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# Asylum Policy in France: A Case Study of Governing Party Incentives & Seine Saint-Denis : Une étude de cas sur l'impact des partis au pouvoir sur la politique d'asile

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Abstract:

Following an increase in displaced persons globally in the 2000s and 2010s, governments around the world have been required to adjust their response to the growing need for refuge. Even internally within countries, there was variation in how the governing political party revised asylum policy. This thesis seeks to explain that variation in asylum policy in France between 2007 and 2019 under three different parties in power. Its explanations focus on the ideology and electoral incentives of governing parties and it focuses on the general economic status of the country. Based on literature and historical context, three factors are primarily considered: ideology, structural conditions, and the rise of the far right. Among these, ideology can be further subdivided into cultural protectionism and Euroscepticism; and, structural conditions can be further subdivided into unemployment and the percentage of foreign born persons in France in a given year. The thesis develops a new empirical measure of asylum policy. Using this measure, some but not all of the five potential explanations are found to explain asylum policy by the three parties considered in this study.

I. Introduction

The French Republic, as one of the wealthiest nations and with a colonial past, is a country that undergoes major immigration each year. These immigrants come for many reasons, economic, familial, and personal safety. Historically, France has been one of the largest destination countries for asylum seekers and for many good reasons too. Among them, until 2017 healthcare was not only universal for citizens, but also for any person living on the French territory, whether illegally or legally. For those seeking escape from persecution, this factor among many others made France a prime destination for relocation.

In the quite recent past, global turmoil, terrorism, and war have caused a global surge in individuals applying for asylum. In 2000, the global number of asylum seekers was barely under one million. Twenty years later, that number had more than quadrupled (UNHCR 2021). While the majority of the impact of this emigration has been mostly felt in neighboring countries in the global south, many Western countries, like France, have been impacted as well. These recent trends have been met with changing laws and regulations regarding asylum policy.

Asylum is a form political immigration, described by the Geneva convention of 1951, which is the necessary precondition for an applicant to receive the internationally recognized designation of refugee, which affords that individual with certain rights and privileges. Among these rights is principally that of non-refoulement, permitting the beneficiary to not return to a dangerous or discriminatory situation (UNHCR 1951). All refugees have been asylum seekers by definition, but not all asylum seekers become refugees: countries have the liberty of accepting and rejecting individual cases. Furthermore, given that asylum seekers are not as protected under an international designation, this population is in fact *more* vulnerable than refugee populations. Consequently, asylum policy is important.

Asylum policy is a term used to address changes to government policies that directly impact those seeking asylum. This concept not only covers ease of acceptance into the country, but also the conditions that apply to an individual once entrance is granted or approved. For example, in 2018, the French parliament passed a law that reduced the amount of time an asylum seeker must wait before accessing the labor market from nine months to six months. This change certainly impacts the well-being and welfare of an asylum seeker, and thus would be classified as a change to asylum policy. From 2013 to 2014, the percentage of accepted asylum seekers in France increased from 9% to 13.5%; insofar as this, directly impacted access to services for asylum seekers, it is another example of the kinds of changes in asylum policy that governments may make. Changing access to services or the services themselves creates uncertainty, which does not necessarily bode well for asylum seekers. In fact, their status is nearly entirely at the whim of their host country, with the governing political party often able to adjust asylum policy through legislative or administrative measures. As such, the relationship between asylum seekers and the governing political party of their host country is one that merits explanation.

To better understand the number of factors that can cause the governing party to change current asylum policy, this thesis will present a case study of the governing political parties in France between 2007 and 2020 and the manner that these parties adapt their asylum policies. Already, a number of factors already seem relevant for the governing party in power. The far right *Rassemblement National* (National Rally, RN), which campaigns on xenophobia, has seen

constant electoral gains since 2007. The economic situation in France has not been strong, with the country not having sub-7% unemployment rate in more than three decades. The number of foreigners in France has risen each year for decades. The case of France provides numerous possible explanations for a governing party's asylum policy, including ideological preferences as well as external factors that shape party incentives. In order to test the relative importance of these different factors, I will use pertinent theories on the sources of policy making to better understand the changes in how French political parties have determined their asylum policy and I will draw on scholarly analyses of the determinants of immigration policy .

Admittedly, other countries may treat asylum policy differently; however, a more global study would omit cultural and national nuance, which help meaningfully interpret the given data. France is an interesting case given that variations in asylum policy during this timeframe occurred under three different governments – one right-leaning, one left-leaning and one centrist

To answer this question, it is important to first examine the pertinent literature on the subject. This review must explain two factors: why political parties enact policy, and how asylum policy can relate to political parties. The latter question will provide the framework for the hypotheses that are tested in this thesis. These hypotheses will be tested to see whether they may reasonably explain the governing party's variation in asylum policy. Finally, I will contextualize this thesis within existing literature and demonstrate improvements and additions that have been made to this field of study.

