

Chapter 8

Media, Public Opinion and Migration

Policies in Euro-mediterranean Countries: The Case of France



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8.1 Introduction

Irregular migration from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean to the Northern shore is on the rise since 2011. The routes used for irregular crossings are the Central Mediterranean route, the Western Mediterranean route, and the Eastern Mediterranean route. Between 2011–2015, migrants crossing the Mediterranean mostly used the Central Mediterranean route extending from Libya and Tunisia to Italy. The highest number of irregular crossings on this route was in 2014 when 170,664 persons were reported to have taken this route. The Western Mediterranean route stretches from North Africa, mainly Morocco and Algeria, to Spain. The use of this route remained averagely stable between 2013 and 2016 with an average of 7000 crossings recorded per year. The Eastern Mediterranean route which extends from Turkey to Greece was heavily used in 2015. The number of crossings along the Eastern Mediterranean route was 885,386 in 2015 compared to 50,834 in 2014 (Frontex: European Border and Coast guard agency).

The highest number of irregular crossings through the three routes was recorded in 2015 (a total of 900,000 crossings). While the most commonly used routes in 2015 were the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes (from Turkey to Bulgaria), the number of crossings on the Central Mediterranean route, the most dangerous, remained high. The increased irregular crossing in 2015 led to the labelling of the year as the year of Europe's refugee crisis (Ibid).

Unless otherwise indicated by in-text citation, the information provided in this chapter is based on the author's doctoral dissertation entitled "Determinants of asylum policies in Germany and France during the period 2013–2016, with special emphasis on the role of public opinion"

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This chapter is concerned with how the media and the public in Northern Mediterranean countries reacted to this movement and how such reaction was concurrent with the policy debate. The chapter will focus on France as a case study. Over 50% of France's immigrants originate from other Mediterranean countries. The majority (29%) are coming from Southern Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia) and the remaining 20% are coming from Northern Mediterranean countries like Italy, Spain, and Turkey (DESA: United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs). Moreover, the promotion of a strong union among Mediterranean countries is also a French project. The project by France was originally envisioned as a project encompassing countries bordering the Mediterranean. With pressure from other European countries particularly Germany, it developed in 2008 from a Mediterranean Union to a union for the Mediterranean that includes all EU member states (Ufm) (Tasche, 2010). With its importance in the migration system and its attempt to contribute to a regional-making process, France presents, as such, a good case study to understand how the public and the media perceives immigrants from the other side of the Mediterranean shore.

The findings of this chapter confirm the correlation between public opinion and public policy as it demonstrates that the policy debate and the asylum legislation that followed are concurrent with public perception. The latter, however, is to a great extent influenced by France's collective memory of migration. The first section of this chapter will explain the methodology particularly in terms of selecting the media form. The second section will provide a brief explanation of the meaning of 'collective memory' highlighting France's historical experience with migration. The third and final section will present the findings subdivided into three sub-sections: newspapers findings, public opinion findings, and the policy debate.

8.2 Methodology

This chapter is based on the findings of a larger study carried out by the author on the determinants of asylum policies. The larger study analyzed newspaper articles, public opinion surveys and the French parliament's minutes from 2013–2016.

With regard to newspaper articles, the study adopted a qualitative media content analysis which entails three steps for sampling: selecting the media form, selecting from within the media form and deciding the sample size (Macnamara, 2005). Media forms include traditional media (newspapers, magazines, Television (TV), radio) and non-traditional media (the Internet and the social media platforms). The last Standard Eurobarometer (EB) Survey on media use in the EU revealed that TV is the number one source of news for the majority of adults (81%) followed by the Internet (69%), social media platforms (48%), radio (47%), and finally the written press (26%) (Standard Eurobarometer 92, 2019). Given that most newspapers are switching to digital production (Myllylahti, 2016), it is reasonable to assume that the percentage of EU citizens (69%) who use the Internet, as per the last Standard

EB, are using digital newspapers. While the press (written or digital) might affect public opinion differently from social media, the last Standard EB on media use indicated that the level of trust in traditional media is higher than that in social media (Standard Eurobarometer 92, 2019). Moreover, while TV is the most popular media source, the role of newspapers in setting public agenda and impacting policy has historically been regarded as more influential than the TV (Cohen, 1963). Moreover, in recent years, scholars agree that newspaper coverage informs TV broadcasting (Golan, 2007). Given the above, the study upon which this chapter is based chose the press since it is agreed upon that it is the outlet that has the most effect on public opinion. Based on volume of distribution, the three most widely read newspapers in France were selected: *Le Figaro* (representing the right), *Le Monde* (representing the center), and *Liberation* (representing the left). While it cannot be claimed that the three newspapers represent the French press, they offer good representation of press coverage in France given their volume of distribution.

