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# *Border Talk: Discursive Practices of National Identity in post-Brexit UK and France*

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# ACRONYMS

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

DHA – Discourse-Historical Approach

EB – Eurobarometer

EC – European Community

EEC – European Economic Community

EU – European Union

RN – Rassemblement National

UK – United Kingdom

# INTRODUCTION:

## A TALE OF TWO NATIONS: THE RE-EMERGENCE OF BORDERS IN BRITISH AND FRENCH NARRATIVES

Over the past decade, the political salience of borders has intensified across Europe, notably in the United Kingdom and France. From the 2015 so-called "European migrant crisis" (Goldmeier, 2025) and the 2016 Brexit referendum to the ongoing rise of nationalist populism, the border has re-emerged as both a literal and symbolic object of political anxiety.

This research is driven by the need to understand how the former colonial powers of the UK and France—often perceived as ideological rivals, but deeply intertwined historically (Kumar, 2006)—articulate boundaries in times of perceived crisis. The UK and France, despite their differing political systems and national traditions, increasingly converge in their use of exclusionary discourse targeting migration, religion, and race. At the same time, their historical legacies, with Britain's insular pragmatism and France's ideational republicanism (Favell, 1998), inform divergent logics of boundary creation. By comparing how these two states conceptualise and enforce borders through discourse, this study uncovers broader trends of European bordering while highlighting national specificities.

The originality of this thesis lies in its dual focus on bordering as both a political project and a discursive practice, building on interdisciplinary scholarship in critical border studies, postcolonial theory, and political sociology. Much of the existing literature tends to focus either on the physical practices of border control or on border discourse at the pan-European level. There is also a strong body of work on bordering in the United States. However, less attention has been paid to comparative discourse analysis between France and the UK—two countries with parallel yet distinctive post-imperial trajectories and differing relationships with European integration. This thesis addresses that gap by focusing on discursive constructions of borders in elite political speech and the interconnectivity of national identity, bordering, and exclusion.

To this end, the thesis is underpinned by two core theoretical frameworks. First, postfunctionalism (Hooghe & Marks, 2009) provides a lens through which to understand how identity-driven politics have increasingly overtaken interest-based logics in the politics of integration and exclusion. Second, Ruth Wodak's (2008) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a methodological toolkit to trace how historical narratives, rhetorical strategies, and intertextual references are mobilised to legitimise bordering practices.

Therefore, this thesis investigates the framing of borders in political discourse in the UK and France over the past ten years, asking:

> *How are borders framed in political discourse in the United Kingdom and France between 2015 and 2025?*

The thesis is structured in three main chapters. Firstly, the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning this thesis is discussed, by offering a definition of key terms aids to guide the reader through the key concepts of the thesis, then explaining the theory of postfunctionalism and its relevance, then the Discourse-Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis, which will be used throughout the thesis to analyse the primary sources and the Eurobarometer and its relevance is explained. Secondly, an in-depth Literature Review is important in order to understand the following material and to contextualise the existing literature of this field. The Literature Review also covers existing material in this field and discusses gaps and contributions that this thesis can bring. Then, Chapter 1 explores the UK's post-Brexit bordering discourse, analysing how sovereignty, control, and race have been rearticulated in light of recent policy shifts. Chapter 2 turns to France, where bordering is increasingly justified through appeals to Republican values, *laïcité*, and securitisation. Chapter 3 undertakes a comparative analysis, situating the UK and France within wider European trends while highlighting the enduring role of colonial legacies in shaping discursive strategies as well as the mainstreaming of populist political discourse. The final chapter draws conclusions about the role of political discourse in constructing borders as symbolic, racialised, and historically contingent spaces of exclusion.

The thesis employs primary sources which are speeches and quotes from British and French politicians, as well as selected Eurobarometer data (see Tables). One speech is analysed in more depth than the others i.e. the 2023 “Stop the Boats” speech by Rishi Sunak, the table is found in section 2.2, see Annex for the full transcript of the speech.

In short, this thesis argues that political discourse in both the UK and France constructs borders not merely as physical boundaries, but as ideological battlegrounds over who belongs, who is a threat, and who must be excluded. As “bordering” becomes increasingly central to national politics (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002, p.126), understanding the historical, rhetorical, and affective mechanisms that underpin it is becoming growingly urgent.

The following section introduces the methodology and theoretical framework that supports this thesis. Starting with a definition of key terms to ensure consistency throughout the thesis and to address complex terms which often have many definitions. Then the theory of postfunctionalism is explained with reference to its applicability for this particular thesis. The following section introduces the Discourse-Historical Approach, which is used for the analysis of the primary sources. Finally, the quantitative data of the thesis is presented: the Eurobarometer (see Tables for the data).

# METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS:

Before diving into the analysis, it is essential to define the key concepts that underpin this thesis. Terms such as *national identity*, *belonging*, *othering*, *bordering*, and *postcolonial memory* are central to understanding how political discourse constructs inclusion and exclusion in the United Kingdom and France. Closely linked are notions of *populism*, *Euroscepticism*, and *neoliberalism*, which provide the ideological and political backdrop against which debates on immigration and national borders unfold. Clarifying these concepts not only establishes the analytical foundation for the case studies that follow, but also ensures conceptual consistency throughout the thesis. Definitions are drawn from both theoretical scholarship and critical discourse studies to situate the analysis within an interdisciplinary framework.

Firstly, *nationalism* is understood here not simply as an attachment to the nation, but as a discourse that constructs the nation through narratives of cultural homogeneity, historical continuity, and symbolic boundaries (Wodak, 2016). Closely tied to this is the notion of *belonging*, which can be understood as both a subjective sense of identification with the nation and an external process of inclusion and exclusion based on criteria of cultural, racial, or political legitimacy (Vollmer, 2021). *Bordering*, in both a material and symbolic sense, is central to this dynamic, functioning not only to regulate the physical edges of the nation, but also to delineate who is considered part of the national community (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002; Vollmer, 2021). The process of *othering*, defined in this case as the discursive construction of out-groups as culturally, racially, or politically inferior, plays a vital role in these exclusionary narratives (Ahmed, 2014; Blaagaard, 2008). *Postcolonial memory* adds another layer to this discourse by exposing how colonial histories continue to shape contemporary national identities, particularly in the United Kingdom and France, where amnesia or selective remembrance often reinforce exclusionary politics (Boswell, 2008; Lewicki, 2024; El-Enany, 2020). *Populism*, typically characterised by a binary opposition between “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite”, intersects with nationalist discourse to portray foreign institutions and immigrants as

threats to sovereignty and social cohesion or order (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). *Euroscepticism*, particularly in the British variant, draws heavily on such populist and nationalist tropes, framing the EU as an imposition on national sovereignty, apparent in both "hard" and "soft" forms (Wellings & Gifford, 2018, p. 88). Finally, *neoliberalism*, often assumed to be an apolitical, purely economic logic, is reinterpreted here as a rationality of governance that reconfigures borders, citizenship, and migration in racialised and hierarchical ways (Lewicki, 2024; Bobée & Kleibert, 2023). Together, these concepts form the backdrop through which political discourse on borders and national identity in the UK and France are examined throughout this thesis.

## 2.1 POSTFUNCTIONALISM

This thesis investigates how political discourse in the UK and France has invoked national identity in debates about border regimes over the past ten years. Given the salience of identity-based appeals, a framework that prioritises the interaction between public opinion, party strategy, and integration outcomes is essential. The theory of postfunctionalism, developed by Hooghe and Marks (2009), helps to understand the change in approach to politics, specifically regarding attitudes towards European integration. This theory is the most appropriate framework for this study because it helps to address the rising politicisation of European integration and foregrounds identity as a core explanatory variable. The authors argue that European integration can no longer be understood without reference to identity, public opinion, and political contestation. The postfunctionalist theory moves beyond earlier theories of integration not as an automatic or elite-driven process, but as a deeply political struggle over authority, identity, and sovereignty. In the case of border discourse, this theory becomes highly relevant, especially in the case of the UK due to the dramatic change in UK bordering instigated by Brexit (Webber, 2019). This theory is the chosen base of this thesis because it helps to explain the ways in which political discourse has changed in recent years. The argument is that although public opinion has always played a decisive role in party discourse, identity issues now define political cleavages more intensely than before (Hooghe & Marks, 2009). This left/right cleavage largely defined postwar politics in Western Europe, where parties competed on the basis of class and policy outputs, essentially answering the question: "Who gets what?*"* However, as Hooghe and Marks (2009, p.16) argue, the emergence of

European integration as a salient issue complicated this framework by introducing a more volatile dimension: “Who is one of us?”. European integration no longer concerns only material outputs (market access, regulation, redistribution), but also invokes questions of sovereignty, identity, and the boundaries of political community. These are what the authors refer to as “pre-material issues” (p.16), defined as matters of national belonging, cultural integrity, and symbolic membership. The political discourse tenancy now, as argued in this thesis, features a combination of long-established nationalism combined with a re-emergence of public interest in borders as a political concept as a means to shape public opinion even further and create feelings of belonging as well as feelings of otherness. As such, this thesis builds on postfunctionalist theory by examining how elite political actors in the UK and France discursively construct borders not only as territorial markers, but as sites of cultural and ideological meaning. Through DHA, this study investigates how identity-based anxieties are constructed, recontextualised, and legitimised in political rhetoric.

## 2.2 THE DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL APPROACH

This thesis employs Ruth Wodak's (2008) DHA, within the broader framework of CDA to examine how political actors construct narratives of national identity, borders, and otherness in border-related discourse. The analysis focuses on publicly available texts-including political speeches and parliamentary statements, combined with governmental policies from the United Kingdom and France. Given the emphasis on elite discourse and the ideological functions of language in the public sphere, interviews are not necessary. The selected materials provide sufficient depth for a critical analysis of how meaning is constructed and contested in official rhetoric. While interviews could offer supplementary perspectives, the aims of this research are best addressed through textual and contextual analysis of political discourse as framed by DHA, with some supporting data from Eurobarometers.

DHA is uniquely suited for analysing the intersection of language, ideology, and historical memory in political communication. Distinct from other forms of CDA, DHA is grounded in a socio-philosophical tradition of critique and explicitly incorporates historical context into the analysis of discourse. It treats discourse as “both socially constructed and socially

constitutive" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008, p. 89), allowing for a dialectical understanding of the relationship between language and social structures (Silva, 2023). This is particularly applicable to the two ex-colonial powers under study: France and the UK, where references to empire, war, and European integration are frequently mobilised to legitimise contemporary border regimes and constructions of national identity (Kumar, 2006).
A key strength of DHA lies in its three-fold understanding of critique, each dimension contributing to the approach's reflexive and normative goals. First, "*text* or *discourse-immanent critique"* uncovers contradictions and inconsistencies within the discourse itself. Second, "*socio-diagnostic critique"* aims to demystify the latent or overt ideological and manipulative strategies used in discourse, drawing on contextual and theoretical knowledge. Third, "*prospective critique* seeks to contribute to the improvement of communication", for example through policy recommendations or inclusive language guidelines (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008, p.88). In line with this, Wodak (2016) advocates for transparency and self-reflection on the part of the researcher-principles that align closely with the critical orientation of this study.

Furthermore, DHA incorporates a nuanced understanding of ideology, defined as "an (often) one-sided perspective or world view" composed of the shared beliefs and attitudes of a specific collective, which serves to establish unequal power relations through discourse. Such ideologies manifest in "hegemonic identity narratives" (p.88), media framings, or discursive control over who gains access to public debate. DHA aims to deconstruct these ideologies by revealing how they are embedded in language. In the context of this thesis, the construction of belonging, threat, and exclusion in political speeches is often underpinned by these ideological operations.
Power, another core concept in DHA, is not viewed as inherent to language but as something realised through the strategic use of language by those in dominant positions. The given definition of power follows Weber (1980:28), conceptualised as the capacity to assert one's will even against resistance. Through discourse, actors legitimise or contest power relations-whether by controlling access to public spheres, manipulating genre conventions, or imposing interpretive frames.

