The Mainstream Accommodation of the Far-Right in France: Analyzing Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron’s Populist Rhetoric on Crime

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I. INTRODUCTION

“Personally, I use the word *ensauvagement* and I repeat it.” The former director of Sarkozy’s re-election campaign in 2016, Gérald Darmanin, defended his usage of the word in July 2020.¹

On September 17, 2020, *The New York Times* ran the headline, “Why French politicians can’t stop talking about crime”. Along with several Western news outlets, the New York Times, reported on a recent development in the 2022 French presidential election. Members of President Emmanuel Macron’s centrist-right party, *La République En Marche!* (LREM), began utilizing *ensauvagement* to describe the state of crime after a long summer with a few highly publicized ‘violent’ incidents across the country. The eventful summer included the reemergence of society after the strict coronavirus lockdowns along with the Yellow Vest and Black Lives Matter movements. *Ensauvagement*, or turning savage, is a coded far-right word alluding to youth of north African and sub-Saharan origin. This rhetoric characterizes them as uncivilized, or savage, with undertones of the French mission to ‘civilize’ their many African colonies.

The utilization of *ensauvagement* was particularly newsworthy because mainstream party candidates had never used *ensauvagement* before. The usage of this populist rhetoric in reference to crime implies that this ‘uncivilized population’ as responsible for a rise in crime. Populist Marine Le Pen, the leader of the National Rally (RN), formerly known as National Front (FN) until 2018, reintroduced the word *ensauvagement* in 2013 after she assumed leadership of the party from her father Jean-Marie Len Pen.² *Ensauvagement* is not the first time a mainstream candidate has borrowed populist rhetoric from the National Rally. Former President Nicolas

² Onishi and Méheut.
Sarkozy used populist rhetoric on crime during the 2005 riots while unofficially campaigning for his 2007 presidential run. His publicized tenure as Minister of Interior significantly helped him own the issues of crime and immigration to accommodate the populist far-right in the 2007 presidential election where he defeated the Socialist Party candidate, Ségolène Royal. The parallel between today and 2007 ignited my thesis where I will answer the following question: how do Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron, mainstream French political candidates, utilize populist rhetoric on crime as a political tool to compete in the 2007 and 2022 presidential elections, respectively?

In the first chapter of my thesis, I conducted a literature review on populism, political and populist rhetoric and political party competition. I found that the populist communication style can be effective in winning the electorate and garnering attention from the media. Populist rhetoric is a political tool for presidential candidates to exclude social groups and articulate French identity. With the growth of populism, mainstream candidates are developing strategies to compete with populists through issue ownership and accommodation. Crime contributes to the success of populist parties in Western Europe.

In my second chapter, I analyze Nicolas Sarkozy’s populist rhetoric before the 2007 presidential election. The shocking success of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s 2002 presidential election run set the stage for Sarkozy’s success as a mainstream candidate in the 2007 election against Ségolène Royal of the Parti Socialiste (PS). Before his Presidency, Sarkozy, the former leader of the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), served as the Interior Minister from 2002-07 during the Presidency of Jacques Chirac, the founder of the UMP. Despite Jean-Marie’s success in 2002, the populist party was characterized as too aggressive and became less socially
accepted, prompting the 2013 shift in leadership to Marie Le Pen.\(^3\) Former President Nicolas Sarkozy’s success as a mainstream candidate in the 2007 election against Ségolène Royal established a path for strong populist rhetoric on crime for mainstream candidates. Sarkozy exhibited a tough stance on crime and utilized strong populist rhetoric, especially during the 2005 riots in the Parisian banlieues. These riots began after three kids of Turkish, Black and Arab descent ran from the police and two were electrocuted from jumping an electric fence.\(^4\)

In my third chapter, I exhibit how Macron’s unifying and positive language differentiated himself from Le Pen in 2017. I demonstrate how Macron’s rhetoric approaching the 2022 presidential election is a clear departure from his rhetoric during the 2017 presidential election. The 2017 presidential election signaled a significant milestone for the far-right populist party in France. It was the first time the National Rally possessed a significant chance of winning a presidential election. However, Le Pen crumbled with a considerable loss to Marcon. Although Macron won in 2017, 2022 is up for grabs as Macron is attempting to own the issue of crime and accommodate the National Rally. This emergence of strong populist rhetoric on crime indicates of a larger French political transformation underway in the 21st century: the accommodation of the far-right in the mainstream.

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I. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Populism**

Jacques Gerstlé and Alessandro Nai best capture how political science scholarship defines populism. Populism “promote[s] a vision of politics as a Manichean conflict between the pure people and the corrupt elite, often relying to a simplistic and demagogical language,” (2019, 431). In my thesis, I utilize Gerstlé and Nai’s definition of populism to characterize the political rhetoric of former president Nicolas Sarkozy and current President Emmanuel Macron as populist rhetoric. Beginning with the rise of populism in the 1980s, scholarship has focused on populist parties, candidates and electoral successes. While scholars agree on Gerstlé and Nai’s definition of populism, they vary on how to characterize populism (Bonikowski 2017; Busby, Gubler, and Hawkins 2019; Goldhammer 2015, 135; Jagers and Walgrave 2007; Mudde 2004, 542).

Cas Mudde claims that populism functions ideologically as a system of beliefs (2004, 296). Bart Bonikowski disagrees with Mudde and argues that populism does not function ideologically because political actors across the ideological spectrum channel populism. Bonikowski challenges scholarship that only attaches populism to political actors on the far-right. Rather, he characterizes populism as a form of political discourse; therefore, populism is a rhetorical strategy (2017, S186-7). In my thesis, I identify how two mainstream party presidential candidates utilize populism in their political rhetoric.

**Political Rhetoric**

Political rhetoric serves multiple purposes for political actors during election campaigns. William H. Riker argues that election campaigns provide the greatest opportunities for political actors to communicate public policy to their electorate (1990). Political rhetoric is used in formal and informal settings, such as campaign speeches, interviews and side remarks. At its simplest,
political rhetoric is how political actors communicate through discourse and language (Condor, Tileagă, and Billig 2013, 205). Political rhetoric is also a strategic and powerful tool to communicate with voters (Bonikowski 2017; David 2017, 164; Hadler and Flesken 2018, 375; 2007; Léonard 2016, 1092; Mooney et al. 2011, 17).

Ronald R. Krebs and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson characterize political rhetoric as coercive (2007, 36). Political rhetoric creates a “frame (or set of terms) that characterizes the issue at hand and a set of implications that…[the political actor] suggests follows from that frame,” (2007, 43). These implications are intended to be compelling, or coercive. Political actors use framing (Busby, Gubler, and Hawkins 2019; Helbling, Hoeglinger, and Wüest 2010; 2007; Léonard 2016) in their rhetoric to influence how the electorate views an issue (Entman 1993, 37). Kevin Michael De Luca’s definition of political rhetoric aligns with Krebs and Jackson’s characterization of political rhetoric as coercive.

DeLuca illustrates how political rhetoric uses framing to articulate social conceptions of the self, social systems and the self’s orientation in these systems. He argues that political rhetoric is, “the mobilization of signs for the articulation of identities, ideologies, consciousness, communities, publics, and cultures,” (1999, 17) (Cited in Léonard 2016, 1092). DeLuca best exemplifies how political actors create a frame with the intention of prompting the electorate to believe the intended implication. Marie des Neiges Léonard uses DeLuca’s definition of political rhetoric to analyze Nicolas Sarkozy’s political rhetoric during the 2005 riots (2016, 1092). Léonard’s analysis offers the most comprehensive literature on a mainstream French political candidate’s populist rhetoric on crime. In my thesis, I will analyze how Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron use a populist frame, or populist rhetoric, as a political tool.

*Populist Rhetoric*
In my thesis, I use Gerstlé and Nai’s definition of populist rhetoric: political rhetoric that, “promote[s] a vision of politics as a Manichean conflict between the pure people and the corrupt elite, often relying to a simplistic and demagogical language,” (2019, 431). Populist rhetoric is not neutral, unlike Riker’s description of political rhetoric. Populist rhetoric utilizes framing to include and exclude groups (Condor, Tileagă, and Billig 2013; Busby, Gubler, and Hawkins 2019; Ribera and Díaz 2020; Ruth Wodak 2015). Although all politicians use framing in their political rhetoric, populist framing intends to create a social hierarchy with the ‘pure people’ at the top and other excluded groups below. I hypothesize that Krebs and Jackson would describe populist rhetoric as coercive because of its reliance on a heavily inclusive and exclusive frame.

Populist rhetoric is not exclusive to populist candidates (Bonikowski 2016, 13); however, populist candidates rely more heavily on populist framing than mainstream candidates (2017; Gerstlé and Nai 2019; Mudde 2004; Smith 2010). Political outsiders are more likely to make populist claims and political actors are most likely to make populist claims during the early stages in their campaign (2017, S186). Despite their claims as political outsiders, candidates that use populist framing are a part of the political elite. Léonard describes political rhetoric as the “power owned by the elite to act in the world,” (2016, 1093). Political actors exert their power through their discourse whether they frame themselves as outsiders to the political elites.

French Populist Rhetoric
Cécile Alduy and Stéphane Wahnich are the leading experts on French populist rhetoric. Alduy and Wahnich conducted a study on the evolution of the National Rally’s (RN) rhetoric, from its founder Jean-Marie Len Pen, to its current leader Marine Le Pen. Since 2011, Marine Le Pen has transformed her populist rhetoric. Although Marine Le Pen has not fully abandoned her party’s past rhetoric, she has made considerable efforts to attract more supporters to the National Rally and distance herself from her father’s polarizing rhetoric. The leader of the National Rally
has increased her usage of coded language to include and attract more of the electorate (Cited in Goldhammer 2015, 141). Arthur Goldhammer borrows a quote from *Marine Le Pen prise aux mots* to theorize why the French electorate responds to Marine Le Pen. Through her rhetoric, Le Pen “constructs the contending [political] forces as two irreconcilable antagonistic camps (heroes and demons, Good and Evil, nation and globalism)—the mythological language ensures a bipolar division of the political field,” (Alduy and Wahnich 2015, 163) (Cited in Goldhammer 2015, 141). Goldhammer states that Le Pen’s populist framing has been the key to her success. The effectiveness of her rhetoric is evident because of the National Rally’s increasing electoral success in France over the last decade. Alduy, Wahnich and Goldhammer illustrate how populist rhetoric has been a successful political tool for the French far-right party. Alessandro Nai expands upon the scholarship on Marine Le Pen’s communication style through his study comparing the communication styles of populist and mainstream candidates cross-nationally. 

*The communication style of populist candidates*

Nai fills a quantitative literature gap on the difference between the communication styles of populist and mainstream candidates. He confirms the assumption that populist and mainstream candidates communicate differently during election campaigns. Utilizing 764 expert scholars, Nai analyzed 195 political candidates across the world in 40 national elections from June 2016 to June 2017. He evaluated whether the assumptions about populist candidates and their communication styles are true, that populist candidates are negative, attacking and fear-inducing (2017, 3). Nai defines populist candidates as, “political actors that advocate for people-centrism and anti-elitism, or more generally an opposition between the common ‘people’ and the (corrupt, wicked) elite,” (2017, 5). Nai employed expert scholars to complete surveys on the campaigns related to their country of expertise.
In Nai’s study, experts evaluated overall campaign tones, character vs. policy attacks and fear/enthusiasm appeals. Emotional appeals (Gerstlé and Nai 2019; Jerit 2004; Nai 2017) communicate the values or goals of the candidate and generate their attention. Candidates can draw on anger and fear depending on whether they want to inspire the electorate to be risk-averse or risk-seeking. Emotional appeals can also garner the media’s preference for drama (2004, 566–67). In this study, campaign tones were measured between -10, as only negative, and +10, as only positive. Type of attacks were scaled from 1 to 5 where 1 consisted of primarily character attacks and 5 consisted of primarily policy attacks. Lastly, fear and enthusiasm appeals were scaled between 0, meaning “very low use”, and 10, meaning “very high use” (2017, 9–11).

Through his study, Nai found that populist candidates were 15% more negative in election campaigns than mainstream candidates. Populist candidates also conducted 11% more character attacks and expressed 8% more fear messages in election campaigns than mainstream candidates (2017, 22). Nai identifies how populist candidates do indeed perpetuate their existing reputations as negative, fear inducing and attacking.

The effectiveness of negativity, emotional appeals & populist rhetoric

Scholars report mixed findings on the effectiveness of populist communication: negativity (including character/policy attacks), emotional appeals and populist rhetoric. There is a lack of consensus regarding the effectiveness of negative campaigning (Bhattacharya 2016, 722; Budesheim, Houston, and DePaola 1996; Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner 2007). Some scholars view negative campaigning as useful (Gerstlé and Nai 2019, 419; Jerit 2004, 565), while others do not find enough evidence to believe so (2007, 1184). In 2007, Lau et. al reassessed their 1999 meta-analysis on negative campaigning in the United States. Through their survey of 111 studies, Lau et. al created a ‘common metric’ to compare their selections. Lau et. al find mixed evidence on the electoral success of negative campaigning (2007, 1185). Instead of providing a definition
of ‘negative campaigning’ to guide their analysis, Lau et. al compare campaigning through the terms: ‘positive’, ‘neutral’ and ‘negative’ (2007, 1178). In their findings, Lau et. al do not detect a definite correlation between negative campaigning and declining voter turnout (2007, 1184). Most interestingly, Lau et. al discern that neither negative and positive campaigns are more effective “in shifting votes towards those who wage them,” (2007, 1183). However, negative campaigning may result in a declining relationship between the populace and government (2007, 1184). Gerstlé and Nai’s findings challenge Lau et. al’s limited American based analysis on negativity.

Conducting the first of its kind, Gerstlé and Nai analyzed the effectiveness of negativity, emotionality and populist rhetoric on seizing the media’s attention and receiving the majority of the vote. Between 2016-18, Gerstlé and Nai conducted a statistical cross-national analysis of 43 elections and 97 candidates (2019, 412). This 2019 study builds upon Nai’s previous study with its reliance on expert surveys. Gerstlé and Nai analyzed the extent to which candidates utilize, “negative tone[s]...personal attacks, fear appeals, enthusiasm appeals, people-centrism, anti-elitism, [and] simplistic language,” in their election campaigns (2019, 416). Gerstlé and Nai utilized the same negativity/positivity campaign tone and character/policy scale from Nai’s 2017 study.