With regard to selection from within the media form, the issues and articles selected for the analysis were chosen using purposive sampling. The issues were purposively selected focusing on Fridays' issues. Since Friday is the end of the week in Europe, the decision to focus on Friday was made on the assumption that Friday issues would probably highlight events happening during the week and would probably discuss policy decisions that were undertaken in this week. In this regard, 600 Friday issues were reviewed to choose the sample of articles to analyze. The researcher looked for key words like 'refugees', 'migrants', 'asylum seekers', and 'Syria' (given that most refugees during the period were from Syria). 299 articles were found including these words, the largest number was in 2015, the year which signified the largest irregular movement towards Europe.

The researcher read the 299 articles to select the sample. The sample (a total of 98 articles) was selected purposively choosing articles that dealt with the conceptual question of the research which is how the media reported on the increased irregular movement to Europe.

While purposive sampling is allowed with qualitative research, the way the sample was purposefully selected for this research has its limitation. A purposive sampling that is based only on the conceptual question without a temporal limitation would have been a better strategy. In other words, the findings might have differed if the chosen sample was not restricted to Friday issues. However, this was not feasible given the limited resources. The aim of the research is only to provide an example of how the most widely read newspapers in France covered Europe's refugee crisis and how such coverage corresponded with the public's perception of the crisis and the legislation that followed.

With regard to public perception, the study analyzed the results of the seven standard Eurobarometer (EB) reports and the results of the European Social Surveys (ESS) published during the period 2013–2016. Moreover, the study analyzed the findings of a public opinion survey with 2000 individuals in France conducted by 'more in common', a civil society initiative, in 2017.

8.3 Collective Memory

There are many different definitions of collective memory. The most widely used definition is the one put forward by James Wertsch and Henry Roediger who define it as “*a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group*”. They explain that collective memory should not be confused with history because history is an objective and accurate description of the past while collective memory is the past as remembered by a specific group in a way that shape this group’ identity. As such, perceiving a historical event in a particular manner, remembering it, and passing on the memory to the next generation is essential for establishing one’s own identity. Collective remembering, they argue, rejects any different interpretation of history even if it relies on conflicting evidence (Wertsch & Roediger III, 2008).

The ‘Guest worker’ model that was implemented in France following World War II represents an important historical event that shaped the public perception towards immigrants as well as immigration policies. The model was based on recruiting workers from sending countries for 2 years nonrenewable so that each worker would have to leave after 2 years and replaced by another one should there be a need. The recruited workers were accommodated in quarters adjunct to factories outside the city and isolated from the local population in an attempt to confirm the temporariness of their stay (Castles, 1986).

The labor recruitment program was initially handled by France’ office of national immigration. However, over time, the office was unable to meet the demands of employers because the demand exceeded the office’s ability to supply the needed labor. This led to a growing pattern of irregular migration outside the framework of the national immigration office. The supply of irregular migrants also suited employer needs because they accepted lower pay and difficult working conditions. Immigration outside the framework of the office also increased because citizens of French colonies were allowed to enter France without a visa. The end result was that France became home to a large groups of irregular migrant workers from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and West Africa who over time became permanent settlers. Moreover, family reunion was tolerated due to the low birth rates in France. The large number of immigrants led to housing shortage which resulted in the growing number of slums areas within France and the burdening of the welfare system. The most disadvantaged members of the French working class were eventually affected leading to economic tension. Cultural tension also existed since immigrants were isolated from the host population which affected negatively their ability to integrate. The image of the migrant as isolated and different and unable to integrate continue to shape the French’s contemporary public perception of immigrants as will be apparent in the analysis of public opinion. (Ibid).

8.4 Findings

8.4.1 Newspapers' Findings

The study used the analytical tool of framing. The most commonly used frames in media analysis are the problem frame, the human-impact frame, the political frame, the morality frame, the security frame, the policy-prescription frame, and the economic frame. The problem frame is used when the issue is defined as a 'problem' with clear cause and effect. The security frame is used whenever the discussed topic is explicitly defined as a security issue. Both frames are usually used to instigate fear. The human-impact frame or the humanitarian frame is usually used to alert the reader to the human consequences of an issue. The morality frame refers to the framing of an issue from a duty or social responsibility perspective. The economic frame is used when the focus is on the economic consequences of an issue and the policy prescription frame is used when framing the issue through evaluating existing policies or suggesting new policies. Finally, the political frame is used when an issue is discussed focusing on the political considerations surrounding it. (Boydston et al., 2013).