The DHA conceptualises discourse as a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices linked to a macro-topic, involving multiple social actors with differing perspectives and normative claims (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008). For them, 'discourse' is:

- "a cluster of context-dependent semiotic practices that are situated within specific fields of social action
- socially constituted and socially constitutive
- related to a macro-topic
- linked to the argumentation about validity claims such as truth and normative validity involving several social actors who have different points of view." (p. 89)

Discourse is always situated within a broader field of social action. For example, institutional politics, media commentary, or education, and can be realised through various genres, such as speeches, press statements, or policy documents.
To capture the interwoven nature of language and power, DHA relies on the principles of *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. *Intertextuality* refers to how texts explicitly or implicitly draw on other texts, while *interdiscursivity* refers to the way discourses overlap and hybridise (e.g., how economic, security, and cultural narratives coalesce in border debates). The related process of *contextualisation* describes how elements are de- and re-inserted into new contexts, thereby acquiring new meanings and serving different purposes. This is particularly relevant when considering how political narratives on migration or borders are reinterpreted across speeches, news articles, or social media.
Another important term utilised in this thesis is *topos,* which "should be understood as a quasi "elliptic" argument (an *enthymeme*), where the premise is followed by the conclusion without giving any explicit evidence, while taking the conclusion to confirm, and relate back to, *endoxon*." (Wodak, 2016, p.8)

The DHA also makes a clear distinction between text and discourse. Texts are materialisations of discourse that make speech acts durable and interpretable over time. Texts, whether written or spoken, are typically assigned to genres: socially ratified ways of using language for particular purposes. This thesis uses mainly political speeches as central genres through which national identity, exclusion, and belonging are articulated.

To operationalise DHA in this thesis, Wodak's (2016, p.3) eight-step analytical process is followed:

1. " literature review, *activation of theoretical knowledge* (i.e., recollection, reading, and discussion of previous research);
2. *systematic collection of data and context information* (depending on the research questions, various discourses, genres, and texts are focused on);
3. *selection and preparation of data for specific analyses* (selection and downsizing of data according to relevant criteria, transcription of tape recordings, etc.);
4. *specification of the research questions and formulation of assumptions* (on the basis of the literature review and a first skimming of the data);
5. *qualitative pilot analysis* (this allows for testing categories and first assumptions as well as for the further specification of assumptions);
6. *detailed case studies* (of a whole range of data, primarily qualitatively, but in part also quantitatively);
7. *formulation of critique* (interpretation of results, taking into account the relevant context knowledge and referring to the three dimensions of critique);
8. *application of the detailed analytical results* (if possible, the results might be applied or proposed for application)."

Additionally, the analysis is guided by five questions for investigating the construction of national or transnational identities:

1. "How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes, and actions named and referred to linguistically?
2. What characteristics, qualities, and features are attributed to social actors, objects,
phenomena/events, and processes?
3. What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?
4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or mitigated?"

(Wodak, 2016, p.5).

This section has introduced the methodology and theoretical framework that is utilised throughout this thesis. Moving on, the Eurobarometer is now explained and contextualised, with guidance on how to understand the chosen data, including limitations of the data. The data is found in table form in the 'Tables' section of the thesis.

## EUROBAROMETER:

This thesis includes evidence from Eurobarometers conducted from the first in 1974 to 2020, in order to support the postfunctionalist claim of Hooghe and Marks (2009) that European citizens have been changing their opinion on the most important issues facing their country. I also use the data to compare the most salient issues according to French and UK citizens with the entirety of the EU member state citizens. Eurobarometer is the official survey tool used by EU institutions—primarily the European Commission and the European Parliament—to regularly gauge public opinion across Europe on EU-related, political, and social issues. Launched in 1974 by Jacques-René Rabier, it was originally intended to help "reveal Europeans to themselves." Today, it serves as a key data source for researchers, policymakers, media, and the public, offering long-term, consistent, and geographically broad insights into European attitudes and trends (European Commission, n.d.). There are three different types of Eurobarometer: *Standard Eurobarometer*, *Flash Eurobarometer* and *Special Eurobarometer*. For this thesis, the focus is mainly on Standard Eurobarometers. Firstly, Table 1 (see Tables) compares what citizens feel are the most important issues facing their nation at that present moment. Secondly, Table 2 (see Tables) compares attitudes to European integration.
Here it is important to note the limitations of the data. The polling questions were not consistent over the entirety of the Eurobarometers, therefore the data selected is that which is the most compelling to compare and the most similar in the context. The selected data aims to track shifts in public opinion, therefore anything deemed relevant to feelings towards European Integration, for example feelings towards the EC or EU as a whole, or feelings towards the Single Market has been included. Another limitation is that for the earliest Standard Eurobarometers, for example Eurobarometer 1 (1974), there is a lack of

quantitative data, contrary to the later Eurobarometers which mainly focus on quantitative data. The selected data also does not cover every year since 1974, however it does cover important historical milestones which will be contextualised later on, and therefore is suitable for this particular thesis. Despite these limitations, the selected Eurobarometer data still offers a rich source of information to aid in the understanding of public opinion and how this shapes and is shaped by political discourse over the years. The data is presented in two tables to offer clarity and comparative ease.

While this thesis focuses on recent bordering discourses, it is worth recalling that in the early 1970s, when the UK had just joined the European Economic Community (UK Parliament, 2025), public concerns in both Britain and France were primarily economic, according to the evidence compared by the selected Eurobarometer. According to Eurobarometer 1 (Commission of the European Communities,1974), over 70% of respondents across the EEC identified rising prices and the cost of living as the most important national problem, followed by unemployment and crime. In both the UK and France, these material concerns dominated over cultural or identity-based issues. This contrasts sharply with contemporary bordering discourses, where migration, sovereignty, and national identity have overtaken economics as dominant themes. Such a shift supports the postfunctionalist arguments of Hooghe and Marks (2009) that integration conflicts have moved from permissive consensus based on material benefits to affective, identity-driven contestation, particularly in response to perceived crises, starting in the 1990s. This historical context helps explain why current border politics in the UK and France, though similarly exclusionary, are grounded in distinct trajectories of national memory and political discourse.

The following section presents the literature review. First an introduction is given in order to ground the main literature of the thesis. Then LR.1 discusses the topics of national identity, belonging and the construction of the other. LR.2 presents the important literature on bordering and exclusion. LR.3 presents post-colonial theory literature in the contexts of the UK and France. Finally, gaps in the literature are reviewed along with the contributions that this thesis brings to the existing literature.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## INTRODUCTION:

The concepts that animate this study: *identity*, *bordering*, *nationalism*, and *postcolonial memory*, are neither static nor self-evident. In combination, these interlocking themes provide a critical foundation for understanding how borders are framed within political discourse. However, each is contested, shaped by and utilised in shifting political contexts (Wodak, 2015). Yet, despite their instability, these terms are frequently mobilised in political discourse with an air of inevitability, treated as if their meanings were fixed and uncontested (Tyerman, 2022).

This discursive ambiguity poses significant challenges for analysis. As scholars such as Wodak (2015), Yuval-Davis (2011), and van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002) have shown, the construction of belonging always intertwines with the construction of the 'Other'. Bordering is not simply about drawing lines on maps, but about making distinctions between in-groups and out-groups (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002). These distinctions are usually racialised, classed, and gendered (Blaagaard, 2008). This becomes particularly evident in the context of postcolonial Europe, where the legacies of empire continue to haunt contemporary debates over national identity and immigration policy (Kumar, 2006).

## LR.1: NATIONAL IDENTITY, BELONGING AND CONSTRUCTING THE 'OTHER':

Even before investigating the specific mechanisms by which bordering is carried out and exclusions legitimised, the very notion of national belonging must be scrutinised conceptually. As contemporary debates over immigration, identity, and integration intensify (McMahon, 2017), it becomes increasingly important to approach these issues by unpacking the underlying narratives that define belonging. Benedict Anderson's foundational concept of *imagined communities* (1983) provides a crucial entry point into this discussion, illustrating how national belonging is manufactured through shared myths, symbols, and mediated narratives that bind individuals together in the absence of direct

social interaction. His work underscores the symbolic and discursive nature of national identity, which is continually reproduced through cultural and political practices. Building on this foundation, scholars have emphasised that national identity is often delineated through the construction of the 'Other'. As Brubaker (1992) and Triandafyllidou (1998) explain, the symbolic boundary between 'us' and 'them' is a powerful political mechanism that reinforces social cohesion through division. Wodak's (2015) *Politics of Fear* outlines how nationalist politicians instrumentalise collective memory and victimhood to justify exclusionary practices.

## LR.2: BORDERING AND THE DISCURSIVE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION

Borders are not static lines etched into or defined by geography, but dynamic, socially constructed processes that regulate movement and identity. As van Houtum and van Naerssen (2002, p.126) argue, the process of border creation should be recognised as "*bordering"*—a continuous, strategic practice aimed at spatial differentiation among flows of people, goods, and capital. Far from being imposed solely from above, borders are often justified through tacit public consensus, functioning to both reproduce space and belonging and reinforce imagined national cohesion. Migration, then, becomes a potent site of border anxiety, where the entry of the 'other' disrupts the perceived cultural homogeneity and territorial order of the nation-state (Benson & Sigona, 2024). As such, bordering practices expose the contradictions of globalisation's open rhetoric, revealing instead a selective hospitality that privileges certain mobilities while restricting, or even criminalising others (van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002). Wodak's (2015) *The Politics of Fear* offers one of the most comprehensive analyses of this phenomenon, demonstrating how right-wing populist parties across Europe deploy fear-based rhetoric to construct crisis narratives and establish scapegoats. These discourses are deeply interwoven with historical tropes, collective memory, and nationalist myths, which provide legitimacy to claims about cultural decline and national jeopardy. These narrative have been effectively entering the mainstream, portraying migrants and minorities as existential threats to national cohesion, security, and culture (Wodak, 2015). There is a reliance on a discursive logic of *crisis*, wherein immigration is framed as a perpetual emergency that demands extraordinary measures, thereby shifting the boundaries of acceptable political speech (Moffitt, 2016). A

key vehicle for the dissemination and reinforcement of these exclusionary narratives is the media. As Moffitt (2016) argues in *The Global Rise of Populism*, populist actors have adeptly used media logics to behave as "performers" (p.90) that dramatize the urgency of a crisis, personalise politics, and discredit elites. Media outlets, in turn, often amplify populist messages through sensationalist coverage, which blurs the line between political discourse and spectacle. The effectiveness of this strategy lies in its ability to shift the Overton window, which refers to the range of policy ideas considered politically acceptable at a given time. Politicians tend to support only those ideas within this window, as advocating for ideas outside it risks losing public support; however, the window can shift over time with changing societal norms (Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2019). Therefore, formerly extreme positions are able to gain mainstream acceptance.
As van Dijk (2018) illustrates, migrants and refugees are often framed in discourse through lenses of crisis, threat, and burden, contributing to a moral panic that reinforces the imagined threat of the 'Other'. These representations do not merely reflect public sentiment but actively shape political agendas and public policy, often legitimising restrictive migration regimes and the erosion of minority rights. El-Enany's (2020) concept of *(b)ordering Britain* is particularly relevant, as it shows how immigration law and citizenship practices continue to privilege colonial hierarchies under the guise of national sovereignty. Scholars such as Joan Wallach Scott (2007) and Olivier Roy (2007) argue that these policies reflect deeper anxieties about the limits of French universalism and the place of Islam within the Republic/ within Republican values.

Drawing on theorists like Gilroy (2004) and Hall (2017), Tyerman (2022), borders are framed as operating within a "metaphysics of race," producing difference through embodied hierarchies and cultural exclusion. Racism becomes "central to the construction of the 'others' of citizenship" (Sharma, 2015, as cited in Tyerman, 2022, p. 32), with ideas of race and nationhood working in tandem to delineate who belongs. The immigration controls of the modern state, Sharma argues, reinforce the belief that our lives are safer and more meaningful when protected from others, which in turn effectively segments the world into bordered enclaves of inclusion and exclusion.

Finally, Tyerman (2022) connects these discursive shifts to a broader political trend. Since the 1970s, he notes, there has been "a right-wing convergence" in Europe, where mainstream parties have increasingly absorbed the rhetoric of the far right. This is particularly evident in the electoral rise of parties like the *Front National* in France and the Conservative Party in the UK's adoption of anti-immigrant positions (Tyerman, 2022, pp. 278–279). Meanwhile, mechanisms like the EU's visa regime continue to reproduce global hierarchies by regulating movement according to perceived human worth, risk, and racialised value.

## LR.3: POSTCOLONIAL MEMORY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND FRANCE

Postcolonial memory continues to shape the construction of national identity and political discourse in both the United Kingdom and France, influencing contemporary debates on immigration, integration, and belonging (Kumar, 2006). As former imperial powers, both countries confront complex legacies that are embedded in their institutions, public narratives, and sociopolitical anxieties. Scholars like Gilroy (2004) and El-Enany (2020) show how Britain's nostalgic attachment to empire reinforces racialised boundaries of belonging, particularly in Brexit-era debates. Similarly, in France, assimilationist ideals are weaponised to exclude visibly Muslim citizens under the guise of *laïcité* and republicanism (Scott, 2007). *The Politics of the Veil* exemplifies how colonial anxieties about Islam and Muslim subjects have been transposed into the present. Across both cases, immigration controls are less about security and more about maintaining national hierarchies inherited from colonial structures (Tyerman, 2022).