Budesheim et. al allude to Gerstlé and Nai’s findings on the effectiveness of negative campaigning. Due to varied quantitative and qualitative studies, Budesheim et. al theorize how only select conditions will give rise to effective negative campaigning (1996, 523). Gerstlé and Nai assert that negativity can indicate greater electoral success. Specifically, their results found that candidates who used more personal attacks were more likely to be elected and garner more attention from the media (2019, 431). Candidates using personal attacks received 24% more
votes than candidates who did not (2019, 423). Negativity specifically increases media attention in presidential elections because there is a narrower field of candidates (2019, 419). The media is increasingly attracted to the “conflictual elements of politics,” (2019, 411). However, Gerstlé and Nai find that negativity backfires overall because negative campaigns generally receive less votes. They theorize that negativity backlashes because “focusing on the opponents’ shortcomings is not enough to convince voters,” (2019, 423). Additionally, negativity can backfire if a candidate attacks another candidate on an issue that the attacking candidate is not credible on. The attacking candidate may expose their own weaknesses (2019, 429).

Gerstlé and Nai expanded upon Nai’s study to include both anxiety and enthusiasm appeals on their emotionality scale with 0 for ‘very low use’ and 10 for ‘very high use’. Their analysis found that enthusiasm appeals are more likely to receive greater attention from the media (2019, 419). Candidates that greatly rely on emotional appeals, either enthusiastic or fearful, are more likely to gain a higher percentage of votes than candidates that do not use any emotional appeals (2019, 423–24). Both negativity and emotionality indicate greater electoral success and media coverage (2019, 431). These indicators are shown to be more important than the incumbency of a candidate where incumbents are generally more likely to win elections (2019, 427).

Lastly, Gerstlé and Nai measure populist rhetoric with three criteria. On a scale of 0–4, an expert decides if their candidate “identifies with the common people and celebrates their authenticity”, uses “informal style and popular language” and expresses “anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric” (2019, 415). Populist rhetoric alone does not have an effect on electoral success or media attention. However, Gerstlé and Nai believe that their “results speak more of the effects of populist rhetoric than of populist ideology,” (2019, 431). Although there is no
quantitative evidence confirming the effectiveness of populist rhetoric during an election campaign, populist candidates who rely more on populist framing (2017; Gerstlé and Nai 2019; Mudde 2004; Smith 2010) are more likely to utilize certain communication techniques that have been proven to be effective. Gerstlé and Nai corroborate Nai’s findings that populist candidates conduct more character attacks, express more anxiety/fear emotional appeals and are generally more negative (2017, 22). Gerstlé and Nai find that mainstream candidates practice “average-to-weak populism and negativity” while populist candidates fit their own stereotype through aggression and populist appeals (2019, 431). The exclusionary framing used in populist rhetoric corresponds with the tendency for populist candidates to attack, conduct anxiety/fear emotional appeals and go negative. Candidates may simultaneously attack certain social groups or appeal to an electorate’s fears while using a populist frame. Gerstlé and Nai study validates Krebs and Jackson’s argument that, “language has a real causal impact on political outcomes,” (2007, 42).

Through different methodologies, Gerstlé and Nai and Lau et. al provide the most comprehensive analysis on communication styles during an election campaign. Gerstlé and Nai build upon Goldhammer’s argument that Marine Le Pen’s populist rhetoric contributes to gaining electoral support. Scholarship on the political communication styles of populist and mainstream candidates inspired my analysis on the role of political rhetoric in the campaigns of Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron. Although Sarkozy and Macron are candidates from mainstream parties in France, their communication styles suggest that mainstream presidential candidates in France find that the communication style of populist candidates, and specifically populist rhetoric, is a political strategy to win elections.

Although scholars are increasingly paying more attention to political communication styles, more research is needed to measure the effectiveness of communication styles during an
Gerstlé and Nai advocate for more research regarding how voters respond to negative messages and the extent of the media’s intermediary role between voters and political actors (2019, 419). Gerstlé and Nai stress the necessity for more studies comparing political communication styles cross-nationally (2019, 411).

**Issue Ownership**

Political rhetoric and communication techniques are tools for candidates to own issues during election campaigns. Issue ownership is a political strategy for both populist and mainstream candidates. George Egorov’s definition of issue ownership guides my thesis. Egorov describes how political parties choose issues that they believe will generate a ‘comparative advantage’ over another party’s issue. Often, parties stray away from selecting the same issue as their competitor. Parties continuously emphasize their issue with the hope that voters will respond and find their issue compelling (Jerit 2004, 564). Parties may also steal an issue from a competitor if they view their competitor’s electorate as susceptible and insecure (Egorov 2015, 3).

Gerstlé and Nai exhibit how the 2017 French Presidential election exemplifies the contrasting issue ownership between mainstream and populist candidates. Right-wing populist candidate Marie Le Pen owned the issues of ‘immigration, asylum, crime and security, and religion/morality’. Mainstream candidate Emmanuel Macron owned the issues of ‘jobs and unemployment’ (Gerstlé and Nai 2019, 429). Mainstream parties in Western Europe traditionally do not exhibit issue ownership on issues such as immigration or crime (Smith 2010, 1480). Immigration is specifically an important issue for far-right parties such as the National Rally (Bonikowski 2017). During the 1980s, the then formerly known as the National Front first
associated the issue of immigration to crime into the political sphere (de Maillard and Roché 2004, 139).

Along with issue ownership, Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen demonstrated the stereotypical communication styles of mainstream and populist candidates, respectively. Le Pen utilized more “negativity, personal attacks, fear messages, informal language and anti-elitism” while Macron utilized more “enthusiasm appeals and civil language” (2019, 428). Le Pen’s defeat in the 2017 presidential election exhibited Gerstlé and Nai’s argument that negativity backlashes overall. Primarily attacking Macron was a weak strategy for Le Pen that harmed her in the run-off (2019, 432). During the Le Pen and Macron debate, Le Pen aggressively attacked Macron on the issues he owned, ‘jobs and unemployment’, and spent little time advocating for her own issues (2019, 429). Le Pen’s attacks also demonstrated how attacks backlash when candidates are not credible on the issues they attack their opponents on (2019, 429). Gerstlé and Nai argue that the 2017 French presidential election illustrates how, “issue ownership is a powerful driver of negativity,” during election campaigns (2019, 432). Issue ownership is significant in my analysis of Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron’s rhetoric. Sarkozy and Macron diverge from the norm of mainstream candidates in France. Their populist rhetoric on crime demonstrates an attempt to own the issue of crime, an issue traditionally owned by the far-right in France.

*Accommodation*

Mainstream parties utilize accommodative, adversarial, and/or dismissive strategies towards single-issue, niche, populist and/or far-right parties to remain competitive in the political arena. Issue ownership is one method for candidates to accommodate other parties or political actors. Mainstream parties accommodate far-right parties by adopting policy positions of far-right parties; therefore, contesting issue ownership of far-right issues. Conversely, mainstream
parties utilize adversarial strategies when taking opposing policy positions. Lastly, when mainstream parties want to downplay the salience of a far-right party issue, they do not address the far-right party’s issue. This is a dismissive strategy. (Carvalho 2019, 368).

Accommodation can benefit mainstream parties navigating the political arena with single-issue, niche, populist and/or far-right parties (Carvalho 2019; Kriesi 2007, 88; Meguid 2005; Smith 2010, 1489). João Carvahlo states that mainstream parties are successful in undermining the issue ownership of these parties if mainstream parties are able to reduce the electoral support of these parties. Mainstream parties are most likely to be successful against these parties when they first enter the political arena. By the time these parties gain more and more electoral support, mainstream parties face risks when accommodating them (2019, 368). Accommodating may result in the loss of party consensus and push voters away (Smith 2010, 1489).

Carvalho cites that current cross-national research on accommodative strategies indicate that single-issue, niche, populist and/or far-right parties do not lose electoral support when mainstream parties accommodate them (2019, 368). Carvalho studied the strategy of the Union for a Popular Movement Party’s (UMP), a mainstream, center-right party led by Nicolas Sarkozy against the National Front (FN) in the 2007 and 2012 French presidential elections. Through his case studies, Carvalho concludes that the single-issue, niche, populist and/or far-right parties voters would rather not vote an accommodative mainstream party if the mainstream party is unpopular. Rather, these voters will vote for their party as long as their party seems credible because, in Carvalho’s words, they will vote for the “original rather than the copy”. These voters are turned off by accommodating mainstream strategies under these conditions (2019, 382).
Bonnie Meguid found similar results as Carvalho in her study on mainstream and niche parties from 1970-2000 in Western Europe. Meguid analyzed 30 niche, or single-issue, parties across 17 Western European countries in national legislative elections (2005, 350). These single-issue parties were either green or far-right parties. Meguid’s study found no evidence that mainstream party accommodation decreased electoral support for green and far-right parties (Meguid 2005, 357). Between 1978 and 1997, Meguid analyzed the National Front (FN) and two mainstream French parties: the Socialist Party (PS) and Gaullist Party (RPR). The PS used an adversarial approach against the FN, giving the FN an enemy. The RPR response to the FN was delayed. Subsequently, RPR’s voting base weakened and split. The RPR lost right-wing voters to the FN (2005, 356).

Carvalho and Meguid assert the potential dangers that accompany accommodating these parties. Mainstream parties can legitimize the issues that these parties campaign on despite still winning elections. Although far-right populist parties may enter and leave the political arena, there may be a lasting effect after these parties disappear from the political arena (Carvalho 2019, 382; Meguid 2005, 357). In the case of my thesis, using populist communication techniques and attempting to own crime, an issue of the far-right populist party, mainstream candidates Sarkozy and Macron risk not only losing to credible populist candidates, but also promoting extreme and dangerous views on social groups through their populist framing.

*The success of populist parties*
Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron’s populist rhetoric on crime implies that crime is a pressing issue in crime. Therefore, I wanted to investigate how crime levels impact electoral success, and whether specifically populist parties benefit from crime levels. Scholars disagree about which factors contribute to the electoral success of populist parties (Smith 2010, 1475). These factors fall under two categories: issues and institutions. More specifically, political and
economic issues and electoral institutions (2010, 1473). Scholars also disagree on the impact of immigration and unemployment on the electoral success of populist parties. Elisabeth Ivarsflaten claims that immigration is essential to the support of populist parties (2008). Smith finds significant flaws in past qualitative and quantitative studies on the electoral success of populist parties. Past qualitative studies do not provide cross-national findings; rather, these studies are useful when analyzing populist parties in specific countries. Past quantitative studies vary and contradict each other because they suffer from “omitting relevant variables”, “model misspecification and improper theorizing,” (Smith 2010, 1475). Smith asserts that these previous studies have omitted crime as a relevant variable in the success of populist parties.

Between 1970 and 2005, Smith collected data in 18 Western European countries from 182 national parliamentary elections. He hypothesized that, “higher levels of crime will lead to higher levels of support for populist right parties,” (2010, 1480). Smith included unorganized populist parties and countries without extreme right parties to avoid selection bias (2010, 1476). Smith found that higher levels of crime do indeed increase electoral support for populist parties in Western Europe (2010, 1484–86). Creating an association between crime and immigration benefits populist parties. Smith explains how, “as immigration rises, the influence of crime on populist right party support increases significantly,” and “as crime rates rise, the strong influence of immigration on support for populist right parties increases in strength,” (2010, 1488). In the context of Sarkozy’s 2007 campaign and Macron’s 2022 campaign, overall crime levels continue to decline in Western Europe. In chapter three, I confirm that there is no significant evidence of rising crime levels in France. However, Smith’s study indicates that crime becomes more important to populist party support if immigration rises. As immigration continues to rise in France, crime has the potential to influence an increase in support for the National Rally.
Therefore, populist rhetoric on crime is a tool for candidates to perpetuate false perceptions of rising crime levels for hypothetical electoral benefit.

*Insécurité culturelle*

An increase in *insécurité culturelle* is a potential effect of populist rhetoric in France. French political scientists coined the phrase *insécurité culturelle* to explain the rising popularity of populism in France. Around 2012, Christopher Guilluy and Laurent Bouvet introduced the term cultural insecurity or *insécurité culturelle* (Ahearne 2017, 270). In *L’Insécurité culturelle*, Bouvet defines cultural insecurity as, “the expression of an anxiety, a fear, not to say a dread concerning what people experience, witness, perceive, and feel … with respect to upheavals in the world order and changes in society,” (10) (Cited in Goldhammer 2015, 136). Scholars argue that significant cultural changes in Europe during the second half of the 21st century constructed the cultural conditions to stir cultural insecurity (Tonry 2014; Kivivuori 2014; Mucchielli 2010). Although I do not analyze how populist communication affects the emotions of voters in my literature review, it is evident that the populist communication style is a political tool that influences elections. Not only is *insécurité culturelle* a potential effect of populist rhetoric, but it provides a promising path for French presidential candidates to reach voters concerned about crime, an issue closely associated with the rise of immigration in France and Western Europe. Attempting to stir *insécurité culturelle* through populist rhetoric on crime indicates that French mainstream presidential candidates view crime as a ticket to Élysée Palace.

**Conclusion**

This review of literature establishes a gap that I hope my thesis will answer: how do mainstream French presidential candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy and Emmanuel Macron, utilize populist rhetoric on crime as a political tool to compete in the 2007 and 2022 presidential elections, respectively.

Introduction

In this chapter, I follow the UMP presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy’s path to the presidency during the 2005 riots. His rhetoric during the 2005 riots strengthened his candidacy. On January 14, 2007, 98.1% of UMP party members nominated Sarkozy. Nicolas Sarkozy defeated Ségolène Royal on May 6, 2007. Sarkozy exhibited issue ownership of crime in 2007 when he ran for president as the acting Minister of Interior under President Jacqueline Chirac. Marie des Neiges Léonard portrays Nicolas Sarkozy’s channeling of the National Front’s rhetoric during the 2005 riots. His rhetoric appealed to far-right voters.

