

“Ni droite, Ni gauche, Français!” Far right populism and the future of Left/Right politics¹

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‘We have entered a new two-partyism. A two-partyism between two mutually exclusive conceptions which will from now on structure our political life. The cleavage no longer separates left and right, but globalists and patriots’ (Le Pen 2015)

The pronouncement of the imminent death of Left and Right as useful political categories is nothing new. Declared as already dead in 1842 (*Dictionnaire du Politique*, cited in Ignazi 2003: 5), this division has been regularly challenged both in academia and in the public realm. Brexit, the election of Donald Trump and the 2017 French presidential election have become yet another occasion to question the relevance of the dichotomy and suggest the emergence of alternative ways of conceptualising political divisions (see for example Sénécat et al. 2016, The Economist 2017, Slaughter 2017, Goodhart 2017, Hooghe and Marks 2017).

Narratives of the terminal decline of Left and Right have been particularly rife during the 2017 French presidential election. In an election where the main Left and Right candidates fared poorly, the far right candidate’s most credible adversary was Emmanuel Macron, a former investment banker and minister under François Hollande who claimed to be ‘both left and right’ and eventually went on to win the presidency. According to Marine Le Pen and her supporters, Macron represented a politician that could not be placed on a left and right political spectrum, but whose candidacy required the creation of a new political distinction: that between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’. As the President of the Front National declared in an interview at *l’Invité Politique*, ‘[t]here is no more right and left. The real cleavage is between the patriots and the globalists, that Macron incarnates well’ (Le Pen 2017a).

This article seeks to investigate the rationale behind this division between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’ and reflect on the consequences of this new distinction for the Left/Right continuum. In particular, it will argue that far right parties have several ideological and strategic reasons to reject the Left/Right dichotomy and replace it with a distinction that is more compatible with their worldview. While this

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new distinction may not be readily included in political analysis, it points towards the incorporation of a new cleavage between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ societies in political discourse, which, in the long term, could represent a direct challenge both to the Left/Right distinction itself, and to what it embodies in symbolic terms. In order to illustrate this argument, the article will start with a review of the history of the Left/Right continuum, before moving on to a theoretical investigation of why far right parties may wish to reject it. It then uses the case of the Front National to illustrate how the party has challenged the Left/Right distinction discursively and attempted to replace it with a new one between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’. The concluding section will reflect on the implications of the introduction of this new cleavage in the political realm.

1) Left and Right: a history of the political distinction

The emergence of Left and Right as a political distinction is a heritage of the French Revolution, and more precisely, of the *Assemblée Constituante*. During its vote on 29 August 1789, the Assembly had to deliberate on the right of veto by the king. For the vote, supporters of the royal veto (conservatives) were asked to stand to the right and opponents (modernisers) to the left, thereby giving birth to what would become an enduring political division. While this did not happen during the French Revolution, as the *Revolutionnaires* sought unity over division (Gauchet 1996), the division between Left and Right entered the political vocabulary in a stable way during the Restoration, when it became the standard way to refer to the opposition between liberals and ultras (Lukes 2003: 606). Following their adoption in French politics, the terms Left and Right spread throughout the rest of Europe and became ‘categories of political identity’ (Lukes 2003: 606), as well as the dominant way to conceptualise the political space. The increase in salience and spread of these two terms, however, did not settle two questions which would continue to haunt politics for years to come: first, their intrinsic meaning and second, their potential to endure the passing of time.

On the first point, settling the ‘meaning’ of Left and Right has been an ongoing challenge for political theorists. In this case, one can distinguish between those who seek to contextualise the meaning of Left and Right, and those who focus on an essentialist interpretation of it. ‘Essentialist’ interpretations have sought to find features of Left and Right which have remained unaltered by time, considering, like Laponce (1981: 11) that ‘[b]etter than conservative and liberal or progressive and reactionary, left/right tends to describe background forces rather than specific actors; it describes a fixed landscape rather than those who travel through it’. One of the dominant understandings of these ‘background forces’ is that put forward by Norberto Bobbio (1994), who considered that the Left and Right cleavage represented a division on notions of equality, with the Left privileging equality of all human beings and the Right arguing in favour of a ‘natural order with inequalities’. Proponents of a contextual understanding argue that Left and Right have meant different things at different times. Thus, if they