The United Kingdom's engagement with postcolonial memory takes a different, though equally exclusionary, form. While France emphasizes assimilation into a Republican model, the UK has historically celebrated its multiculturalism (Kumar, 2006). Yet, this apparent inclusivity is undermined by an enduring nostalgia for the British Empire that continues to shape political discourse. This nostalgia was notably mobilised during the Brexit campaign, where slogans like "Take Back Control", popularised during the Brexit campaign invoked a loss of sovereignty and status that resonated with segments of the population anxious about demographic change, globalisation, and immigration (Asiamah,

2024). Postcolonial memory also influences the way borders are imagined and enacted, both symbolically and materially. In both the UK and France, immigration policies reflect an implicit racial hierarchy, privileging some migrants over others based on perceived cultural compatibility or historical ties. These hierarchies are justified through narratives that obscure colonial violence while demanding assimilation from those still marked by it. Such dynamics expose the contradictions at the heart of national identity projects in post-imperial states: the simultaneous denial of colonial responsibility and the persistence of colonial logics in governing difference.

## GAPS IN THE LITERATURE AND CONTRIBUTIONS:

Despite the richness of existing research, gaps remain in theorising how anti-immigration sentiment evolves over time and intersects with race, class, and gender. This is an ever-evolving issue, so this thesis contributes by offering an up-to-date analysis of how public sentiment in the UK and France shapes and is shaped by political discourse. By employing the DHA to CDA of these chosen speeches and quotes, the roots of these trends in populist and mainstream discourse can be revealed. Much of the existing research focuses on national case studies in isolation, with particular focus on the case of the United States when discussing border discourse, without sufficiently accounting for transnational patterns of exclusion and bordering.

Despite a robust body of literature on national identity and the construction of the ‘Other’, several gaps remain. Additionally, the intersectional dimensions of belonging—how race, gender, class, and religion intersect in experiences of inclusion and exclusion—remain underexplored in many mainstream analyses. Scholars such as Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) and Floya Anthias (2002) provide important interventions in this regard, emphasising the need for a more nuanced understanding of the stratified nature of national belonging. This becomes particularly relevant in the case of the UK and France, where colonial histories continue into the present day and create a complicated hierarchy of belonging.

The following chapter introduces the first case study: the UK. Combining all the context hitherto given, this chapter will first introduce Britain’s border regime since 2015,

presenting new policies that have developed. Next, context is given about Brexit and the Windrush Scandal, as these are discussed throughout the chapter. Following this, post-colonial legacies are discussed with reference to present-day political discourse, offering evidence in the form of political discourse. The next section offers an in-depth analysis of the 2023 ‘Stop the Boats’ speech of Rishi Sunak (see Table 3). It is first contextualised, and then analysed through DHA, supported by evidence of policy and further political speeches. Then the discourse of deservingness is introduced, with special focus on the Windrush scandal and racial hierarchies. Finally, a conclusion of the chapter is offered.

# CHAPTER 1: A KINGDOM UNITED?

## INTRODUCTION: BRITAIN'S BORDER REGIME IN A POST-BREXIT WORLD

The 2016 referendum that resulted in the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union marked not just a significant rupture in the geopolitical landscape, but also a fundamental restructuring of its border regimes, reflected in political discourse at the time (Hobolt, 2016). With the end of EU freedom of movement, the UK government enacted a series of legal and administrative changes that reshaped the migration-citizenship nexus, reinforcing stratified migrant subjectivities and cultivating a politics of belonging tied to the project of "Global Britain" (Benson & Sigona, 2024). This reconfiguration of the border regime has had profound implications for how the UK constructs and enforces ideas of national identity, belonging, and otherness in a post-Brexit world.

This chapter investigates how Britain's post-Brexit migration policies serve as instruments of political discourse and symbolic nation-building. It argues that the UK's new border regime is not simply a response to labour market needs or security concerns, but rather a deliberate political project rooted in post-imperial nostalgia, racial hierarchies, and a desire to reassert sovereignty. By examining how legal reforms, discursive strategies, and administrative and local practices work together, the chapter explores how the UK has attempted to reclaim control over its borders, both externally at the nation's edges and internally through systems of surveillance and exclusion.

Three interrelated themes guide the analysis. First, the chapter explores how Brexit-era discourse mobilised colonial memory and nationalist tropes in order to justify the strengthening of border control and the opposition to European integration. Second, it investigates how migration is racialised and hierarchised through policy tools such as the points-based system and deportation regimes, particularly in relation to the Commonwealth and postcolonial subjects. Third, it examines the symbolic function of high-profile policies such as the Rwanda Deportation Plan (BBC News, 2024) and the 'Stop the Boats' campaign in staging sovereignty, even when such measures prove legally or practically unviable (Asiamah, 2024).

The second section of this chapter will focus primarily on the 2023 ‘Stop the Boats’ speech by Rishi Sunak as a main case study. The most notable and relevant quotes from this speech will be structured in a table, analysed through Ruth Wodak’s DHA approach to CDA, and then explained in context.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that Britain’s post-Brexit bordering practices are central to its project of national self-definition in a moment of geopolitical transformation. Through policies that both symbolise and enact exclusion, the UK seeks to construct a new place for itself in the world: one that reaffirms traditional hierarchies while projecting a renewed vision of autonomy and control.

## CONTEXT: BREXIT AND WINDRUSH:

Brexit marked a pivotal rupture in the UK’s relationship with the European Union, one rooted in long-standing ambivalence toward European integration. The UK’s exclusion during the EU’s founding and its later refusal to adopt the euro (Shaw, Smith & Scully, 2017) reflected a historically limited commitment to the European project. As Wellings and Gifford (2018) argue, the transformation of the EU from a market-based cooperation into a supranational political entity was seen by many British Eurosceptics as antithetical to parliamentary sovereignty. Tools like the Eurobarometer help reveal how British attitudes toward the EU shifted over time (European Commission, n.d.). The Brexit vote itself formalised this rupture: from 1 January 2021, the UK became subject to third-country customs checks, ending its access to the single market and customs union (House of Lords Library, 2024). Brexit also triggered significant internal and external border changes, particularly around immigration. The introduction of stricter visa regimes post-Brexit aligns with a broader ideological trend toward exclusion, visible even before Brexit, in cases like the Windrush Scandal. Though Windrush migrants had arrived legally as Citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies, starting in 1948, successive immigration laws transformed them into targets of suspicion, culminating in policies that punished people for lacking documentation rather than recognising their contributions (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, n.d.). As the empire formally receded, the racialised logic of empire was translated into hierarchical domestic law and policy. Informal segregation

and discriminatory practices in housing and employment were accompanied by formal legislative changes, including the British Nationality Act of 1948 and restrictive immigration laws of 1962, 1968, and 1981 (Fryar et. al, 2018). These laws redrew the boundaries of citizenship, producing a racialised division between the white "old Commonwealth" and the non-white "new Commonwealth," even as both had previously been promised equal status within the imperial polity (Tyerman, 2022, p. 38).
In recent years, this logic has reached its apex in the UK's **"**hostile environment**"** policy regime of 2012 (Praxis, n.d.).

## 1.1 EMPIRE NOSTALGIA AND THE LANGUAGE OF CONTROL

The hangover from its colonial past remains potent in the UK's post-Brexit border regime, animating not just policy but the symbolic logic of deciding who belongs. Central to this regime is a hierarchy of deservingness that operates along lines of racialisation, economic utility, and cultural compatibility. Migrants are implicitly judged by their perceived usefulness or degree of threat: *How much will you help us?* versus *How much will you harm us?* This framework reproduces the colonial logic of sorting populations by value, loyalty, and manageability (Tyerman, 2022).

A compelling metaphor emerges here: the nation-state is cast as a vulnerable, feminised body, echoing Sara Ahmed's (2014, p.3) observation that "softness is narrated as a proneness to injury." In UK political discourse, terms like *Soft Touch Britain* (Jacob, 2025) suggest that the nation's borders are too easily penetrated, whether by immigrants, or by the EU, or by foreign laws, and thus must be hardened. Border security is reimagined as a kind of national self-defence, an armour against injury.
This framing intensifies during moments of national anxiety, especially around sovereignty and identity, which are central to post-Brexit Britain. Van Dijk (1992, p.94) states that "the strongest form of denial is reversal". One of the clearest examples is the discursive reversal of Boris Johnson and the Leave campaign, who claimed that Theresa May's Brexit deal would reduce the UK to "the status of a colony" (Koegler et al., 2020, p.587). In this logic, Britain – once an empire – is recast as the victim, now 'colonised' by Brussels bureaucracy. This rhetorical move reveals what Koegler et al. call "the perverse flexibility

of populist discourse" (2020, p.587): it allows the UK to retain a sense of grievance and moral superiority even while invoking its imperial legacy.

Such populist messaging constructs a false dilemma: either dominate or be dominated. There is no room for horizontal cooperation, such as that required by EU integration, only vertical hierarchies. As Beaumont (2018, p. 380) argues, "devolving power to the EU [has been] experienced as especially destabilizing to nationalists' sense of self-esteem and progression." The result is a return to a zero-sum understanding of politics rooted in imperial nostalgia: if the UK cannot dominate the EU, it must liberate itself from it.
This discursive framework saturates British border policy. The call to "Take Back Control," (Asiamah, 2024) popularised during the Brexit referendum, encapsulates this ideology. The slogan is more than a rejection of supranational governance; it is a call to restore imperial agency and to redraw the boundaries of belonging. In this imaginary, borders become instruments of racialised and moral sorting, defining not just who may enter but who *deserves* to belong.

The UK's colonial past also reinforces a sense of exceptionalism: as a once-dominant world power, Britain cannot tolerate perceived subordination, whether to EU rules or to international asylum norms. Thus, any infringement on national sovereignty—such as legal obligations to accept refugees or follow European Court of Human Rights rulings—is constructed as unnatural or humiliating. This strain of Euroscepticism is reflected more in-depth in section 1.2.

The political consequence is clear: hard borders are offered as the solution to every domestic ailment, from crime to housing shortages to NHS strain (Tyerman, 2022). In this context, migration becomes the perfect scapegoat. Controlling borders becomes synonymous with reclaiming order, identity, and even dignity. But this is a fantasy rooted in nostalgia and colonial methods of exclusion, one that relies on maintaining racial hierarchies and denying Britain's complicity in global displacement.
In a 2016 speech to the European Parliament, Nigel Farage stated:

> *"What happened last Thursday was a remarkable result, it was indeed a seismic result, not just for British politics, for European politics but perhaps even for global politics too because what the little people did, what the ordinary people did, what the people who have been oppressed over the last few years and see their living standards go down – they rejected the multinationals, they rejected the merchant banks, they rejected big politics and they said, actually, we want our country back, we want our fishing waters back, we want our borders back, we want to be an independent self-governing, normal nation and that is what we have done and that is what must happen."*

He finished the speech by stating: "allow us to go off and pursue our global ambitions and future" (Farage, 2016). The suggestion here is that Brexit restored the all-important sovereignty that was stolen by the European Union and that the "little people" (Britons), have been struggling to reclaim for years. This is another example of *discursive reversal*, in which the UK is almost framed as a colonised nation rather than an ex-colonial power. The fight of the "little people" against "big politics" is characteristic of populist discourse. The speech illustrates *socio-diagnostic critique* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008): Farage constructs a dichotomy between an oppressed, authentic people and a deceitful, transnational elite, thus revealing the manipulative character of populist discourse (Wodak, 2015). This binary narrative embodies a populist ideology wherein symbolic forms like "fishing waters" and "our borders" are loaded with nationalist meaning, reinforcing hegemonic notions of British sovereignty (Benson & Sigona, 2024).

EB 86 of 2016 (see table 2) shows that in this year, 72% of Britons said that they 'tend not to trust' the EU (European Commission, 2016). This was the highest percentage of all member states this year, with the average of all member states being 48%. This Eurosceptic feeling is clearly represented in political rhetoric of the time, and demonstrates how populist discourse utilises national anxieties to justify extreme policy measures (such as Brexit), as well as extreme discursive tropes, going as far to say that British people have been "oppressed."

