

Why are European Countries Reluctant to Accept Syrian Refugees?

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Research Question

The conflict in Syria has forcibly moved about 10 million people from their homes. Resettlement of Syrian refugees has become a significant public policy debate in Europe and the United States. Despite the fact that European countries are champions of international law and human rights, there is a strong resistance to acceptance of Syrian refugees. This study analyzes and attempts to explain the reasons why European governments are reluctant to receive Syrian refugees.



Argument

I argue that domestic political considerations stemming from the increasing Islamophobia and the rise of far right are the main motives behind anti-refugee policies in Europe. Under the pressure of significantly evolving anti-Muslim sentiment particularly after the recent terror attacks in Europe, the European leaders find it gradually difficult to resettle the Syrian refugees without significantly losing public support to their political party platforms.

Competing Explanations

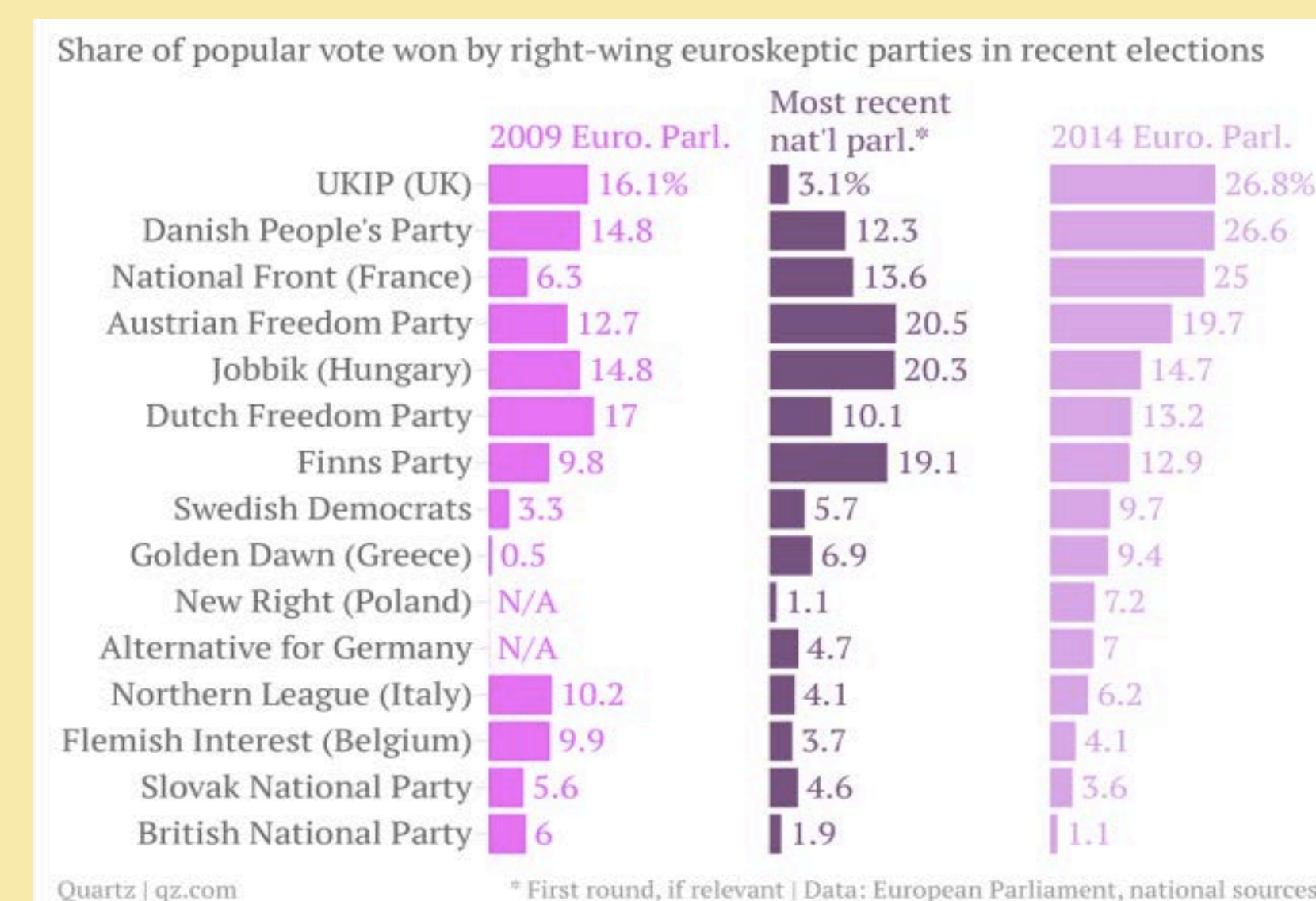
Alternative Explanation	Argument
Economic Explanation	<p>To some, the resettlement of refugees in Europe will create extra burden on already debilitating European economies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> only 0.21 percent more contribution to the European Union by each member is sufficient to finance the needs of incoming asylum seekers and refugees. the refugees, by the diversity that they bring, can offer creative contributions to European countries and add new long term economic advantages to the aging population of Europe
Security Explanation	<p>To others, the receiving Syrian refugees can increase the threat of terrorism in Europe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the refugees themselves, fleeing war and extremism, are not supporters of the violent groups. Western governments have implemented strong vetting criteria in receiving the refugees a more limiting refugee policy is the real security threat as this will increase the grievances of those who suffer from the effects of war. many of terrorist attacks in Europe have been instigated by “homegrown” jihadists, not by refugees.

Domestic Politics: A Key to Explain European Reluctance to Accept Syrian Refugees

The main motivation for the reluctance of Europe’s political leaders to open the borders for Syrian refugees is **domestic political considerations**. The rise of Islamophobia and the far right after the attacks of 9/11 and the recent bombings in major European cities led an anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe.

- The rise of Islamophobia:** Given the rise of anti-Muslim sentiments, the political parties that target to keep public support to win elections cannot make bold moves with regard to Syrian refugees.
 - A 2016 study shows that forty-nine percent of people in Britain did not want to accept refugees while on only 20 percent agreed to accept more refugees.
 - A recent poll shows that only 22 per cent of Germans believe that Islam belongs to their country, and an overwhelming 61 per cent agreed that Islam does not belong to Germany.
 - In France, the legislators passed bills limiting Muslims in the public sphere and the French National Front leader, Marine le Pen, has recently targeted Muslims on several occasions.
 - In Czech Republic, a recent opinion poll suggested that 94 percent of Czech people believe that the EU should deport all refugees.
 - In November 2015, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that “terrorists have exploited mass migration by mingling in European societies.”

- The rise of the Far Right:** The uphill trajectory of far-right parties makes the open-door policies even more difficult as mainstream political parties are concerned to lose the social base to the far right alternatives.



Conclusions

- The domestic political considerations are the key to explain the reluctance of European governments to admit Syrian refugees.
- The rise of Islamophobia and the growing support for the far right has redefined the priorities of the electorate in European countries.
- Populism and winning elections trumped over the values of democracy and human rights that the E.U. stands for.
- Syrian refugees do not pose an economic or security threat to Europe. The real crisis for the European countries today is their policy of integration.