfully done then there is a great probability that extremism levels will decrease as national communities will be able to better understand the society they live in, as well as the EU itself. Simultaneously, community cohesion would increase and there would then be less reason for extremist to fester within society in the long run as community cohesion flourishes; as stated earlier, modern social contracts must have a focus on creating community cohesion as a whole rather than satisfying the needs of *individual* groups. There is already legitimate support for such an agenda: when Europeans were asked if the EU needs a clearer message, 81% of Europeans agreed while 11% disagreed⁴⁰. Thus, further understanding of the EU and European society as well as the conflicts affecting it is necessary before taking on larger goals such as establishing a broader European identity, because of the simple fact that as of now, Europe is not at the right stage to develop such a thing in the midst of its present social disarray.

Endnotes:

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