Nicolas Sarkozy

The son of Hungarian and Greek immigrants began his political career in 1983 as the mayor of Neuilly-sur-Seine. Nicolas Sarkozy served in the French government from 1993-2007. Additionally, the lawyer was the Minister of Budget in 1993, Minister of Interior Affairs from 2002-04, Minister of Interior Affairs and Territorial Organization from 2005-07 and Minister of Economy of Finance and Industry in 2004. Sarkozy’s presidential campaign unofficially began when the UMP elected Sarkozy the leader of the party on November 28, 2004. Almost a year later, Sarkozy gained significant public recognition during the 2005 riots in the Parisian banlieues. As Minister of Interior, Sarkozy managed the French government’s response to the rioters. In France, the Minister of Interior is one the most coveted positions in the president’s

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9 Gurau and Ayadi, 11.
cabinet. The position oversees law enforcement, immigration and the overall safety and security of the Republic. Sarkozy’s populist rhetoric as Minister of Interior during the 2005 riots benefitted his presidential campaign and launched his courting of the far-right electorate.

**The 2005 riots**

On October 27, 2005, Bouna Traoré and Zyed Benna died from electrocution in Clichy-sous-Bois, northeast of Paris. While leaving a soccer game, the French police pursued Traoré, Benna and Muttin Altun. Attempting to flee the police, the three teenagers jumped a fence with an electric transformer. Muttin Altun was the sole survivor, suffering severe injuries. The riots commenced that night with a confrontation between the police and young men from the neighborhood. These protests spread throughout the suburbs and into the city. Between October 27th and November 7th, 2005, 1400 cars were burned. Rioters set fire to cars and damaged property. The police presence in the city only grew as more confrontations with the police escalated. In reaction to the protests, France declared a state of emergency on November 9th, 2005. November 12th signaled the peak of the riots with the spread of the riots to every major city in France, with Marseilles as the exception. Afterwards, the riots slowly faded and concluded on November 17th, 2005.

The location of the riots is crucial to understanding the significance of the riots in France and Sarkozy’s populist rhetoric on crime. The riots began in Clichy-sous-Bois, population 30,000, one of 40 communes in the Seine-St. Denis department. In Seine-St. Denis, there is a large population of French citizens of foreign origin. Seine-St. Denis also has the largest population of immigrants with 21.7% of residents living in the department. Specifically in

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12 French scholars use foreign origin to describe those who were not born in France and have nationality in a foreign country.
Clichy-sous-Bois, 77% of the minors have one parent of foreign origin. The majority of people residing in Clichy-sous-Bois are a part of the Arab, Turkish or Black community. The three teenagers reflect the demographics of Clichy-sous-Bois. Muttin Altun was Turkish and both Bouna Traoré and Zyed Benna were African-Maghrebi.

Léonard emphasizes how the banlieues, such as Clichy-sous-Bois, “have been systematically excluded from within French society.” The lack of access to the center of Paris from Clichy-sous-Bois illustrates this geographic exclusion. There are no direct trains, subway or bus lines from Clichy-sous-Bois to Paris.\textsuperscript{13} The riots did not expand much further than the banlieues because “to target more significant symbols of the state would have meant taking a couple buses and a commuter train in order to first reach them.”\textsuperscript{14} The treatment of racial minorities in the banlieues depicts the notable “institutionalized discrimination and segregation” at the hands of the French government. Léonard portrays how, “racial minorities in suburbs like in the Seine-St-Denis department experience high unemployment rates, discrimination on the labor market, police brutality and abuse, racial profiling, lack of access to adequate health care, political exclusion and spatial isolation.”\textsuperscript{15} Waves of immigration to France coincided with the growth of the banlieues.

The banlieues were first constructed to accommodate the growing industrial working class outside of major French cities, such as Paris.\textsuperscript{16} From 1955 to 1975, the banlieues expanded due to the decolonization of the French territories and a post-World War II baby boom. Many

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Léonard, “The Effects of Political Rhetoric on the Rise of Legitimized Racism in France,” 1090.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Léonard, “The Effects of Political Rhetoric on the Rise of Legitimized Racism in France,” 1090.
\end{itemize}
Algerians immigrated to France after Algeria won independence from France in 1962.\textsuperscript{17} Earlier in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, the immigrant population comprised of laborers from Italy, Spain and Poland. However, post-World War II, the immigrant population in France increasingly consisted of immigrants from north and sub-Saharan Africa. The state of the 
*banlieues* changed dramatically after the 1973 OPEC crisis triggered an economic recession in France. As wealthier residents moved out of the *banlieues*, the living conditions in the *banlieues* severely deteriorated.\textsuperscript{18} As immigration increased again during the 1980s, immigrants found low-income housing in the *banlieues*. The immigrant population became concentrated in the *banlieues* where residents experienced higher rates of unemployment.

Although the 2005 riots were an exceptional occurrence in the *banlieues*, the riots signified a continuation of confrontations between the police and the youth living in the *banlieues*. Since the 1980s, there have been about fifteen confrontations between the two groups each year.\textsuperscript{19} The media coverage during from the 1980s onwards “intensified the public perception that the ‘problem’ of the *banlieues* was also a problem that directly related to France's ethnic minorities and to the allegedly unassimilable young men of North and sub-Saharan African origin.”\textsuperscript{20} Today, the *banlieues* carry several strong negative connotations: "drugs, crime, delinquency, civil disorder, Islamic fundamentalism and even terrorism."\textsuperscript{21}

By the end of the 2005 riots, 4770 people were arrested and 118 minors were imprisoned. The Ministry of Interior never released the deportation records, but anywhere from 10 to 120 people were deported from France. Sarkozy’s populist rhetoric on crime targeted the protesters,

\textsuperscript{17} Howarth et al.  
\textsuperscript{20} McNeill, “Les Années Banlieues.”  
\textsuperscript{21} McNeill.
the majority of them being young men of North African or sub-Saharan African descent.

However, his rhetoric surpassed just targeting them with offensive language. Sarkozy continued the French government’s systematic discrimination and abandonment of the *banlieues* through his framing of the residents and communities living in the *banlieues.*

**Populist rhetoric on crime**

Nicolas Sarkozy utilized populist rhetoric during the 2005 riots. Populist rhetoric, for our purposes, is “the mobilization of signs for the articulation of identities, ideologies, consciousness, communities, publics, and cultures.” Sarkozy used populist framing in his rhetoric by “promot[ing] a vision of politics as a Manichean conflict between the pure people and the corrupt elite, often relying to a simplistic and demagogical language.” Populist framing examines membership into the social groups; and therefore, incites questions of identity. Populist framing decides, “Who is to be counted as a full-fledged member of society, and by what right do some (designated the elite) wield power over others (the self-proclaimed people).” Populist framing creates a hierarchy of social groups where some belong with the pure, authentic people while others do not deserve the same equal treatment. Sarkozy’s populist rhetoric during the 2005 riots further excludes the rioters and the *banlieues* from full acceptance into French society as true French citizens.

Through two examples of populist rhetoric, I illustrate how Sarkozy designates the protesters, the residents of the *banlieues* and the larger immigrant and minority population in France as enemies of the French Republic. I also portray how Sarkozy articulates a vision of

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French identity that portrays minorities and immigrants as less French than the rest of the population.

‘Cleaned with a kärcher’

Even before the riots began, Nicolas Sarkozy used populist rhetoric when speaking about a suburb of Paris similar to Clichy-sous-Bois. On June 23rd, 2005, Sarkozy visited La Courneuve after a stray bullet struck and killed Sidi Ahmed, an 11-year-old boy. The stray bullet came from a conflict between two rival drug gangs. Sarkozy stated that the banlieue La Courneuve should be ‘cleaned with a kärcher’. His statement is an example of political rhetoric because he mobilizes a symbol to articulate an identity and culture. Kärcher is a specific German brand of pressure washers. Sarkozy mobilizes a symbol for cleaning, a kärcher, to comment on the state of a community, La Courneuve. Through mobilizing a symbol for cleaning, Sarkozy expresses that La Courneuve is a filthy place. The usage of a power washer specifically conveys the extent to how filthy Sarkozy characterizes La Courneuve as.

The kärcher statement is also significant because of Sarkozy’s position as the Minister of Interior, a high-ranking official in the French government. As the Minister of Interior of France, Sarkozy speaks on behalf of the French government. Stating that La Courneuve needs to be ‘cleaned with a kärcher’ as the Minister of Interior communicates how the French government views the situation in La Courneuve. Although ‘cleaning with a kärcher’ does not communicate La Courneuve as an enemy of the French Republic, this statement communicates that the French Republic views the banlieue as a problem to be solved. However, the former Minister of Interior expresses that the French government believes that this community is filthy and less than other communities; therefore, Sarkozy channels populism and utilizes populist rhetoric. By denoting

26 Henley, “The Guardian Profile.”
La Courneuve as filthy, Sarkozy is excluding this community from the ‘pure people’ and communicating that the residents of La Courneuve, a majority immigrant and minority population, do not share the identity of the ‘pure people’. Therefore, Sarkozy is insinuating that the identity of the ‘pure people’, the French, are rather the opposite of the population in the banlieues, white and Christian. Sarkozy’s kärcher statement was not out of character. After Sarkozy became the Minister of Interior, he made statements on minority and immigrant banlieues outside Paris.28

‘Racialle’

Once the riots began in October of 2005, the Minister of Interior continued his populist rhetoric on crime from June. On October 27th, 2005, Nicolas Sarkozy used racialle to describe the protesters and condemn their actions. In English, racialle translates to thugs or scum. 29 On November 10, 2005, Sarkozy repeated the word on national television. Sarkozy stated that:

I would like anyone to tell to my face, someone who hits a firefighter, who throws stones to a firefighter, how do we call him? ‘Young man?’ ‘Sir?’ We call him a thug because it’s a thug. When I say they are scum [racialle], they call themselves that! Stop calling them ‘young people’!30

Sarkozy continued to use racialle to describe the protesters. On November 21, 2005, Sarkozy spoke to his party, the UMP, and repeated racialle again. He followed with a snide comment that his language might not have been strong enough to convey his point.31

Nicolas Sarkozy’s insistence on labeling the protesters as racialle exhibits his populist rhetoric. Sarkozy mobilized the symbol of racialle to comment on the identity of the protesters and the communities living in the banlieues. The word racialle symbolizes filth and unworthiness. Labeling the protesters as racialle articulates the identity of the protesters as less

28 Léonard, 1093.
29 Léonard, 1093.
30 Léonard, 1094.
31 Léonard, 1094.
than and excludes the protesters from the ‘pure people’. \textit{Racialle} frames the protesters as criminals. The rioters’ criminal status excludes them from belonging with the ‘pure people’ Instead, \textit{racialle} implies that the ‘pure people’ need to be protected from the rioters. Sarkozy’s rhetoric draws upon stereotypes attributed to racial minorities living in the \textit{banlieues}. \textit{Racialle} furthers the association between the \textit{banlieues}, the young minority men living in the \textit{banlieues} and crime.\footnote{Léonard, 1094.}

Through Sarkozy’s framing of the protesters as criminals, he was able to justify the French government’s strong response while also removing any justification for the protests. \textit{Racialle} and ‘cleaned with a kärcher’ conveyed that the French government did not view the protesters as legitimate political actors rightfully protesting against the police and French government for systematically abandoning and attacking their community. Sarkozy responded to the protesters with an increase in police presence throughout the city and the \textit{banlieues}.\footnote{Léonard, 1101.} In December of 2005, Sarkozy falsely claimed that “75% to 80% of the rioters were notorious delinquents.”\footnote{Léonard, 1094.} In reality, 60% of protesters had no previous criminal record.\footnote{Léonard, 1090.}

\textit{The racialized association to immigration}

During the riots, Nicolas Sarkozy also characterized the protesters as immigrants, despite many of the protesters not being immigrants. The majority of protesters were second generation French citizens. On November 14, 2005, Sarkozy claimed that deportations were imminent for the protesters.\footnote{Léonard, 1099.} In France, young Black men born and raised in the \textit{banlieues} are often characterized as immigrants. Racial minorities in France “are frequently classified popularly as immigrants because of the racialized association between immigration, those of North African
origin, and blacks.”\textsuperscript{37} In addition to framing racial minorities in France as criminals, Sarkozy blanketly framed France’s immigrant population as criminals as well. Through his rhetoric, Sarkozy supported the “construction of a racist narrative about un-French foreign criminals being the main instigators of the riots.”\textsuperscript{38}

To Sarkozy, the protesters cannot truly identify as French. Sarkozy addresses his understanding that racial minorities will only be French legally and not culturally. On November 17, 2005, Sarkozy told the French magazine \textit{l’Express}, “[Those rioters] are totally French legally speaking. But let’s say things as they really are: polygamy, the acculturation of a number of families makes it more difficult to integrate a young individual of African origin than another young French person of another origin.”\textsuperscript{39} Through the riots, Sarkozy states that protesters do not share the same French identity as white Christians living in France. Weeks before the 2007 presidential election, Sarkozy explicitly stated French identity as white and Christian. Sarkozy explained that:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Je veux dire que la France, c’est aussi 2.000 ans d’héritage chrétien intégré à la morale laïque française….Et dans le patrimoine de l’identité nationale française, il y a ce long manteau d’églises qui couvre la totalité du territoire français (…) L’héritage chrétien intégré à la morale laïque, ça signifie quelque chose dans un pays comme la France (Sarkozy, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, 16/04/2007)}\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

I mean that France is also 2,000 years of Christian heritage integrated into French secular morality…And in the heritage of the French national identity, there is this long cloak of churches that covers the entire French territory (…) The Christian heritage integrated into secular morality, it means something in a country like France (Translated by Reverso).


\textsuperscript{39} Léonard, 1100.

\textsuperscript{40} Ivaldi, “Inequality, Identity and the People: New Patterns of Right-Wing Competition and Sarkozy’s ‘Winning Formula’ in the 2007 French Presidential Election,” 7.
Although Sarkozy does not convey race, Sarkozy asserts that French identity is based upon a 2,000 year old Christian heritage. France 2,000 years ago constituted of white people and specifically not people originating from north and sub-Saharan African. Sarkozy’s racialized association between the protesters and the immigrant population living in France during the riots exhibited his conception of the ‘pure’ French people.

The enemy from within

Nicolas Sarkozy’s usage of raciale designated the ‘un-French’ protesters as enemies of the French Republic and even further, threats to the stability of French Republic. Designating the protesters as enemies and threats further excludes the protesters as separate from the ‘pure people’ and indicates that the protesters are not truly French. Sarkozy escalated this narrative on November 6, 2005, when he stated that, “it will either be the order of the gangs, or the order of the mafias, or another kind of order,” if the riots are not squashed. Sarkozy fueled fear through listing the potential consequences of the continuation of the riots if ‘order’ is not restored in the French Republic. Sarkozy understood the riots as ‘the will of those who made delinquent acts their main activity in order to resist the ambition of the Republic for order and law on its territory.’

