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When opposites attract? The relationship between foreign policy and the migration-terrorism nexus in the French radical right and radical left discourse.

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## **Abstract**

Forms of political violence such as terrorism, as well as, migration flows have traditionally been interpreted and discussed in very different ways by the right wing and left wing parties. Yet, during the 2017 presidential campaign, Marine le Pen, leader for the National Front (FN) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of France Unbowed (FI), despite obvious differences in terms of conceptualisation of justice and legitimisation of violence, presented an agenda on the two phenomena revealing some critical overlapping points. The literature, however, does not yet provide a clear framework to understand party competition in relation to the terrorism-migration nexus here understood and analysed in relation to EU integration and national foreign policy. Hence, by building on studies on the cultural dimension of political competition, this paper analyses the positioning of the two parties over the four key issues, namely EU integration, foreign policy, migration and terrorism. Our study reveals and discusses what kind of nexus these two parties recognise and elaborate and how the party competition dynamics has been altered accordingly. In particular, we show that an ‘U-Curve’ is visible also in relation of an alleged migration-terrorism nexus revealing an increased convergence of opposing radical parties.

## **Keywords**

Terrorism, Migration, Party Manifesto, Populism, National Front, France Unbowed, France

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## Introduction

The involvement of individuals with a migration background in some of the major terrorist incidents of the last few years has fuelled the European debate on the relationship between migration and terrorism. Investigators found that many of the perpetrators involved in the attacks conducted in Europe between 2015 and 2018 could travel across the Schengen area thanks to their national or residence permits. Moreover, in the aftermath of the 13 November 2015 coordinated attacks in Paris, it became pressing to address the relatively easy possibility of travelling beyond Europe, including to zones of conflict like Iraq and Syria, and then returning to European countries. At the centre of the fight against terrorism of the last few years, the French government has, on many occasions, recognised a form of connection between terrorism and migration. The increase of operative engagement in the fight against the so-called ISIS in Syria, for instance, was communicated and discussed in parallel to the need to protect refugees in the area and to prevent mass movement towards Europe (Geddens and Scholten 2016). Overall, for scholars and policymakers alike, the connection between migratory flows and forms of political violence such as terrorism have long been a key issue on the security agenda of countries (Rudolph 2003), in spite of clear evidence to confirm what kind of nexus actually exists between the two phenomena. Indeed, an increasing number of studies has approached states' narratives and practices in order to attempt to shed light on the different dimensions of the alleged nexus (Sciurba and Furri 2018; Korkut et al. 2020). We argue, however, that by privileging a unified and aggregated regard to states' and governments' positions, the literature has not yet provided sufficient knowledge of how different national parties position themselves in relation to the subject. It is fair to say that existing literature on foreign policy and party politics has, surprisingly, overlooked the connections existing between these issues, as these two strands have rarely talked to each other on this topic. Hence, it is argued here, a focus on parties' positions on issues of migration and terrorism would allow contrasting views to emerge and, therefore, for the *politics* behind responses to these two phenomena, and their alleged nexus, to be taken into due account. Even more interesting, we believe, is the comparison between two populist parties at the opposite ends of the political spectrum, meaning radical right and radical left. Indeed, in the specific case of foreign policy and the migration-terrorism nexus, we found that the French case offers some revealing overlapping points between the opposites which are worth investigating.

On this premise, this paper expects to make two types of contribution to the existing debate: first, by analysing two extreme parties, the National Front (*Front National*- FN) and France Unbowed (*France Insoumise*- FI), through their party manifestos, we analyse what kind of nexus these two parties recognise and discuss. In order to do so, we position the two parties over the cultural dimension of conflict that we understand as comprehensive of European Union (EU) politics, foreign policy as international politics, migration and terrorism. Second, we expect this case to provide a theoretical contribution as well, by strengthening the increasing connections between the literature on foreign policy and the role of party competition (see Hoffman 2016), while addressing the largely overlooked case of the migration-terrorism nexus.

In these terms, we argue, the paper allows us to shed light and to map both the political attention – salience – dedicated to these issues and the dimensions of disagreement or convergence over them – degree of polarisation – and therefore, the politicisation of these issues for radical parties.

The paper unfolds in the following way. We open with an overview on the existing debates on the terrorism-migration nexus and their relevance for foreign policy analysis and scholarship in party politics. Hence, we present the approach of the study and the methodological framework, explaining the relevance of a party manifesto analysis through interview simulation, triangulated with online official documents and national daily newspapers. The paper then shifts to the empirical analysis, presenting first a mapping of FN and FI positions on the four issues. Finally, the paper concludes by revising the main contributions to the existing literature in terms of the connection between foreign policy and party politics analysis, while also proposing a few areas for future research.

## Foreign policy, party competition and the terrorism-migration nexus

### *The Terrorism-Migration threat*

As for many other political and security-related issues, the attacks of 9/11 were also a crucial turning point in the relationship between migration and terrorism. Since the attacks, Western States, but not only, have adopted new and more restrictive measures in their general immigration frameworks and on the circulation of people, so as to address perceived vulnerabilities in the face of terrorism. Yet, it seems that, as Simsek (2007: 146) has argued, there is still a great “scarcity of migration literature directly related to terrorism”. It can, however, be argued that for quite some time the relationship between these two different, although for many overlapping, phenomena has been at the centre of both the academic and policy debate. Certainly, authors seem to agree, they are both somehow connected to international conflict as the potential cause or likely consequence (Schmidt 2016).