## 1.2 'STOP THE BOATS': SOVEREIGNTY, THREAT, AND ILLEGALITY

The following table (Table 3) is based on Table 4.1 (p.g 95) of Wodak and Reisigl's 2008 work on DHA. Following the definitions of the discursive strategies offered in this example, I constructed a table with example quotes from Rishi Sunak's 2023 'Stop the Boats' speech. Following the table I offer a more in-depth analysis of these examples. *Strategy* in this case refers to a more or less deliberate set of practices (often including discourse), aimed at achieving a specific social, political, psychological, or linguistic objective. These strategies operate across various levels of linguistic structure and complexity. (Wodak & Reisigl, 2008). *Nomination* refers to the "discursive construction of social actors, objects/phenomena/ events and processes/ actions". *Predication* is "discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events/ processes and actions (more or less positively or negatively)". *Argumentation* is "justification and questioning of claims of truth and normative rightness". *Perspectivization/Framing* includes "positioning speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance" and *intensification/mitigation* is "modifying (intensifying or mitigating) the illocutionary force and thus the epistemic or deontic status of utterances" (Wodak & Reisigl, 2008, p.95).

**TABLE 3:**

| Strategy | Objective | Devices Used | Examples from Sunak's Speech |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nomination** | Construct social actors (in-groups vs. out-groups); define "us" and "them" | • Membership categorisation (e.g. "illegal immigrants", "criminal gangs")<br>• Deictics (we/us vs. them)<br>• Metaphors | • "Illegal immigration undermines... fairness"<br>• "Your government, not criminal gangs... decides who comes here"<br>• Repeated references to "us" and "them" |
| **Predication** | Qualify social actors or actions | • Evaluative adjectives ("illegal", "incredible", "vanishingly rare") | • "The only, extremely narrow exception…" |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | positively or negatively | • Hyperboles, comparisons, stereotypes, metaphors | • “This is the toughest legislation…”<br>• “We’ve set the bar so high…” |
| **Argumentation** | Justify actions or policies through appeals to norms, fairness, security | • *Topoi* (of security, justice, responsibility, numbers)<br>• Logical cause-effect constructions | • "Illegal immigration undermines... the very sense of fairness"<br>• "Numbers are up 80% in the Mediterranean"<br>• "Because it is your government..." |
| **Perspectivisation / Framing** | Show speaker's alignment with the audience; position events from a shared POV | • Deictics (“I”, “we”, “you”)<br>• Direct/indirect speech<br>• Framing devices | • "I share the British people’s frustration"<br>• “If they [Labour] really get the values of the British people...”<br>• "This is your government..." |
| **Intensification / Mitigation** | Adjust emotional or rhetorical force of statements | • Hyperbole (“toughest legislation ever”)<br>• Repetition for emphasis (“blocked”, “share your frustration”) | • "Vanishingly rare for anyone to meet it"<br>• “Blocked” (repeated)<br>• “I will not allow a foreign court…” (strong deontic force) |

Rishi Sunak’s “Stop the Boats” speech, delivered at the 2023 Conservative Party Conference, stands as a stark exemplar of contemporary bordering discourse in post-Brexit Britain. Positioned as a political performance of control and sovereignty, the speech outlines the government’s immigration crackdown, particularly through the proposed deportation of illegal arrivals to Rwanda (BBC News, 2024). In the UK, there are four primary definitions which categorise someone as an illegal migrant:

1. “Entering the UK on a visa and overstay (including in cases where residence permission is cancelled due to a criminal conviction).
2. Entering the UK without authorisation or through deception, such as using forged documents.
3. Not leaving the country after an asylum application has been rejected and all rights of appeal exhausted.
4. Being born in the UK to parents who are unauthorised migrants, because the UK does not have birthright citizenship.” (The Migration Observatory, 2025)

At the core of Sunak’s rhetoric is a discursive binary between desirable and undesirable migrants — those like his own parents, who “worked hard” and “integrated”, and those who arrive “illegally” and thus undermine Britain’s social fabric. This construction of in-groups and out-groups is central to Wodak’s (2008) DHA and is enacted through *referential strategies* (e.g., “your government, not criminal gangs or foreign courts”), *predication* (e.g., “illegal”, “vanishingly rare”), and *argumentation* (e.g., *topos* of security, fairness, and national identity). The notion that “illegal immigration undermines not just our border controls, it undermines the very sense of fairness that is so central to our national character” reflects an appeal to a moral order rooted in exclusion, while hyperbolic assertions such as “this is the toughest legislation that has ever been passed” and “we’ve set the bar so high” reinforce the performative toughness of the border regime and position this government as more effective than the last.

Sunak repeatedly invokes collective deictics (“we”, “your government”) to position himself as aligned with the British public, sharing their “frustration” and representing their “values.” This perspectivisation, paired with the use of repetition for terms like “blocked” and references to “them” (meaning: refugees, the Labour Party, the Strasbourg court), creates a narrative of national victimhood and resistance. The rhetorical force of the speech is heightened by intensification strategies, such as “I will not allow a foreign court to block these flights,” framing border control not just as administrative policy but as a defence of sovereignty, democracy, and national identity. The point of mentioning “foreign courts” being the reason for the failure of the plan also highlights how part of Sunak’s grievance with this plan not going through is not just that the plan has failed, but that it was not solely the decision of the UK, highlighting the saliency of sovereignty. Within the context

of post-Brexit Britain, this speech reveals how borders are no longer simply physical demarcations but symbolic sites of national rebirth (Benson & Sigona, 2024).

The UK government's 'Stop the Boats' campaign, a flagship component of its post-Brexit border regime, highlights not only on formal policy instruments such as offshoring, detention, deterrence, but also on the presence of border enforcement into civil society (Asiamah, 2024). This particular rhetoric did, quite effectively, seep into society. While official discourse frames the campaign in humanitarian terms, such as saving lives at sea, or legal ones including the importance of integrity of asylum processes (Home Office & Cleverly, 2024), its implementation reproduces colonial racial logics through outsourced, informal, and often illegal practices of surveillance and control.

One striking example is the re-emergence of vigilante activism along the Kent coast. As Lewicki (2024) documents, self-proclaimed concerned citizens engage in militarised monitoring of Channel crossings, often livestreaming boat arrivals, confronting hotel staff and asylum seekers, and attempting to physically intercept migrants at sea. While these groups deny being militias, their self-legitimation borrows heavily from state discourses, including references to WWII, the "invasion" narrative, and active cooperation with "Project Kraken"—a UK Border Force initiative that encourages the public to report suspicious coastal activity (Lewicki, 2024, p.13). Although these actors often claim to act independently, many have affiliations with MPs, parties such as Reform UK (formerly UKIP), or they are ex-military etc. Despite their self-styled defence of public safety, such vigilante actions lack legal standing and have been condemned by the Security Industry Authority (SIA), which warns that using force to detain migrants could constitute assault and that such activity may result in license suspension (SIA, 2023).
This convergence of vigilantism and state discourse illustrates how the bordering regime extends beyond institutional policy into the realm of symbolic, informal, and often illegal social practices (Lewicki, 2024). Influence is thus both top-down and bottom-up. While government rhetoric has helped legitimise these practices, they also reflect deeper societal undercurrents of colonial nostalgia, and national anxiety surrounding borders that predate the campaign itself.

These vigilante actors echo the state's racialised bordering narrative, positioning themselves as protectors of the nation while reproducing colonial tropes of threat and disorder. Their framing of asylum seekers swings ambivalently between humanitarian concern and racialised criminalisation. This oscillation, as Lewicki (2024) shows, mirrors broader state rhetoric that constructs refugees as either victims or infiltrators who threaten the social order. Both constitute framings which justify intensified border policing.
In this context, the vigilante becomes an unofficial arm of the border regime, enacting what the state itself often cannot do under international law, even if their discourse can suggest that they would like to.

Importantly, this vigilantism cannot be dismissed as fringe or oppositional. As Lewicki (2024) argues, it is interconnected with government policy, responding precisely to the responsibilisation logic embedded in neoliberal governance. The 'Stop the Boats' campaign may not officially endorse these practices, but it creates the moral and symbolic terrain in which they become imaginable, justified, and even encouraged. In Weber's (1980) terms, the vigilantism applies *actional power* through "physical force" to government "threats or promises" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2008, p.89). In moments where the state claims its hands are tied by legal or political constraints, vigilante actors can step in to perform its wishes. An example of this is a quote that Boris Johnson told Sky News in 2020:

> *"But then there's a second thing we've got to do and that is to look at the legal framework that we have that means that when people do get here, it is very, very difficult to then send them away again even though blatantly they've come here illegally,"*

This statement was later deemed "inflammatory" by Lisa Doyle, head of the British Refugee Council (Sky News, 2020). The reliance on evaluative intensifiers such as "very, very difficult", invite emotional reactions and dichotomous thinking (law-abiding Britons vs law-breaking outsiders). This statement also constructs migrants as illegally present, with the word "blatantly" suggesting that this statement is not only true, but very obvious, thereby attempting to justify the truth of his claim, as Wodak (2016) suggests is an aspect

of argumentation. The law is presented as ineffective, and almost complicit in undermining national control. The government is portrayed as constrained, bound by legal frameworks that prevent decisive action. However, the suggestion of how to handle this problem is slightly ambiguous. The statements seem to suggest that there is either need for reform, or for extra-legal action. The argumentation utilises discursive delegitimisation of international legal norms and asylum protections by implying that they hinder sovereignty and are harmful to the nation-state. This form of discursive tactic relieves responsibility from the government and redirects it onto legal structures (e.g., human rights laws, refugee conventions – i.e. supranational norms). It suggests that the government wishes it could do more for the people but simply, their *hands are tied.* This, in turn, risks feeding populist resentment and indirectly legitimises calls for vigilante action, though not openly inciting it.

## 1.3 NATIONAL CHARACTER AND THE DISCOURSE OF DESERVINGNESS

In contemporary Britain, bordering functions not only as a political practice of migration control but also as a symbolic mechanism for defining the national self. At the heart of this process lies a discourse of deservingness, which evaluates how worthy immigrants will be for the nation, and therefore how much they belong. This discourse, however, far from being neutral, is racialised and deeply embedded in Britain's imperial past and postcolonial present. As Tyerman (2022, p. 33) notes, "there are degrees of foreignness and danger here; not all migrants are as un/welcome as others." This reflects a persistent hierarchical racialisation in the postcolonial international order, where proximity to supposed 'whiteness' and 'Britishness' determines access to rights, space, and security. This process is historically rooted in the structures of empire, where colonial subjects were governed through logics of racial difference, restricted mobility, and spatial segregation (Benson & Sigona, 2024). "Racially 'mixed' colonial subjects were treated with suspicion, seen as 'subversive' and 'contagious', the potential 'enemy within'", as figures that threatened the racial purity and moral authority of British identity, the very presence of such individuals "called into question the criteria by which Europeanness could be identified, how citizenship would be accorded, and nationality assigned" (Tyerman, 2022,

p.37). This challenge to racial order disrupted the distribution of the *spoils of empire* (El-Enany, 2020), thus making their exclusion a political imperative for post-imperial Britain. The Windrush scandal serves to demonstrate this exclusion. Paulette Wilson's case is emblematic: a woman who arrived in 1968 as a Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies was reclassified as an "illegal immigrant", and subjected to detention and the denial of state services. The underlying assumption was clear: Blackness signifies foreignness; proof of belonging must be earned, not assumed (Fryar et. al, 2018).
The outrage surrounding the Windrush scandal, however, often relied on a selective moral economy. Those wronged were framed as deserving. In other words: loyal, hardworking, and respectable contributors to British society. As Fryar et. al (2018) point out, the scandal's framing ignored that these individuals were already citizens. David Lammy, Labour MP, commented on the scandal, stating:

> *"The Windrush story does not begin in 1948; the Windrush story begins in the 17th century, when British slave traders stole 12 million Africans from their homes, took them to the Caribbean and sold them into slavery to work on plantations. The wealth of this country was built on the backs of the ancestors of the Windrush generation. We are here today because you were there. My ancestors were British subjects, but they were not British subjects because they came to Britain. They were British subjects because Britain came to them, took them across the Atlantic, colonised them, sold them into slavery, profited from their labour and made them British subjects."* (2018)

Despite Lammy's obvious opposition to the detainment of these individuals, the theme is still the same that the scandal is not simply unjust because the victims were in fact legal citizens, but that it is especially unwarranted because these people worked hard and contributed to British society. Despite the overall message being critical of the actions of the state, the victims are still framed as deserving because they contributed "labour" to the UK. Similarly, the reference to his "ancestors" is a method that reoccurs in British political discourse, (for example by Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer) adding a sense of familiarity and understanding of the people, even though he himself has not been target of any of these arrests.