II. Literature and Argument
While substantial literature exists on party preference toward immigration, research on party preference towards asylum seekers is more limited. Additionally, given that the research question is based on the specific case of France between 2007-2019, existing literature may not exactly align with the country or the timeframe, or, may explore trends in a more global environment. Nonetheless, understanding other scholar's perspectives on parallel issues will allow us to create a framework through for understanding the variation in asylum policy. In order to answer the research question, examining existing literature will provide two key findings: the first will demonstrate how political parties determine policy generally, and the second will demonstrate individual factors that are important for determining asylum policy.

Literature
There are a number of theories that explain how the governing political party will act once in power. Marks et al. indicate that political parties will act according to the party family they are in, integrating new issues into already existing cleavages (2002). In this way, ideology is fundamental to the political party's decisions. Other scholars write about the importance of the political mandate: in other words, political parties are simply a voter's tool to achieve political outcomes (Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994). In this scenario, policy is simply a measurement of the general will of the voting population. This political mandate view seems unlikely to be the entire answer: the governing political party is faced with numerous choices and must therefore choose issues to integrate into its policy platform (Budge 1994). A more holistic view anticipates party competition and its impact on policy choices. According to Adams and Somer-Topcu, political parties shift their policy space according to shifts of their rival party, especially if that such move was successful electorally (2009). There are even other ways that political parties can shift ideologically: Strom argues that a political party will generally shift to a centrist policy space to maximize its potential voters while minimizing the potential voters of the rival party (Strom 1990). It seems that a number of these factors will prove consequential in the determination of asylum policy.

Argument
The focus will now turn to scholarship on specific and measured phenomenon that directly impacts asylum policy. Three explanations appear key based on literature surrounding immigration policy: ideology, institutions, and economics. Of these three, both ideology and economics can be further subdivided: because ideology is a broad topic, the focus will be on cultural protectionism and Euroscepticism, and because the economy is a field with numerous qualifiers, the focus will be on the unemployment rate and contact theory. Each of these five subjects will provide the framework this thesis uses to understand asylum policy.

**Assimilation and Ideological Views**
An explanation that may prove key to understanding the governing party's asylum preferences is the relationship between certain ideological views related to cultural protectionism and anti-immigration tendencies. Breunig and Leudtke argue that the governing party's ideology can indeed influence its preferences towards immigration (2008). Neither an economic left-right scale, nor a authoritarian-libertarian scale take into account the precise nuances within the party that seem important. Indeed, some literature suggests that left-right ideology is not the strongest predictor of anti-immigration tendencies, especially given that both the left and the right are

faced with the "same interest groups and international context" (Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020).

Accordingly, a more specific dimension than the left-right scale may provide more reasonable evidence. The idea of cultural protectionism stems from the sociological concept of ethnic and group threat theory, which indicates that members of an out-group can be perceived as a threat from people within the in-group (Blumer 1958). In a nation with a significant number of foreign-born residents, this can take the form of hostility toward immigrants. Cultural protectionism seems to have at least some impact on anti-immigration sentiments among parties within European democracies (Stockemer et al. 2020; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005). This is not surprising given that in some European countries, a model of exclusive national identity has existed for centuries, and identification with that very nation state holds a symbolic importance (Hooghe and Marks 2004; de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2008). Some scholars note that certain aspects of national identity such as religion seem to require protection, and members of minority religions may therefore be seen as a threat to religious heritage (Blumer 1958; McLaren 2002; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005; de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko 2008).

In Western nations, it is therefore unsurprising that attitudes against the out-group seem more marked against non-European immigrants and non-Christian immigrants (Clayton, Ferwerda, and Horiuchi 2019; Davis and Deole 2015; Dustmann and Preston 2007). For these reasons, ethnic threat theory and the corresponding cultural protectionism seem applicable to the domain of asylum policy. To clarify, cultural protectionism and assimilationism are not the same, but both can be considered as mapping onto the conservative end of a second, cultural axis of political competition. The former describes the manner that organizations seek to protect national cultural norms from external groups. Assimilationism describes the extent to which immigrants must conform to a host countries' values. Both of these values prioritize the national culture over tolerating or supporting immigrants' cultural practices. Radical right groups may seek to take advantage of this second axis by expressing xenophobic tendencies and endorsing culturally protectionist and assimilationist positions (Golder 2016).

France proves to be an ideal case for the study of this theory. For decades, among supporters of the ideological right, calls for French universalism and laïcité have been very prominent in national discourse. Accordingly, the expected relationship H1 between cultural protectionism and asylum policy is as follows: *The more culturally protective the governing party, the more restrictive its asylum policy.* This hypothesis indicates that the primary incentive for a governing party is not its placement on a left-right spectrum, but rather its beliefs on cultural protectionism.

**Euroscepticism and Ideology**
The quality of Euroscepticism, ideological much like the axis of cultural protectionism, may also play a factor in the determination of an asylum policy for the governing political party. The competencies of both immigration and border control lie at least partially within the European Union's control. As France is a member of the EU, the governing party's choices on integration matters are therefore consequential for any immigration policy. Having a negative position on the EU likely indicates a negative position against integration, whereas having a positive position on the EU likely indicates a positive position on integration. On a broader level, existing

literature shows that the for individuals, anti-immigration attitudes are a strong indicator for "political Euroscepticism" (Evans and Mellon 2019; Stockemer et al. 2020; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005). Individual preferences are not the unit of analysis for this thesis; however, they can prove interesting within the discussion of opening new cleavages or the polarization of already existing ones (Evans and Mellon 2019). For this reason, discussing Euroscepticism as a pre-integrated cleavage can provide an answer for why asylum policy differs for each political party.