initially referred to a distinction between ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’, they acquired new meanings in different political contexts. In the field of political sociology, the dominant way of conceptualising the distinction since the 1960s has been to see it as a reflection of the major social cleavage in Western societies, that is, the workers/owners cleavage posited by Rokkan and Lipset (1967). Thus, the Left was taken to represent the interests of the workers, while the Right would ultimately defend the values and interests of the owners. More recently, Ronald Inglehart (2006 [1971]) posited the emergence of a new ‘post-materialist’ cleavage which would replace the class cleavage. The new division was expected to ‘transform the meaning of Left and Right’ (Inglehart 1990: 289), and lead conflict in Western societies to shift focus from primarily economic issues to value-based conflicts. Inglehart’s understanding, however, still maintained the relevance of Left and Right as categories: while he suggested that the materialist versus postmaterialist divide would eventually ‘displace’ the understanding of the class cleavage as the basis of the distinction between Left and Right, he maintained the familiar dichotomy as the dominant language of politics.

If the meaning of the distinction between Left and Right has been contested, its continued relevance has equally become a point of contention. The first references to its ‘loss of meaning’ can be dated back to 1842, when the word’s entry in the French *Dictionnaire du Politique* declared that ‘these ancient divisions have lost a lot of their value’ (quoted in Ignazi 2003: 5). About two centuries after its first declaration of irrelevance, the ‘end of ideology’ thesis suggested (again) that the Left/Right dichotomy made little sense (Bell, 1988 [1960]; Bobbio 1994: 3). More recently, scholars have considered that Left and Right fail to capture the increasing complexities of the modern world. Giddens (1994), for example, urged to move ‘Beyond Left and Right’, thus contributing to the creation of Tony Blair’s ‘Third Way’, while Furedi (2005: 49) declared that the words have simply ‘lost their meaning’, and would be further weakened by the emergence of non-aligned groups or movements refusing to identify with them. This failure of Left and Right to fully capture the complexity of political systems has equally been reflected in spatial models of politics, where scholars have increasingly introduced new cleavages to understand the evolution of modern politics. Thus, for example, Hooghe et al. (2002) posited the existence of a Green/Alternative/Libertarian-Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist axis, while Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008) flanked the Left/Right economic dimension with a second ‘cultural’ dimension.

If Left and Right have been extensively challenged in the academic debate, at least discursively they have managed to remain the dominant categories of political division in most European societies. The 2017 French presidential election, however, brought the questioning of the Left/Right division back into fashion. It did so directly in the public sphere, with Emmanuel Macron explicitly running on a platform that was supposed to be ‘both Left and Right’ and Marine Le Pen claiming that Left and Right made no sense, and that the true division was between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’. Le Pen’s claim to be ‘neither Left nor Right’ and her suggestion of the emergence of a new cleavage are of particular interest when reflecting on issues of the continued relevance of the Left/Right dichotomy, especially since a

‘neither left nor right’ discourse is a long-standing one for the FN and a shared feature of far right parties (Enyedi and Krause 2010: 175). While not all of them openly reject the language of Left and Right,² they rarely identify through it. Instead, they prefer to use different dichotomies. Thus, it is worth asking: first, what is their interest in reconceptualising politics along different lines? And second, what are the consequences of such a move, especially given the increasing incorporation of far right discourse into mainstream politics?

These questions have, so far, remained unanswered. Most of the literature on political cleavages has focused on a sociological perspective, seeing parties as responsive actors representing cleavages rather than contributing to their creation. However, the emergence of cleavages is an iterative process, in which parties both represent underlying divisions, and contribute to the shaping of those cleavages by introducing them into the public sphere and teasing out their essential features in a way that suits them. In order to reflect this, this paper adopts a party-centred approach investigating the motives that lead far right parties to attempt to reshape the conceptualisation of the political space, and then exploring the discursive means by which they have tried to do so through a case study of the French Front National. Thus, it makes no claim to be an accurate reflection of the sociology of voters, but rather wishes to complement the growing literature on changing political cleavages by focusing on the role of parties in their expression. It is to the investigation of far right parties’ opposition to the notions of Left and Right and their attempts to replace them with new political divisions that this paper now turns.