On November 9th, 2005, France declared a state of emergency. Both the French government and the FN advocated for a state of emergency, which involves a national curfew and an increase in police presence. The state of emergency law was first imposed in 1955 during the Algerian War. After 1955, the state of emergency was used in New Caledonia to combat the Kanak independence rising in 1985. The Minister of Interior was a fierce advocate for the state

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42 Léonard, 1098.
43 Léonard, 1089.
44 Léonard, 1097.
of emergency and called for a longer one. While expressing the urgency for a state of emergency, Sarkozy repeated his November 6th statement that, “Because if it is not the order of the Republic that reigns in these areas, it will be the order of the gangs or extremists.”

Sarkozy’s rationale for the state of emergency further demonstrates how he views racial minorities and immigrants living in the banlieues as a threat to the French Republic. Framing racial minorities and immigrants as a threat to the French Republic allows Sarkozy to appeal to the emotions of the French electorate.

_The fear-mongering Sarkozy_

Nicolas Sarkozy’s tenure as Minister of Interior was pivotal to capturing the far-right electorate during his campaign. Sarkozy utilized anxiety/fear appeals during the 2005 riots, a communication style characteristic of populist candidates and proven to garner electoral success. Sarkozy sought to incite fear while advocating for the state of emergency. He warned the public and other French politicians that chaos and the imminent fall of the Republic would ensue without a state of emergency. Sarkozy’s anxiety/fear appeals strategically stirred insécurité culturelle. Sarkozy’s rhetoric communicated to the public that the 2005 riots signified increasing violent disorder in French society. Sarkozy attributed the cultural changes in France, meaning the increase in racial minorities and immigrants, to this violent disorder. Sarkozy asserted that the French should be fearful of racial minorities and immigrants because not only are they not French, but they are true threats to the Republic.

_The outsider_

Nicolas Sarkozy’s rhetoric began his winning strategy for the 2007 presidential election. Soon afterwards, Sarkozy successfully transformed his image from a Minister during Jacques

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45 Léonard, 1089.
Chirac’s presidency to an outspoken challenger to Chirac and Prime Minister Dominique Villepin. Chirac and Sarkozy’s relationship became strained when Chirac chose not to support Sarkozy’s candidacy. Chirac revealed the strained relationship after publicly disagreeing with Sarkozy on key issues. Sarkozy was an overwhelmingly popular candidate for the UMP. And despite his relationship with Chirac, Sarkozy was able to garner full support from the UMP and maintain his edge as a perceived outsider.

Although Sarkozy was an established political elite, he successfully dissociated himself from President Chirac. Published days before the first round of the presidential election, *The New Yorker* characterizes Nicolas Sarkozy as: an “angry outsider to the old political ruling class.” Coining it as ‘rupture tranquille’ or a ‘peaceful severance’ from Chirac, Sarkozy utilized his time as the chair of the UMP to distance himself and withdraw support from Chirac’s regime, despite being in the same party. Sarkozy best expresses his rupture tranquille from the UMP:

*Depuis 2002, je me suis construit en marge d’un système qui ne voulait pas de moi comme président de l’UMP, qui récusait mes idées comme ministre de l’Intérieur et qui contestait mes propositions* (Sarkozy, in *Le Figaro*, 17/04/07)

Since 2002, I have built myself on the sidelines of a system that did not want me to be the president of the UMP, that recused my ideas as Minister of the Interior and challenged my proposals (Translation by Reverso)

Sarkozy’s publicized statements against the ‘system’ demonstrated Sarkozy’s use of a populist frame and his belief that framing himself as an outsider would attract more of the electorate.

Gilles Ivaldi emphasizes the importance of Sarkozy’s populist framing in winning the election.

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52 Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 60.
Ivaldi writes, “Above all, it was the normative construction by Sarkozy of a profound antagonism between the French citizens and their disconnected political elite which best resumed the populist essence of the candidate’s courting of the electorate.”

Sarkozy’s criticism of the French political system clearly separated himself from the political elite whom he described as combative towards him. His anti-establishment stance served a rhetorical purpose because Sarkozy was able to declare himself as representative of the people, instead of his true place as a political elite. Characterizing himself as ‘le changement’ or a ‘change’ implied that his presidency would be a break from the corrupt system.

The 2007 presidential election

During the 2007 presidential election, Sarkozy benefited from the aftermath of the 2002 presidential election and the weakness of the left and far-right. Twelve candidates entered the first round of the highly anticipated 2007 presidential election. The main contenders included: Nicolas Sarkozy of the center-right Union for Popular Movement (UMP), Ségolène Royal of the leftist Socialist Party (PS), François Bayrou of the centrist Coalition for French Democracy (UDF) and Jean-Marie Le Pen of the far-right National Front (FN). The other eight candidates all polled below 10% before the first round. These parties included the far-left Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the far-left Communist Party (PCF), the far-left communist Workers' Struggle or Trotskyist Party, the far-left Greens Party, the Hunting, Fishing, Nature and Tradition Party and the right-wing Movement for France (MPF). The far-left candidate José Bové did not

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54 Ivaldi, 9.
56 Gurau and Ayadi, “Political Communication Management.”
represent a party, but associated himself with the far-left Greens Party.\textsuperscript{57} The election was predominantly a competition between Royal and Sarkozy with Bayrou as the main challenger.\textsuperscript{58}

\textit{First round results}
On April 22, 2007, French voters cast their ballots in the first round of the presidential election.\textsuperscript{59} The pre-election polls correctly predicted that Sarkozy, Royal, Bayrou and Le Pen each received over 10\% of the votes. Sarkozy won 31\% of the electorate with 11 million votes\textsuperscript{60} while Royal and Baryou each won 25.87\% and 18.57\% of the electorate respectively.\textsuperscript{61} Jean-Marie Le Pen received the least support of the four leading candidates with 10.4\% of the electorate and 3,834,530 votes.\textsuperscript{62} The other eight candidates only won 15\% of the votes in total.\textsuperscript{63} About 85\% of France’s 44.5 million voters participated in both the first and second rounds of the 2007 presidential election.\textsuperscript{64} Other than the 1965 presidential election, the 2007 election possessed the highest voter turnout of any French presidential election.\textsuperscript{65}

The mainstream candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy, Ségolène Royal and François Bayrou, benefited from strategic voting in the aftermath of the 2002 presidential election. The first round of the election demonstrated a decline in support for far-left candidates and an uptake in support for the mainstream candidates. The support for the Workers’ Party decreased from 10\% to 6\% between the 2002 and 2007 elections. Receiving only 1.9\% of the electorate, the PCF obtained its lowest percentage ever. The shrinkage of votes for the far-left in the first round was

\textsuperscript{58} Gurau and Ayadi, “Political Communication Management,” 10.
\textsuperscript{61} Hauss, \textit{Politics in France}, 208.
\textsuperscript{63} Hauss, \textit{Politics in France}, 207.
\textsuperscript{64} Bennhold and Sciolino, “French Voters Pick Sarkozy to Be President; Turnout High.”
\textsuperscript{65} Hauss, \textit{Politics in France}, 207.
reactionary towards the shocking defeat of the Socialist Party candidate and former-Prime Minister Lionel Jospin to the National Front candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002. Le Pen won 17% of the electorate in the first round before losing to Jacques Chirac of the UMP in the second round run-off. In 2007, many far-left French voters demonstrated strategic voting when they voted for safer and more credible mainstream candidates such as Sarkozy, Royal and Bayrou. 2007 voters voted strategically to prevent another significant left loss and surprising far-right victory in the first round.

The far-right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen was not immune to strategic voting either. The far-right vote exhibited a decline in voter turnout. In 2002, Jean-Marie Le Pen won 16.9% of the votes in the first round, his best performance ever. Despite Le Pen’s 2002 moment in the national spotlight, he was not able to repeat his success in the following election. Pre-first round polls overestimated Le Pen’s turnout at 12.5-16.5%. Instead, Le Pen suffered his worst performance since 1974, winning only 10.4% of the electorate. The Front National also received less support from the working class, a historically supportive voter base for Le Pen. Le Pen only won 15% of the working class vote in 2007, contrasting his 2002 performance with 26% of the working class. Gilles Ivaldi theorizes that the National Front’s decline demonstrated strategic voting. Although Le Pen succeeded expectations in the 2002 first round, he did not gain any traction in the second round. Ivaldi believes that Le Pen’s lack of improvement in the second round exhibited Le Pen as a low-electability candidate, directing voters elsewhere in 2007.

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66 Shields, “The Far Right Vote in France,” 34.
shock of the 2002 election established a path for the run-off between mainstream candidates Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal, and more importantly, a path for Sarkozy to woo far-right voters through his rhetoric.

*Ségolène Royal*
Ségolène Royal’s presidential candidacy was a milestone for women in France. However, Royal was not the first female presidential candidate and not even the only female candidate in the race. Even though three other female candidates ran for office in 2007, the Socialist Party candidate was the first female French presidential candidate from a mainstream party. The groundbreaking run-off between Royal and Sarkozy signaled the first time a woman held an outstanding chance of winning the French presidency.73 Before her presidential election campaign, Royal served four terms in the French parliament, beginning her service in 1988.74 She also served as a deputy four times and a minister three times.75 Royal served as the Minister of Environment from 1992-1993, the Minister of School Education from 1997-2000, Minister of Family and Children from 2000-2001 and the Minister of Family, Children and Disabled Peoples from 2001 to 2002.76 Royal had already broken barriers in 2004 when she was elected as President of the Poitou-Charentes Region. She was also the only woman elected in 2004 as a President of a region.77

Ségolène Royal quickly rose as a viable presidential candidate from the Socialist Party. A 2004 IPSOS poll first directed attention towards a possible Royal presidential run after she gained name recognition for her regional presidential win that same year.78 While Royal’s

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73 Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 59.
75 Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 50.
77 Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 62–63.
78 Murray, 50.
political visibility was slowly increasing in 2005,\textsuperscript{79} 2006 encompassed her swift and spectacular rise in the 2007 French presidential race. On April 11, 2006, Royal first publicly hinted at her aim for the executive office.\textsuperscript{80} Four months later and three months before the November primary, many French news outlets were already predicting Royal as the probable Socialist Party nominee. Within the year, Royal’s presidential campaign went from non-existent to a campaign for the potential next President of France.\textsuperscript{81} Winning 60\% of her party members’ votes, Royal overwhelmingly earned the Socialist Party nomination on November 16, 2006.\textsuperscript{82} Her male opponents Laurent Fabius and Dominique Strauss-Kahn each only received 20\% of the party votes.\textsuperscript{83} Regardless of Royal gaining notoriety in 2006, she did not fare as well transitioning into the first round, and even worse into the run-off.

Even before the April 2007 first round, Ségolène Royal’s polling numbers began to dwindle. Between December 2006 and February 2007, Royal’s percentage points fell by 10 points. Her first round poll projections dropped from the mid-thirties to the mid-twenties.\textsuperscript{84} Pre-first round polls predicted a Royal defeat and Sarkozy victory if Royal qualified for the second round. However, François Bayrou was slated as a potential dark horse candidate if he was able to beat Royal in the first round. Polls predicted that Bayrou stood a better chance to defeat Sarkozy in the run-off. Voters on the left began to shift their votes to Bayrou as Royal began to lose popularity.\textsuperscript{85} Nonetheless, once Royal lost an edge over Sarkozy at the start of 2007,\textsuperscript{86} Sarkozy’s lead continued to grow until he won the presidency in May 2007.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{79} Gurau and Ayadi, “Political Communication Management,” 9–10.
\textsuperscript{80} Gurau and Ayadi, 18.
\textsuperscript{81} Murray, \textit{Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling}, 51.
\textsuperscript{82} Gurau and Ayadi, “Political Communication Management,” 18.
\textsuperscript{83} Murray, \textit{Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling}, 51.
\textsuperscript{84} Clift, “The Ségolène Royal Phenomenon,” 289.
\textsuperscript{85} Murray, \textit{Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling}, 52.
\textsuperscript{86} Murray, 49.
\textsuperscript{87} Murray, 51–52.
Round 2
Nicolas Sarkozy defeated Ségolène Royal on May 6, 2007.88 Sarkozy captured 53.1% of the electorate while Royal ended with 46.9% of the electorate.89 The pair split the male vote; and most surprisingly, Sarkozy drew in more female voters with 54% of women voting for the UMP candidate. However, Royal found her greatest success in the youth vote, winning 65% of people under the age of thirty90 and 69% of young women.91 Mariette Sineau attributes Royal’s success with the under thirty age group to the socialization of the younger generation. Gender equality and political parity were more normalized to the younger generation than the older generation who turned out more for Sarkozy. Sarkozy’s greater popularity with women voters is due to older women in France holding more conservative values.92 Sarkozy found his stride with 53% of the 30-49 year old vote and 57% of the 50+ vote. Sarkozy’s 2007 win was historic for the center-right. The center-right had not acquired such a large victory since former President Charles de Gaulle, the founder of the Fifth Republic, was elected into office. Sarkozy’s win was also historic because the successor of a president’s party has not won an election since 1974.93

Nicolas Sarkozy’s issue ownership
Nicolas Sarkozy’s rhetoric during the 2005 riots set a foundation for Nicolas Sarkozy to seem credible on the issue of crime primarily, but also immigration as well. Sarkozy spent his campaign demonstrating his credibility on these two historically far-right issues.94 Sarkozy’s

89 Hauss, Politics in France, 207.
90 Hauss, 408.
92 Sineau, 495.
93 Hauss, Politics in France, 408.
94 Ivaldi, “Inequality, Identity and the People: New Patterns of Right-Wing Competition and Sarkozy’s ‘Winning Formula’ in the 2007 French Presidential Election,” 2.
issue ownership preyed upon the weak electorate of Jean-Marie Le Pen and challenged Le Pen’s credibility on crime and immigration.

Despite being the son of Hungarian and Greek immigrants, Nicolas Sarkozy’s immigration platform was unfriendly to immigrants in France. While Minister of Interior, Sarkozy created anti-immigration legislation. The public supported Sarkozy’s 2006 immigration bill that was created less than a year after the riots. During his presidential campaign, Sarkozy championed stricter immigration quotas and advocated for the deportation of 25,000 illegal immigrants per year. Sarkozy campaigned for a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity and eventually created this ministry when he was elected as president in 2007.