Accordingly, the hypothesis H2 is as follows: *The more Eurosceptic the governing party, the more restrictive its asylum policy.* The precision on position on Europe rather than the left-right scale is equally important as the case of H1. The EU, a large, supranational European body, does indeed control several competencies related to migration and asylum, and this measure of "Eurosceptic" intends to assess the extent to which the governing political party intends to cooperate or to exercise its national sovereignty. There is indeed variation on how political parties perceive and react to the European Union, with some calling for a renegotiation of the foundational treaty, and even others calling for a dissolution altogether. This such variation may result in direct changes to asylum policy, with or without the cooperation of the European Union.

**The rise of the far right and Institutionalism**
While the first two theories seek to explain asylum policy through the governing political party's ideology, some scholars have indicated that institutional factors drive policy positions. Breunig and Luedkte indicate that positions on immigration are in part determined by the incentives created by institutional factors within the political system (2008). These institutional factors can vary wildly based on government structure, but one notable example is the veto-point cited by Abou-Chadi, wherein a right-of-center body of parliaments can block left-of-center reforms in the left-of-center body of parliament (2016). In the case of France, the election system may prove to be an example of this institutional factor that motivates policy changes. More specifically, the runoff system introduces unique incentives not present in other democracies. The runoff election system provides insurance against extremist groups winning outright on a plurality. In this way, the far right may prove to be a critical factor in the determination of asylum policy. Evidence already exists that French mainstream parties band together as the Republican Front to limit electoral representation of the third largest party the National Rally in France (Fennema and Maussen 2000). The 2004 regional elections included a two-round system as well to minimize the effect of the RN, halving their representation in local councils despite an equal amount of votes (Shields 2003).

In other countries the impact of the far right on anti-immigration tendencies on the governing party is a measured phenomenon, even more so if the governing party will face a considerable electoral challenge in the next election (Abou-Chadi 2016; Evans and Mellon 2019; Pettrachin 2019). To quantify this relationship, there are indicators that increased representation of far-right groups may lead to anti-immigration policies afterwards. Within France, the increasing size of the National Rally may prove to be a strong prize to gain in the second round of national level elections, with recent first round election support reaching more than 20% in the presidential election. Considering vote-maximization strategies within a two party system, the substantial voter base is impossible to ignore (Strom 1990). Also worth considering is that the National Rally vote in the first round has increased each year since 2007: in this way, demand for

populism and the far right seems evident. This occurs despite institutional constraints that attempt to limit representation, restricting extreme right party supply defined by Norris (2005). Ultimately, vote maximization strategies in European democracies has already been proven to impact policy decisions on a national level. In indicating that "in cases where radical right parties surpass the threshold of representation we witness an on average much larger shift in mainstream parties' anti-immigrant positions," Abou-Chadi highlights that political parties use far right electoral representation almost as a barometer for the population's anti-immigration tendencies (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020). In other words, in order to maximize potential votes, mainstream parties tend to adopt anti-immigration policies when far-right groups are on the rise.

H3 must therefore capture the impact of this phenomenon in France. Given the constraints and the structure of the national election system in France, party incentives are sometimes different from those found within other democracies. Among the most consequential of these differences is the runoff system for national elections, wherein if no candidate receives more than half of the votes, a second-round election takes place with the two highest scoring candidates. This two round system gives second-round political parties and candidates a unique opportunity to secure a new winnable electorate from fringe political parties. Along these lines, the support for medium-size political parties such as the National Rally, a far-right party based on an anti-immigration scheme, is tangible and recorded. Despite the fact that the RN rarely wins meaningful national parliamentary representation, their increasing vote size may be seen as an indicator of French anti-immigration tendencies generally for political parties. As a result, the hypothesis H3 is as follows: *The more electoral success the RN has, the more restrictive the asylum policy of the incoming governing party.*

**Unemployment and Structuralism**
Another important concept to consider is whether the economic threat purportedly posed by immigrants has any impact on the governing party's asylum policy. Generally, for immigrants, the theory implies that an influx of low skilled workers will lead to competition for jobs with native low skilled workers, leading political parties to distance themselves from pro-immigration policy (Breunig and Luedtke 2008). Evidence on this theory, though, is contentious. Some scholars to find no significant relationship between unemployment and anti-immigration tendencies (Dustmann and Preston 2007; Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020). Other scholars indicate that there is a relationship between unemployment and anti-immigration tendencies (Davis and Deole 2015). Some point towards general economic health as an indicator (Davis and Deole 2015; Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020). In any case, this research does have clear implications for my research question, so economic factors, and their perceptions must be taken into account.