2) Explaining the far right’s opposition to the Left/Right distinction

The first question is: Why do far right parties reject the Left/Right distinction and place themselves outside of such a dichotomy? I argue there are four main reasons why far right parties have endeavoured to overcome the Left/Right distinction. First, their ideological core is by definition, potentially both left and right. Second, at the heart of far right politics is a monist understanding of the world which clashes with the understanding of the Left/Right distinction as representing a legitimate and meaningful division. Third, in more pragmatic terms, they reject the negative connotation of the term ‘far right’ – which leads them to question the whole distinction. Fourth, defining themselves as ‘neither left nor right’ allows for differentiation from the rest of the political spectrum and presentation as ‘outside’ normal politics.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to review definitions of the far right, however, in order to elucidate the first point, it is necessary to briefly discuss the ideological core of the far right party family. While early studies have had a difficult time finding a common definition of the far right (see Mudde 1996 for a useful review of early definitions), in recent years a developing consensus has emerged on the core

² Examples of far-right parties doing so include Haider, 1997, on the Northern League’s 2014 Euromanifesto.

elements of far right ideology. While some definitions are broader than others, virtually all definitions of the far right comprise of at least one element, that of nationalism or – as Cas Mudde (2007: 19) further specified - a "nativist" form of nationalism closely tied to xenophobia. The second shared ideological feature of far right parties is often considered to be authoritarianism, embodied by the focus on law and order (Mudde 2000, Harrison and Bruter 2011). Finally, for a specific sub-section of the far right, it is possible to detect a final shared ideological trait in the shape of populism intended as '[a]n ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups — “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite” — and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* or general will of the people' (Mudde 2007: 23).

Far right parties first reject the Left/Right distinction because these key ideological attributes are neither fully of the Left nor of the Right. They could be present in the political ideology of parties on both sides of the political spectrum. With respects to the first point, nationalism, for example, one can detect it both in far right movements and in movements of the Left (Halikiopoulou et al. 2012). Some might argue that in its 'banal' form, it is so diffused that it permeates all strata of society (Billig 1995). Authoritarianism is equally 'non-confessional': The history of dictatorship is rich in examples of this. Stalin or Ceausescu were arguably authoritarian leaders at the head of authoritarian regimes, however, few would qualify them as 'far right'. For those to whom it applies, populism equally displays this ambiguity, as all it requires is a 'people', however defined, and an elite against which they must fight. Thus, recent years have witnessed a growing interest in populism as a phenomenon of the Left, as well as of the Right.³ This suggests that the far right does not sit 'naturally' anywhere on the Left and Right spectrum, as its ideology is, in principle, capable of being located on either side of the it. This ideological flexibility comes across as particularly evident when reflecting on their policies, which mix support for a strong State and protectionist economic positions that are closer to the Left with a more clearly right wing socio-cultural vision (Rydgren 2007). The potential to be neither Left nor Right, however, is not decisive in the argumentation and needs to be complemented by further considerations. While it points towards the fact that they could reject the distinction, it does not explain why they do so.

A more important consideration as to why far right parties reject the Left/Right distinction is connected to their *Weltanschauung*, or broader understanding of politics, which is inherently monist. Lipset and Raab (1970: 6) have powerfully argued that at the heart of political extremism is a form of anti-pluralism or monism which treats 'cleavage and ambivalence as illegitimate'. On this basis, Rydgren (2007) argues that far right parties push forward an understanding of the world which does not recognise legitimate divisions and which rejects pluralism. In literature on the far right, this is often discussed as a rejection of 'liberal democracy', and, one might add, of the role that the distinction between Left and

³ See for example March (2007) for a general analysis, Stavrakakis and Katsambekis (2014) on Syriza, and Otjes and Louwse (2015) on a comparison between left and right wing populism in the Netherlands.

Right plays in it. If we accept that at the heart of modern democracy is the respect for and embrace of pluralism and conflicting views, the distinction between Left and Right can be seen as a ‘symbolic rendition’ of these ideas (White 2012). Therefore, as Lukes (2003: 606) puts it:

The acceptance of left and right symbolises consent to discord - the acceptance, that is, of political pluralism in one of its several senses: of permanent, irreducible, institutionalised conflict as inseparable from democracy and a rejection of the idea that such conflict is a pathological deviation blocking the path to a unified, reconciled society.

Following such a narrative, it is possible to understand why far right parties would dismiss the vocabulary of Left and Right. The rejection of pluralism implies the rejection of any such thing as a legitimate political divisions. The symbolism that Left and Right embody, then, becomes difficult to accept and the rejection of the vocabulary of Left and Right points towards the rejection of political division as constitutive of society. Put bluntly, far right parties reject Left and Right because they symbolise an understanding of the political world which does not conform to their understanding of it. Putting forward alternative divisions, in this case, is a way to present the political space in such a way that allows them to overcome the notion of constitutive dissent embodied by the Left and Right vocabulary.

