

French identity in Quebec increasingly affiliated with political goals

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Legault speaking in 2015

Morgan Aikele- Earlier this month, François Legault of Quebec was re-elected to his second term as Quebec's premier. While initially expected to run a low-key campaign, especially due to his high approval ratings following his first term, Legault's campaign took a divisive stance on immigration. However, Legault relied on the national identity of the French Québécois in order to make his approach to immigration policy more popular.

National identity refers to the idea that each person has a sense of attachment to a nation— or at least, that an individual feels more attached to one nation than any other. It is important to note that nations are simply named groups which share a common culture, history, ethnicity, religion, etc., which all help to create a common sense of identity and belonging. National identity is also a powerful force in generating loyalty to a state or government— and this is precisely what François Legault utilized throughout his campaign. For example, while the Canadian federal government has planned to majorly increase its immigrant population, Legault wishes to maintain a much lower cap in Quebec. He has referred to immigration as “suicidal” for Quebec's distinctly French identity, which is uniquely effective rhetoric in the majority French-speaking province. In Quebec, many already fear that immigration erodes the area's “**French linguistic and Roman Catholic heritage.**” Thus, Legault's warnings against immigration frame Legault to the Québécois as one who will stand up for *their* identity and customs. Further, Legault's recent statements accusing white Montrealers of “**looking down**” on Quebec

City have certainly played well to its target audience: in the election, support for Legault was strongest in districts with the “**highest percentage of French Québécois voters,**” both suburban and rural. Legault is apparently seen as a champion of the French nation's identity in Quebec, and he has appealed to that vision as he promotes a political agenda.

Legault's success in this campaign will likely range in impact between the individual, local, regional, national, and international levels. We can understand this situation and its ramifications further through the concept of scale. **Scale** refers to the geographic extent of political actions. On the regional level, Legault's policies will likely affect the number of immigrants that enter the province of Quebec, but may also have an effect nationally, since Quebec is where much of Canada's immigration is controlled. Reducing the flow of immigrants will also have an impact across the globe in those countries that are the source of migrants to Canada.