This moral filtering of migrants is not unique to Britain. As Blaagaard (2008) argues, European whiteness operates as a flexible but powerful system of cultural and political normativity. In Europe, whiteness is not always colour-coded but functions through national, cultural, and religious criteria such as secularism, linguistic fluency, and gender conformity. It designates some bodies as fully European and others as inherently suspicious. Blaagaard (2008) warns that importing U.S.-centric binaries (e.g., Black vs. white) into the European context misses how race, culture, and nationalism are interwoven into complex, often unspoken logics of exclusion.

In the UK, these logics operate through what Blaagaard (2008, p.17) calls “ethno-racial”, which is a conflation of race, ethnicity, religion, and national identity. Policies like the New Plan for Immigration, the Homes for Ukraine scheme, or the recent Rwanda deportation law illustrate how deservingness is tied not only to legal status but to a perceived compatibility with British values (Lewicki, 2024). Migrants from Ukraine, for instance, are welcomed as white, Christian, and geopolitically sympathetic. Contrastly, refugees from former colonies or Muslim-majority countries are framed as threats to national integrity, even if they hail from ex-colonies. Blaagaard's (2008) critique adds depth to Tyerman’s (2022) argument about the hierarchical foreignness inscribed into British border practices. European Whiteness, she argues, is judged by far more than just skin colour, and includes possession of privilege, cultural proximity to the secular-liberal ideal, and alignment with norms of modernity and respectability. This helps explain why Central and Eastern European immigrants, while often legally privileged as EU citizens, have also faced xenophobic rhetoric, economic scapegoating, and cultural suspicion in Britain, especially in the context of Brexit. Benson and Sigona (2024, p.2057) review data from the Home Office to “show how this power of removal targets some nationalities, with Romanian nationals disproportionately and consistently more affected by removal orders over the last decade than any other EU nationality”. However, this hierarchy of deservingness is more complicated than simply punitive. Lewicki (2024, p.1) argues that, through “openings and loopholes” of Britain’s bordering after Brexit,

> *"state and non-state actors co-produce a neoliberal border regime of stratified rights, partial inclusions, and gradual exclusions. These variegated entitlements draw on and reinvigorate the racial order of coloniality."*

She explains that in the UK, people racialised as "Eastern European" are often viewed by politicians and the public to be workers who usually enter low-paying jobs (often manual labour). Although, the value of this is often overlooked, or is outweighed by the perception that these people are "welfare scroungers" (p.8), receiving more in benefits from the country than they put in. In contrast to this, people categorised as "Western European" are often assumed to contribute huge amounts in tax to the British system, and have a higher paying job, perhaps even sending their children to private schools, thereby putting more in to the system than they take out. Thus, a hierarchy of deservingness is created, based on proximity to European Whiteness and value of contribution to British society. Lewicki (2024, p.8) adds that:

> *"Brexit never was about discontinuing the reliance on cheap mobile labor. Rather, it was about making mobility into shortage occupations more precarious and disposable"*

This is apparent through 2018 discussions of "temporary work schemes after Brexit" (Goodhart, 2018), discussed in a Policy Exchange paper about post-Brexit migration policy. The benefits of re-implementing temporary work schemes like The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) which, interestingly, is said to have been "phased out in 2014 in part because of the large availability of such labour from eastern Europe" (p.15). The suggestion to re-implement such visa schemes is no coincidence, proving that Brexit was, in part, about filtering out the non-deserving's of their freedom of movement, and restricting them to *temporary* right to remain, whilst still benefitting from their cheap and precarious labour.

In sum, deservingness in the UK is not just about what migrants do but how they have been categorised by the public and the state. This hierarchy is not simply a matter of policy but of affective politics, a product of moral hierarchies shaped by empire. To understand

the UK's bordering practices today, we must account for the full complexity of European whiteness as both a legacy of colonial power and a continuing structure of national belonging.

The following chapter introduces the second case study: France. Building on the theoretical and comparative context previously discussed, this chapter explores how bordering practices and discourses of exclusion are embedded in French national identity. The chapter begins by examining the Republican model of citizenship, focusing on how its formal universalism conceals informal boundaries based on race, religion, and postcolonial history. Section 2.2 investigates the political and symbolic role of *laïcité*, highlighting how secularism functions as a discursive border that polices visible difference. The third section introduces elite discourse, analysing how the figure of the migrant is racialised and moralised in political rhetoric, particularly through speeches by Bardella and Zemmour. These are analysed using Ruth Wodak's DHA. Finally, Section 2.4 discusses French anxieties around globalisation and how political actors mobilise those concerns to justify stricter borders and national protectionism.

# CHAPTER 2: A FRACTURED HEXAGON? BORDERING AND EXCLUSION IN CONTEMPORARY FRANCE

## INTRODUCTION:

A fundamental paradox lies at the heart of French national identity: the simultaneous existence of a universalist model that claims to see no difference, and a set of symbolic and structural borders that continue to exclude based on racial, religious, and postcolonial grounds. The French Republican tradition, built on ideals of equality and indivisibility, formally denies the recognition of race or ethnicity (Scott, 2007; Weil, 2008). Yet, in practice, the Republic produces internal boundaries in the form of borders that are invisible in law but tangible in discourse, administration, and public sentiment. As Patrick Weil (2008) writes, "nationality is also a matter of policy" (p. 3). In France, nationality is not a static legal classification but a shifting, contested space that reflects broader political ideologies. It acts as a boundary line that is "constantly being renegotiated and crossed, not an enclosure" (Weil, 2008, p. 3). The formation of modern nationality law began with the Civil Code of 1803, but its meaning and limits have evolved through colonial encounters and postcolonial migrations. In this context, French identity is not simply legal status, but a cultural and racialised construct, defining who is considered authentically French (*français de souche* (Le Bras, 1998)) and who remains the perpetual outsider.

This Chapter first explores the Republican model of France and the way in which it continues old bordering practices in a more subtle (invisible) way. Then section 2.2 covers the *laïcité* interlinks with exclusion in contemporary French political discourse. Section 2.3 will explore racialisation of the migrant through right-wing political discourse, and finally section 2.4 analyses how French anxieties about globalisation often create the sense that harder borders are required.

## 2.1 THE REPUBLICAN MODEL AND INVISIBLE BORDERS

The French Republican model purports to be colourblind, universal, and egalitarian. In reality, it embeds a system of invisible borders that are maintained not only through law, but through administrative discretion, political discourse, and social imaginaries (Wallach Scott, 2007). While the Republic formally recognises no race or religion, these categories continue to shape who is seen as truly French and who is subject to suspicion, surveillance, or symbolic exclusion.

Recent political developments highlight this enduring tension. In January 2025, Interior Minister Bruno Retailleau proposed abolishing the automatic right to French citizenship for children born in France to foreign parents (Thompson, 2025). Emphasising the need for a "voluntary act" of naturalisation, the proposal echoes earlier restrictive measures such as the 1993 Pasqua Law, which aimed to curtail legal migration and harden the conditions of access to nationality (Guiraudon, 2001; Thompson, 2025). This reflects what Weil (2008) describes as a historical oscillation between inclusive and exclusive conceptions of French nationality. A telling example of this tradition of exclusionary logic is the treatment of Algerian Muslims during colonial rule. Although technically French nationals, their citizenship was "merely formal, denatured, stripped of rights" (Weil, 2008, p. 6). This postcolonial legacy persists, shaping the experiences of racialised citizens and migrants within the Republic. Today, France's borders are not only geographic but epistemic and affective. They mark out who belongs, who threatens the national fabric, and who can or cannot be assimilated.

The far-right Rassemblement National (RN), under figures like Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella, has consistently framed immigration as a civilisational threat. Bardella has advocated for the abolition of *jus soli* (birthright citizenship) and promoted a vision of France rooted in ethnic and cultural homogeneity. Such discourse constructs a racialised hierarchy of assimilability, reinforcing the idea that some populations (often Muslim or postcolonial) can never truly integrate (Wallach Scott, 2007).

This is mirrored in the Macron government's securitised approach to so-called "Islamist separatism." In response to a 2025 report accusing the Muslim Brotherhood (religious and political organisation which advocates for the installation of Muslim values in society

(Jabkhiro, 2025)) of undermining French secular values through non-violent influence, Macron announced measures to limit foreign funding of Muslim institutions (Reuters, 2025). The implication is clear: Muslim citizens and communities are viewed as potential threats to normative Frenchness, whether or not they are members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Far-right narratives have also promoted the concept of "remigration" the return of immigrants and their descendants to their countries of origin (Zemmour, 2025).
A striking example is an address from far-right politician, Éric Zemmour, following the riots that ensued in Paris after the Champions League win for Paris Saint-Germain (Blackburn, 2025). He explained the perpetrators of the violence from his point of view, stating:

> *"ils sont pour la plupart des enfants de l'immigration arabo-musulmane, qu'il soient né ici ou là-bas, qu'il soit français ou étranger, ils détestent la France et les Français". (Zemmour, 2025, 1:21-1:31)*
> *"cette violence n'a rien à voir avec le foot". (Zemmour, 2025, 00.42-00.45)*

By completely detaching the violence from the football, Zemmour clearly saw an opportunity to perpetuate racialised stereotypes and find a scapegoat for the ills of the French nation. This lays fertile ground to reintroduce his proposed policy of *remigration* which he had originally proposed during the last presidential election (Zemmour, 2025). Zemmour disconnects violence from football culture, despite the context being a football celebration. This discursive *decontextualization* constructs a racialised scapegoat, suggesting that violence is inherent to the cultural background of a group, not situational. He continues by suggesting that:

> *"c'est bien dans la tradition des barbaresques comme on disait au 17e siècle. C'est-à-dire des pirates, des pillards, qui venaient d'Alger ou de Tunis pour écumer les côtes françaises" (Zemmour, 2025, 03:02-03:09).*

There is a *topos* of savagery and criminalisation that positions the state as besieged. The irony is evident in suggesting that the North Africans have invaded France, when in reality,

the reverse is true. He calls back to invasions from the 17th century, even though the French invasion of Algeria occurred in more recent times and is more present in society (Wallach Scott, 2007).

Zemmour's speech is illustrative of how the French Republican model, while formally universalist, is continually reinterpreted through a racialised and culturalist lens. As Ruth Wodak's DHA reveals, his framing of urban violence not only decontextualizes the event from its football celebration context, but re-inscribes long-standing colonial binaries between civilisation and barbarism. Through the *topos* of invasion and criminality, Zemmour constructs an ethno-cultural boundary that casts second-generation French citizens as permanent outsiders, demonstrating the existence of invisible borders in the national imaginary (Blaagaard, 2008).
Such developments reveal how French nationality continues to function as a politics of differentiation, as Weil (2008) argued. While the Republican ideal claims neutrality, the application of citizenship remains selective, strategic, and can be revoked at any moment. Legal equality does not guarantee social inclusion, and the lines that divide the French from the 'Others' are often drawn in discourse, not doctrine.

## 2.2 LAÏCITÉ, INTEGRATION, AND SURVEILLANCE OF IDENTITY

Joan Wallach Scott (2007) critically explores how French universalism operates not as a neutral, inclusive framework but as a discursive tool for enforcing cultural conformity and surveilling difference. In *The Politics of the Veil*, she argues that France imagines itself as a timeless, enlightened Republic, constructing itself in opposition to Islam, which it frames as its civilizational 'Other'. This opposition enables the maintenance of symbolic borders, even within the legal boundaries of citizenship. As she states, "This dual construction, France versus its Muslims, is an operation in virtual community building. It is the result of a sustained polemic, a political discourse" (p. 7). In this sense, French Republicanism functions not only as an ideology of integration, but as a mechanism of disciplining and erasing difference:

> *"Sameness is an abstraction, a philosophical notion meant to achieve the formal equality of individuals before the law. But historically it has been applied literally: assimilation means the eradication of difference" (p. 7).*

This framing is clearly evident in President Emmanuel Macron's 2020 speech in Les Mureaux, where he defines acceptable citizenship boundaries under the guise of defending *laïcité* and the Republic. Macron states:

> *"Je veux qu'il n'y ait aucune confusion ni aucun amalgame... mais force est de constater qu'il y a un islamisme radical qui conduit à nier les lois de la République…" (Macron, 2020).*

Using Wodak's (2008) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), this quote can be analysed through the *topos* of danger: that radical Islam poses a threat to the values of the Republic, and the *topos* of responsibility: that the state must take action to protect French society. Though Macron insists on avoiding conflation (*"aucune confusion ni aucun amalgame"*), the structure of the sentence rhetorically reintroduces the very confusion it claims to avoid. By embedding "islamisme radical" within a discourse of national defence, Macron effectively creates a binary between the assimilated "good Muslim" and the suspect "radical Muslim." This binary enforces symbolic borders within the imagined national community, designating some citizens as less compatible with 'Frenchness'. Moreover, Macron's statement must be contextualised historically. As Scott (2007, p.10) notes, French political discourse consistently fails to distinguish between "Muslim," "immigrant," and "North African," which contributes to the racialisation of Muslim identity. Despite this research being from 2007, there are still hangovers of this kind of generalisation today, evident through this recent political discourse. Even when framed in liberal or Republican language, such discourses reinforce exclusionary boundaries and justify restrictive policy measures under the pretext of protecting secularism and the French nation.