This thesis seeks to clarify the above relationship with precision, measuring the perceived economic employment threat against the governing political party's asylum policy. The hypothesis for this structural theory is as follows: *The higher the unemployment rate in France is during a party's tenure in office, the more restrictive its asylum policy.* The preference for unemployment rate rather than annual GDP change is intentional; rather than measuring changes in output during a period of time, the unemployment rate better captures a society's capacity to theoretically integrate more work, whether temporarily or permanently. If the country is unable to integrate even the current number of working age persons into the labor force, then some

governing political parties may think it unwise to permit a further number of people to enter, namely immigrants.

**Foreign born persons and Structuralism**
As with the former discussion, this explanation also relies on the structural theory of governing party's preferences on immigration. Instead of focusing on economic threat theory, though, this section will be more focused on the number of immigrants that are already within the borders of a country. Breunig and Luedtke cite that the number of foreigners entering a country could indeed be an important factor in the determination of immigration policy (2008). If the number of immigrants who have entered have already exceeded the capacity of the country to integrate into the culture, the governing political party would have less incentive to not restrict immigration policy. On an individual level, some literature establishes that meaningful exposure to migrants has a positive correlation with positive preferences towards migrants (Clayton, Ferwerda, and Horiuchi 2019). Other literature, though, indicates that individual characteristics such as country of origin matter *more* for regions that have seen greater levels of migration, especially for individuals on the ideological right (Karreth, Singh, and Stojek 2015). The disagreement between these two pieces of literature highlight the two fundamental theories on immigration and preferences towards immigration: while conflict theory indicates that increased interaction has an outgroup less embraced by the ingroup, contact theory indicates that increased interaction between the two groups will increase the ingroup's acceptance of the outgroup (Allport 1979; Enos 2014; Sherif et al. 1961). Ultimately, it is important to acknowledge that the incentives of a governing party to accept asylum seekers may not be the same as an individual's incentive to vote. Admittedly, the evidence behind these theories are mixed: some scholars have indicated that high levels of past migration is not tied to anti-migration tendencies for political parties (Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020). In any case, the hypothesis must test the viability of conflict theory through political parties as an explanation for variation in asylum policy.

In this way, the final hypothesis H5 examine will examine whether the following is true: *The higher the percentage of foreign-born persons living in France during a governing party's tenure, the more restrictive its asylum policy.*. Worth noting is that this theory will be based on the aggregate number of foreign-born persons total in France at any given time rather than simply the measure of immigrants that enter the country in a given year. The latter figure does not account for outflow, only for inflow. This measurement is critical because if the net number of foreign-born persons decreases over a period of time, this would not be measured by immigration into the country. Furthermore, the above measurement captures the static number of foreign persons with which a French person could actually interact. Accordingly, H5 is important because governing political parties may use the percentage of foreign born persons as an indicator of a depleted capacity to accept further types of immigrants such as asylum seekers.

III. Research Design

The governing parties in power at the national level of France between 2007 and 2019 are as follows in chronological order: L'Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP), Le Parti Socialiste (PS), and La République en Marche (REM). There are a number of reasons that these parties are interesting: In general, the UMP is a right-leaning party, the PS is a left leaning party, and the REM is a centrist party; given the variation in governing party ideology over this time, any variation in asylum policy during this time period could be influenced by changes in the governing party. While this is a gross simplification of the internal party dynamics and choices, party ideology can sometimes indicate policy choices and preferences, which would be critical for understanding asylum policy. Furthermore, these parties have been in competition with each other through many of the previous elections, namely the PS and the REM. This such dynamic offers interesting insight to the party dynamics between mainstream parties and novel parties.

While other parties offer interesting proposals as well, they are not included in this analysis. For instance, the National Rally (RN), formerly the Front National (FN), is an interesting case, but does not fit within the constraints of this research. Firstly, their platform is not entirely consistent depending on the election year; and they have not received sufficient electoral votes to make any theoretical policy proposal actionable. This thesis is primarily concerned with parties that can actively dictate changes to asylum policy at a national level. Likewise, smaller members of the governing party coalition will not be included as well. This is primarily because the total coalition outside of the primary governing party often consists of fewer than 6% of parliamentary representation. In this way, while these smaller parties are indeed "governing," they likely do not have the final say in policy proposals.

The reason that this timeframe is chosen is twofold. Firstly, this thesis will contribute to existing literature on the recent 2013 European refugee crisis and its impact: a subject with great timeliness and importance. In order to establish a baseline though, data should be taken before and after, as this thesis seeks to do. Secondly, using a more recent study will allow the results of the study to be more generalizable, as the situation in 2007 is more similar to current day France than the situation in 1960.

Methodology
**Dependent Variable**
The dependent variable that I have created for the purpose of this research, which I term "Asylum Policy," intends to holistically measure the government's asylum policy while a particular party is in power between the dates 2007 and 2019. To do so, a number of factors must be taken into account, namely the ease of access to asylum services and actual policy changes within a certain timeframe.

The first proposition can be measured according to the percentage of asylum seekers admitted into France with a positive decision. This will henceforth be referred to as the PAAS. Asylum statistics are collected annually and reported by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless People, OFPRA, and Eurostat. The first department is funded by the Interior Minister of France, and the second department is funded internally by the European Union.

There actually is a tiny variance between the two departments in asylum statistics: this is because according to the French Minister of the Interior, Eurostat statistics are incomplete. For this reason, I will use OFPRA statistics downloaded from the organization's annual reports.