Nicolas Sarkozy’s ownership of crime was revealed with his tough, anti-crime bills in 2003 and 2006. He promoted ‘politique de sécurité’ where he pledged to crack down on juvenile crimes and multiple offenders. Brice Hortefeux, the deputy interior minister and one of Sarkozy’s oldest friends best characterizes Sarkozy’s expertise in crime. Before the first round, Hortefeux declared that in order to win Sarkozy must, “demonstrate his best qualities, to show that he is not only a fighter but a protector—that he will protect the people who work, that he will protect the consumer, and most important, that he is the protector of our citizens, the one

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96 Marthaler, “Nicolas Sarkozy and the Politics of French Immigration Policy.”
100 Ivaldi, “Inequality, Identity and the People: New Patterns of Right-Wing Competition and Sarkozy’s ‘Winning Formula’ in the 2007 French Presidential Election,” 12.
who fights crime for their security.” Hortefeux’s comment illustrates how Sarkozy’s biggest strength derived from his credibility on crime, his ability to fight against crime for the security of the French Republic that he exhibited in 2005.

The weak candidacy of Jean-Marie Le Pen

Jean-Marie Le Pen, the then 78-year-old, had been the National Front candidate since the mid 1970s. Although Le Pen found great success in the first round of the 2002 presidential election, his poor showing in the second round impacted his candidacy in the 2007 presidential election. The National Front did not lose its appeal to voters, but Le Pen was seen as a low-electability candidate. His low-electability stemmed from being unable to garner more support in the second round and spoil the 2002 election. Despite losing electability and representing continuity, the issues that Le Pen and his party campaigned on were popular. However, the credibility of the National Front was generally questionable because Le Pen did not have a holistic policy platform. He was only associated with crime and immigration. On the other hand, voters who demonstrated concern for Le Pen’s issues of expertise were attracted to Sarkozy. Sarkozy was seen as a credible candidate in 2007. He was appealing because he had a history of making decisions on issues that right wing voters cared about. Coming into the 2007 election, Sarkozy had the more realistic possibility to fulfill the promises of his campaign. Right wing voters doubted Le Pen would ever get that chance.

Jean-Marie Le Pen’s rhetorical shift

During Le Pen’s 2007 presidential campaign, he backed away from his previous offensive rhetoric. Le Pen did not stress his characteristic “national identity, cultural and socio-

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102 “Round One.”
104 Shields, “The Far Right Vote in France,” 34.
106 Ivaldi, 17.
economic policies.\textsuperscript{107} The National Front’s 2007 manifesto illustrates Le Pen’s movement away from his past, strategically avoiding identity politics.\textsuperscript{108} Le Pen’s strategy was uncharacteristic for the National Front. Asserting French identity and “mutual exclusionism” was essential to the identity of the National Front that Le Pen crafted during the 1980s.\textsuperscript{109} During the 2005 riots, Le Pen criticized Sarkozy’s populist rhetoric. Le Pen declared:

\begin{quote}
Vous êtes les branches de l’arbre France, vous êtes des français à part entière. Si certains veulent vous Kärcheriser pour vous exclure, nous voulons, nous, vous aider à sortir de ces ghettos de banlieues où les politiciens français vous ont parqués, pour vous traiter de racaille par la suite. Il n’y a pas de beuritude, pour moi vous n’êtes ni des potes, ni des blacks, ni des beurs, vous êtes des citoyens français, des enfants légitimes de la France faisant partie de notre république (Le Pen in Argenteuil, 06/04/2007)\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}

You are the branches of the France tree, you are full-fledged French people. If some want you Kärcheriser to exclude you, we want to help you out of these ghettos of suburbs where the French politicians have parked you, to call you scum afterwards. He there is no beuritude, for me you are neither friends, nor blacks, nor arabs, you are French citizens, legitimate children of France forming part of our republic (Translated by Reverso).

In this statement, Le Pen contested the messages Sarkozy communicated during the riots. Le Pen acknowledged the Sarkozy’s usage of \textit{kärcher} and \textit{racaille}. Le Pen asserted that Sarkozy is excluding the population living in the \textit{banlieues}. Additionally, he argued that the French political elite, including Sarkozy, are wrongfully calling the population living in the \textit{banlieues as racaille} even though the elite purposefully isolated them in the \textit{banlieues} with little resources.

The National Front candidate ran a weaker presidential election campaign in comparison to his 2002 campaign. Le Pen’s slight shift towards the mainstream resulted in unclear

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{107} Ivaldi, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{108} Ivaldi, 15.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Ivaldi, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ivaldi, 14.
\end{itemize}
messaging\textsuperscript{111} and his lack of campaigning did not benefit him.\textsuperscript{112} Le Pen trusted that he would benefit from being the steadfast far-right candidate. Le Pen explained:

\begin{quote}
Les événements travaillent pour moi (...) Si je regarde les programmes défendus par mes concurrents, ils sont peu ou prou toujours venus sur mes terrains. Le public doit me reconnaître d'avoir été celui qui a vu clair et qui a vu loin, qui a deviné avant les autres les problèmes du pays (...) Les électeurs préfèreront toujours l'original à la copie (Le Pen, BFM, 03/04/07)\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

Events work for me (...) If I look at the programs defended by my competitors, they have more or less always come to my land. The public must recognize me to have been the one who saw clearly and who saw far, who guessed before others the problems of the country (...) Voters will always prefer the original to the copy (Le Pen, BFM, 04/03/07)

Le Pen’s belief that far-right voters will prefer the candidate who originally advocated for certain issues is accurate. Le Pen is the original copy for the issues of immigration and crime that Sarkozy accommodated. However, far-right voters only prefer the original candidate if they are viewed as credible.\textsuperscript{114} In 2007, this was not the case for Le Pen. Towards the end of his campaign, Le Pen realized that he was trailing Sarkozy and took an adversarial approach. As Le Pen began to attack Sarkozy, his negativity backfired and he did not make it past the first round.\textsuperscript{115}

\textit{The accommodation of the National Front}

Nicolas Sarkozy and the UMP demonstrate how mainstream parties accommodate far-right populist parties during an election.\textsuperscript{116} Scholars\textsuperscript{117} concur that Sarkozy accommodated Jean-Marie Le Pen and the National Front through adopting the similar stances on the issues of crime

\textsuperscript{111} Shields, “The Far Right Vote in France,” 36.
\textsuperscript{112} Ivaldi, “Inequality, Identity and the People: New Patterns of Right-Wing Competition and Sarkozy’s ‘Winning Formula’ in the 2007 French Presidential Election,” 12.
\textsuperscript{114} Carvalho, “Mainstream Party Strategies Towards Extreme Right Parties,” 382.
\textsuperscript{116} Carvalho, “Mainstream Party Strategies Towards Extreme Right Parties,” 368.
and immigration. His populist rhetoric on crime significantly contributed to his accommodation because it allowed him appeal to the right and far-right voters and distance himself from politically correct mainstream candidates. Léonard found that, “Sarkozy and the French government...actually benefited from the riots in that by racializing the riots and criminalizing the rioters, they have been able to justify more anti-immigrant campaigns and restrictive citizenship policies attracting the conservative electorate from the far right party.”

Furthermore, Sarkozy borrowed *racialle* from Jean-Marie Le Pen and the National Front. Carvahlo attributes Sarkozy’s successful accommodation to “the higher levels of resources of the UMP, the centre right’s divisions over immigration and integration and Sarkozy’s higher levels of political capital in the face of a discredited FN candidate.” Because Le Pen was a weak candidate for the FN, Sarkozy was able to successfully accommodate the National Front without major risk that it would backfire.

*Sarkozy’s success with far-right voters*

During his campaign, Sarkozy publicized that he was the presidential candidate for all French citizens, accepting support from all sides of the political spectrum. Sarkozy explained how he would garner support from all French voters:

> Si je suis élu président de la République, tout ce que la droite républicaine n'osait plus faire parce qu'elle avait honte d'être la droite, je le ferai. Tout ce que la droite républicaine et le centre ont abandonné à la gauche et à l'extrême droite, je m'en saisirai (Sarkozy, Toulouse, 12/04/07)

If I am elected President of the Republic, everything that the Republican right no longer dared to do because that she was ashamed to be the right one, I will. Everything the

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120 Léonard, 1095.
122 Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 55.
Republican right and the center have abandoned to the left and the extreme right, I will seize it (Sarkozy, Toulouse, 04/12/07) (Translated by Reverso)

However, Sarkozy specifically targeted National Front voters. He described himself as “plus à droite que Chirac”\(^{124}\) or more to the right than his predecessor Jacques Chirac.

\[ J'irai même les chercher un par un. Si le FN a progressé, c'est que nous n'avons pas fait à droite notre boulot\(^{125}\) \\
I will even go and get them one by one. If the FN has progressed, it is because we have not done our work to the right (Translated by Reverso) \\

Nicolas Sarkozy was successful in his accommodation of Le Pen. Sarkozy took voters who voted for Le Pen in 2002 and captured voters who voted for Le Pen in the first round of 2007. Gerard Grunberg agrees that Sarkozy successfully drew FN voters to him.\(^{126}\) Rainbow Murray describes how, “Sarkozy wooed far-right voters with promises of being tough on immigration and law and order.”\(^{127}\) During the first round of 2007, polls ranged in their estimates for 2002 Le Pen voters voting for Sarkozy in the first round with IPSOS at 21\%, SOFRES at 28\%, CSA at 30\% and IFOP at 38\%. James Shields found that almost half (40\%) of Le Pen voters in 2007 considered switching their vote to the UMP.\(^{128}\) According to a CEVIPOF, Le Pen only had 17\% of its original 2002 voters. 39\% of the 2002 Le Pen voters switched to the UMP.\(^{129}\) After the FN was eliminated in the first round, Sarkozy captured 69\% of Le Pen’s voters from the first round in the second round against Ségolène Royal.\(^{130}\) During the 2007 election, Sarkozy stole some of the

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\(^{125}\) Shields, 35.
\(^{127}\) Murray, Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling, 55.
\(^{129}\) Shields, 34.
National Front’s traditional electorate. He was able to attract more support from blue collar workers from a lower socio-economic bracket than before.\footnote{Ivaldi, “Inequality, Identity and the People: New Patterns of Right-Wing Competition and Sarkozy’s ‘Winning Formula’ in the 2007 French Presidential Election,” 18.}

*The weakness of Ségolène Royal and the left*

Ségolène Royal did not attempt to accommodate the right and struggled harnessing the left wing during her presidential run. Royal faced significant obstacles attempting to unite the left wing. For one, the last time the left wing had a true coalition was in 1997. No left coalition existed after the 2002 election. Royal’s campaign was the left trying to rebuild after the Socialist Party’s 2002 embarrassment. Historically, French left wing candidates are at a slight disadvantage because the country usually leans center-right in presidential elections. Examining France’s political history before 2012, Francois Mitterand is the only left-wing President since the start of the Fifth Republic in 1958.\footnote{Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 52.} The left has had little success in acquiring France’s highest office. After Royal officially lost in 2007, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who Royal beat in the primary, noted the significance of the 2007 loss for the left wing. Strauss-Kahn notes, "Never was the left so weak, because it has still not renovated itself….In a world which is changing, people do not want the solutions to globalization that have been offered so far by the left.”\footnote{Bennhold and Sciolino, “French Voters Pick Sarkozy to Be President; Turnout High.”}

Strauss-Kahn's comment alludes to the lack of unity in the Socialist Party where some old school Socialists refuse to adapt to the market economy. The left lacked credibility in providing a platform to react to a globalizing economy and evolving population.

Sarkozy benefited from the dysfunction of the Socialist Party. The Party failed to provide adequate support for their own presidential candidate. Despite Ségolène Royal’s clear primary victory, members of the Socialist Party did not fully embrace her as a candidate. Royal was
treated as an outsider to her own party. Some Socialist Party members publicly disagreed with her and believed other candidates would have made better presidential nominees. However, Royal was never a complete outsider because of her association with François Hollande, the Socialist Party leader and father of her four children. He remained largely neutral to Royal, only offering lukewarm support and never rallying the party members to support her. Therefore, Royal remained somewhat independent from the Socialist Party and Hollande. Royal also attempted to reinvent the party ideologically and organizationally. She did not tie her rhetoric to any of the great Socialist Party intellectuals nor supported the two traditional ideologies of socialism. Not only was there no leftist coalition, but there was no Socialist Party coalition either.

The incredible rise and subsequent fall of Ségolène Royal mirrors other female politicians across the globe competing for their nation’s executive position. Despite her early success, the French media coverage and gendered stereotypes significantly impacted her campaign. Royal faced challenges unique to female candidates. In alignment with many female politicians across the globe vying for an executive position, Ségolène Royal seized international attention as the first potential female President of France. She balanced continuously demonstrating herself as qualified to be President while also running as a candidate who represented a momentous ‘change’ as the potential first female President of France. Sarkozy better was able to represent the candidate of change even though Royal represented an actual change in French politics. Furthermore, Sarkozy fared better than Royal. The media attacked Sarkozy less. He received more resources and full support from the UMP. Sarkozy’s aggression was also more accepted

134 Murray, *Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling*, 51.
135 Murray, 63.
than moments of Royal’s strong assertion. Rainbow Murray believes that Sarkozy’s win demonstrated that the French weren’t quite ready for a woman candidate.

As her campaign continued, Ségolène Royal was characterized as indecisive, irrational and passive. Although her messaging was at times vague, Royal was more scrutinized for her mixed messages. It was, to an extent, unclear where she stood ideologically including issues other than social or domestic ones. The release of her 100 propositions contributed to the lack of clarity on her policy stances and overall message. During her campaign, Royal demonstrated issue ownership of social and domestic policies. Her identity as a female candidate and her articulation of these issues as a Socialist candidate, contributed greatly to her issue ownership. She was seen as credible in feminized issues that left wing candidates generally campaign for. Royal did not communicate a clear stance on crime and immigration. While covering the first round of the election, the New Yorker commented that, “Sometimes she loves immigrants, sometimes she loves the police more.” Royal’s issue ownership further allowed Sarkozy to own the masculine right-wing issues such as foreign policy, the economy, immigration, and crime. Additionally, her issue ownership left an opening for Sarkozy to own crime and accommodate voters on the right.