In this respect, the specialised literature on the so-called ‘migration-terrorism nexus’ points generally at three types of correlation between the two phenomena: terrorist campaigns as a cause of migration (Koser and Cunningham 2015); migration as a cause of terrorism and source of concern for the security apparatus of receiving countries (Schoenholtz 2003; Algan et al., 2013; Hainmuller, Hangartner and Pietrantuono 2017); and finally, migration and terrorism waves as a consequence of conflict and war (Nassar 2005; Lutz and Lutz 2015).

In Europe, this debate increased both in volume and intensity in the post-Arab Spring era, when increasing migration flows put an unprecedented pressure on European countries and overlapped with a series of terrorist attacks related to open conflict in the Middle East. In this regard, much of the attention given by public and academic arenas has focused on two questions: the processes of radicalisation within European countries, often concerning individuals with an immigration background (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010; Neumann 2013; Roy 2015; Hafez and Mulliz 2015; Malthaner 2017), as well as, the infiltration and return of terrorist fighters to Europe (Paulussen and Entenmann 2014; Reem and PISOIU 2014; Byman 2015; Lindekilde et al. 2016; Jawaid 2017).

Here, however, this paper seeks to focus on the way such a relationship has been understood and communicated by political actors (Faist 2006; Lahav 2010; Maguire 2015). And this is relevant, we argue, considering that in recent years the attention paid to discourses on both terrorism and migration has increased significantly, highlighting the implications and interests behind linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by party leaders and the media while discussing these two phenomena (Ceyhan and Tsoukala 2002; Jackson 2005; Backer-Beall 2014; Sinatti and Horst 2014; van Ostaïjen 2016). Indeed, despite the fact that both topics have received a considerable amount of attention in the academic and political arena, it is still surprising that very few studies – or none – have systematically analysed the features and implications of the alleged nexus within domestic political competition.

### *Foreign Policy and the Terrorist-Migration Nexus: The structure of Political Contestation*

It is not a novelty within the academic debate that cultural-oriented issues have been shaping the structure of the political contestation of Western countries over recent decades. Indeed, since the 1980s, along with the traditional left/right economic-oriented dimension of conflict (Kitschelt, 1994; 2004) – which concerns the allocation of material resources, i.e., redistributive political allocation vs. allocation of income in accordance with the market - a new cultural-oriented<sup>1</sup> dimension has emerged (Inglehart, 1990; Hooge et al., 2002; Kitschelt, 2004; Kriesi et al., 2008; 2012). This dimension of contestation has been labelled in different ways: post-materialist/materialist, libertarian/authoritarian, GAL/TAN, etc. Regardless of the terminology employed, within the literature there is a common agreement in identifying one pole as a combination of multiculturalist, non-interventionist and alternative politics positions, and the opposite one representing a mix of anti-immigration, anti-Europeanist and nationalistic stances (Kriesi et al., 2008). Furthermore, the literature has demonstrated that, over time,

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<sup>1</sup> Literature has shown that other crucial cultural issues on which political parties are expected to take a position are LGBTQ rights, abortion, euthanasia, secularism, and more. For the purposes of this article, we have circumscribed the analysis to a limited set of cultural issues, that is, the EU, migration, Foreign Policy and terrorism. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the cultural dimension of political contestation is much more complex.



such a dimension has acquired importance in structuring political conflict in parallel with the emergence of a new ‘integration-demarcation’ cleavage triggered by globalization (Kriesi, 2006). Accordingly, immigration as well as foreign policy, security and European integration have become four interlinked salient issues on which political parties are expected to take a position (Lorenzini *et al.*, 2016; Wagner *et al.*, 2017a). More precisely, the literature has shed light on the growing politicization of such issues (see Costa 2019; Wagner *et al.*, 2018); that is, an ‘increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation’ (De Wilde 2011:560).

Hence, it is not surprising that several studies have been devoted to investigating mainstream parties’ positions on dimensions of conflict; while ideological differences between Social-Democrat and Conservative parties have been narrowed along the economic dimension, the degree of polarization of the party system in the cultural dimension has scaled up (Kitschelt, 2004; Lorenzini *et al.*, 2016). Consistently, party politics literature has exposed the salience given to this dimension by the new ‘populist’ challengers, especially those of the radical right (PRRPs) – but also those from the radical left (PRLPs) – which have increasingly interpreted political contestation in cultural terms (Mudde, 1999; 2007; Van der Waal *et al.*, 2010; De Koster *et al.*, 2012; Grabow and Hartleb, 2013; Kriesi 2014; 2015). Notwithstanding this renewed attention given to the cultural dimension, the literature still shows several theoretical gaps to be filled.

First of all, the connection between the question of foreign policy, together with the specific phenomena of terrorism and migration, has been largely overlooked. Party politics studies have tended to isolate these issues, treating them separately. The focus has been devoted especially to immigration flows and to the process of European integration, while only recently has the literature started to pay attention to party preferences concerning foreign policy and its possible impact on migration flows and/or security measures at the domestic level (see Wagner *et al.*, 2018; Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015; Rathbun 2013).

The same could be argued when looking at the specific case of populist parties from the radical right and radical left, and their positions concerning foreign and security policy which has received little attention within the literature, especially from a comparative perspective. While it is true that in recent decades these parties were not vocal on these issues, since the 2015 so called ‘migration crisis’, they have increasingly included foreign policy within their political agendas.