Finally, it is worth considering the strategic incentives for far right parties to reject the distinction, first, in view of the negative connotation attached to the term ‘far right’, and second, as a tool of political differentiation. Hainsworth (2008: 6-7) and Mudde (2007: 33) noted that far right parties use a vast array of different terms to define themselves. Their names usually include references to blocs and movements, and while this is not necessarily exclusive to them, as often parties do not have a direct reference to their position on the Left/Right spectrum, mainstream parties are happy to declare their positions as positions of the Left or of the Right.⁴ Far right parties, on the contrary, do not self-identify, either in their names or in their discourse, as ‘of the extreme right’ and will openly reject the label. One can see this reticence to adopt the label ‘far right’ as dictated by two factors, stemming from both its ‘right’ and its ‘far’ component. Of the former, the ravages of the Fascist and Nazi regimes in Europe left the Right, both in its conservative or in its extreme form, with a negative reputation in post-war Europe’s early years. Democracies in Western Europe often came out of power compromises that included the centre and the left, while excluding and marginalising right wing parties. While this reading is debateable, especially as far as the later years of European politics are concerned, this idea of a ‘left-wing cultural hegemony’ has been strongly perceived by intellectual strands of the far right. Suffice it to think of the claim of the Nouvelle Droite to wage a ‘metapolitical battle’ against the dominant current

⁴ Although that is not always the case – see White (2010) for a discussion on the use of the label ‘Progressive’ to replace that of Left.

of Left-wing thinking in the public space⁵. More importantly, the label extreme (or far, or radical) has equally negative implications in these parties' views, because it suggests that there is a 'lineage' connecting the extremist parties of the inter-war period with the post-war far right. This point is critical for those parties who do not recognise themselves as deriving directly from those traditions – as is the case for parties of the 'new extreme right' (Ignazi 2003), which do not retrace their ideological roots to the Fascist or National-Socialist regimes. Taken together, these points lead far right parties to perceive the label of extreme right as a means to delegitimise them, or, as the FN's 2002 programme put it, a way for the 'establishment' to 'demonise the national movement politically and electorally'.

Also from a strategic point of view, far right parties, and especially those who associate their nationalism with a thin 'populist' ideology, seek to adopt the 'outsider' position in politics. In this sense, the rejection of the Left/Right distinction allows them to present themselves as 'unconcerned' with regular politics, or as true outsiders. To explore this argument, it is necessary to reflect on the role of Left and Right in the structuring of political debate. As argued earlier, Left and Right represent the norm when it comes to the political debate and the positioning of parties on a spectrum. In this sense, they embody 'regular' politics (White 2010). Far right parties, on the other hand, are not only commonly placed 'outside' regular politics (albeit increasingly less so), but also gain politically from being perceived as outsiders. This is particularly the case given the low levels of trust in the political class that characterize first-wave democracies (Norris 1999, Hay 2007, Mair 2013). As parties who have rarely (if ever) been involved in the dirty business of politics, they exploit the idea that they are 'pure' and 'uncontaminated' by the workings of 'regular' parties. Rejecting the Left/Right distinction, then, enhances their position as outsiders. It suggests that they are not debating on the 'Left and Right' issues that other candidates discuss (and which they present as irrelevant) but on the 'true' issues that really matter. In addition, the rejection of Left and Right and its replacement with a cleavage of their choice, allows them to present their opponents as 'all the same': if Left and Right do not exist, and the cleavage is a different one, they can lump their opponents into a single category. Thus, they become the only 'truly different' candidates and can play the card of 'change'.

Having identified four theoretical reasons why far right parties may wish to reject the categories of Left and Right, the following section will illustrate the chapter's main argument by focusing on the usage of the language of Left and Right in the French Front National, considered by many as the archetype of the far right party (Vasilopoulou, 2010). Starting from the study of the emergence of a 'ni droite, ni

⁵ Born in France in 1968, the *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right) can be defined as a 'cultural school of thought' (Duranton Crabol, 1988). While its intellectual influences come both from the Conservative Revolution and the 'New Left' (Bar-On, 2011), its main aims as an organisation were cultural or 'metapolitical', in so far as it sought to challenge the left-wing dominated narratives at the heart of the French post-war state. Some of the ideas developed by Nouvelle Droite theorists, such as the concept of 'ethnopluralism' and 'differentialism' shaped significantly the ideology of far right parties in Europe. For a more extensive review of the Nouvelle Droite's positions and influence on far right political parties, see Duranton Crabol 1988, Taguieff 1994, Bar On 2007.

gauche' doctrine in the 1990s and ending with the presidential campaign of 2017, it will show how the Front National has rejected the labels of Left and Right, and has attempted to replace them with a new political distinction: that between 'globalists' and 'patriots'.