## 2.3 POLITICAL ELITES AND THE DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MIGRANT

In *Discourse and the Denial of Racism* (1992), van Dijk opens by stating: "one of the crucial properties of contemporary racism is its denial, typically illustrated in such well-known disclaimers as 'I have nothing against blacks, but…'" (p. 87). Despite the empirical focus of his study on earlier European contexts, his theoretical insights remain highly relevant to the current French political landscape. As van Dijk (1992, p.89) asserts, "such strategies may at the same time aim at defending the ingroup as a whole," thus reinforcing internal symbolic boundaries and delineating the limits of national belonging. This theoretical framing is particularly evident in the June 2024 remarks of Jordan Bardella, President of the RN, during an interview on BFM TV:

> *"Les Français d'origine étrangère ou de nationalité étrangère n'ont rien à craindre de notre projet… S'ils travaillent, s'ils paient leurs impôts, s'ils paient leurs cotisations, s'ils respectent la loi, s'ils aiment notre pays, ils n'ont rien à craindre."*

Bardella's statement exemplifies van Dijk's claim that elite discourse often merges surface-level inclusion with underlying conditionality. The message is presented reassuringly—"they have nothing to fear"—yet the reassurance is undermined by a list of requirements: economic contribution, legal compliance, and emotional loyalty to the nation. These conditions signal what van Dijk (1992) terms "positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation" (p.88), where the speaker appears tolerant and fair, while simultaneously implying that the outgroup is suspect and must prove its legitimacy.
The conditionality embedded in Bardella's repeated "s'ils" ("if they...") constructs a hierarchy of moral deservingness. Immigrant-origin individuals must constantly demonstrate their loyalty and usefulness to avoid becoming targets of exclusion. As van Dijk (1992) notes, denials, disclaimers, and other forms of mitigation are ideological moves that aim to save face and simultaneously convey negative meanings about minorities.

Bardella's rhetoric follows the structure of a classic disclaimer: We are not against immigrants… if they behave properly. This is functionally identical to the formula "I'm not racist, but…", which van Dijk (1992) identifies as a discursive tool for pre-emptively deflecting accusations of prejudice while reproducing racial stereotypes. The underlying inferred stereotype is that immigrants are prone to lawlessness, welfare dependence, or treachery. Through presupposition and implication, Bardella's speech frames these traits as inherent risks unless neutralised by proof of good behaviour.

Importantly, this conditional belonging is asymmetrically applied. Ethnic majority citizens are not typically asked to prove their allegiance or patriotism to remain part of the national community (Wallach Scott, 2007). As such, Bardella's formulation enacts what van Dijk (2018) describes as the symbolic reproduction of dominance, whereby the dominant group maintains power through repeated representations of minorities as culturally deviant or threatening. The requirement that minorities "aiment notre pays" is especially revealing, as it introduces an emotional and cultural test that is inherently unquantifiable and ideologically loaded. It opens the door for state actors to delegitimise dissent or cultural difference under the pretence of preserving unity.

Van Dijk's framework enables a critical unpacking of how such rhetoric masks exclusion with the language of fairness. The cumulative effect of these strategies is the normalisation of suspicion towards immigrant-origin citizens and the entrenchment of a moral hierarchy between the *deserving* and *undeserving* within the nation. As van Dijk underscores, "the denial of racism is not its absence, but its most cunning form" (1992, p. 89).
In sum, Bardella's statement is a clear instance of symbolic bordering through elite discourse. It upholds the myth of universal Republicanism while operationalising conditional belonging, thereby reinforcing the very exclusions that the French model of citizenship allegedly denies.

## 2.4 FROM OPENNESS TO DEFENCE: THE DISCURSIVE POLITICS OF GLOBALISATION IN FRANCE

Globalisation in France has long been met with an ambivalent and often sceptical response, shaped by economic, cultural, and ideological anxieties. While globalisation promises increased mobility, innovation, and competition, many French citizens perceive it as an "Anglo-Saxon" project (Chabal, 2013, p.33). This term gained particular popularity after the 1970s and came to be synonymous with neoliberal globalisation. It evokes not just economic integration but the wider Anglo-American cultural and political model, that conflicts with the French republican and social model. This perception has fuelled widespread fears of social dumping, of which Goodhart (1998) traces the root back to 1993, when a plant in France was closed and moved to Scotland, meaning that workers in high-wage economies were placed in direct competition with low-cost labour abroad, threatening national industries and employment standards. This is seen as a negative effect of European integration, and the effects of outsourcing and intensified global competition have reinforced a sense of economic precarity, prompting calls across the political spectrum for stronger national protections and, symbolically, for the reinforcement of borders. Eurobarometer 38 of 1992 demonstrates that more French people related Single Market to 'fear' than 'hope' (ref EB). This was the first time in any country (since the start of Eurobarometer) that attitudes towards the Single Market had been more fearful than hopeful, reflecting growing concerns in France about economic European integration at this time.

Political parties, from the far-left PCF to the far-right FN, have instrumentalised these concerns to advocate for sovereignty, protectionism, or a reassertion of state control over markets (Hanley, 2001). While centre-left and centre-right parties have at times embraced European integration as a buffer against global volatility, their discourses often reveal a tension between regulatory ambitions and the reality of a deregulatory EU market. As Hanley (2001) observed, these dynamics have produced a fragmented political consensus on globalisation, with traditional parties struggling to reconcile market liberalisation with demands for social protection. In this context, bordering is not merely a response to

migration but emerges as a broader reaction to globalisation's perceived erosion of economic security, cultural cohesion, and national autonomy.

An IPSOS report of 2021 demonstrated that only 27% of French people believe that globalisation is a good thing for their country. This was the lowest vote of the 25 countries assessed in the poll. This figure had dropped by 7% since the previous year. The same report showed that in 2024, 49% of French people disagreed that globalisation is a good thing for their country, again the lowest statistic of country to agree. It is apparent that French opinions about globalisation are not getting any more favourable, and this is reflected in political discourse. For example, Marine Le Pen made some remarks in a 2017 campaign launch speech in Lyon which positioned globalisation as responsible for many national troubles.
She stated:

> *"Procédant uniquement de la recherche par certains de l'hyper profit, elle se développe à un double niveau, la mondialisation d'en bas avec l'immigration massive, levier du dumping social mondial, et la mondialisation d'en haut avec la financiarisation de l'économie.*
> *La mondialisation qui était un fait avec la multiplication des échanges, ils en ont fait une idéologie : le mondialisme économique qui refuse toute limitation, toute régularisation de la mondialisation et qui, pour cela, a affaibli les défenses immunitaires de la Nation, la dépossédant de ses éléments constitutifs : frontière, monnaie nationale, autorité de ses lois conduite de l'économie, permettant ainsi à un autre mondialisme de naître et croître : le fondamentalisme islamiste."*

By positioning globalisation as a double threat; from below with immigration and social dumping, and from above with the insatiable greed of elites, it conjures the picture that the French people are being besieged on two fronts, and must fight against this evil, as they are under threat. The way in which she refers to actors is also telling of the discursive methoda at play. She refers to "certains", which implies the elites responsible for globalisation, but is a very vague invocation which reinforces conspiratorial ambiguity. Another term she

uses is “immigration massive”, a quantifier which is again vague, implying threat and scale but lacking any actual evidence. Furthermore, the threat of “fondamentalisme islamiste” also conflates religious identity and extremism, with no real link. This demonstrates a *topos* of threat – if globalisation is unregulated, borders will be crossed, which leads to extremist Islam infiltrating France. The nation of France is also victimised, and framed as being denied essential components of sovereignty with the assertion that globalisation has “affaibli les défenses immunitaires de la Nation”. The choice of wording “défences immunitaires” personifies the nation of France, suggesting that globalisation and immigration are some kind of infection for which France needs a cure. Here, the French nation is the victim and French people contribute in no way to globalisation, this is the fault of the elites.

The final chapter of this thesis offers a comparative analysis of British and French bordering logics, investigating how each state’s imperial legacy, political discourse, and institutional responses to globalisation shape their contemporary exclusionary practices. Building on the preceding case studies, the chapter explores how the two different historical trajectories produce distinct yet increasingly convergent border regimes.
The chapter unfolds in three sections. Section 3.1 maps a transnational convergence on exclusion, arguing that despite national specificities, both France and the UK reproduce racialised and moralised bordering through discourse, policy, and affect. Section 3.2 interrogates imperial legacies, examining how contemporary projects such as *Global Britain* and *Choose France* repackage colonial nostalgia as forward-looking internationalism. Section 3.3 focuses on the crisis of representation, analysing how populist rhetoric and technocratic governance combine to legitimate exclusion in both states.

# CHAPTER 3: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

## INTRODUCTION: DIVERGING HISTORIES, CONVERGING LOGICS?

Before examining the contemporary border regimes of France and the United Kingdom, it is essential to recognise the distinct historical trajectories that underpin their national imaginaries. While both states share imperial pasts and face similar global concerns—such as migration, supranational integration, and the rise of populism—their bordering logics emerge from diverging understandings of nationhood, memory, and identity (Kumar, 2006). This chapter compares these logics across three analytical dimensions: historical memory, discursive bordering practices, and institutional responses to globalisation and representation crises.

At the core of this divergence is each country's relationship to its imperial past. As Kumar (2006) argues, Britain and France were rival imperial powers whose competition shaped not only their global dominance but also their national identities. However, France's post-imperial trajectory has been marked by introspective reckoning with its revolutionary and colonial past, leaving them with a "long and fertile tradition of national self-reflection" (p. 427). Works such as Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire* (1984), which was created to catalogue the symbols and spaces that, according to Nora, contribute to French national identity (Vanthuyne, 2025) or speeches such as de Gaulle's "une certaine idée de la France," (de Gaulle, 1965), demonstrate how French national discourse has grappled openly with questions of unity, decline, and renewal, attempting to define what it means to be French. By contrast, British identity has been underpinned by what Kumar describes as a "Whig interpretation of history" (p. 425), presenting national development as a steady, conflict-averse arc that avoids deep introspection, particularly surrounding race and imperial legacy. For them, "the past is past", however they avoid the American attitude that "history is bunk" and instead that the seamless continuity of past into present makes "the distinction between past and present both difficult and pointless" (Kumar, 2006, p.414).

These differing attitudes to history and identity shape contemporary border discourse in crucial ways. French political rhetoric tends to frame borders in moral-universalist terms, placing importance on secularism, republicanism, and *laïcité*. Meanwhile, British discourse prioritises pragmatism and sovereignty, often disguising nationalist aims in bureaucratic or institutional language (van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002).

This chapter proceeds in three sections. Section 3.1 explores exclusionary logics in discourse. Section 3.2 examines imperial legacies. Section 3.3 analyses how populism and technocratic governance create crises of representation that bordering discourses attempt to resolve.

## 3.1 A TRANSNATIONAL CONVERGENCE ON EXCLUSION

Border regimes in France and the UK are increasingly aligned in their exclusionary logics, particularly in their targeting of racialised or precarious populations. While differences remain in the ideological framing of these regimes, both states have adopted a set of practices that normalise exclusion not only at the level of state policy but also in the everyday social fabric. Tyerman (2022) offers an "everyday" perspective on bordering, with attention given to how the regulation of mobility and belonging in both countries is enacted through micro-level interactions, affective responses, and imaginaries of threat and order. This convergence marks a broader shift in European political discourse, where migrants are routinely framed as incarnations of crisis and rendered "primary targets of control, hatred, and violence" (Tyerman, 2022, p. 28).

Tyerman (2022) draws on Nicholas De Genova (2018) to argue that the so-called 2015 "migrant crisis" must be understood as a racial crisis; a moment in which Europe redrew its identity through a racialised distinction between insiders and outsiders (De Genova, 2018, as cited in Tyerman, 2022, p. 28). In this context, the figure of the Muslim migrant becomes a condensed symbol of cultural threat, "negatively defining an imaginary Europe as culturally (i.e. racially) homogeneous and united" (Tyerman, 2022, p. 29). This imaginary enforces a civilisational hierarchy that positions non-European others as incompatible with European values, echoing long-standing colonial ordering.