The second measurement shall be based on laws and regulations that are implemented during a governing party's tenure. This will henceforth be referred to as the PM, or policy measurement. PM will be based on information provided by *asyluminEurope.org,* a joint project between the asylum information database and the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (Asylum Information Database 2013, 2013, 2014, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). The funders for this project are primarily NGOs that serve asylum seekers in Europe.

**Calculation of PM**
Several difficulties exist in considering the PM and the PAAS together: first of all, the PAAS is qualitative data, whereas the PM is quantitative data. In order to resolve this discord, it is necessary to convert PM data from qualitative to quantitative.

1. Policy directives are rated from a 1-10 on their importance on total asylum policy
2. Policy directives are rated from -1 harmful to 1 beneficial to total asylum policy
3. Importance and benefit rankings are multiplied to give a -10 to 10 scale

While importance and benefit are subjective, I created a scoring key to standardize the measured impact of each implemented law or regulation. The basis of the key is the effect of a policy on an individual asylum seeker. A score of 1, for example, indicates that legal changes may occur, but de facto, little changes. Likewise, a score of 10 indicates that asylum seekers may need to immediately alter their plans or stay as a result of changes to asylum policy.

*Table 1: The measurement of the effect of asylum policy changes*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Laws change, but nothing changes in practice; or, asylum policy is marginally changed; or, punishment for noncompliance is marginally changed |
| 3 | The impact of the change is marginal and hardly impacts daily function |
| 5 | Daily function is impacted as a result of asylum changes |
| 7 | Everyday life is permanently different for an asylum seeker |
| 10 | Asylum seekers may seek to leave or extend asylum stay as a result of changes to asylum policy; or, asylum policy is dramatically changed; or, punishment for noncompliance is dramatically changed |

| | |
|---|---|
| -1 | The net effect is negative |
| 0 | The net effect is unknown or neutral |
| 1 | The net effect is positive |

In this way, I can standardize and quantify the effect of each law and regulation. The score of each policy is then indexed according to date enacted. The index value of PM at the origin date of 1 January 2007 is set to 0, and each year, the cumulative changes are summed, and then added to the previous year's value. In this way, Asylum Policy as a variable is not the rate of change of policy, but rather a total value indicating the position of a governing party in a year relative to

the governing party in another year. To see individual laws and regulations implemented, please see the annex.

An example of two PMs differing and the reason are the years 2018 and 2019. In 2018, the PM score of the REM is -1. In 2019, the PM score of the REM is -14. The effect of this change primarily comes from two regulations that were implemented in 2019. Firstly, asylum seekers must wait 3-months before being able to access PUMA, the French healthcare system. This sort of change would certainly impact everyday life for asylum seekers, especially those who are sick or injured. Accordingly, because this is a net negative effect, this change will be assigned a value of -9. The other change that occurred during the year was a disallowance for asylum seekers to withdraw cash from credit cards, effectively restricting purchasing power and capabilities. This change is certainly large, but does not nearly affect everyday life: in this way, this change will be both negative, and at a 4 (Asylum Information Database 2020). Cumulatively, these two changes sum to be -13, the exact change between the years 2018 and 2019.

**Calculation of PAAS**
Data of the number of accepted asylum statistics are available, but I will instead use the Percentage of Accepted Asylum Seekers PAAS rather than the raw number of accepted asylum seekers. The reason that I will use percentage instead of the raw number is because of the massive increase in asylum applications and acceptances since 2010. In fact, each year in the data set has an increased number of asylum applications when compared to the prior year. It is important to acknowledge though, that this increased number of applications has no impact on the percentage of accepted asylum seekers themselves. 2017 was a year that saw more applications for asylum than any prior year, but also had the highest rate of acceptance in the entire dataset. Accordingly, it is worth noting that French asylum policy in and of itself is not independently driven by an increase in application. This is why I will instead use the PAAS.

There is another important reason that I am using the PAAS instead of the raw number. Raw numbers are not relative, and thus may be misleading. One might see that in 2016, the PS government accepted 28,775 asylum seekers and in 2019, the REM government accepted 28,140. Based on the figures, one might think that the PS and REM may be equally accepting of asylum seekers, but in fact, the PS government accepted more than 14% more of total applications. Furthermore, having a percentage out of 100 permits easier scaling PASA with the PDM. The total number of asylum applications by country can also be found on from the OFPRA annual reports (OFPRA 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020). The following are steps to determine the PAAS at a given time:

1.  The number of accepted first-instance applications for asylum is divided by the number of first-instance applications for asylum in France in the target year.
2. This figure is multiplied by 100. This results in the PASA.