Conclusion

137 Murray, Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling, 51–52.
138 Murray, 65.
142 “Round One.”
143 Murray, Cracking the Highest Glass Ceiling, 63.
The success of Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidential campaign originated from his populist rhetoric on crime during the 2005 riots. The 2005 riots launched Sarkozy into the French presidency. His usage of *raciale* and *kürcher* separated himself from traditional mainstream candidates, proving himself as a candidate who would speak his mind instead of being politically correct like other political elites.\textsuperscript{144} His populist rhetoric on crime and platform as the Minister of Interior and a presidential candidate demonstrated his issue ownership of two traditionally far-right issues, immigration and crime. Sarkozy strategically accommodated the far-right populist party in France. Sarkozy benefited from the overall weakness of the left and far-right in 2007 and elevated his candidacy by framing himself as an anti-establishment, populist candidate. Although Sarkozy lost reelection in 2012, Sarkozy helped further legitimize Le Pen’s positions on crime and immigration to the extent that the National Front was able to make a comeback in the 2017 presidential election.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{144} Ivaldi, “Inequality, Identity and the People: New Patterns of Right-Wing Competition and Sarkozy’s ‘Winning Formula’ in the 2007 French Presidential Election,” 6.
\textsuperscript{145} Carvalho, “Mainstream Party Strategies Towards Extreme Right Parties,” 366.
II. EMMANUEL MACRON’S CALCULATED BET: THE REEMERGENCE OF MAINSTREAM POPULIST RHETORIC ON CRIME

Introduction
In this chapter, I demonstrate how Emmanuel Macron’s rhetoric changed from his 2017 presidential run and today. Today, Macron is attempting to own the issue of crime to accommodate Marine Le Pen and win reelection.

The Hollande Presidency
On May 6, 2012, Nicolas Sarkozy lost his reelection campaign to the Socialist François Hollande. The 2012 presidential election featured newcomer Marine Le Pen, the daughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen and successor to the National Front Party. Le Pen entered her first presidential race after taking the reins from her father in 2011 as the new National Front Party leader. During the Hollande Presidency, the far-right FN party made the most significant gains of any French political party. Le Pen’s party gained momentum after winning the most seats in the 2014 European and 2015 departmental elections. Contrarily, the two major political parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and Les Républicains (LR) or The Republicans Party, formerly known as the UMP, did not prosper during the Hollande presidency. Both parties found themselves as weak competitors heading into the 2017 election.

Despite regaining the presidency from the center-right UMP in 2012, the French left struggled under François Hollande. Hollande’s disapproval ratings broke records throughout 2013 and 2014.

146 Carvalho, 376.
his presidency. In December 2016, Hollande officially withdrew his reelection bid, becoming the first president of the Fifth Republic to not run for reelection. Holland’s decision to withdraw stemmed from the high probability that he would not qualify for the second round of the election. A March 2016 CEVIPOF poll found that Hollande would lose to Le Pen and the Republicans Party candidate, either Nicolas Sarkozy or Alain Juppé, the former Prime Minister under Jacques Chirac, in the first round. Even worse, it was unlikely that Hollande would have been able to garner enough support from his own party to win the PS nomination. Alistair Cole asserts how the left’s failure to win in 2017 signaled the collapse of the loosely standing left-wing coalition during the Fifth Republic. In regards to the other major French political party, the UMP struggled between 2012 and 2014 with a lack of party unification and diminishing political credibility. The UMP faced several legal battles including a campaign fundraising controversy for Sarkozy’s 2012 presidential campaign and allegations of ‘influence-peddling’ from Sarkozy. Subsequently, Nicolas Sarkozy’s changed the UMP’s name to the LR in 2015.

An unconventional election
Heading into the 2017 presidential election, the absence of notable political heavyweights opened up space for new candidates and an unpredictable election. Up until the first round in

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155 Cole, Emmanuel Macron and the Two Years That Changed France, 7–8.
April of 2017, there were no clear front-runners in the presidential race. The left’s strongest candidate came from the far-left and not the traditional PS. The far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon ran on his own platform, *La France Insoumise* (FI) or ‘Unbowed France’.

The Socialist Party’s presidential nominee remained unclear until early 2017. The PS primary featured a notable upset. Hollande’s prime minister, Manuel Valls, suffered a close loss to Benoît Hamon. The shocking PS primary further demonstrated the lack of stability in the party.

Until late into the 2017 race, Nicolas Sarkozy was viewed as the favorite to represent the LR in the first round. Instead, François Fillon rose as a contending candidate after beating both Juppé and Sarkozy in the LR primary. Sarkozy’s scandals damaged his reputation and his chances of winning the LR primary. Although Fillon won the LR primary, Fillon’s candidacy was also spoiled due to a significant public scandal. Fillon was accused of using public funds to distribute money to family members under the guise of government jobs. The Fillon scandal peaked in March 2017, a month before the first round. And despite his falling polling numbers, Fillon did not pull out of the election. Sarkozy and Fillon’s scandals continue to follow them today. On March 1st, 2021, Nicolas Sarkozy was convicted for influence peddling and corruption with more investigations still underway. In June of 2020, Fillon was officially charged for concealing public funds and embezzlement.

*The rise of Emmanuel Macron*

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By April 2017, the main candidates included: the former Prime Minister under Nicolas Sarkozy, François Fillon (LR), Marine Le Pen (FN), Emmanuel Macron (LREM) and Jean-Luc Mélenchon (FI). The most noteworthy surprise of the 2017 presidential race was the entrance of the centrist Emmanuel Macron, the former Minister of the Economy under François Hollande. Macron announced his presidential run late into the election cycle in November 2016. Macron also established a new political party, ‘La Republique En Marche’ (LREM). An unstable LR and PS combined with weak presidential nominees benefited Macron in the first round. The lack of unity and instability of the PS was further evident after Manuel Valls’ primary loss. Instead of supporting the Socialist nominee, Hamon, Valls publicly extended his support for Macron before the first round. The PS and Fillon’s floundering gave Macron room to adopt the center. Not to mention, Macron gained more support when the centrist François Bayrou decided not to run and supported Macron in February of 2017.

The first round

The first round of the 2017 presidential election took place on April 23, 2017. The close presidential race exhibited a poor showing for the left. As shown in Table 1, The PS candidate Hamon only

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<td>Votes</td>
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<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
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Note: Percentages are based on votes cast.
Source: Conseil constitutionnel.

Table 1. Results of the first round

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167 Durovic, 1489.
168 Horobin, “France’s Sarkozy Rebrands His UMP Party as Republicans.”
received 6.36% of the votes. Mélenchon fared much better at 19.58% of the vote, but still not enough to top Le Pen who won 21.3% of the vote. Fillon and Le Pen split the right-wing vote, with Fillon unable to capture enough of the electorate to move onto the second round. Macron entered the May run-off as the favored candidate after winning 24.01% of the votes.

The run-off
On May 7, 2017, Macron decidedly won the presidential election in a landslide victory with 66.1% of the electorate. As shown in Table 2, Marine Le Pen finished with 33.9% as the second female presidential candidate to compete in the French presidential election run-off. The 2017 election also marked the National Front’s best performance ever. Le Pen faced heightened expectations on her performance, unlike her father in 2002. In reality, polls revealed that Le Pen underperformed in the run-off.

Populist rhetoric in the 2017 election
Comparing Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen’s political rhetoric during the 2017 presidential election serves as a baseline to understanding the upcoming 2022 presidential election; and ultimately, how Macron’s rhetoric has shifted towards populist rhetoric, the style of populists like Marine Le Pen. Out of the four main candidates in the first round, Macron and Le Pen represented opposite ends of the spectrum for five out of eight rhetoric elements. Macron received the lowest scores for “negativity, personal attacks, fear messages, informal language, informal language,

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176 Durovic, 1493.
and anti-elitism” and Le Pen the highest.\textsuperscript{177} Le Pen also scored low on the civility measure, the usage of civil language. Macron demonstrated “average-to-weak populism and negativity,” during his presidential campaign\textsuperscript{178} and ran a more positive and much less aggressive in comparison to Le Pen.\textsuperscript{179}

The May 3, 2017 run-off debate between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen showcased the rhetorical differences between the two candidates. Jocelyn Evans and Gilles Ivaldi best summarize the juxtaposition between Macron and Le Pen where, “Macron deliberately set out a clear set of policies with regard to unemployment, policing and education,” while Marine Le Pen, on the other hand, “based the vast majority of her allocated time attacking Macron, both ad hominem and criticizing his policies but often based upon fallacious data or misrepresentation.”\textsuperscript{180} Indicated as the loser of the debate,\textsuperscript{181} Le Pen received criticism for her aggressive performance across the political spectrum, including from her own voter base. Polling data reinforced Macron’s debate victory. The Institut français d'opinion publique (IFOP) recorded a significant 3% decline in support for Le Pen. Elabe recorded 63% of the French “find[ing] him more convincing.”\textsuperscript{182} Macron and Le Pen’s differing political rhetoric reinforces that populist candidates are more negative, using more character attacks and fear appeals.\textsuperscript{183}

\textit{Issue ownership in the 2017 election}

\textsuperscript{177} Gerstlé and Nai, “Negativity, Emotionality and Populist Rhetoric in Election Campaigns Worldwide, and Their Effects on Media Attention and Electoral Success,” 428.
\textsuperscript{179} Gerstlé and Nai, “Negativity, Emotionality and Populist Rhetoric in Election Campaigns Worldwide, and Their Effects on Media Attention and Electoral Success,” 416.
\textsuperscript{180} Evans and Ivaldi, \textit{The 2017 French Presidential Elections}, 115.
\textsuperscript{182} Evans and Ivaldi, \textit{The 2017 French Presidential Elections}, 116–17.
\textsuperscript{183} Nai, “Fear and Loathing in Populist Campaigns?,” 22.
Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen demonstrated issue ownership during the 2017 presidential election. When Emmanuel Macron attacked his opponents, he went after the issues he had credibility on. Macron served as the Minister of Finance during the Hollande presidency and pushed his opponents on issues related to the economy. The mainstream candidate Macron attacked his opponents on “jobs and unemployment.”184 During her campaign, Marine Le Pen shifted her focus more towards the economy,185 an important theme of the election. However, Marie Le Pen exhibited issue ownership and majorly attacked her opponents on “immigration, asylum, crime and security, and religion/morality.”186 The FN built its reputation and issue ownership on advocating for these issues and attacking others on them.187 The 2017 French presidential election confirms that, “issue ownership is a powerful driver of negativity.”188 Although Macron preserved his positive approach to the election, he demonstrated negativity when attacking his opponents on the economy.

A change in political structure?
Macron’s shocking entrance and win in the 2017 presidential election caused scholars189 to question how Macron’s win potentially transformed the structure of the French political

system. 2017 marked the first time since 1981 that a mainstream political party did not win the presidency. The emergence of LREM disrupted the pattern of a PS or LR candidate residing in Élysée Palace.190 Anja Durovic affirms that, “the 2017 presidential elections mark[ed] a clear break with the bipolar shape of the French party competition in the mid-2000s.”191 Florent Gougou and Simon Persico outline four models that reflect the potential impact of Macron’s presidential win on the French political party system. The four block model, the most popular conception of the future of French political system after the 2017 election, includes four fragmented blocks: the left, the center, the moderate right and the extreme right. The standard tripolarity denotes three poles: the left (Macron), the moderate right (Fillon) and the extreme right (Le Pen), similar to other theories on the political party system changes across Western Europe. The new tripolarity model includes “one democrat-eco-socialist; one liberal-globalizer and one conservative-identity pole”, meaning the left (Melanchon/Hamon), Macron and Le Pen. Lastly, the “quadrille bipolaire” consists of four equally strong poles, where the left and right hold similar coalitions as France during the 1980s.192 In Gougou and Persico’s ‘tripolarity’ and four blocks models, Macron is “a new distinct centrist pole”. In the standard tripolarity and “quadrille bipolaire”, Macron occupies the leftist pole.193

Since Macron took office in May 2017, he has demonstrated that he is far from his days as a Socialist Party member and a centrist candidate that he was framed as during the 2017 election. Historian Robert Zaretsky predicted Macron’s shift away from the center. In the history of French politics, there have been almost no true centrist candidates.194 Norimitsu Onishi and

193 Gougou and Persico, 310.
Constant Méheut affirm that he is “an altogether different Emmanuel Macron.” Instead, Macron has moved closer to the right. Macron continues to shift on social issues, showing that he does not fit his perception from 2017 as socially liberal. Nicknamed as the president of the rich, Macron has eliminated the wealth tax and raised taxes on pensions. His economic policy has benefited wealthy French citizens and hurt poorer ones. In November 2018, the yellow vest protests began as a response to an increase in fuel taxes due to Macron’s economic policy.

During the first three years of Macron’s presidency, the President has been largely unpopular, but 2020 represented a new era in Macron’s presidency. Today, Macron does not hold the leftist pole in French politics. Macron falls closer to the moderate right than the center today. To international audiences, Macron has departed from a “modern, liberal president” to “an authoritarian president.” Macron has further toughened his stance on crime and shifted more towards the right. Macron has dramatically increased the presence of law enforcement in France since the start of the yellow vest protests in 2018. The French police have increased their use of force on all citizens. Before 2018, police brutality was mostly concentrated in the banlieues.

Macron’s Minister of Interior appointment, Gérald Darmanin, marked a transition in Macron’s presidency. Nicolas Sarkozy’s the protégé and former 2016 re-election campaign brought the populist rhetoric of the National Rally, ensauvagement, into the mainstream.

Ensauvagement

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198 Jones, “Don’t Be Fooled by Emmanuel Macron the ‘Moderate.’”
199 Onishi and Méheut, “Macron, Once a Darling of Liberals, Shows a New Face as Elections Near.”
200 Bock, “Emmanuel Macron’s Year of Cracking Heads.”
201 David Keohane and Victor Mallet, “Macron’s Interior Minister Confronts Le Pen on Her Own Territory,” Financial Times, March 15, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/4050f02f-0cf7-4c72-a03a-7804f8113129.
In an interview on July 24, 2020, the Minister of Interior and Head of Police, Gérald Darmanin, told the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, that, “It is necessary to stop the *ensauvagement* of a certain part of society.”202 In a July 27th 2020 interview with the French radio station, Europe 1, the Minister of Ecological Transition, Barbara Pompili spoke out against the word, alluding to the risk of ‘*monter les Français les uns contre les autres*’ or ‘pitting the French against each other’ (Translated by Reverso).203 The controversy surrounding *ensauvagement* did not end in July of 2020.