Indeed, while the convergence between the PRRPs and the PRLPs has been detected mostly when concerning the European Union issue (e.g., Hooghe *et al.* 2002; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004; Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012; ), we know very little about the migration-terrorism nexus. Several studies have indeed demonstrated that both PRRs and PRLs are generally opposed to the European integration process, an opposition represented by what is popularly known as the “inverted U curve”(Kriesi, 2008; van Elsas and van der Brug, 2014; van Elsas *et al.*, 2016). Few others have also extended these insights to other issues such as immigration and foreign policy (see Coticchia and Ceccorulli 2016; Wagner *et al.*, 2017a; 2017b, Coticchia and Davidson 2018), but there is still a surprising gap in considering radical parties’ overall foreign policy positions and what kind of connections they see between different related issues.

Overall, what we know from the literature is that radical parties can have similar positions on foreign policy issues (see in particular Balfour 2016). For instance, most populist parties oppose military interventions abroad, though usually for different reasons. The nationalist ideology of the Populist Radical Right leads them to take isolationist positions and, at the same time, to support the strengthening of self-defense (see also Chrysosgelos 2010; Verbeek & Zaslove 2015; Wagner *et al.*, 2017a; 2017b). In terms of budget, they are likely to back an increase in territorial defense expenditure in parallel with a cut of the expenditure related to out-of-area military intervention. Contrary to this, the PRLPs tend to have a strong pacifist ideology and are therefore more inclined to lower defense and military spending. Differences seem even stronger in relation to development aid. While the PRRPs campaign for aid to be designed exclusively to contain immigration flows, the PRLPs have a strong internationalist and rights-based approach to such an issue. Concerning migration, the literature has underlined strong differences between the two radical poles. The RLPPs are said to oppose a securitarian approach to migration, and to promote a humanitarian-oriented strategy to the issue, with open borders within the EU. Instead, for

the RRPPs, anti-migration stances represent the core of their identity-based political agendas. Therefore, they advocate a restrictive approach to migration. However, more recent literature (e.g., Keith and McGowan, 2014), questions the multiculturalist interpretation of the relationship between the PRLPs and immigration. For example, Ivaldi (2018) has shed light on the emergence of a more cautious approach towards the migration phenomenon from the Radical Left, in accord with the emergence of a new Left-Authoritarian electorate (Lefkofridi and Michel, 2013).

By building on these insights, this paper expects to analyse and conclude whether an “inverted U curve” can also be identified when looking at foreign policy and the migration-terrorism nexus. Specifically, with this paper, we seek to contribute to this debate in a two-fold way. As mentioned, the research aims to provide an in-depth comparison of the policy positions of two radical parties – one on the right and one on the left – on a crucial dimension of political contestation. Specifically, we expect to focus on a question that we believe is still largely under-addressed: the alleged nexus between migration and terrorism. In this sense, on the basis of fresh empirical insights, we also provide a theoretical contribution by strengthening the connection between the traditional research on party politics and issues in foreign policy.

For this purpose, France appears to be an interesting case study within the European panorama. Indeed, differently from other cases, the structure of its domestic, political contestation in the cultural dimension is complicated by the presence of two powerful populist radical parties, the National Front (FN), from the Radical Right, and France Unbowed (FI), from the Radical Left. The co-existence of two opposing radical parties makes the French case extremely relevant in order to assess the extent to which these parties link the recent migration flows with the destabilization of the North African region (also) caused by Western foreign policies and the way in which they frame the terrorism/migration nexus.

### Mapping party politics positions

For an analysis of the parties' policy preferences in the welfare state realm, we assume that such preferences are systematically expressed in the political debate during campaigns and properly expressed by each party's program or manifesto (Budge et al. 1987, 2001; Chaney, 2013). While it is true that manifestos and their equivalents are read by relatively few electors in most countries, they nonetheless constitute the major indirect influence on what parties are seen stand for. This is because manifestos “form the basis for comment in the mass media and provide the cues for questions raised with party candidates at all levels, as well as stable issues for their campaigns” (Budge 1987: 18). In other words, party manifestos can be considered as one of the best tools for a systematic comparison and analysis of party competition in different countries (Perry 1986).

Therefore, we analyse here parties' preferences on four issues – foreign policy, migration, terrorism and European integration (European Union) –, which correspond to four sub-dimensions of the cultural dimension of contestation. Indeed, we have decided to analyse these four issues separately first, and in relation to each other later, so as to investigate the alleged nexus between migration and terrorism while taking parties' overall position on related questions into due consideration. The question of migration clearly implies references to EU politics, and so does the question of terrorism in relation to more general foreign policy issues.

Hence, for each issue, parties have at their disposal two opposite policy options: *interventionism* vs. *anti-interventionism* concerning foreign policy; *pro-immigration* vs. *anti-immigration* regarding migration issues; *securitization* vs. *anti-securitization* as far as terrorism issues are concerned; and, finally, *pro-EU* vs. *anti-EU* concerning European Union issues.

In order to map parties' positions along these four sub-dimensions we employ qualitative content analysis, through interview simulation. As Krippendorff (2004) pointed out, simulating an interview of available texts represents a tool for obtaining answers to questions that could plausibly have been asked of the authors of these texts; in this case, the political parties. Accordingly, we created a set of questions for each issue to be answered with YES, NO or NS/N (“Not Specified/Neutral position”).

We then proceeded with semi-quantified<sup>2</sup> answers in order to create indexes allowing us to locate political parties along the policy spaces in the form of tables. In general terms, in the process of semi-quantification, each answer is attributed the value +1 (NO), 0 or -1 (YES)<sup>3</sup>. When the answer is indirect we assigned the value +/- 0,5. Parties therefore position themselves on a scale ranging from -1 to +1. We also decided to re-qualify the data, by creating a qualitative scale of the positions – *Low*, *Medium*, *High*<sup>4</sup> –, which stresses the intensity of the party policy position from a qualitative perspective. However, in order to gain a more comprehensive qualitative insight we also analyse public statements by the party leaders of the two cases, so as to account also for the public discourse formulated and transmitted on migration and terrorism beyond party manifestos during the Presidential campaign. In order to do so, we collected a total of 42 additional texts, among which are official documents and press releases published on FN and FI websites, as well as news articles with direct quotations and communications published for the last month before election day from the three main national daily newspapers *Le Figaro*, and *Le Monde* and *Libération*.