3) From 'neither left nor right' to 'globalists' versus 'patriots'

As the terms Left and Right were born in France, it is perhaps not surprising that this is also one of the countries where they have been most extensively contested. Some of the most well known forms of opposition to the Left/Right cleavage can be found in the doctrine of French fascist thinkers who abided by the doctrine of 'ni-nisme'⁶ (Sternhell, 1987). It was also challenged in a radically different form in the discourse of Charles de Gaulle, who notably sought to overcome partisan divisions in the name of a higher 'national interest' (Fysh, 1997).

As far as the Front National is concerned, its complex relationship with the concepts of Left and Right began with their acceptance of the label 'Right'. While the party had rejected the label of 'extreme' since it rose to prominence in the national debate, it had, in its early years and up until the early nineties, openly declared itself 'of the Right'. This willingness to situate itself on the political spectrum should be read in the context of the Cold War, where the Front National's stark anti-communism led the party to place itself squarely in the camp of the enemies of the Left. It was not until the mid-nineties that 'ni-nisme' made its (re)appearance in France – albeit only briefly.

In 1996, Samuel Maréchal, a prominent member of the Front National de la Jeunesse and son-in-law of Jean-Marie Le Pen published a book famously titled '*Ni droite, ni gauche, français!*' The book, described as 'a love message to all the French, regardless of their political, social, provincial, philosophical or religious origins', provides evidence for some of the elements discussed in the previous section. Firstly, it presents the political class as being 'all the same', focused on maintaining power rather than on the interest of the French people. Secondly, it depicts the Left/Right distinction as an 'infernal cleavage' and a 'permanent civil split [fracture]', highlighting the party's monist understanding of politics and the rejection of political conflict as intrinsic to modern democracy. These two points are discussed in several parts of the books, and often in conjunction, as in the following example:

Rather than for the interests of the Left or the Right, we prefer to fight for the interests of the French. We do not sacrifice ourselves to this strange habit of politicians, who manipulate perfectly the Left/Right semantic in electoral times. As they cannot fight on programmes, they call upon a part of the people

⁶ Which can be translated to "neither nor-ism"

against the other and take advantage of this fight of which they are the main creators. (Maréchal, 1996: 37)

Thus, what Maréchal does in this case is suggest first, that the French all share the same interests – and that the separation between Left and Right is the artificial creation of a political class. This, in turn, represents the starting point to present the Front National as a radically different party, working on the basis of a different cleavage:

Jean-Marie Le Pen's movement is not a RPR situated more to the right or more to the left; it places itself elsewhere [...] It is therefore tacitly – but explicitly – accepted that the Front National is outside the political class (Maréchal, 1996: 41-42)

Maréchal's position on Left and Right can be summarized with the metaphor, which both opens the book and is repeated in different guises throughout 'The Front National is neither the left-wing nor the right-wing of politics. It is the bird. Simply' (Maréchal, 1996: 59).

The re-birth of 'ni-nisme' was not uncontroversial, and raised opposition within the party on three grounds. Firstly, a certain share of the party was concerned about the fact that 'ni-nisme' facilitated parallels between the Front National and Fascism. Secondly, the rejection of the label 'Right' suggested that the party was abandoning its ideological background (Dely, 1996). One can read this as a concern that the party might be more open-minded towards the Left and Communism. Finally, a smaller faction of the party feared that 'ni-nisme' would lock the FN out of alliances with the main right-wing party, leading it to permanent opposition, with no hope of holding government (Dely 1999: 87-89). Thus, it was abandoned, in favour of a continued identification with the Right – albeit a different kind of Right when compared to the mainstream.⁷

The arrival of Marine Le Pen at the helm of the party in 2011 marked the return of a progressive shift towards 'ni-nisme', albeit in a different form. This move needs to be read in conjunction with the Front National's aspiration to become a potential 'party of government.' As Ivaldi (2016) correctly points out, since Marine Le Pen's accession to the head of the Front National, fight for office has become a strategic goal for the party. Given the nature of the two-round electoral system, moving from opposition to government requires parties to recruit beyond their own voting basis or create electoral coalitions. Thus, Le Pen started a dual strategy of 'de-demonising' the party and attempting to recruit beyond the

⁷ Concerning this point, the party's 2002 manifesto is particularly informative when it says (scare quotes in original): 'The National Front brings forward values that transcend eras and fashions. The left, essentially negative, whose master word will always be destruction, is by definition incapable of founding a durable social order. The "liberal" right, contracted on an egoistic individualism as negative as socialism, has shown after the years of economic growth, the limits of its abilities of "manager". [...] When Jean Marie Le Pen, on 6 September 1992, declared in front of the Reims cathedral: "we swear to defend the freedoms, independence, identity of the French people, its culture, language, humanist and Christian civilisation", he showed that the National Front has made its own the heritage felt by each French at the heart of himself: that is the philosophy, the real one, the only one that forms the basis of the fight of the national, popular and social right that we incarnate.'

regular party lines through the introduction of a new cleavage beyond Left and Right: the one between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’.