The controversy amplified in September 2020, catching the attention of international media. In an interview with Europe 1 on September 1st, 2020, the Minister of Justice, Eric Dupont-Morreti condemned the usage of *ensauvagement*. In a response to Dupont-Morreti’s comment, the former director of Sarkozy’s 2016 reelection campaign affirmed his usage of the word. “Personally, I use the word *ensauvagement* and I repeat it,”204 said Darmanin on September 1, 2020. A junior minister of equality, Marlène Schiappa, supported Darmanin’s claims, stating that *ensauvagement* is a reality in France.

On the other hand, the President Macron has not repeated *ensauvagement*.205 However, Macron has not denounced *ensauvagement* either.206 Rather, the French President remarked that he preferred to describe the situation in France as the ‘*banalisation de la violence*’ or the

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204 Onishi and Méheut, “A Coded Word From the Far Right Roils France’s Political Mainstream.”  
205 Onishi and Méheut.  
normalization of violence. Macron was visibly annoyed by the media’s persistent questioning on the Minister of Interior’s rhetoric. “You’ve done the Kama Sutra on ‘ensauvagement’ for the past 15 days,” contended Macron.

*The cultural significance of ensauvagement*

*Ensauvagement*, or turning savage, is a coded word, most popularized by the National Rally. French historian Pap Ndiaye illustrates how *ensauvagement* is used to describe “young, violent youths of sub-Saharan or North African origin.” *Ensauvagement* characterizes these youths as uncivilized and savage. Cécile Alduy, a French expert on political communication, states how, “*ensauvagement*’ creates two distinct worlds, one being of the civilized and one being of the savage.”

The word *ensauvagement* directly ties to French colonialism where the French went on a ‘civilizing’ mission in their African colonies. Jean-Loup Adénor describes how:

> Il se trouve que l'emploi du mot 'sauvage' dans l'histoire culturelle française a dépassé la notion d'animalité pour toucher l'histoire de l'esclavage. Le sauvage s'est trouvé redéfini à ce moment-là en opposition au colonisateur, au civilisé. Gérald Darmanin ne peut pas s'affranchir de l'histoire culturelle de ce mot.

It turns out that the use of the word 'savage' in French cultural history has gone beyond the notion of animality to the history of slavery. The savage was redefined at that time in opposition to the colonizer, to the civilized. Gérald Darmanin cannot free himself from the cultural history of this word (Translated by Reverso)

*Ensauvagement* has direct roots to France’s dark history of racism, colonialism and slave trading.

Due to cultural significance of *ensauvagement*, Darmanin does not use *ensauvagement* lightly.

*Populist rhetoric*


209 Onishi and Méheut, “A Coded Word From the Far Right Roils France’s Political Mainstream.”

Similar to *racialle*, *ensauvagement* exemplifies populist rhetoric. *Ensauvagement* articulates the identity of youth of north and sub-Saharan African origin in France as savages. Due to the racialized association of racial minorities and immigrants in France, *ensauvagement* identifies the ‘savages’ also as immigrants. Denoting a social group as savages creates a populist frame. *Ensauvagement* excludes the ‘savages’ from the ‘pure people’ and communicates that youth of African origin do not share the identity of the ‘pure people’. Therefore, *ensauvagement* insinuates that the identity of the ‘pure people’, the French, are rather the opposite of the population in the *banlieues*, white and Christian. As the Minister of Interior, Darmanin speaks for the President on the French government’s perception of French identity through *ensauvagement*.

*The banlieues*

Similar to *racialle*, the French government used *ensauvagement* as a political tool to justify the increase in police presence in the *banlieues*. In the *Le Figaro* interview, Darmanin emphasized how President Macron increased spending towards law enforcement in France. Darmanin also boasted how Macron increased the security budget to an estimated billion euros and affirmed that Macron will continue to prioritize law enforcement in his presidency. After Darmanin made his statement about *ensauvagement* in the July 24th 2020 *Le Figaro* interview, Darmanin said:


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We must stop the *ensauvAGEMENT* of a certain part of society. We must reaffirm the authority of the state, and not let anything go by. My vision is that of the common-sense French: the police and the gendarmes protect us, and they run behind the thugs. The role of the Ministry of the Interior is to protect those who protect us, and to help them run after the thugs (Translated by Reverso)

Darmanin explicitly named the youth of the *banlieues*, who he attributes the *ensauvagement* of society, thugs. As Sarkozy also communicated during the riots, thugs symbolize racial minorities and immigrants. Through *ensauvagement*, Darmanin states that the youth in the *banlieues* are criminals: and therefore, enemies and threats to the security of the French Republic. Ndiaye foreshadows the implications of *ensauvagement*. Ndiaye explains how *ensauvagement*, “opens the door to policies on immigration, police checkpoints, and it could be used to justify police violence….If police officers are dealing with savages, well, then, it’s legitimate that they use violent means to control these so-called savages.”

Darmanin’s rhetoric fails to acknowledge how the French government constructed the social conditions in the banlieues where concentrated communities of north and sub-Saharan African citizens and immigrants live. Violence is more prevalent in areas with less resources. *Ensauvagement* denies accountability for systematically abandoning and attacking the banlieues.

*The far-right and ensauvagement*

Marine Le Pen first began using *ensauvagement* in 2013. Le Pen’s usage of the word has been more publicized since 2018. The French author Laurent Obertone brought the word ‘ensauvagement’ back into the public consciousness of the far-right in his book *La France Orange Mécanique*. In his book, Obertone asserts that immigrants are most responsible for

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213 Onishi and Méheut, “A Coded Word From the Far Right Roils France’s Political Mainstream.”
Nicolas Bay, the secretary of the National Rally, declared “the ensauvagement of French society” in 2016 while also claiming that the French government was “masquer l'explosion de l'insécurité” or hiding the explosion of insecurity in the country. Bay was responding to the Minister of Interior under Hollande’s announcement of the state of crime in France. The Minister of Interior reported a 11% increase in homicides unrelated to terrorist attacks. Since 2012, delinquency in Europe has decreased. Armed thefts were down 12%. Regular thefts had decreased by 4%, but homicides increased by 2% and burglaries by 4%. Bay claimed that these statistics meant that, "L'ensauvagement de la société française est une réalité qu'il n'est plus possible de nier" or that, “The ensauvagement of French society is a reality that can no longer be denied.”

Although the far-right historically used ensauvagement, a political actor on the left used ensauvagement once as well. The former Minister of Interior under Hollande, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, used the word as well to describe the delinquency of young repeat offenders. During the height of the Darmanin ensauvagement controversy, Bernard Cazeneuve, the former Minister of Interior and Prime Minister during the Hollande years, apologized for using the word in 2016. The Socialist Party member used ensauvagement to describe a group attacking a police car in Essone.

An eventful summer

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The Gérald Darmanin’s usage of *ensauvagement* was incited by a few highly publicized violent incidents during the summer of 2020. A bus driver in Bayonne was murdered after being beaten to death by a group of young men who were from a cité, a housing project. A woman died after a driver ran her over in Lyon during a drag race. Her body had been dragged for 800 meters. After two Paris Saint-Germain soccer games in the European Champions League playoffs, a group of young men from the banlieues observed the games with car burnings and lootings close to Champs Elysées.219 On Bastille Day, a man working at a laundromat was beaten after asking a customer to wear a face mask. The summer of 2020 also featured George Floyd protests and the French government’s lifting of their strict coronavirus lockdown.220

*Crime*

*Ensauvagement* sets an alarm that crime is increasing in France, but there is little evidence that crime is actually on the rise in France. Top French criminologist Laurent Mucchielli sets the record straight in that, “contrary to received ideas, our society is becoming less and less violent.”221 The data confirms this decrease in violence. There were 4.6 million property crimes in 2010 compared to 3.8 million in 2018. Not including sexual assaults, violent crimes also dropped. In 2012, there were 647,000 violent crimes. In 2018, there were 579,000. In the last quarter of a century, murder has almost split in half.222 In 2019, there were 970 homicides in contrast to 1,051 homicides in 2000.223 Analyzing crime in France and Western Europe in the context of the cultural, demographic and economic changes from the end of the

219 Lichfield, “The Racist Myth of France’s ‘Descent into Savagery.’”
221 Lichfield, “The Racist Myth of France’s ‘Descent into Savagery.’”
20th century till today contextualizes the perception of increasing crime and alarm over violence in the 21st century.

In Western Europe, crime increased during the second half of the 20th century. Along with an increase in violent crimes and property crimes, homicide rates rose across Europe between 1960 and 1990, reaching its highest point in the 90s. The rise in crime levels during the last half of the 20th century coincided with significant cultural changes across Europe. Europe experienced drastic demographic, economic and cultural developments. The demographic composition drastically diversified due to mass immigration and migration from North Africa and the Middle East. Through globalization, economic inequality and declining social mobility became more outstanding. The creation of the European Union in 1993 exhibited this transition towards globalization. The shift towards post-industrialism led to a growing multicultural, educated elite concentrated around urban environments. Pivotal social movements and mass decolonization aided in these demographic and economic changes while simultaneously altering societal norms and values. This three to four decade long crime level fluctuation is attributed to significant societal disruptions.


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225 Tonry, 51.
230 Tonry, 5.
by 16%. France underwent similar demographic, economic, and cultural changes to the rest of Western Europe. Immigration increased after World War II when France established an immigration policy encouraging European white Catholic male workers to nationalize in France. The 1973 OPEC oil crisis signaled brought rising unemployment and resentment towards immigrants in France. The demographics of the immigrant population changed during the 1980s from white European to African and Middle Eastern. From 1975 to 1999, the immigrant population grew from 3.887 million to 4.387 million. In 1999, immigrants made up 7.3% of the population.

All crime in Western Europe has fallen since the end of the 20th century. Despite this downward trend, the statistics are misleading cross-nationally. Variation between criminal law systems, methods of collecting crime statistics, crime prevention policies, procedures on recording crime and levels of crime skew crime rates and contribute to the perception of rising crime. However, scholars emphasize how, “changes in cultural thresholds of tolerance,” significantly account for the perception of rising crime and visibly increasing crime rates in the 21st century in some European countries and not others. If a culture becomes less tolerant of

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233 Howarth et al., Contemporary France, 120.
certain crimes, victims and police will report and record more crimes. In France, there has been a shift in tolerance where violence is exceedingly unacceptable. Violent interactions between citizens are increasingly being moved from the private to public sphere. Improved living standards, greater life expectancies and feminism are pivotal in lowering the tolerance of violence in France.²³⁹

Slight fluctuations in crime in France during the 21ˢᵗ century can be attributed to continuous cultural changes. The 2008 global financial crisis increase the unemployment rate between 2008 and 2009. Unemployment also rose between 2012 and 2015. The proportion of immigrants in the total population continues to grow. In 2010, there were 5.514 million immigrants in France, making up 8.5% of the population. In 2019, there were 6.7 million immigrants living in France, with 46.7 percent being born in Africa. Immigrants made-up 9.9% of the country’s population.²⁴⁰ Crime slightly rose between 2014 and 2015 as a few highly publicized terrorist attacks occurred in France. In 2015, the Charlie Hebdo attacks occurred in January while the Paris attacks in November. The Paris attacks were the deadliest in French history. The Nice truck incident followed in 2016. During the emergence of the #MeToo movement, the French police found an increase in reported sex crimes between 2017 and 2018.²⁴¹

*Insécurité Culturelle*

Populist rhetoric on crime draws upon these cultural changes. Politicians have the potential to perpetuate feelings of insecurity through populist rhetoric on crime. French Justice Minister, Eric Dupont-Moretti connected populist rhetoric on crime to cultural insecurity.

²⁴⁰ “L’essentiel Sur... Les Immigrés et Les Étrangers.”
Dupont-Moretti asserts that, “ensauvagement is a word that fuels the feeling of insecurity.” He acknowledges the power behind this populist rhetoric. Dupont-Moretti indicates the dangers behind artificially manufacturing cultural insecurity. The Prime Minister Castex, unwilling to condemn Darmanin’s usage of ensauvagement, explains that:

"La question n’est pas les mots qu’on emploie pour qualifier le phénomène, mais les actions que l’on met et que l’on va mettre en place pour y faire face...Le ministre de l’intérieur, comme l’ensemble du gouvernement, constate effectivement qu’il y a une montée du sentiment d’insécurité et je peux vous dire dire la totale mobilisation du gouvernement pour y faire face"

The question is not the words we use to describe the phenomenon, but the actions we put in place and that we are going to put in place to deal with it...The Minister of the Interior, like the government as a whole, is indeed aware that there is a growing feeling of insecurity and I can tell you the total mobilization of the government to deal with it.

French National Assembly and LREM party member, Aurélien Taché, tweeted that, “This concept implicitly links the rise in violence to that of immigration ... to the ethnic mixing of society.” Through breeding feelings of insecurity, politicians attempt to attract voters who view crime as an issue. Smith explains that, “As populist right parties continue to emphasize their ‘own’ issues, these appeals resonate with voters who are increasingly worried about their own economic, social, and physical security.” When mainstream candidates such as Sarkozy and Macron borrow populist rhetoric and issues, they attempt to stir fears and anger directed towards cultural changes in France or appeal to those who are already fearful or angry.

Macron’s issue ownership of crime and accommodation of the far-right

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242 Onishi and Méheut, “A Coded Word From the Far Right Roils France’s Political Mainstream.”
Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen are set to match up again in the 2022 presidential election. Public opinion expert at the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, Chloé Morin, divulges that, “No doubt he [Macron] considers the biggest threat for 2022 as coming from the right and so that’s the space that he has to shrink and fill.”

Macron is adjusting to the desires of the French people. Grunberg observes that, “You’re seeing an evolution of the electorate to the right. Public opinion is demanding toughness. Toughness toward Islamists, whoever. There’s definitely been a change.”

President Macron has also demonstrated an interest in the far-right newspaper Valeurs Actuelles to better comprehend the right. Macron commented that, "It's a very good newspaper, you have to read it to understand what the right thinks." Macron replaced his previous Minister of Interior during the summer of 2020 for Darmanin. Arnaud Mercier explains that:

La campagne d'Emmanuel Macron va se jouer à droite et le président de la République sait ce qu'il fait lorsqu'il nomme un homme comme Gérald Darmanin à un poste aussi important que l'Intérieur

Emmanuel Macron’s campaign will be played right and the President of the Republic knows what he is doing when he appoints a man like Gérald Darmanin to a position as important as the Interior

Taché, also tweeted that, “Taking up the term ensauvagement is a major concession to the extreme right.”