The largest number of newspapers' articles published on the topic of the increased irregular migration was by *Le Figaro* (45 articles from a sample of 98). *Le Monde* and *Liberation* published 27 and 26 articles respectively. The most commonly used frames by the three newspapers were the human impact frame and the political frame. The analyzed articles covered topics including 'the magnitude of the movement', 'Asylum Policies in the face of the movement', and 'hosting refugees and asylum seekers.'

The human impact frame was usually used when reporting on the magnitude of the movement and highlighting the deaths at sea. For example, one article by *Le Monde* discussed the tragedy of Lampedusa through deconstructing all labels arguing that those who died in an attempt to reach Europe were first and foremost humans, or as the author put it "*victims of the Lampedusa tragedy were neither immigrants, refugees, or clandestine: they are humans that died on the move*" (Agier, 2013). Throughout the article, the author criticized the anti-migrant discourse and accused France of creating the image of what he described as "*an abstract, ghostly and repulsive "foreigner."*" (Ibid). The death of Aylan Kurdi, the child who was found dead on the shores of the Mediterranean, was covered by many articles. For example, one of *Le Monde*' articles published a big picture of the child with the following caption: "*this photo will be needed for Europe to open its eyes and become conscious of what is happening*" (Fenoglio, 2015). Another, article by *Liberation* reported on the tragical incident by referring to the number of children who die on the road to Europe.

With regard to the political frame, twelve *Le Figaro* articles, six *Le Monde* articles, and eight *Liberation* articles used the political frame. Other frames used included the problem frame, morality frame, economic frame, security frame, and policy evaluation frame. The problem frame was mostly used by *Le Figaro*

(12 articles) while it was rarely used by the other two newspapers (Only one *Le Monde* article and three *Liberation* articles used this frame). Two of *Le Figaro* articles used the security frame and both *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* used the policy prescription frame (five articles from each newspaper used this frame).

Le Figaro articles, were equally divided between articles focusing on the humanitarian aspect of the irregular migration and articles focusing on its impact on Europe. *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, by contrast, focused more on the humanitarian aspect and death at sea. However, when discussing Merkel's reaction to the increased irregular movement of 2015, *Le Monde's* articles were divided. Some of *Le Monde* articles supported Merkel's decision while others were critical of the decision and its impact on Europe.

Issues concerning policies towards irregular migration or migration in general were not found in the *Liberation* sample. With regard to the two other newspapers and with the exception of a few *Le Figaro* articles that discussed the political role of France in the Syrian conflict, the focus was not on France, *Le Monde* articles were divided between those critical of the EU's policy which was described by one article as 'inhumane,' and those externalizing the refugee problem by advocating increasing development aid to neighboring countries to decrease refugee inflow to Europe. Some of *Le Figaro* articles focused on Germany and were implicitly skeptical of Merkel's policy. Newspaper articles belonging to the three newspapers were divided with regards to the EU-Turkey agreement between opponents and supporters. Surprisingly, there was almost no discussion of the amendments made to the French asylum law that was adopted in July 2015.

Finally, with regard to the topic 'hosting refugees and asylum seekers', the discussion focused on the hosting of migrants in other countries. Even though France did not receive a large number of asylum applications during the period that witnessed the large influx of irregular migrants, the absence of issues concerning migrants in France is astonishing given the large number of immigrants in France. Some articles discussed the situation of refugees in developing countries like Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. These articles used the human-impact frame to describe the dire conditions and the implications on both refugees and host countries. Other articles focused on Germany and the economic impact of hosting Syrian refugees as well as on the rise of the rightwing and its possible implications on Germany's asylum policy. The situation of the Calais jungle and/or its evacuation was not heavily discussed even though it is a significant migration issue in France. In the sample of 98 articles, only three discussed the situation of Calais: two articles from *Le Figaro* and one from *Le Monde*. The *Liberation* sample did not include any articles on Calais. The article by *Le Monde* used the human-impact frame to describe the dire living conditions in the Calais Jungle. However, the two articles of *Le Figaro* focused on the impact on the local population and how the evacuation divided the people into those supporting it and others against it.