To fully understand what is labelled a "migration crisis," Tyerman (2022, p.31) insists we must instead recognise it as "a crisis of racism". They do so not only by excluding the racialised "other" by material means, but also through symbolic constructions of the nation as a valued community (Anderson, 2013), a moral and cultural ideal expressed through shared norms of behaviour, ethnicity, and language.

Borders thus emerge as essential sites of statecraft, where distinctions between "us" and "them," security and insecurity, belonging and foreignness are constantly reproduced (Tyerman, 2022, p. 31). The presence of those constructed as non-native within national space is seen as inherently disruptive, "unsettling the equation of bounded territory with homogeneous identity" (p. 32). As Doty (2003) prompts, "statecraft has been and is inextricably linked with the 'other'" (p. 25), and Tyerman (2022) builds on this point by connecting modern border practices to colonial logics of racial ordering.
Member of Reform UK, Lee Anderson, recently tweeted "Ban the burqa? Yes we should. No one should be allowed to hide their identity in public." (Telegraph, 2025). This comment came in response to fellow Reform MP Sara Pochin's question to Sir Kier Starmer in Parliament:

> *"Given the Prime Minister's desire to strengthen strategic alignment with our European neighbours, will he — in the interest of public safety — follow the lead of France, Denmark, Belgium and others and ban the burqa?"*

Several interesting concepts are present here. "In the interest of public safety" suggests a direct threat. It implies that a continuation to allow Muslim women in the UK to wear the burqa would, for some reason, at this specific point in time, be a threat to the nation. This is an example of what Wodak (2015) terms as moral panic discourse, wherein a particular group is innately dangerous, requiring urgent action. The choice to frame the proposition as a strategy for closer alliance to "European neighbours" is also an interesting sentence to unpack. Firstly, it is evident that the Europeans are seen in a more positive light than Muslims, even though in this case, the referred to Muslims are spatially within the borders of the UK and the Europeans in question are outside these borders. They are "neighbours", which suggests it is important to collaborate with them and to build a good relationship, as

they live in proximity, calling upon Christian imagery of 'Love thy neighbour'. This is a *topos* of precedent; as the European neighbours have acted, the UK should do the same. Those within the borders of the UK wearing a burqa are, however, a threat to public safety. Secondly, it is particularly striking when viewed in light of Brexit and the broader Eurosceptic narrative historically advanced by her party. When the EU is seen to pose a threat to British sovereignty, they are the threat and the enemy. However when they share values on exclusion and priority of white/Christian values over Muslim values, they are setting a positive example which is to be followed. This generates the implication that the spread of ideas is much more fluid when it comes from people who are closer to European Whiteness, and right/populist parties can be open-minded to this. However when an idea or way of life comes from someone who looks different, the 'us' should be *protected from* 'them'. It suggests that those wishing to wear a burqa are all the same, whether they be living in/from France, UK, Belgium or Denmark, but white citizens born in these countries will have their own, different – but all important – identities, which need to be protected. Lee Anderson's simplistic reply suggests that there are only two options, exemplifying what Wodak (2015) terms depoliticised populism: the reduction of a complex socio-cultural issue to a binary moral choice. To either ban the burqa or not, and there is only one right option of these two. Anything else cannot even be considered – there is no discussion to be had. The bluntness of the sentence highlights its urgency. His follow-up, "No one should be allowed to hide their identity in public," draws on the *topos* of transparency, suggesting that concealment signifies danger or criminality. This is particularly ironic given that the burqa is itself an overt marker of cultural and religious identity. The rhetorical framing reverses its meaning by transforming a visible identity symbol into a metaphor of secrecy and threat.

Furthermore, this logic omits other forms of facial concealment in public such as hooded clothing, pandemic masks, or costume, and singles out the burqa as uniquely problematic. This selective enforcement underscores a racialised and gendered bordering logic, where state and social control disproportionately target visible Muslim women as symbolic threats to national cohesion and security (Sharma, 2015; Wodak, 2015).

The structure "Ban the burqa? Yes we should." leaves no room for nuance or deliberation. In sum, both Pochin's parliamentary question and Anderson's tweet exemplify how right-wing populist discourse constructs a racialised moral panic, framing Muslim women not merely as different, but as dangerous. The rhetoric operates within a broader postcolonial and racialised logic of European bordering, where whiteness is valorised and visibly Muslim identities are marked for exclusion, surveillance, and control. This conceptualisation also reveals the gendered dimensions of whiteness and belonging. As Blaagaard (2008) notes, European discourses of whiteness often situate women's bodies as symbolic battlegrounds.

## 3.2 IMPERIAL LEGACIES

Both the UK and France have demonstrated, through policy and speech, post-imperial projects that seek to reconcile national identity with globalisation by leveraging colonial ties. For example, through the *Global Britain* project (Benson & Sigona, 2024) and France's *Choose France* higher education strategy. Framed as forward-looking, both initiatives project global visions that are deeply rooted in imperial nostalgia.

In her Brexit speech of January 2017, then Prime Minister Theresa May stated:

> *"We are a European country – and proud of our shared European heritage – but we are also a country that has always looked beyond Europe to the wider world. That is why we are one of the most racially diverse countries in Europe, one of the most multicultural members of the European Union, and why – whether we are talking about India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, countries in Africa or those that are closer to home in Europe – so many of us have close friends and relatives from across the world."* (May, 2017)

She frames Brexit as a chance to look further in the world, listing some of Britain's ex-colonies as partners to be paid more interest in. This narrative aims to mask the colonial hierarchies responsible for structuring Britain's global influence (El-Enany, 2020) and instead repackages empire as the historical foundation for Britain's multicultural, global

relevance. As Boris Johnson declared, Brexit was not a retreat from the world, but a chance to be "more global, more outward-looking than ever before" (Johnson, 2016). France's engagement global ambition is marked by a profound contradiction: there is a trend to promote circulation of the French language, education, and culture in former colonies, but simultaneously to contain movement and protect its national identity at home. A pertinent example of this is the higher education strategy in Africa. The *Choose France* initiative, launched by President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 (Bobée & Kleibert 2023), exemplifies this dual ambition. It aims to increase the number of international students in France and expand the country's cultural reach through transnational higher education. However, it also seeks to restrict immigration by keeping African students outside French borders while providing them with French degrees. This represents a form of "selective (im)mobility," (p.575) where access to movement and knowledge is tiered according to race, class, and perceived economic value (Bobée & Kleibert, 2023).

Macron's 2017 speech in Ouagadougou encapsulates this logic. While he claimed to offer African students the freedom to study "in Burkina Faso if they want to," the surrounding context reveals structural limitations on such choices (as cited in Bobée & Kleibert, 2023, p. 576). Offshore campuses in Morocco, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire were initially framed as alternatives to migration, but as Bobée and Kleibert (2023) show, these institutions increasingly function as infrastructures of "selective (im)mobility," (p.575) designed to facilitate the movement of elite students, (often through 3+2 models that feature three years in Africa and two in France) while filtering out less economically "desirable" applicants.

The contradiction extends to cultural identity. Macron's call to resist the "fashionable" rise of English in Africa and to reassert French as "the number one language of Africa" illustrates France's desire to universalise its language and values abroad (Bobée & Kleibert, 2023, p. 580). This is also reminiscent of the *Scramble for Africa*, in which the French and British were direct rivals for African domination between the late 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ century (Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2016). Macron's speech now suggests a struggle for linguistic domination. Yet domestically, there is growing anxiety over linguistic and cultural dilution (Chabal, 2013). This reflects a postfunctional paradox:

while globalisation is embraced when it affirms national prestige, it is resisted when it challenges internal notions of homogeneity and control.

## 3.3 POPULISM, TECHNOCRACY, AND THE CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION

Despite reoccurring in populist speech, these discourses are not confined to political margins; rather, they have become commonplace in mainstream policy and media narratives (Wodak, 2015).

The immigrant is cast as the dangerous 'Other,' while the native majority is presented as under siege, legitimising policies of border fortification and cultural assimilation.
This phenomenon is reinforced by media representations, which frequently link migration to disorder, welfare dependency, or terrorism (van Dijk, 2018). Such framings contribute to moral panics that render xenophobia politically acceptable. As Moffitt (2016) argues, populist politicians perform crises in media spaces to dramatize threats and discredit elites, creating a cycle where exclusionary rhetoric generates popular support and policy change. A key example of this is the recent 'Island of Strangers' speech by Keir Starmer, delivered on 12th May 2025. Starmer was accused of echoing sentiments of former British politician Enoch Powell (Syal, 2025), who has been described as the "champion and chief spokesman of the various racist and anti-immigrant movements" (Nairn, 1970, p.3). His speech effectively reflects how technocratic elites adopt populist and moralising language to reclaim control.

Starmer claims that his "White Paper on immigration… will finally take back control of our borders…" (UK gov, 2025). He is clearly echoing discursive language used by Reform UK members, but in the following sentence he tries to distance himself from previous governments by suggesting that these policies did not work and that they caused "chaos". This is characteristic of van Dijk's (1992, p.88) "positive self-representation and negative other-representation". Despite a regurgitation of effectively the same tropes, Starmer asserts that things will be different this time around. Stating, "Now, make no mistake – this plan means migration will fall. That's a promise." Here he is using technocratic authority

to reinforce a populist claim. In DHA, making promises such as this is described as a method of controlling the masses.

Through evocative metaphors such as “an island of strangers,” Starmer constructs a narrative of threatened national cohesion, echoing historical anxieties about multiculturalism and indirectly invoking the symbolic borders of nationhood. He also positions the population as the victims. Strikingly, the speech reconfigures immigration as a system of deservingness: “so settlement becomes a privilege that is earned, not a right, easier if you make a contribution, if you work, pay in, and help rebuild our country.” (UK gov, 2025) Settlement is then contingent on labour-market participation and cultural integration. This economic filtering Tyerman’s (2022) racialised neoliberal bordering, where identity and productivity become the basis for moralised inclusion. Starmer’s language is framed in managerial terms but reproduces exclusionary affective logics masked as fairness, showing postfunctionalist tensions between elite governance and identity-driven mass politics. This logic mirrors Jordan Bardella’s 2023 claim that French people of foreign origin have nothing to fear… if they work, integrate, and contribute. In his speech Starmer is similarly reinforcing conditional belonging while maintaining the structural threat of exclusion. In both cases, technocratic filtering is legitimised through emotional registers of unity, control, and fairness — positioning integration as a test of national worthiness rather than a right.

Comparably to the British case, Ivaldi (2024) demonstrates that in the French context, the centre-right has absorbed core elements of radical-right discourse, including the cultural conditionality of citizenship and the securitisation of immigration, in order to try and quell the rise of the Rassemblement National. “As Meguid argues, mainstream parties must decide whether to dismiss, accommodate or attack their new competitor.” (Ivaldi, 2024, p.80).

France serves as a key case study for examining how the populist radical right (PRR), emerging early in the mid-1980s with the rise of the Front National (now Rassemblement National), has influenced mainstream political parties. The electoral success of the PRR has pressured parties across the political spectrum to adapt. Due to similar ideologies, the

mainstream right has most notably shifted toward more exclusionary, authoritarian positions on issues like immigration, security, and EU integration. The radicalisation of Les Républicains (LR), particularly under Éric Ciotti and Laurent Wauquiez, represents a significant rightward turn, aligning the party more closely with the RN and weakening its role in a newly tripolar party system (radical left, Macron's centre, and the RN). The PRR's influence has also contaminated centrist and left-leaning political forces, raising concerns about the future configuration of French politics and the normalisation of the far right (Ivaldi, 2024). In 2024, Eric Ciotti told TF1 TV that it is necessary to create an alliance with the extreme right. He stated: "arrêtons de faire des oppositions fictives, un peu factices", essentially explaining that they should stop pretending that they are different. Despite causing outrage among some of his voters, this reflects a convergence among the right.

The following section concludes the thesis, with a re-cap of the discussions made throughout, followed by some final thoughts.