The distinction between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’ was not entirely new when Marine Le Pen dug it out of the party chest. Bruno Megret had already posited its existence in 1989, and the Front National’s increased focus on issues of globalisation throughout the nineties and noughties helped bringing it to the fore⁸. However, especially in its early years, it flanked, rather than replaced the Left/Right cleavage, and remained confined to the party milieu. The 2017 election, on the other side, represented a qualitative shift in the usage of this rhetoric, as the division between ‘globalists’ versus ‘patriots’ acquired a central position in Marine Le Pen’s presidential campaign.

The clearest expression of Le Pen’s understanding of this new cleavage is presented in her speech at the Assises de Lyon, the meeting where she started her presidential campaign:

We welcome all those who share with us the love for France and who want to bring our country on the road to national recovery.

We can see it, the ancient debate between Left and Right has had its day. The primaries have shown that the debates on secularism and immigration, as well as those on globalisation and generalised deregulation, constitute a transversal and fundamental cleavage.

This cleavage no longer opposes the right and the left, but the patriots and the globalists.

In this election, we represent the patriots.

What moves us is not the love for money or individual interests, but concern for the homeland, it is not a hollow and disembodied vision of the world but a multipolar world rich in diversity, in peoples and in their own spirit.

We ask all patriots of the left and of the right to join us. Elected officials or simple citizens, wherever you come from, whatever your past commitments have been, you have a place on our side.

Patriots, you are welcome!

The collapse of traditional parties and the disappearance one by one of almost all of their leaders show that the great political recomposition has started. (Le Pen, 2017b)

⁸ In the noughties, the party’s magazine ‘Les Français d’Abord!’ even had a brief news section called ‘Nationaliste (thumbs up)/Cosmopolite (thumbs down)’

There are several points worth noting in the above passage. First of all, it marks a step forward compared to Marechal's view discussed in the previous paragraphs. While both visions point towards a decline of Left and Right, 'ni-nisme' was aimed mostly at presenting a unified nation in face of an opportunist political class. However, Le Pen places her party in a new dichotomy, that of 'patriots' versus 'globalists'. This is presented as a 'transversal and fundamental cleavage' – and the emphasis here needs to be put on the notion of transversal. It points towards a willingness to open to constituencies beyond the party's regular base in order to represent 'all patriots'. Thus, it is presented as a unifying move in the ineluctable process of the 'recomposition' of political space.

In opposition to her understanding of 'patriots' it is worth analysing her definition of the 'globalists' in more detail:

Our leaders have chosen unfettered globalisation. They wanted it to be positive, it has been awful.

Coming exclusively from some people's search for hyper-profit, it has developed at two levels, lower level globalisation through massive immigration, the lever of global social dumping, and higher level globalisation through the financialisation of the economy.

Globalisation, which started off in fact due to increased exchanges, has been made into an ideology: economic globalism that refuses all limitations, all regularisation of globalism and that, because of this, has weakened the immune system of the Nation, depriving it of its constitutive elements: borders, national currency, legal authority on the conduct of its economy, allowing another globalism to be born and grow: Islamic fundamentalism.

The latter has grown within a deleterious communitarianism, borne out of the mass immigration our country has been subjected to year after year [...]

The first in the name of globalised finance, that is, the ideology of absolute commerce, the other in the name of a radicalised Islam, that is, the ideology of absolute religion. (Le Pen, 2017b)

The definition of 'globalists' is even more informative than that of 'patriots', as it identifies very clear enemies. In fact, if nationalists wish to remain elusive in their definition of their chosen in-group (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013), especially in electoral times when they are attempting to enlarge their voting basis, identifying enemies is an essential part of creating a sense of unity. In this case, the selection of 'outsiders' in the form of 'globalists' is of great interest because it lumps together a traditional enemy in terms of identity (Islamic fundamentalism) with a revised version of the 'rootless cosmopolitan' embodied by 'economic globalism'. In this way, it unites cultural and economic concerns in the same group of 'enemies of the people'.