**Calculation of Asylum Policy**
Asylum policy as a whole is the sum of PM and PAAS. While PM is not necessarily scalable, changing regimes during this timeframe limit the total variation over the given period of time. From an index of 0 at year 2006, the range of all values is 30. At the same time, the range of all values of the PAAS is 14. Because the PM and PAAS should be rated equally important, they

must be scaled accordingly by multiplying the PAAS by 2.1428 (30/14). The following are the steps required to determine the "Asylum Policy" in any given year:

1. Multiply the PAAS of the given year by 2.1428
2. Add the figure from step 1 to the PM of the same given year
3. This new figure is the Asylum policy of that given year

If the above steps are taken for the target years 2007-2019, the values for Asylum Policy are as follows. Interesting trends already become evident. The large increase from 2014 to 2015, an almost 39 point jump, for example, marks the start of the European Refugee crisis and the consequential PS response visible. Individual factors included in this calculation include an increase in the asylum acceptance rate by more than 4%, permitting asylum seekers to access the labor market legally, permitting the spouses of recipients of subsidiary protection to bring their children and spouses, and several other changes (Asylum Information Database 2017; OFPRA 2014, 2015).

Table 3: Asylum policy by year

|      | Asylum Policy |
| --- | --- |
| 2007 | 13.52 |
| 2008 | 2.92 |
| 2009 | -0.32 |
| 2010 | -2.30 |
| 2011 | -9.70 |
| 2012 | -11.84 |
| 2013 | -7.66 |
| 2014 | 1.97 |
| 2015 | 40.78 |
| 2016 | 48.95 |
| 2017 | 43.95 |
| 2018 | 41.66 |
| 2019 | 21.97 |

Table 2: Graphical representation of Asylum Policy



Asylum Policy Variation by Party
UMP — PS — REM
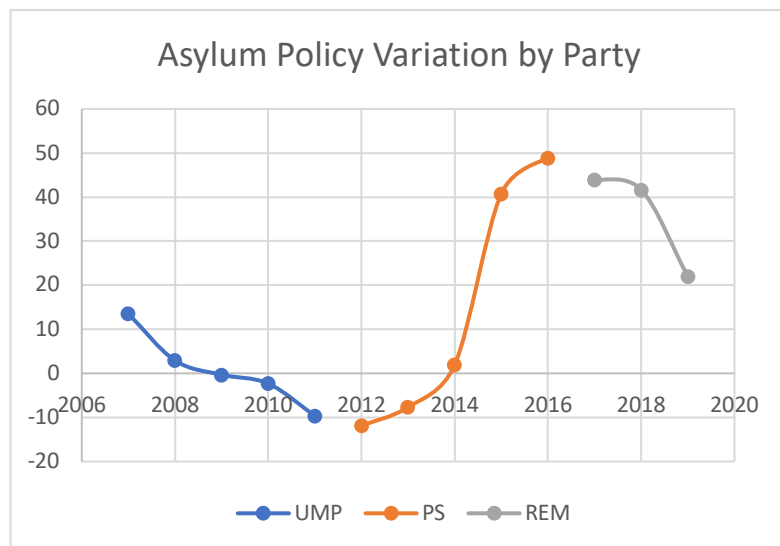
Independent Variables

For each of the hypotheses to be explored, an independent variable must be provided to measure its impact on the dependent variable. Furthermore, along with a quantitative analysis of the independent variable, a qualitative analysis will also be conducted, primarily based in the rhetoric and speeches of party officials during the governing party's tenure.

*H1: The more culturally protectionist the governing party, the more restrictive its asylum policy.* The above hypothesis is primarily based on the theory that culturally protectionist political parties will generally tend to have a more restrictive asylum policy. Concepts of laïcité and French universalism are commonplace in the nation's political discussion about immigration policy. As such, measuring whether the governing party seeks integration rather multiculturalism captures this fear of the outsider groups and culture. Therefore, I will use the Chapel Hill Experts Survey results years 2010, 2014, and 2019, for data on the UMP, PS, and REM respectively. The

CHES survey is a poll of political experts who estimate European political party positions on specific topics. The dataset inside defines multiculturalism as the political party's "position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers," scaling the value from 0, indicating a policy preference for multiculturalism, and 10, indicating a policy preference for assimilationism (Bakker et al. 2015, 2017, 2020). The relationship between "position on integration" and asylum policy seems self-evident, but is not. Party position on the issue is not always followed by matching policy. Furthermore, while the independent variable seeks to explain the position on integration, the dependent variable captures elements broader than integration: namely ease of access to reception services, legal punishments, and acceptance rates for asylum seekers. In this way, I will be able to examine experts' perception of a political party's ideological space and use that within this study.

*H2: The more Eurosceptic the governing party, the more restrictive its asylum policy.*
Euroscepticism of the governing political party is an indicator of restrictive asylum tendencies according to this hypothesis. To measure the quality of Euroscepticism, I will use the Chapel Hill Experts Survey in the same way as for H1. CHES measures the position of a political party on EU integration on a 1-7 scale, 1 being highly opposed and 7 being strongly in favor (Bakker et al. 2015, 2017, 2020). Accordingly, this can be used as a broad measure of the favorability towards European integration, and therefore a broad measure of the favorability towards Euroscepticism as well.