### **Party policy preferences in France: the European Union, foreign policy, migration and terrorism**

The 2017 presidential elections represent a turning point for the French party system. The two mainstream parties – the Socialist Party (PS) and the Gaullist Party (under the label of The Republicans - *Les Républicains*) –, which had guided the country over recent decades, lose a massive number of votes when compared to the previous Presidential elections in 2012 (Table 1). In particular, the decline of the PS is impressive and can easily be counted as one of the many examples of the widespread downturn of social democracy across Western countries. The failure of the mainstream parties has been all to the advantage of the new challengers. The centrist, Europeanist candidate of Forward! (*En Marche-LaREM*), Emmanuel Macron, prevails over Marine Le Pen's National Front (FN) in the second round of the elections. Nevertheless, the FN result is extremely salient, since, for the first time, it obtains more votes than The Republicans. Similarly, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, with his new party, France Unbowed (FI), successfully attracts the votes of a left constituency disappointed by the last PS government's policies.

In such a new political scenario, the cultural dimension of political contestation plays a crucial role. More specifically, the European Union, foreign policy, migration and terrorism are addressed in the political manifestos of all the main political parties, as shown by Table 2. This is not surprising, since security concerns were brought to light following the wave of terrorist attacks in France in recent years. As expected, the FN – given its radical right ideology – is the party that puts more emphasis on these issues, but even the FI pays quite a significant attention to them.

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to underline that we talk about a *semi-quantification* of the data because the quantification process is closely connected to the qualitative-oriented coding mechanisms. Indeed, the content analysis of party manifestos does not follow the strict quantitative-oriented coding procedure of the Comparative Manifesto Project, in which all quasi-sentences have to be coded. On the contrary, in a procedure mixing qualitative content analysis with a sort of expert survey (in which the experts are the authors), the values assigned to the questions are attributed on a high-qualitative base, taking into account theoretical considerations. Therefore, the numerical indexes need to be embedded into an in-depth interpretative, qualitative-oriented analysis.

<sup>3</sup> For specifics on the method and the interview 'questions' see the Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> Low: between 0 and +/-30; Medium: between +/-31 and +/- 59; High: between +/- 60 and +/-100.

**Table 1.** French Presidential Elections, 2017 and 2012 (first round)

	<b>Forward! (Macron)</b>	<b>National Front (Le Pen)</b>	<b>The Republicans (Fillon)</b>	<b>France Unbowed (Mélenchon)</b>	<b>Socialist Party (Hamon)</b>
2017	24.01%	21.3%	20.01%	19.58%	6.36%
2012	-	17,90%	27,18 <sup>1</sup> %	11,10 <sup>2</sup> %	28,63%
Change	-	+3,4	-7,17	+8,48	-22,27

<sup>1</sup>The data refer to the *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*. UMP; <sup>2</sup> The data refer to the *Front de Gauche*, FG  
Source: Manifesto Project Dataset

**Table 2.** Party Manifesto salience on European Union, foreign policy, migration and terrorism (2017 Presidential elections)

<b>Forward! (Macron)</b>	<b>National Front (Le Pen)</b>	<b>The Republicans (Fillon)</b>	<b>France Unbowed (Mélenchon)</b>	<b>Socialist Party (Hamon)</b>
21,5	35,2	22,9	21,3	17,1

Source: Manifesto Project Dataset.

Note: The final value is an additive index ranging from 0 (no salience) to 100 (maximum salience). It is made up of the following variables: Foreign Special Relations: Positive; Foreign Special Relations: Negative; Anti-Imperialism; Military: Positive; Military: Negative; Peace; EU: Positive; EU: Negative; Internationalism; Internationalism: Negative; Freedom and Human Rights; National Way of Life: Positive; National Way of Life: Negative; Law and Order: Positive; Multiculturalism: Positive; Multiculturalism: Negative; Russia/USSR/CIS: Positive; Russia/USSR/CIS: Negative; Western States: Positive; Western States: Negative; National Security: Positive; War Participants: Positive; Refugees: Positive.

But how do these two radical parties position on such issues? Which policy options do they choose?

Table 3 shows the qualitative and quantitative results of the content analysis of the FN and FI manifestos. Broadly speaking, what emerges from the empirical analysis is that, despite different frames and intensity, both parties tend to converge on the majority of these issues, or at the very least do not display harsh ideological differences, with the exception of the terrorism issue.