It is therefore clear that the impact of the newspaper's political orientation on how topics were framed is not significant. *Le Figaro's* articles were divided in the way they covered irregular migration between those stressing the humanitarian dimension and those problematizing the phenomenon. *Le Monde's* articles were also

divided in their coverage of policies between those encouraging liberal policies and those advocating for externalizing migration. The situation in Calais was completely absent from *Liberation's* coverage. Likewise, and while it was expected that a left-oriented newspaper would discuss immigration and asylum policies, such discussion was also absent from *Liberation's* sampled articles.

8.4.2 *Public Opinion's Findings*

Immigration was listed as one of the most important issues facing the EU as well as the respondents' countries in the standard EB surveys on public opinion during the period 2013–2016. From among the 28 European countries surveyed during 2013–2016 (including Croatia which joined the EU on July 1st, 2013 and the United Kingdom which left the union in January 2020), France ranked between the 8th and 15th in terms of perceiving immigration as an important issue. The highest percentage of the population who perceived immigration as the most important issue was in fall 2015 when 22% of the respondents ranked immigration as the most important issue facing France. This was expected as fall 2015 witnessed the highest number of irregular movements to Europe. However, in comparison to the perception of the population of other European countries during the same year, France ranked among the lowest countries in terms of how important its population perceived immigration. For example, while 22% of its population ranked immigration as the most important issue facing France in fall 2015, the issue was ranked as the most important by 76% of the German population, 60% of the population of Denmark, 56% of the population of Netherlands and Austria, and by 53% of the population of Sweden. With the exception of Germany that received the largest claims for asylum in 2015, the four other countries, unlike France, are not major migrants' receiving countries (European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer). However, in the survey conducted in 2017 by 'more in common', immigration was ranked as the third most important issue for French citizens after terrorism and unemployment where 37% of the sample ranked immigration as the most important issue facing France (Beddiar et al., 2017).

As such, immigration was not salient to the French public during the period 2013–2016, a finding that correlates with the newspaper's findings which attempted to externalize Europe's refugee crisis. Immigration, became increasingly important to the French public in 2017 as indicated by the survey carried out by 'more in common'. The increased salience of the issue in 2017 could be attributed to a number of reasons including the rise of Marine le Pen (president of the National Front, the far-right party) to the last round of the presidential election of 2017 and the centrality of immigration in her campaign as well as to series of terrorist attacks that were extensively covered by the French and European media (Ibid).

With regard to perception towards immigrants and refugees, public opinion polls in the EU indicate that EU citizens tend to overestimate the number of non-EU immigrants as a percentage of the population in their countries and to overestimate

the number of irregular immigrants in comparison to regular immigrants. With regard to France, the difference between the actual and perceived number of immigrants was very high in comparison to other European countries (European Commission: Special Eurobarometer).

Public opinion polls in the EU also highlight that Europeans perceive immigration within the EU and immigration from outside the EU differently. France belonged to the vast majority of European countries where the majority of its population expressed positive sentiments about immigration from other EU Member States but negative sentiments about immigration from countries outside the EU. (European Commission: Qualitative Study). The percentage of the French citizens perceiving immigration from other EU countries positively decreased from 51% in fall 2014 to 45% in summer 2015 but increased again to 55% in fall 2016. In terms of perception towards immigration from outside the EU, slightly over 50% of French citizens perceived immigration from outside the EU negatively. The highest negative perception (64%) was recorded in fall 2015 (European Commission: Standard Eurobarometer).

According to the study by 'more in common', thirty per cent of the French population holds positive views of migration while seventeen per cent of the population opposes it believing that migration poses a threat to national identity. The majority of the French population (53%) holds conflicting views on migration. Their views are influenced by specific situations rather than a result of a fixed ideology about immigrants. Some are driven by the humanitarian situation and the moral obligation to help while others are driven by the economic situation in the country. However, when participants were asked whether France should respond to the refugees' crisis by providing asylum opportunities, only eighteen per cent of the respondents indicated that France can afford to host refugees while sixty per cent highlighted that the economic situation of France does not allow it to host refugees. Moreover, fifty-one per cent of those surveyed believed that the vast majority of irregular migrants are abusing the asylum channels and 45% agreed that borders should be completely closed and attributed terrorist threats to the refugee influx (Beddiar et al., 2017).