*H3: The more electoral success the RN has, the more restrictive the asylum policy of the next governing party.*
According to the above hypothesis, the "Electoral Success of the RN" is a leading indicator of a negative asylum policy of the next governing party. Because the success of the National Rally can be a semi-useful tool of capturing anti-migration sentiment in the population, given that "closing the borders" is one of their most consistent ideologies, governing party's may consider this success as a rejection or an acceptance of current asylum policy. To measure this electoral success of the National Rally, it is unwise to look at regional representation or representation on a national level; the national parliament structure inherently dissuades voters from supporting fringe candidates due to the runoff election system. Therefore, a national vote-level support for a singular candidate is required, for which I will use the presidential elections. In order to determine this "Electoral Success of the RN," I will use the RN vote support for the presidential candidate for the party in any given election year in the first round.

*H4: The higher the unemployment rate in France is during a party's tenure in office, the more restrictive its asylum policy.*
According to the structural theory on the governing party's preferences towards immigration, economic downturn would have a negative impact on these preferences. The reason that unemployment is used rather than GDP is twofold; for one, the unemployment rate better captures individual well-being than a measure of production. That is, to say that GDP is more focused on the aggregate level of production, whereas unemployment is more focused on individuals. Secondly, some may perceive asylum seekers or any type of immigrant as an economic threat to job security. In this way, the unemployment rate is a superior measure for understanding this relationship. Admittedly, other forms of unemployment rates exist; however, because this hypothesis seek to measure perceived labor displacement, considering individuals

not seeking work within the unemployment rate would be unreasonable. Furthermore, counting individuals who are underemployed would not measure full-time employment displacement. Accordingly, the unemployment rate for France that will be used is the number of unemployed persons divided by the eligible labor force (OECD 2020b).

*H5: The higher the percentage of foreign-born persons living in France during a governing party's tenure, the more restrictive its asylum policy.*
This hypothesis is similar to the above in that it is based on the structural theory of governing party's preferences; however, this is instead based on the total number of foreign persons who live in France. The reason that foreign persons are measured rather than simply asylum seekers is because without meaningful interactions, it is unlikely that individuals can differentiate asylum seekers from any other type of foreign-born persons. For this figure, as it is provided annually by the OECD, it will be measured against Annual Asylum Policy (OECD 2020a). A percentage is used rather than an absolute number: this is to simply reflect demographic change as compared to the total demographic of the country. Otherwise, an absolute figure might not reflect changing population during the timeframe.

IV. Analysis

Assimilationism and Ideological Views

Based on H1, it seems reasonable to expect highly assimilationist governing parties to have a more restrictive asylum policy. Because of cultural norms and French universalism, our expectation is that the value of multiculturalism will be relatively low in this country. Surprisingly though, little variation exists among the political parties presented.

*Table 4: Political party multiculturalism measured against average annual asylum policy change*

| Year | Assimilationism | Average Annual Δ Asylum Policy |
|------|------|------|
| UMP | 8.777 | -4.642 |
| PS | 4.727 | 12.158 |
| REM | 5.599 | -7.328 |

The data show some relationship between the quality of assimilationism and having a restrictive asylum policy. In general, it appears that the more assimilationist the political party is, the greater the restrictiveness of the asylum policy; and, the more multicultural the political party is, the more open the asylum policy is. Admittedly, this relationship seems fairly weak. Despite having a higher assimilationist score, the UMP has a lower change in asylum policy than the REM. This difference though may indicate that it is a factor in asylum policy determinations, but not the most important factor in asylum policy determinations. To determine whether the qualitative measurement seems correct, an examination of general discourse from party officials seems necessary to measure the extent to which they align with the position suggested by CHES.

*Table 5: Position on Assimilation by Political Party (Graphical)*
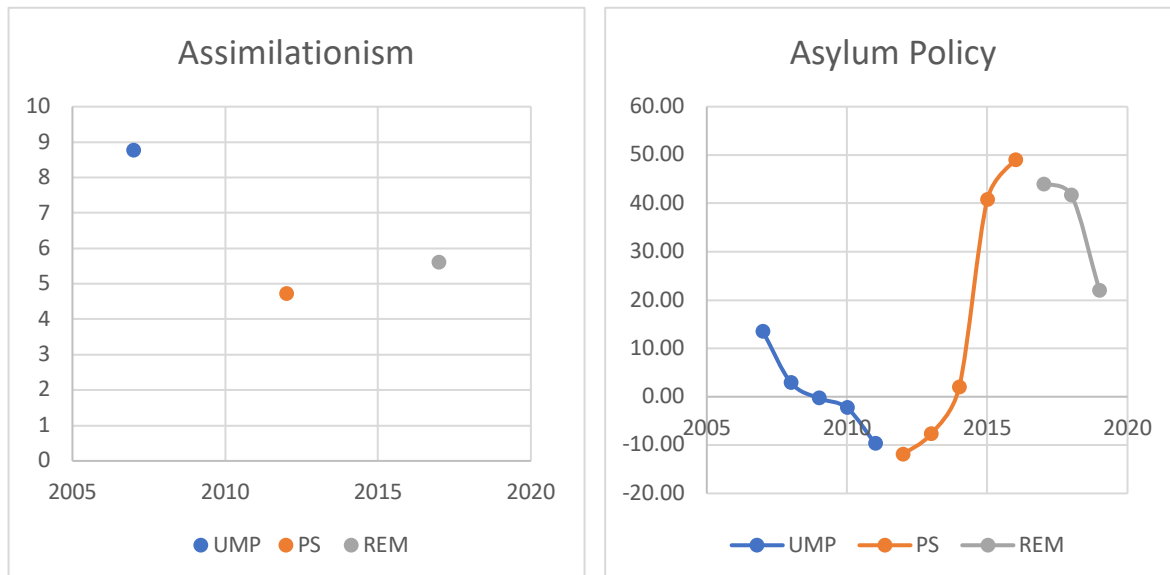