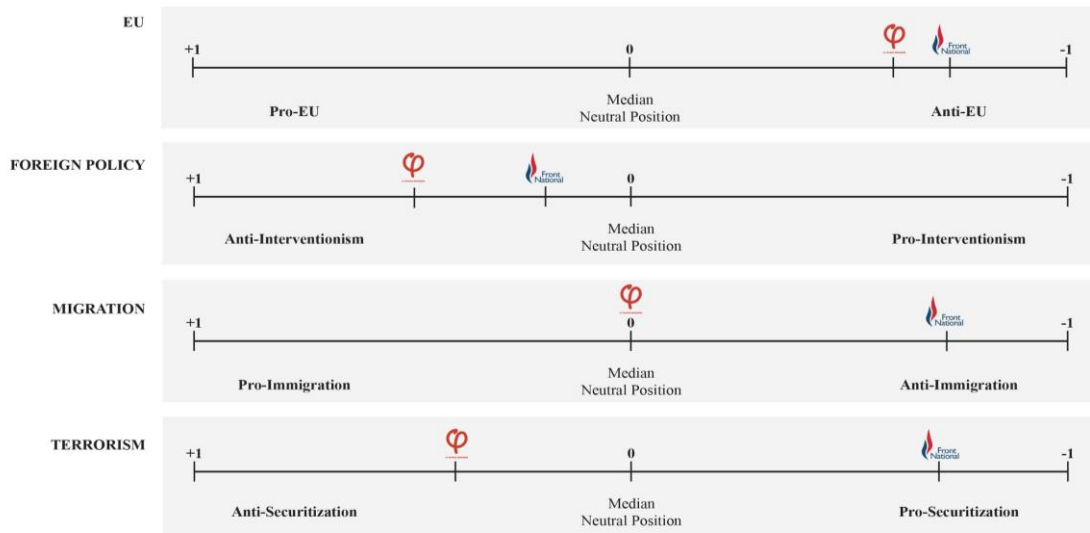
**Table 3.** Party policy positions: direction and intensity

	<b>EU</b>	<b>Foreign Policy</b>	<b>Migration</b>	<b>Terrorism</b>
<b>National Front</b>	High Anti-EU (-0,75)	Medium Non-Interventionism (+0,5)	High Anti-Immigration (-0,88)	High Pro-Securitization (-0,7)
<b>France Unbowed</b>	High Anti-EU (-0,62)	Medium/High Non-Interventionism (+0,6)	Neutral (0)	Medium Anti-Securitization (+0,4)

Note: Numerical values are shown in brackets  
Source: Authors' elaboration. See the appendix.

Such a convergence is better captured when employing the data to spatially locate both the parties along the four sub-cultural dimensions of conflict, corresponding to the four cultural issues: European Union, foreign policy, migration and terrorism (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Political Contestation on European Union, foreign policy, terrorism and migration (2017 Presidential Elections)



In order to better understand these two parties and the implications of their positioning, we now look at party competition dynamics on each of these issues.

### European Union

Concerning the European Union issue, the data generally confirm the insights highlighted by the existing literature on party politics. Both the FN and FI strongly oppose the process of European integration and propose a referendum on EU membership. More specifically, they both campaign for a new multilateral re-negotiation of the Treaties and, in case of failure of this proposal, the unilateral exit of France. More or less directly, both the parties are critical of European management of the migration crisis, and propose the immediate abolition of the Schengen Treaty. Yet, the political justification for opposing the EU, as well as the related groups of justice, are different. The FN frames its euroscepticism through an identitarian lens: the EU is a threat to French national identity, to its independence and therefore to French citizens. The party claims there is a need for a “renegotiation of Treaties so as to break with the pragmatic and failing European construction. We have to build the basis for a Europe respectful of popular sovereignties, national identities, languages and cultures<sup>5</sup>”(Front National 2017<sup>6</sup>).

Meanwhile, the FI bases its opposition to the EU on material reasons: the EU is a neo-liberal institution threatening the French welfare state, including the rights of workers. For FI, the European foreign policy, including its trade policy, is one of the destabilizing factors to have caused the recent immigration crisis, which put pressure the French social security system. In this sense, in the case of the French radical left, the political contestation to the EU remains located in the classic economic dimension of conflict rather than the cultural dimension.

<sup>5</sup> Authors’ translation.

<sup>6</sup> Front National (2017) ‘Project Europe’, published at <http://www.marinelepen.fr/le-projet-de-marine-le-pen/politique-etrangere/europe/>

### *Foreign Policy*

In the case of party preferences on foreign policy, the “inverted U-curve” appears to be even more clear. Along this sub-dimension of political contestation, differences between the FN and FI are narrow: both the parties take an anti-interventionist position. The objective is clearly the same for both parties, meaning the independence of France from NATO and of (weak) European foreign policy. Yet, the political justification for such a position presents clear differences. On the one hand, the FN explicitly supports political realism and the idea of a multipolar international relations system. This means that the French role abroad is understood to be instrumental to the national interest, and therefore, the objective is to avoid entering wars “*qui ne sont pas les siennes*” (Front National 2017). In other words, for the FN, foreign policy has to be motivated by national security purposes, while (military) interventionism – justified for motives of social justice – does not represent a valid policy option. Anti-interventionism here is framed in identitarian terms, as an emphasis of the national state, of its independence and of the principle of non-interference. On the other hand, the non-interventionist positions adopted by the FI represent rejection of Western imperialism, a long-running tradition of the radical left. The renewed independence promoted in the FI manifesto entails the creation of an *altermondialiste* alliance, leading to strong cooperation between the Mediterranean countries and the French-speaking former colonies, still oppressed by the interventionist foreign policies of the West. The manifesto makes clear that French military missions are not justified, and Mélenchon stresses that France cannot be the “gendarme du monde” (France Unbowed 2017). In other words, non-interventionism is meant as cross-country, class support: the priority is to be given to the recognition of the right of self-determination of the people, especially of those most oppressed.