According to the EB survey, the public believes that the most important conditions for the successful integration of immigrants into host countries were learning the language of the host country, contributing to the welfare system, and committing to the values and norms of the host society. The most important obstacles to integration are limited efforts on the part of immigrants to integrate and discrimination against immigrants. Half of the respondents in France believed that the little efforts exerted by immigrants and refugees is the main reason behind their failure to integrate while the other half cited discrimination against immigrants (European Commission: Special Eurobarometer). Only sixteen percent believed that immigration has positive impact on French society while the majority (56%) believed that it has negative impact. (Beddiar et al., 2017).

The survey by 'more in common' concluded that the overall perception of the French public towards immigrants from outside the EU is negative. The study attributed that to the increased rate of terrorist attacks, increased crime rate,

economic decline, and the success of the National Front party in linking these issues to immigration. Another reason given by the study to explain French citizens' negative perceptions is the belief that France has failed to integrate older immigrants. This negative memory of migration came up in the survey where participants argued that the failure to integrate older groups of migrants would make them reluctant to accept more new arrivals, even those seeking asylum. The study concluded that the French people perceived the refugee crisis through the public' perception of the failure of immigration policy (Ibid).

According to the EB survey, immigration was not that salient to the French public during the period of the increased irregular migration, a finding that correlates with the newspapers' externalization of the refugee' crisis. Despite that, the French public believe that the number of immigrants in France is high, do not welcome the reception of refugees, are with border control, and link Islam to terrorism. Since Southern Mediterranean countries (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and Libya) are Muslim countries. This means that the perception of the French public to immigrants from these countries is predominantly negative.

8.4.3 The Policy Debate

The minutes of the parliamentary sessions of the French parliament during 2013–2016 were reviewed to understand the policy debate. During this period, the Socialist party constituted the majority of France's National Assembly (Gueugneau, 2012). The president during the research period, François Hollande, also belonged to the Socialist Party. While announcing for economic and labor reforms during his campaign, he shifted course after 1 year in office and embraced pro-business policies. This was due to the increased levels of unemployment and the series of terrorist attacks that affected his popularity and increased anti-immigrants' sentiments. The destruction of the Calais camp took place during his presidency, the initial decision to relocate 24,000 refugees from Italy and Greece was never realized, and the EU's suggestion of a permanent quota system was rejected (Brochet, 2015). These restrictive immigration policies, unexpected from a socialist party and a socialist president, resonate with the negative public opinion explained above.

The review of the parliamentary sessions indicated that migration issues were rarely present in the parliamentary debates and discussions of 2013 and 2014 and were only comprehensively discussed in the framework of law no. 925 on Asylum Reforms which was introduced in December 2014. As with the case of the media, this is surprising given that France hosts large numbers of immigrants. It is also surprising because migration issues are assumed much importance during political campaigns in France by most political parties. The far right in France constantly links immigration to France's social and economic problems. As such, it was expected that more attention would be given to migration issues in the policy arena.

France adopted Law no. 925 on Asylum Reforms in July 2015. The new law incorporated both the EU asylum and reception directives focusing on improving the

asylum process and reception conditions. The law also introduced measures like accelerating the asylum process and introduced a compulsory accommodation system for asylum seekers across the entire country to avoid regional concentrations. Moreover, the new law allowed asylum seekers to access the labor market 9 months after lodging the application. In addition to law 925, decree no. 2014–301 of March 2014 also modified the Code on the Entry and Residence of Foreigners and the Right to Asylum by extending the right of long-term residence to those who are granted refugee status as well as subsidiary protection.

The first reading of Law no. 925 took place in the National Assembly on December 9, 2014. Examining a bill during the plenary session of the National Assembly or Senate takes place over two phases: a general review phase and a detailed review phase. During the general review phase of the first reading of Law no. 925, the minister of interior presented the bill. Following this presentation, the rapporteurs of the four committees, to which the bill was transferred, commented on the bill and provided their recommendations. The debate during both the general review phase and detailed phase was between the rapporteurs and the government on one hand and the opposition on the other hand. The government represented by the Socialist Party (PS), presented the bill as an attempt to improve the reception of refugees and contribute to the responsibility sharing for the refugee problem facing Europe. For its part, the major opposition party, Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), thought the bill was too liberal and called for rejecting it. When the request was voted against, the UPM requested to transfer the bill to a committee, a request that was also voted against. The UMP opposed the following suggestions: shortening the asylum process, facilitating access to the labor market, and the right for long-term residence. The rationale presented by the UPM was that these provisions would encourage more immigrants. The UMP also believed that the asylum channel was being abused with the proof being that asylum applications are increasing but the number of asylum seekers accepted as refugees is decreasing. The UPM believed that more restrictive measures were needed and criticized the bill for not including a strategy to combat irregular migration and/or deportation of rejected asylum seekers. The response of the government to these criticisms was that the bill was only concerned with asylum issues and not immigration issues. Combating irregular migration and deportation, the government argued, should be covered by a legislation concerning immigration. The government also stressed that the number of asylum applications in France is not comparable to other European countries, like Germany and Sweden.