# CONCLUSION

This thesis begins by introducing the growing salience of borders in political discourse in the UK and France, contextualised through recent geopolitical traumas such as the 2015 Migrant Crisis and Brexit. This comparison is justified through shared colonial pasts of the two nations and their current conversions on exclusionary discourse. The analysis is grounded in the theoretical framework of Hooghe and Marks (2009) theory of postfunctionalism, explaining how identity-based concerns drive disintegration and challenge technocrats. The analysis of primary sources is carried out using Wodak's (2008) DHA approach to CDA. Furthermore, there are references to postcolonial theory, European nationalism and the constantly evolving process of bordering. A comprehensive literature review is conducted and organised thematically by national identity, belonging and the construction of the other, bordering and the discursive politics of exclusion and deservingness. The empirical material is focused on key political speeches, policies and campaign materials of British and French politicians from the years 2015 to 2025, such as Boris Johnson, Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen, Rishi Sunak, and Keir Starmer, among others. The analysis is conducted in three core chapters. Chapter 1 investigates Britain's border discourse post-Brexit, with a focus on colonial nostalgia, 'Global Britain,' an in-depth analysis of the 'Stop the Boats' campaign, and racialised migration control. Chapter 2 focuses on France's postcolonial borders, *laïcité*, elite discourse, and the clash between republican universalism and exclusion. Finally, chapter 3 covers a comparative synthesis examining convergence and divergence between the UK and France on bordering, national identity, Euroscepticism, and populism. These findings are linked to broader European trends in politics and discourse.

The findings show that, in contexts of both the UK and France, binary logics continue to dominate the political landscape. One must either assimilate or leave, is construed as a net contributor or a societal burden. Within this dichotomous framework, proposals such as *remigration* in France or the UK's Rwanda deportation plan do not emerge solely from the political fringes, but reflect deeper societal anxieties and desires. These policies also symbolise an unwillingness to confront the legacies of colonial violence, in both contexts, despite the more advanced culture of reckoning with the past in the French case. Instead of

acknowledging historical injustices, national elites attempt to symbolically expel the reminders of empire, which usually come in the form of ex-colonial immigrants. Discourse, as Ruth Wodak and other critical discourse theorists argue, is not merely communicative, it is constitutive. It reflects and reinforces emerging dominant ideologies, all the while forming public sentiment. Due to politicians unlimited access to the masses through media, they are able to construct migrants and racialised others as perpetual outsiders, whose presence challenges the myth of a cohesive, homogenous nation. This study demonstrates how discourse is not a neutral medium but a weaponised tool: it draws on selective historical memory and manipulates public anxiety to legitimise exclusionary policies. Therefore, this form of discourse is more than just words, but actually a slippery slope towards an exclusive society.

Applying the postfunctionalist framework of Hooghe and Marks (2009) allows us to understand why these bordering logics diverge and converge. In France, borders are defended not only territorially but ideologically. There is an urge to perform as guardians of an abstract republican universalism, that paradoxically denies difference while policing it through language, *laïcité*, and security practices. In the UK, borders serve as a medium to physically exert the desire to reclaim a perceived loss of control, thereby reinforcing an illusion of sovereign self-sufficiency tied to an imagined imperial past. Brexit stands as a paradigmatic expression of postfunctionalist backlash, where concerns over identity trump functional integration and where immigration becomes synonymous with a loss of control and cohesion. Therefore, immigrants are extended the arm of welcome only under strict conditions, usually linked to cultural and linguistic assimilation, patriotism for their host nation and strong economic contribution. This logic outplays the logic of legality, and Brexit served as a convenient means to control who is welcome and who is not, for how long and on what grounds. Finally, the variable Overton Window illustrates how populist rhetoric, once considered extreme, is now mainstreamed, particularly in border and migration policy. The narrative of perpetual states of crisis serves to normalise racialised forms of governance.

Ultimately, this study of political discourse helps to reveal how borders are utilised as not just physical demarcations, but as symbolic battlegrounds for identity and control. They

are sites where elites come together with the public to negotiate who belongs and, more tellingly, who must be excluded in order to preserve the fictitious national unity.

# APPENDIX

Rishi Sunak 2023 'Stop the Boats' full transcript, retrieved from: UK government website:

*Today we are introducing new legislation to keep my promise to you – to stop the boats.*
*My policy is very simple, it is this country—and your government—who should decide who comes here, not criminal gangs.*
*The first step is understanding the nature—and scale—of what we are dealing with.*
*The number of people entering the UK illegally in small boats has more than quadrupled in the last two years.*
*Those illegally crossing the Channel are not directly fleeing a war-torn country… or persecution… or an imminent threat to life.*
*They have travelled through safe, European countries.*
*They are paying people smugglers huge sums to make this dangerous, and sometimes tragic, journey.*
*The reason that criminal gangs continue to bring small boats over here is because they know that our system can be exploited…*
*….that once here…illegal migrants can make a multitude of asylum, modern slavery and spurious human rights claims to frustrate their removal.*
*And the risk remains that those individuals just disappear into the black economy.*
*That is the reality we must deal with…*
*And with 100 million people displaced around the world…*
*….if we do not deal with it now, the situation will just get worse and worse.*
*People must know that if they come here illegally it will result in their detention and swift removal.*
*Once this happens – and they know it will happen – they will not come, and the boats will stop.*
*That is why today we are introducing legislation to make clear that if you come here illegally you can't claim asylum…*
*…you can't benefit from our modern slavery protections…*
*….you can't make spurious human rights claims*

*…and you can't stay.*
*We will detain those who come here illegally and then remove them in weeks, either to their own country if it is safe to do so, or to a safe third country like Rwanda.*
*And once you are removed, you will be banned—as you are in America and Australia—from ever re-entering our country.*
*This is how we will break the business model of the people smugglers; this is how we will take back control of our borders.*
*Now, this Bill provides the legal framework needed to deliver this in a way that no other legislation has done before.*
*This is tough but it is necessary and it is fair.*
*This legislation will be retrospective.*
*If you come on a small boat today, the measures in this bill will apply to you.*
*And this is just part of what we are doing.*
*I've always been clear this is a complex problem that can't be solved overnight and will require us to use every tool at our disposal.*
*That's why I've already secured the largest ever small boats deal with France.*
*And patrols on French beaches are already up 40 per cent.*
*I also promised progress on enforcement and we've increased raids on illegal working by 50 per cent.*
*I've also negotiated a new deal with Albania, which accounted for a third of all small boats arrivals.*
*And that's already delivering. We've returned 500 illegal migrants to Albania and we are seeing far fewer come as a result.*
*This shows that there is nothing inevitable about illegal migration.*
*Deterrence works, and with will and determination, the government can get on top of it—and we will.*
*Now, this will always be a compassionate and generous country.*
*It is something that we're all rightly proud of.*
*Just look at how we have welcomed Ukrainians, Syrians from refugee camps, and embraced Hong Kongers fleeing the Chinese clampdown.*
*But the current situation is neither moral nor sustainable. It cannot go on.*
*It's completely unfair on the British people…*

*….who have opened their homes to genuine refugees…*
*….but are now having to spend nearly £6 million a day to put up illegal migrants in hotels.*
*It's unfair on the people who have come to this country legally to see others skipping the queue.*
*And it's devastatingly unfair on those who most need our help but can't get it as our asylum system is being overwhelmed by those travelling illegally across the Channel.*
*If we can't stop the boats, our ability to help genuine refugees in future will be constrained.*
*Full control of our borders will allow us to decide who to help, and to provide safe and legal routes for those most in need.*
*I understand there will be debate about the toughness of these measures… all I can say is that we have tried it every other way… and it has not worked.*
*So I say again: my policy is very simple, it is this country—and your government—who should decide who comes here, not criminal gangs.*
*And I will do whatever is necessary to achieve that.*

# TABLES

**TABLE 1:**

*Most important issue(s) at the present moment (national level):*

| ***Eurobarometer (EB):*** | **EU Member States Combined (incl. UK):** | **UK:** | **France:** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *EB 1 1974* | Wages and prices, Inflation | Inflation: over 50% | Inflation: over 50% |
| *EB 34 1990* | Unemployment, Inflation | Inflation, Cost of living, Unemployment | Unemployment, Economy |
| *EB 38 1992* | 1. Unemployment<br>2. "too much immigration"<br>3. "loss of national identity" | 1. Unemployment<br>2. "too much immigration"<br>3. "loss of national identity" | 1. Unemployment<br>2. "too much immigration"<br>3. "loss of national identity" |
| *EB 62 2004* | Unemployment: 46%<br>Economy: 27%<br>Terrorism: 16%<br>Immigration: 13% | Unemployment: 9%<br>Economy: 8%<br>Terrorism: 28%<br>Immigration: 29% | Unemployment: 51%<br>Economy: 24%<br>Terrorism: 10%<br>Immigration: 11% |
| *EB 71 2009* | Unemployment: 49%<br>Economy: 42%<br>Inflation: 21%<br>Immigration: 9% | Unemployment: 41%<br>Economy: 31% (lowest % of all MS, same as Malta)<br>Inflation: 10%<br>Immigration: 25% | France: 62%<br>Economy: 35%<br>Inflation: 25%<br>Immigration: 6% |
| *EB 84 2015* | Immigration: 36%<br>Unemployment: 36%<br>Terrorism: 11% | Immigration: 44%<br>Unemployment: 16%<br>Terrorism: 24% | Immigration: 22%<br>Unemployment: 54%<br>Terrorism: 18% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Economy: 19% | Economy: 12% | Economy: 14% |
| *EB 86 2016* | Immigration: 36% | Immigration: 36% | Immigration: 36% |
| | Unemployment: 31% | Unemployment: 15% | Unemployment: 49% |
| | Terrorism: 14% | Terrorism: 15% | Terrorism: 31% |
| | Economy: 19% | Economy: 18% | Economy: 16% |
| *EB 88 2017* | Immigration: 22% | Immigration: 20% | Immigration: 17% |
| | Unemployment: 25% | Unemployment: 10% | Unemployment: 40% |
| | Terrorism: 16% | Terrorism: 25% | Terrorism: 33% |
| | Economy: 16% | Economy: 13% | Economy: 11% |
| *EB 92 2019* | Immigration: 17% | Immigration: 14% | Immigration: 14% |
| | Unemployment: 20% | Unemployment: 10% | Unemployment: 30% |
| | Terrorism: 5% | Terrorism: 5% | Terrorism: 14% |
| | Economy: 14% | Economy: 11% | Economy: 12% |
| *EB 93 2020* | Immigration: 11% | Immigration: 9% | Immigration: 9% |
| | Unemployment: 28% | Unemployment: 34% | Unemployment: 37% |
| | Terrorism: 3% | Terrorism: 3% | Terrorism: 4% |
| | Economy: 33% | Economy: 43% | Economy: 26% |

**TABLE 2:**

*Attitudes towards European Integration:*

| ***Eurobarometer (EB):*** | **EU Member States Combined:** | **UK:** | **France:** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *EB 1 1974* | The Common Market is a good thing: 59% | The Common Market is a good thing: 33% (lowest % of all MS) | The Common Market is a good thing: 68% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *EB 34 1990* | Membership of EC is a good thing: 69% (all-time high thus far) | Membership of EC is a good thing: 53% (lowest % of all MS) | Membership of EC is a good thing: 66% |
| *EB 38 1992* | Current importance of European Parliament: 58%<br>All elements of public support for Europe dropped dramatically in this year | Current importance of European Parliament: 52%<br>EC support drops sharply, Maastricht Treaty opposed before Edinburgh Summit, Opposition of Single Currency | Current importance of European Parliament: 51%<br>More relate Single Market to 'fear' than 'hope' (for the first time in any country) |
| *EB 43 1995* | Support for EU membership: 56%<br>Feels 'Nationality only': 37%<br>Feels European (net results): 23 | Support for EU membership: 43%<br>Feels 'Nationality only': 53%<br>Feels European (net results): -9 | Support for EU membership: 53%<br>Feels 'Nationality only': 28%<br>Feels European (net results): 41 |
| *EB 62 2004* | Membership of EU is a good thing: 56% | Membership of EU is a good thing: 38% (lowest % of all MS) | Membership of EU is a good thing: 56% |
| *EB 71 2009* | Membership of EU is a good thing: 53% | Membership of EU is a good thing: 28% | Membership of EU is a good thing: 50% |
| *EB 84 2015* | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 43% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 44% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 57% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *EB 86 2016* | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 56%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 48% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 48%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 72% (highest % of all MS) | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 76%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 49% |
| *EB 88 2017* | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 47%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 48% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 45%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 59% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 52%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 56% |
| *EB 92 2019* | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 49%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 47% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 47%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 56% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 60%<br>'Tend not to trust' the EU: 58% |
| *EB 93 2020* | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 54% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 58% | Things in the EU are going in the 'wrong direction': 64% |

*Sources: Commission of the European Communities (1974; 1992) European Commission, (1995; 2004; 2009; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2019; 2020)*

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