Interestingly, in the case of the Syrian crisis, crucial for both terrorism and migration affairs discussed below, the two leaders display some similar positions. Le Pen, for instance, proposes to ‘open a dialogue with the ensemble of countries fighting against Islamist fundamentalism, starting with the Syrian and Russian governments, engaged in the fight against the Islamic State’<sup>7</sup>. Mélenchon, on his side, also proposes a ‘universal’ and local alliance to counter ISIS involving Kurdish forces while also opening to Russia’s President Putin. He, nonetheless, highlights the connection between military interventions and conflicts and terrorist violence more than Le Pen does: ‘The first thing to do [to counter terrorism] is to stop the war so the enemy’s breeding ground dries up by refusing the logic of clash of civilizations and « internal war » and by stopping existing destabilising wars and the hypocritical alliance with Gulf Petro-Monarchies’ (France Unbowed 2017: 28).

### *Migration*

Concerning migration issues, the content analysis of FN and FI manifestos shows that the differences between the two radical parties are less marked compared to those that party politics literature has traditionally suggested. Indeed, while for FN’s strong opposition to immigration is expected and perfectly in line with the radical right ideology, the neutrality of FI on such an issue seems to clash with the libertarian background of a radical left party. Indeed, the existence of such a clash, reinforced by FI’s neutral position on the topic, demonstrates that, in the globalized era, the Radical Left is also appealing increasingly to a Left-Authoritarian electorate. Indeed, while it is true that Mélenchon never employs identitarian justification for opposing immigration, in his electoral program immigration is framed as a concern, and not as an opportunity. The appropriate policy answer for FI, as the manifesto shows, in light of the so-called migration crisis, is to eradicate the motivations forcing people to migrate. Among these motivations, it is suggested, there is Western interventionist foreign policy, France included, which has caused political destabilization and resulting wars. As, indeed, Mélenchon

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<sup>7</sup> Delmas, A. (2017). Conflit syrien : que disent les candidats à la présidentielle ?, *Libération*, available online [http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2017/04/07/conflit-syrien-que-disent-les-candidats-a-la-presidentielle\\_1561160](http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2017/04/07/conflit-syrien-que-disent-les-candidats-a-la-presidentielle_1561160), accessed 1 February 2018.

reiterates, “it’s up to us to say that migration is always a forced exilum, a sufferance. It is time to stop all the wars that violate countries of the South<sup>8</sup>”.

This shows that while the FN proposes imposing quotas and making the laws regulating citizenship acquisition stricter in order to address related identitarian concerns, the FI confirms a materialistic interpretation of the issue. As a result, immigration still appears as a potential threat due to the pressure it might impose on the French social security system, while potentially strengthening phenomena of social dumping within the labour market.

### *Terrorism*

According to the analysis, terrorism is the only issue on which ideological differences between FN and FI are clearly marked. In the 2017 Presidential elections, Marine Le Pen confirmed a typical securitization approach towards what she openly calls the ‘Islamist terrorist threat’. The link between terrorism and Islam as a religion is thus underlined, though in a more indirect fashion. At the same time, ‘Islamic’ terrorists are depicted as external enemies, who do not deserve to be considered French citizens. The proposal to re-introduce the “*indignité nationale*” (Front National 2017) – which implies the withdrawal of the French citizenship for those convicted on terrorism charges – confirms the will to externalize the threat. Here a clear “Us-Against-Them” narrative is employed by separating the deserving native French people from the terrorist *aliens*, which threaten both French national security and national identity. For the FN, the only possible policy answer is, therefore, a security one: militarization of the police forces, greater room for manoeuvre for the First Minister to decide upon anti-terrorist measures and less attention paid to civil rights, justified by security necessities. Not surprisingly, the terrorism-migration nexus in Le Pen’s understanding is pretty explicit, ‘The Nice killer, a Tunisian criminal, like the Villejuif one, Algerian, both *S Filed*, would have not had the right to stay in France<sup>9</sup>’. Hence, proposed anti-terrorism measures do reflect such an understanding:

‘With me, there would be no Mohamed Merah, French thanks to the *jus soli* [...] With me, there would be no terrorists-migrants of the Bataclan and Stadium of France, they would not have re-entered our country<sup>10</sup>’

‘All foreigners linked to radical Islam, like the ‘S Filed’, will be expelled. All bi-nationals linked to jihadist networks will lose their French nationality, be expelled and banned from the territory<sup>11</sup>’

The analysis of the FI manifesto presents a clear opposing view. Indeed, data confirm that Mélenchon convincingly supports an anti-securitarian position. He refuses to link terrorism to Islam, and frequently underlines in the manifestos the necessity to avoid, as mentioned, a “clash of civilizations”. At the same time, the party is committed to abolish the “surenchère securitaire” (France Unbowed 2017), which is only to the advantage of the terrorist, and to halt the “Etat d’urgence”, replacing it with the “Etat de Droit”. In other words, for the FI, the main political answer to terrorism is prevention, which goes hand in hand with respect for civil rights. Overall, the analysis does not show any specific terrorism-migration

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<sup>8</sup> Besse Desmoulières, A. (2017), Pr sidentielle : la dynamique M lenchon se confirme au lendemain du meeting de Marseille, *Le Monde*, available at [http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/04/10/a-marseille-jean-luc-melenchon-se-pose-en-candidat-de-la-paix\\_5108632\\_4854003.html#ztTRoQ8siod2bSfp.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/04/10/a-marseille-jean-luc-melenchon-se-pose-en-candidat-de-la-paix_5108632_4854003.html#ztTRoQ8siod2bSfp.99), accessed 1 February 2018.