When comparing the issues debated in the parliament to the newspapers' coverage, differences were observed. As explained, the newspaper articles rarely discussed issues concerning immigrants' integration or refugees' reception facilities. The policy debate, however, tackled issues related to immigrants in France, including reception facilities in the country and shortening the asylum process. During the policy debate, the opposition highlighted the security implications of the crisis as well as the misuse of the asylum channel, two issues that were sometimes highlighted by the media. However, unlike the media, the humanitarian dimension

of the crisis that was highlighted by some newspaper articles were absent from the policy debate.

The analysis of the newspaper articles and public opinion surveys indicated that both acknowledge the seriousness of the issue of migration, the right of people to seek asylum, and the responsibility of Europe to help. At the same time, both the media and the public agree with tightening border control to curb further inflow of immigrants for security, cultural and economic reasons. The new asylum legislation reflects this attitude of the media and the public. The new legislation includes provisions to facilitate the integration of immigrants and refugees and improve reception conditions and access to the labor market. However, at the same time it includes provisions that restrict further entry to France.

8.5 Conclusion

Aiming to contribute to the discussion concerning the relationship of media and public opinion to migration policies in the Mediterranean region, this chapter reviewed newspapers' coverage, public opinion surveys as well as the parliamentary debates in France between 2013–2016 which signified the peak of irregular migratory movement to Europe from outside the continent. The review indicated that the policy debate as well as the legislation adopted were concurrent with the media and public opinion.

The analysis of the parliamentary minutes indicates that migration-related issues were only thoroughly discussed with the introduction of the new law in December 2014. The lack of discussion of migration related issues before 2014 echoes the low coverage of migration related issues in the media. As highlighted in the section concerning the analysis of newspapers, out of 600 Friday issues, only 299 articles dealt with the increased irregular movement labeled as 'Europe's refugee crisis.'

Migration issues were only debated in the framework of the new law. The debate which was between the Socialist government and the opposition represented by the UMP focused on problematizing the increased irregular crossings, the misuse of the asylum channel, and the humanitarian consideration of the increased movements and deaths at sea. These represent the same issues that the media and public focused on.

The review of public opinion surveys indicated that perception towards immigrants differed according to whether they are immigrants from within the EU or outside the EU. As highlighted earlier, with the exception of Sweden, the majority (over 50%) of EU citizens across all other EU countries, including Northern Mediterranean countries, perceived immigration from outside the EU negatively. The period that this research covered signifies the period that witnessed the highest irregular movements from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean to the Northern shore. Public opinion, as the chapter highlighted, during this period indicated an unwelcoming attitude towards refugees from the South, a belief that many among them are abusing the asylum channel, a conviction that the increased terrorist threats is correlated with the refugee influx, and an assumption that Islam and Western

societies are incompatible with one another. As such, the importance of analyzing the perception of the media and public opinion during this period is that this period could represent a shift towards a more radical opinion on migration.

This perception of immigrants from Southern Mediterranean countries as the ‘Other’ and the associated policies that encourage the free movement of goods and capitals but not labor is a reflection of the asymmetrical power relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean. Throughout the colonialization era, countries of the Middle East and North Africa were transformed into suppliers of raw material for the European colonial powers (Tramontana, 2018). And after World War II, the ‘Guest worker’ model of labor recruitment represented a continuation of such asymmetrical relationship where the workers were recruited on temporary basis and isolated from the local population. This chapter explained the social problems associated with the way the ‘Guest worker’ program was implemented in France and the tension it created between the local population and immigrants.

The social and cultural tension that emerged as a result of the implementation of the guest worker program is currently shaping the French’ public perception of immigrants from Southern Mediterranean countries. As this chapter demonstrated, the survey in France indicated that the current perception of immigrants is directly linked to past experience. The chapter also highlighted the correlation between public opinion and immigration/asylum policies. Realizing that the former is affected by the collective memory of migration pinpoints to the importance of approaching migration in the Mediterranean from a historical perspective.

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