Beyond allowing the Front National to (potentially) recruit beyond party lines, this new distinction between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’ serves many of the purposes that have been highlighted in the theoretical section of this paper. In fact, the symbolic power of the distinction between ‘patriots’ and ‘globalists’ is multi-faceted and overcomes several of the shortcomings that the Left/Right distinction poses for far right parties. First of all, it addresses the obvious issue of the ‘negative framing’. While the distinction between ‘nationalist’ and ‘patriot’ is not always as clear-cut, ‘patriot’ has a positive connotation in most societies, as it suggests a ‘respectable’ and (potentially) non-exclusionary attachment to the homeland. As Viroli (1995: 2) put it:

The language of patriotism has been used over the centuries to strengthen or invoke love of the political institutions and the way of life that sustain the common liberty of a people, that is love of the republic; the language of nationalism was forged in late eighteenth-century Europe to defend or reinforce the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic oneness and homogeneity of a people.

Privileging the term ‘patriots’ over ‘far right’, or even over ‘nationalists’, then, allows the party to present itself as both respectable, open, and in line with recent political discourse, as defending republican values.

Secondly, it allows the party to present itself as outside the ‘usual’ line of division in politics, that of Left and Right, and therefore, as an option for renewal. This was already apparent in Marechal’s vision, and reinstated by Le Pen when referring to a ‘recomposition’ of politics. The addition of an alternative division between ‘patriots’ and ‘globalist’ adds to this idea of renewal, while maintaining familiar modes of thinking. Instead of suggesting a negative approach (as a ni-niste doctrine would), it rephrases the dichotomy in positive terms, suggesting that there is a new line of political conflict. While it does not necessarily imply a shift towards the recognition of conflict as a respectable form of politics, it still allows for familiar dichotomist thinking.

Thirdly, it allows to capture a distinction which does not separate the electoral body in two and which pushes towards national unity. In fact, while the existence of a dichotomy may suggest a separation of the political body, ‘globalists’ are outsiders by definition. Much like the Jewish ‘rootless cosmopolitans’ of the past, the ‘globalists’ are citizens of nowhere. On the other hand, the ‘patriots’ are undivided in front of the foreign enemy because they are all driven by the same interest in the Nation. Thus, whether identifying to the Left or Right in the past, the ‘patriots’ are now all united against the external threat posed by the ‘globalists’, dovetailing the monist view of far right parties

Finally, and going back to the strategic objectives of the Front National to become a ‘party of government’, this distinction allows the party to tap into nationalist sentiments and cultural anxieties, as well as into broader opposition to globalisation and its economic consequences. It incorporates economic and cultural issues, reading them through the lenses of ‘doing what is good for the Nation’ –

a vision which, as highlighted in the earlier parts of this chapter, need not be Left or Right. Thus, it can bring together both the economic ‘losers of globalisation’ and those whose main concerns are cultural – whether this be defined as fear of ‘population replacement’ or loss of French values⁹. By doing so, it also presents a point of convergence with the extreme left, opening the potential for the far right to recruit even on the opposite side of the political spectrum. The construction of a ‘patriotic’ camp serves this purpose: it attempts to break partisan lines in the name of a shared commitment towards the ‘*Patrie*’, implying that the interest of the country can be understood identically across partisan lines. While electoral studies point towards the fact that the Front National’s electorate still broadly defines itself as ‘of the Right’, it also increasingly gains the vote of self-defined centrists and extreme Left voters (Veugelers 1997; Mayer 2013, Perrineau 2017). An appeal to this rhetoric could have the potential to rally further beyond party lines, although the results of the 2017 presidential election suggest that there is still a long way to go before this happens.

4) On the consequences: the displacing of political debates

The distinction between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’ is a self-styled discursive distinction. One might, therefore, wonder if it is of any relevance to conceptualising political space: does the new cleavage only exist in political discourse, or does it point towards something real in political struggle? The answer to this question must be qualified. The division between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’ can be more usefully framed in terms of another common distinction that the literature points to as emerging from globalisation: a division between ‘open’ and ‘closed’ societies (Meunier 2015), or a ‘Cosmopolitan/Communitarian’ divide (Zurn and De Wilde 2016; Merkel 2017; see also De Vries 2017 for a similar discussion on the ‘Cosmopolitan/Parochial divide’). Here the ‘open/cosmopolitan’ part of the cleavage is in favour of open societies, both in economic and cultural terms, and the closed/communitarian part privileges protectionist views in the economic sector and less openness to foreigners and outsiders. To an extent, it also appears to chime with Kriesi et al.’s (2006) ‘losers of globalisation’ thesis, although the ‘globalists’ versus ‘patriots’ cleavage goes one step further by trying to completely reject Left and Right and merge both economic and cultural concerns in the same line of division. Be it as it may, it appears that the Front National has been trying to bring into political discourse a cleavage that political scientists suggest might exist – although arguably in a form that most suits their own political purposes.