<sup>9</sup> Desintox, S. (2017), Non, Marine Le Pen n'aurait pas emp ch  les attentats, *Lib ration*, 18 April 2018, available at: [http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2017/04/18/non-marine-le-pen-n-aurait-pas-empeche-les-attentats\\_1563457](http://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2017/04/18/non-marine-le-pen-n-aurait-pas-empeche-les-attentats_1563457), accessed 1 February 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Faye, O. (2017), En vue du premier tour, Marine Le Pen mise tout sur le discours anti-immigration, *Le Monde*, 17 Avril 2017, available at [http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/04/18/en-vue-du-premier-tour-marine-le-pen-mise-tout-sur-le-discours-anti-immigration\\_5112712\\_4854003.html#dX7V2BajEYEValky.99](http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/04/18/en-vue-du-premier-tour-marine-le-pen-mise-tout-sur-le-discours-anti-immigration_5112712_4854003.html#dX7V2BajEYEValky.99), accessed 1 February 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Gonzales, P., Leclerc, J-M., Chichizola, J. (2017), Justice, police, terrorisme : les propositions de Macron et Le Pen, *Le Figaro*, 25 April 2017, available at <http://www.lefigaro.fr/elections/presidentielles/2017/04/25/35003-20170425ARTFIG00345-justice-police-terrorisme-les-propositions-de-macron-et-le-pen.php>, accessed 1 February 2018.

nexus in the case of FI. Yet, the analysis reveals a minor exception. The two phenomena are indeed discussed closely as potential consequences of international conflicts, which to Mélenchon is the reason to stop any warfare, especially that involving foreign military intervention.

Overall then, when it comes to terrorism, the two radical parties' positions do remain opposite, in line with their ideological roots. The FN clearly confirms an authoritarian policy attitude, typical of the RRP, while FI, as expected by a RLP, takes a clear libertarian position.

### What are the implications?

The analysis of the FN and FI manifestos, official documents and public statements has shown that the two parties, though theoretically belonging to opposite party families, have adopted similar policy positions concerning salient issues. This is summarised below in Table 4.

**Table 4.** FN and FI overlapping positions per key nexus

	Foreign Policy-Terrorism Nexus	Migration-Terrorism Nexus	Migration-Foreign Policy Nexus	EU-Migration Nexus
<b>National Front</b>	x	x	-	x
<b>France Unbowed</b>	x	-	x	x

Nevertheless, the political justifications for these policy preferences have been different, thus contributing to alter the dynamic of political contestation. There are, indeed, overlapping arguments emerging, although clear opposing views make it safe to argue that the two parties do respond to understandings of 'justice' in different ways.

The question of the European Union, for instance, manifests the opposition of both parties as it is considered incapable of protecting and recognising the full rights of citizens. For Mélenchon this is because, as a liberal institution, the EU is not able to account for and respect the rights of workers and the 'losers' of globalisation who are, in this case, the referent actors of justice. Indeed, emphasis is put on the set of rights they are entitled to in light of their specific role as workers and subjects of a specific social (national) security system allegedly damaged by the EU liberal approach. However, when it comes to migration, the FI seems to apply a more openly cosmopolitical approach to rights, which should be recognised, regardless of nationality, social background or country of arrival. Migrants are, in fact, recognised as human beings first, entitled to be protected on the basis of international cosmopolitan norms. In the specific case of terrorism, the focus moves to civil rights and the justice system as instruments to prevent and to respond to terrorism, revealing an understanding of terrorist suspects as individuals with rights regardless of their crime. A lawful prosecution of these individuals would allow them to be respected as human beings, and therefore, as intrinsically rights-holders.

Instead, for Le Pen the EU and migrants are essentially blamed for the same reasons: they both put into question the ability of the French State to recognise and practically serve the rights of French citizens who are the core, and only legitimate, referent of justice. By calling for an end to the '*indignité nationale*', migrants – as well as terrorists – are not recognised as human beings. Rather, as for French citizens themselves, these individuals are considered as subjects of a national third country and, therefore, entitled to the rights that their national legal structure can provide them. In these terms, the inner community (French citizens) and the relative rights are privileged over what is (said to be) external in terms of citizenship, language or alleged national cultural characteristics. This is consistent with the position on bi-nationals, since all the rights they have acquired as members of two 'national communities' should be given with more caution or even totally removed once suspected or found guilty of terrorism-related activities.



In relation to foreign policy, we also found some interesting dynamics at play. The National Front, not surprisingly, displays a clear and straightforward interest in protecting French interests over others, which, however, does not really translate into an interventionist attitude but rather to a more isolationist, nationally-focused, approach where, again, the French State and its citizens are at the core of preoccupations. Also, the proposition to cooperate and take Vladimir Putin and Bashar Al-Assad as legitimate interlocutors can be easily interpreted as a recognition of their external sovereignty. In this sense, a principle of non-interference within domestic affairs is clearly recognisable. Hence, not only do states remain the core actor of reference but a preference for 'democratic' cosmopolitan law is hardly detectable. Like Le Pen, Mélenchon also opens to the two contested leaders, Vladimir Putin and Bashar Al-Assad, as an attempt to reinforce a cooperative approach to the conflict, where the United Nations is called to supervise. Contrary to FN, though, he also calls for the recognition of a specific referent group, the Kurds, which reinforces the party's support for the international recognition of rightful non-state actors. Besides, by mentioning the connection between international conflicts and terrorist events, he seems to suggest an interpretation of terrorist events as unattended consequences of the actions of the powerful, meaning the states, on the weak, meaning groups and individuals.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has aimed at shedding light on the dynamics of competition and convergence on four key issues – the EU, foreign policy, migration and terrorism – of two opposite radical parties in France, the National Front and France Unbowed. This is relevant, we argue, because despite a growing interest in the literature on the relationship between party politics and foreign policy (Hoffman 2016; Wagner et. al, 2017; Coticchia and Davidson 2018), these dimensions still remain largely unexplored and the political meaning of party competition disregarded. Hence, building on these different research traditions, but going beyond them, this paper has sought to gain a closer and comparative insight into opposite radical parties that display some form of attractiveness.