Macron’s attempt to accommodate the National Rally through owning crime is most obvious in his support for the global security bill that passed on April 15,

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246 Onishi and Méheut, “A Coded Word From the Far Right Roils France’s Political Mainstream.”
248 Onishi and Méheut, “A Coded Word From the Far Right Roils France’s Political Mainstream.”
249 Adénor, “‘L’ensauvagement’, décyptage d’un élément de langage emprunté par Gérald Darmanin à l’extrême droite.”
250 Ganley, “Is France Really Growing More ‘Savage’?”
251 Nossiter, “Macron’s Rightward Tilt, Seen in New Laws, Sows Wider Alarm in France.”
2021. In this bill, the government outlawed the filming of police officers.\textsuperscript{252} In the next chapter, I will examine how Macron can successfully accommodate the National Rally and defeat Marine Le Pen.

V. CONCLUSION: EMMANUEL MACRON & MARINE LE PEN’S 2022 REMATCH

One year remains before the French elect their next President. The 2022 election represents a crossroads for the French electorate. Will Marine Le Pen finally reach the mountaintop and be the first far-right populist president in France or will the French reluctantly vote for five more years of an unpopular president? Or, will there be a third more likely option? From what we have learned in 2007 and 2017, one year out is way too early to even accurately predict all the candidates running in the election. One debate could be the nail in the coffin for a candidate, such as it was for Ségolène Royal and Marine Le Pen. I argue that crime matters to the French electorate; and ultimately, populist rhetoric on crime matters as well. The reemergence of populist rhetoric on crime in the mainstream is pivotal in the 2022 presidential election. My case study on Nicolas Sarkozy exemplifies mainstream success of populist rhetoric, issue ownership on crime and accommodation of a populist far-right party. Sarkozy’s campaign guides my predictions on Macron’s chances of winning re-election.

Before defeating Ségolène Royal in the 2007 presidential election, the then Minister of Interior, Nicolas Sarkozy, used populist rhetoric during the 2005 riots in the banlieues. A few months before the riots began, Sarkozy stated that the banlieues should be ‘cleaned with a kärcher’. During the riots, Sarkozy labeled the protesters as racialle. He characterized the young protesters of north African and sub-Saharan descent as criminals, enemies of the French Republic and threats to the overall security of the French Republic. In 2020, the Minister of Interior, Gérald Darmanin, used ensauvagement to describe the violent incidents during the summer. President Emmanuel Macron did not repeat ensauvagement himself, but did not denounce it either. Ensauvagement similarly labeled young men of north African and sub-Saharan origin as criminals culpable for the ‘rising violence’ in France. ‘Cleaned with a
“kärcher”, racialle and ensauvagement exemplify the communication style of populist candidates. This rhetoric appeals to the emotions of the electorate, purposefully stirring insécurité culturelle towards the increasing population of racial minorities and immigrants in France. Through populist framing, this rhetoric excludes racial minorities and immigrants from being as French as their white, Christian counterparts. ‘Cleaned with a kärcher’ and racialle was political tool to win over the far-right electorate who share similar views on French identity. Ensauvagement is Macron’s strategy in 2022.

Sarkozy owned the issue of crime in 2007 through his time as Minister of Interior. Although Jean-Marie Le Pen’s party traditionally owns crime, his lack of credibility allowed Sarkozy to own crime instead. Emmanuel Macron is attempting to own the issue of crime in the 2022 presidential election. Macron has spent his presidency, and especially from 2020 to 2021, toughening his stance on crime. Along with Darmanin’s ensauvagement rhetoric, Macron has proven his commitment to crime through his increasing the law enforcement budget and police presence. The passing of the global security bill solidified Macron’s efforts of attempting to own crime.

The impending battle between Macron and Marine Le Pen is portrayed in the recent debate between Darmanin and Le Pen. During the debate, Darmanin claimed that Le Pen’s policies were soft, or not tough enough for preserving the security of the Republic.253 Macron is facing pressure from the far-right to face the ‘violence’. Similar to Darmanin, the National Rally also recognized the summer of 2020 as violent. Marine Le Pen asserted that, “Let’s put it bluntly: For France, this summer has been a murderous summer.”254 The RN channeled this sentiment.

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253 Keohane and Mallet, “Macron’s Interior Minister Confronts Le Pen on Her Own Territory.”
when campaigning over the summer. A local RN candidate in Northern France spread an election poster reading, “During the summer of 2020, several French people have been killed by scum stemming from immigration. Without political action, this could happen one day to those close to you, your brothers, your sisters, your children…” The poster used *racaille*, the far-right word Sarkozy borrowed during the 2005 riots, as an emotional appeal to stir *insécurité culturelle*. Sarkozy’s accommodation of the National Front was successful because he relied on emotional appeals to stir *insécurité culturelle*. Subsequently, Sarkozy stole voters from Le Pen in the first and second round of the 2007 presidential election.

Macron’s strategy during the 2022 will divulge from Sarkozy’s as Macron is an incumbent. During the 2007 presidential race, Sarkozy differentiated himself from the leftist, and more positive candidate Ségolène Royal, framing himself as a political outsider. Macron does not have this advantage, especially as a somewhat unpopular incumbent. Both Sarkozy and Macron upheld the trend of political actors being more likely to make populist claims early in their campaign. Sarkozy exemplified the phenomena where political outsiders are more likely to make populist claims.

**Candidate credibility**

Macron’s recent actions on crime have received significant pushback. The public has become increasingly aware of police brutality in France after the murder of George Floyd along

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256 Léonard, “The Effects of Political Rhetoric on the Rise of Legitimized Racism in France.”

with other incidents between the police and the public in France. The passing of the global security bill in April of 2021 is a direct response to the French public advocating for more police accountability. Through the security bill, any person filming a police officer will be fined and jailed.\textsuperscript{258} The global security law is risky for Macron because many citizens view the security bill as a government overreach.\textsuperscript{259} Macron’s party continues to be defensive about claims about accommodation through crime. Jean-Baptiste Moreau, a lawmaker and spokesperson for Macron's party LREM, denies that the government is swinging to the right and accommodating the National Rally. Moreau states that, "Law and order is not a right-wing approach — it's also left-wing. There's no freedom without security…we can't leave this topic to the far-right Rassemblement National (RN) — we need to come up with our own, less radical solutions."\textsuperscript{260}

Sarkozy benefited from Jean-Marie Le Pen and Ségolène Royal’s weak candidacy in the 2007 presidential election. If Macron faces weak competition in 2022, his incumbency will propel him. The left is still in a disarray in France.\textsuperscript{261} If the French electorate does not view Macron as a credible candidate, he will fail in his accommodation of the National Rally’s issue of crime.

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\caption{The Normalization of Marine Le Pen}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{259} Nossiter, “Macron’s Rightward Tilt, Seen in New Laws, Sows Wider Alarm in France.”
since the electorate favors the ‘original candidate’.

Le Pen’s growing credibility will help her continue to own the issues of crime and immigration. Marine Le Pen’s credibility has increased since her loss in 2017. Table 4 demonstrates how Le Pen’s de-demonization efforts have paid off, including her rebranding as the National Rally in 2018 to distance herself from her father’s National Front. She has historically more credibility with crime and immigration for voters who want tougher stances on these issues. Voters that are concerned about crime and immigration might characterize the President as weak, especially voters who believed Darmanin’s alarming message.

Macron will not win reelection if his administration continues pursuing crime if a strong left or centrist candidate enters the presidential race. Senior researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research, Sebastian Roche, explains that Macron “has a good chance to be reelected in 2022, as long as he's facing RN leader Marine Le Pen in the second round runoff. If, however, left-wing parties and the Greens presented a common candidate, Macron could have to run against their candidate. Then, the outcome of the election could no longer be taken for granted, precisely because Macron hasn't done much to appeal to left-wing voters.”

If the electorate truly favors a candidate who is tough on crime, a political outsider with a new significant crime platform may also find success in the 2022 election.

To win in 2022, Macron needs to regain some credibility on the economy. The Minister of Interior claims that Macron must stay true to his roots on the economy. Darmanin explains that, “The people who vote Front National [the former name of Le Pen’s Rassemblement

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264 Louis, “France’s Macron under Fire for Political Lurch to the Right.”
National] . . . may think Madame Le Pen is right about immigration, but they say to themselves that she is useless on the economy.” In 2017, an exit poll showed that 48% of voters cared most about unemployment. While Macron’s issue ownership of the economy benefited him in 2017, the public pushed back against his economic policy, most notably with the yellow vest protests. Today, French voters are increasingly turned off by Macron’s 2017 push for economic reform and European integration. An IPSOS poll found that, “85% of people are willing to pay more for goods made in France, 57% see taxing the wealthy and corporations as the best response to inequality and 54% oppose more immigration.” Bruno Cautres of the Paris Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) emphasizes the necessity for Macron to own employment, Cautres explains that, "The French need security — but also in a social way. They are worried about their public services and unemployment...Macron also has to satisfy those needs or he hardly stands a chance in the next presidential election.” Le Pen also might have an opportunity to own the issue of the economy if voters do not buy Macron’s platform on the economy due to his rock presidency.

The future of French politics

As of April 2021, three candidates are set to face off in the 2022 presidential race. Macron and Le Pen remain neck and neck in the polls, indicating that Macron may not win in a landslide during a second round run-

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265 Keohane and Mallet, “Macron’s Interior Minister Confronts Le Pen on Her Own Territory.”
267 Louis, “France’s Macron under Fire for Political Lurch to the Right.”
268 Laurent, “Marine Le Pen Doubles Macron’s Pandemic Pressure.”

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off. As with French elections in the 21st century, all bets are off until the second round. Any scenario is on the table. Figure 5269 addresses the entrance of a third candidate: Xavier Bertrand from the center-right Les Republicains, Sarkozy’s former party. Bertrand’s crime platform will further complicate any predictions for 2022. If the electorate believes that crime is going up, whoever owns the issue of crime come election day will win in 2022. Despite the ensauvagement controversy, Professor of information and political communication at the Pantheon-Assas University in Paris, Arnaud Mercier, asserts that there is little political risk in using ensauvagement because it has been historically accepted enough in French politics.270 Therefore, Macron is making a calculated bet that he will be seen as credible on crime and that ensauvagement will benefit his credibility.

The French electorate will play a significant role in 2022. Unlike the 2007 presidential election, the 2017 presidential election featured a significantly smaller voter turnout. 2017 had the worst voter turnout since 1969.271 Both rounds in the election resulted in high abstention rates and blank ballots.272 About 9% of voters casted blank ballots.273 With the pandemic, an unpopular president and a polarizing populist candidate, voters may feel similarly to 2017. Philippe Marlière, a professor of European politics at University College London, explains that, “France could be sleepwalking into voting for the far-right. Not because it wants to, but because there's so much resentment and distrust with regards to mainstream parties and candidates, Macron included, that suddenly Le Pen wins. And no one saw it coming.”274 The electorate in

269 Laurent.
270 Adénor, “‘L’ensauvagement’, décriptage d’un élément de langage emprunté par Gérald Darmanin à l’extrême droite.”
271 Aisch et al., “How France Voted.”
272 Cole, Emmanuel Macron and the Two Years That Changed France, 7.
273 Aisch et al., “How France Voted.”
2007 and 2017 expressed a similar anti-elitist sentiments and general distaste for established parties. Furthermore, the competition in the 2017 election demonstrated the lack of trust between the French and political parties. Alistair Cole observes how ‘people against the elites’ is a common theme in French and European politics. A third candidate has the opportunity to embody to successfully frame themselves as an outsider, one who will advocate for the people and not the elites.

Even if Le Pen never resides in Élysée Palace, the usage of ensauvagement further legitimizes populist rhetoric and ideas of Marine Le Pen and the National Rally. An IFOP poll on ensauvagement found that 70% of the French believe that ensauvagement is appropriate in describing the “violence and delinquency in France”. However, IFOP clarifies that this statistic is indicative of a growing familiarity with ensauvagement due to news coverage rather than the belief in the negative connotations associated with the word. The IFOP poll exhibits how the populist communication style garners media coverage. The poll also illustrates the legitimation of far-right populist parties. LREM further normalized ensauvagement to the extent that political actors do not fear significant political backlash. If Macron does win in 2022 and continues to accommodate Le Pen, the National Rally’s chance of winning in 2027 will increase. On the other hand, if Le Pen wins this election, Macron calculation will be off and his fall will demonstrate the dangers of accommodating far-right populist parties in France.

275 Aisch et al.
276 Cole, Emmanuel Macron and the Two Years That Changed France, 7.
278 Adénor, “‘L’ensauvagement’, décryptage d’un élément de langage emprunté par Gérald Darmanin à l’extrême droite.”
280 Meguid, “Competition between Unequals,” 357.
Request for further literature

In an expanded study, I would continue exploring the relationship between political communication and cultural insecurity in France. An analysis of public opinion polls will be helpful in determining how issue ownership played into the results of the 2022 presidential election. Public opinion polls may also be helpful in gaining a better understanding of the impact of political rhetoric on voting and what motivates voters to choose certain candidates. However, the IFOP poll demonstrated that public opinion polls are not as straightforward as they seem.

Conclusion

Through populist rhetoric on crime, political candidates express their platform; and ultimately, construct their vision of French identity to win elections and gain legitimization in the political arena. Successful issue ownership will determine Macron’s reelection. Sarkozy’s winning strategy in 2007 paved a way for Macron to incite insécurité culturelle in 2022. The reemergence of populist rhetoric on crime in the mainstream is significant to the position of marginalized identities in French society. Ensauvagement conveys that French politicians recognize that racial minorities and immigrants hold less political power than white voters in France. Therefore, they strategically appeal to white voters instead of racial minorities and immigrants. French politicians believe that excluding racial minorities and immigrants appeals to white voters, and in 2007, Sarkozy ran and won on this belief. White voters in France will decide the future of French politics and the overall acceptance and integration of racial minorities and immigrants into French society. As long as white voters continue to view racial minorities and immigrants as less than French, politicians will continue to treat them as such. In 2022, voters will face a decision between the lesser of two evils. A vote for Emmanuel Macron or Marine Le Pen continues the legitimization of dangerous populist rhetoric on crime.
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