A final question concerns the possibilities and implications of including this new dimension into the analysis of politics. On the first point, it is doubtful that this division will be readily incorporated in the political debate or in political analysis. Left and Right are likely to remain the main forms of

⁹ This division is reflected in the electorate of the Front National, which brings together the economic ‘losers of globalisation’ in the North-East of France and the small shop keepers in the South of France. For a recent discussion on the sociology of the Front National, see Crépon et al. 2015

‘representations collectives’ in European politics (Lukes, 2003: 608). They have proven highly resilient throughout the years and could prove difficult to replace (Knutsen 1995, Kim and Fording 2001). In this scenario, what is more likely is that this division will continue to exist as a parallel, rather than intersecting, dimension of politics, appealed to by far right leaders, but with little traction outside these parties. The existence of multiple dimensions of conflict may be problematic in that it will make political contestation increasingly complex and unmanageable. As Hooghe et al (2002: 966) have pointed out, “Contestation among political parties is limited to one or two dimensions. This renders competition among parties institutionally and intellectually tractable.” The rise of a new dimension of contestation, particularly in virtue of the mainstreaming of far right discourse, could make competition cacophonous. Especially in the case of non-intersecting dimensions, it could lead to conflicts in which rather than talking to each other, political actors talk across each other.

However, as this book highlights, recent tendencies in European politics have demonstrated an increasing transformation of mainstream/fringe politics. It is possible that the growing weight of far right rhetoric will lead the mainstream to engage with it or even to adopt this new form of rhetoric, leading to an increased questioning of Left and Right as the main dimension of political contestation. A quick look at the newspaper coverage of the French election suggests that this is not implausible: the results of the election have been often read through the lens of new dualisms. Emmanuel Macron has equally contributed to the rethinking of political space by claiming that the new distinction was between the ‘patriots’ and the ‘nationalists’ (Macron, 2017), rather than between Left and Right. The framing of the choice between Macron and Marine Le Pen as essentially one between two visions of France that have nothing to do with a Left wing and a Right wing vision demonstrates a weakening of the language of Left and Right in the public sphere. It equally suggests that the Front National has been effective in contributing to the reshaping of the political debate in France, although it may have been helped by the presence of the ‘both Left and right’ rhetoric of Macron.

Should this new language take hold, what would be the implications for the future of politics in Europe? To address this question, it is pertinent to reflect on what Left and Right symbolise. Gauchet (1996: 290) famously argued that the Left/Right dichotomy ‘symbolises membership in a society whose law is division. It provides the symbolic vector that makes possible what would otherwise be highly improbable: identification with a fragmented collectivity.’ Left and Right, he argues, are powerful markers because they symbolise division, but as part of a continuous spectrum of options. Eliminating this dichotomy, then, would risk breaking that understanding and transforming societies into a mixture of divided groups with no aggregating point, leading to potential blockages and unsolvable conflicts.

In either case, the future of politics looks increasingly complex. While Left and Right may not be gone for good, they are likely to face competition and, should they be abandoned, lead to a fundamental rethinking of the nature and dynamics of political contestation.

V. Conclusion

The stated aim of this chapter was to reflect on the relationship between far right parties and the Left/Right cleavage. In particular, it has investigated the main reasons why far right parties may wish to reject the division between Left and Right and potentially replace it with a new division. The specific case of the Front National was then used to show how this party has sought to challenge the notions of Left and Right, and replace them with a new division of its own making, that between ‘globalists’ and ‘patriots’. The paper concluded by reflecting on the possible implications for a society in which Left and Right would be overcome by this new division, suggesting that this could lead to an ever increasing fragmentation of political debate.

A final point of reflection left to the readers concerns the extent to which far right parties may wish to truly overcome the Left/Right cleavage, or if it serves their purpose to have it as an ‘Other’ of sorts, which allows them to construct their own image as ‘outsider’ parties. The earlier parts of this chapter suggested that as outsiders to the system, far right parties reject Left and Right. What it also suggested is that they thrive on this position. Thus, the effective overcoming of Left and Right may not serve their best interests, as it would put them back into the domain of ‘regular, albeit ‘new’ politics. While far right politics may be increasingly becoming mainstream, it is not yet fully clear if far right parties will be able to thrive as part of it.

[Word count: 7434, including title and footnotes, excluding references]

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