Specifically, through party manifesto analysis, the paper has mapped parties' positioning along the competition spectrum, while also, qualitatively, assessing understandings and political implications of the aforementioned issues in order to highlight what kind of nexus was privileged and reinforced.

More specifically, from a theoretical perspective, in relation to the European Union, we found that radical right and left parties complicate further the political contestation around EU issues, showing that such a contestation can be framed both along the cultural and the economic dimension of conflict. With respect to foreign policy, the two parties have demonstrated a clear anti-interventionist stance, despite their discourses being very far apart. These two different frames for justifying non-interventionism have interesting theoretical implications. Indeed, non-interventionism has traditionally been considered by party politics literature as a libertarian position but RRP's challenges such an interpretation. Our analysis shows that non-interventionism can be supported from an authoritarian perspective. This means that the cultural dimension of political contestation has become increasingly complex, precisely because of the presence and the success of the radical right, which is altering the dynamic of party competition around foreign policy issues.

The analysis has also revealed a further complex picture when confronted with migration. Indeed, we have shown the relative neutrality of FI on migration, which entails an increasing ideological convergence with the FN. This also implies that such an issue cuts across the cultural dimension and can also be located within the traditional economic, left-right dimension of political contestation. Indeed, as RRP's complicate the political contestation in relation to foreign policy, (new) RLPs contribute to alter the party competition dynamic concerning migration issues, challenging traditional theories of party politics.

Differently, when looking at terrorism issues, the content analysis of party manifestos has confirmed the ideological differences between the two radical parties. In other words, as far as terrorism is concerned, it is possible to retrace a clear traditional left-libertarian vs. right-authoritarian structure of political contestation, which was much more blurred in relation to the other issues. We therefore conclude that a 'U-Curve' is also visible in the case of the alleged migration-terrorism nexus. Our RLP

and RRP's positions indeed increasingly converge on these issues, though with different political justifications motivated by a diverse conception of "nationalism". For the radical right, nationalism is framed in ethnic terms as a tool to promote exclusivity and defend national homogeneity (Halikiopoulou *et al.*, 2012). The radical left, instead, is motivated by a civic nationalism, opposing the great powers that are seen as exploitative of the popular classes. For the RRP's the priority is to defend the nation against any foreign cultures, while for the RLP's is to protect the country from Western imperialism. It follows that, along with euro-sceptic stances, both the radical left and the radical right are more prone to take anti-interventionist positions compared to the mainstream parties.

While these insights complement the current debate in the literature in a significant manner, we nonetheless do see the need for further research on the topic. For instance, additional disaggregated research on other European countries would clarify national peculiarities on the competition between radical parties, or whether there is a transnational 'Western' trend developing. Furthermore, we believe that additional research focusing on in-depth interviews with party executives could instead clarify agencies and intra-party necessities as well as strategic necessities.

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## Methodological Appendix

Table 6 displays the codebook for the content analysis of the Front National and La France Insoumise political manifestos. For each of the four issues we set up a battery of questions that are based on theoretical considerations. The questions are structured in such a way that all the affirmative answers mean support for what the party politics literature has identified as *authoritarian* positions (that is, pro-securization; anti-EU; pro-interventionism; anti-immigration). While all the negative answers reflect support for *libertarian* stances (that is, anti-securization; pro-EU; anti-interventionism; pro-immigration). From a quantitative perspective, all the affirmative answers are assigned a -1 value, while all the negative ones a +1 value. Neutral or not specified answers are assigned a 0 value. Indirect answers are assigned a value of +/- 0,5.

**Table 6.** Codebook

<b>Issue 1: European Union</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
1-1-00	Does the party support a further inter-governmental governance of the migration crisis at the EU level?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
1-2-00	Does the party state that France has to opt-out of Schengen?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
1-3-00	Does the party state that France should regain national competences in financial and monetary policies?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
1-4-00	Does the party support blocking further enlargement of the EU?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
<b>Issue 2: Foreign Policy</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
2-1-00	Does the party state that France needs to have a role to protect in international politics?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
2-2-00	Does the party state that a French presence abroad is necessary to security rather than being overextended?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)



*When Opposites Attract?*

2-3-00	Does the party state that France should strengthen cooperation with European partners in foreign policy?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
2-4-00	Does the party affirm that there is a relationship between European interventionist states' foreign policy and the current migration/terrorist crisis?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
2-5-00	Does the party state that military force is a useful tool to protect principles and values of global justice?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
<b>Issue 3: Immigration</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
3-1-00	Does the party state that France needs to halt immigration flows by introducing quotas?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
3-2-00	Does the party state that immigration is a risk for the sustainability of the French welfare state and, more generally, is a burden for the national economy?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
3-3-00	Does the party state immigration is a threat to the national identity and does the party oppose multiculturalism?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
3-4-00	Does the party affirm that immigration is a threat to national security?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
<b>Issue 4: Terrorism</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Answers</b>
4-1-00	Does the party state that terrorism is caused by religious extremism?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
4-2-00	Does the party state that France is targeted by terrorism because of its democratic and liberal values and principles?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)

4--3-00	Does the party state that terrorists are external enemies?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
4-4-00	Does the party state that recent terrorist attacks are a consequence of the 'open' French approach to migration?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)
4-5-00	Does the party states that terrorist violence requires more military force within the French territory?	Yes (-1); No (+1); Not Specified/Neutral (0)



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