The REM party seems like an ideal candidate to qualitatively measure first: they are the most recently founded party in our model and have had the fewest governing years of any of the selected political parties. Founded by Emmanuel Macron, the former Socialist Finance Minister, the REM won the presidential election and outright parliamentary majority in 2017. In this way,

Macron and the REM were in a unique position to shape policy for the foreseeable future. In a statement on October 2nd, 2020, Macron declared that "Islamist separatism" is a threat through "repeated deviation from the Republic's values" and "the formation of a counter-society… [that] isn't in accordance with the Republic's laws" (Macron 2020). By invoking the doctrine of French universalism, Macron completely bypasses the "multicultural" aspect of his party in calling for assimilation. His position on integration seems unclear though: he was later found saying that "universalism is not… a doctrine of assimilation" (McAuley 2021). On one hand, the leader of the REM decries "Islamist separatism," but on the other hand, he claims to be against "assimilationism." This obscurity is perhaps intentional for the centrist party, to appeal to the far right and the central electorate at the same time. Based on past language though, it seems that the REM position lies less in multiculturalism that assimilationism, as indicated by the CHES study.

It seems that Hollande too, of the Socialist Party, kept an unclear position on the matter. On an alleged Socialist proposal to recognize other languages in schools and permit the Hijab in public spaces, Hollande stated "that's not at all the position of the government," without clearly indicating support for an alternative proposal (Rovan and de Royer 2012). Prime Minister Manuel Valls, though, seems to articulate a clearer stance. On Muslim immigrants, Valls declared that Islam must "stand up" and "cut out all excuses" for jihadism and terror, despite no official endorsement from the president (Vincour 2015). On Romani populations in France, Valls declared that the Romani "must return to Romania" because of issues integrating them (Leclerc 2012). It therefore seems unsurprising that the PS ranked lower on a multiculturalism scale in 2012, despite subscribing to socialist ideology. Based on rhetoric alone, the PS could be classified as more assimilationist, but experts seem to believe that other factors indicate a more multicultural side to the PS.

For the UMP, the data seems to agree with rhetoric from party officials at the time, without any ambiguity. Sarkozy's party nearly universally rejects multiculturalism: the president of the French Republic said that "we do not want in a society in which communities coexist side by side with one another. If a person comes to France, the accept to base their identity in only one community, the national community. If they do not accept that, they do not come to France" (AFP 2011). He further claimed that, within the limits of the constitution, that Islam must be practiced within the French universalist framework over any other way (AFP 2011). Sarkozy was not the only person in his party that espoused this view. Claude Guéant, Interior Minister under the UMP administration said that "a foreigner who is brought to live in France must integrate himself, that is to say, comply completely with our laws, way of life, and speak French" (Saget 2011). It therefore seems that the UMP is as assimilationist as the data suggests, with nearly no mention of multiculturalism.

The dissimilarity between the qualitative and quantitative data may at least partially be attributed to an incongruence between government policy and rhetoric. Speeches and interviews do not take into account international or national constraints.The relationship between the CHES survey and Asylum Policy seems to find that the relationship between asylum policy and assimilationism is similar to that of immigration policy and assimilationism cited in other research. There is indeed an anti-asylum effect from assimilationist preferences.

Euroscepticism and Ideology

It seems reasonable to expect a negative position on the EU to have a direct relationship with Asylum Policy according to H1; that is, to say that a positive position on Europe is likely associated with an open asylum policy and a negative position on Europe is likely associated with a restrictive asylum policy. This is based on the assumption that a pro-European party position would indicate support for European competencies such as a universal asylum policy. Surprisingly, despite ideological variation of other kinds during this timeframe, very little variation is present in the position on Europe for the French governing parties.

*Table 6: Position on Europe by Political Party measured against average annual change in Asylum Policy*

| Political Party | Position on Europe CHES (1-7) | CHES Standard Deviation | Position on Europe ParlGov (1-10) | Average Annual Δ Asylum Policy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UMP | 6.000 | 0.71 (5.29-6.71) | 6.986 | -4.642 |
| PS | 5.785 | 0.80 (4.985-6.585) | 7.944 | 12.158 |
| LREM | 6.833 | 0.40 (6.433-7) | - | -7.328 |

The more-pro European UMP party has a net negative change to asylum policy, whereas the less pro-European party the PS has a larger net positive change. This seems to completely refute the argument that pro Europeanism had a direct relationship; in fact, they appear to have an inverse relationship. Low variation in the independent variable though likely muddles claims of a relationship. This is further obscured by other measures' disaccord in the party's ideological standing. ParlGov, a series that measures political party stances based on party manifestos,

*Table 7: Position on Europe by Political Party (Graphical)*
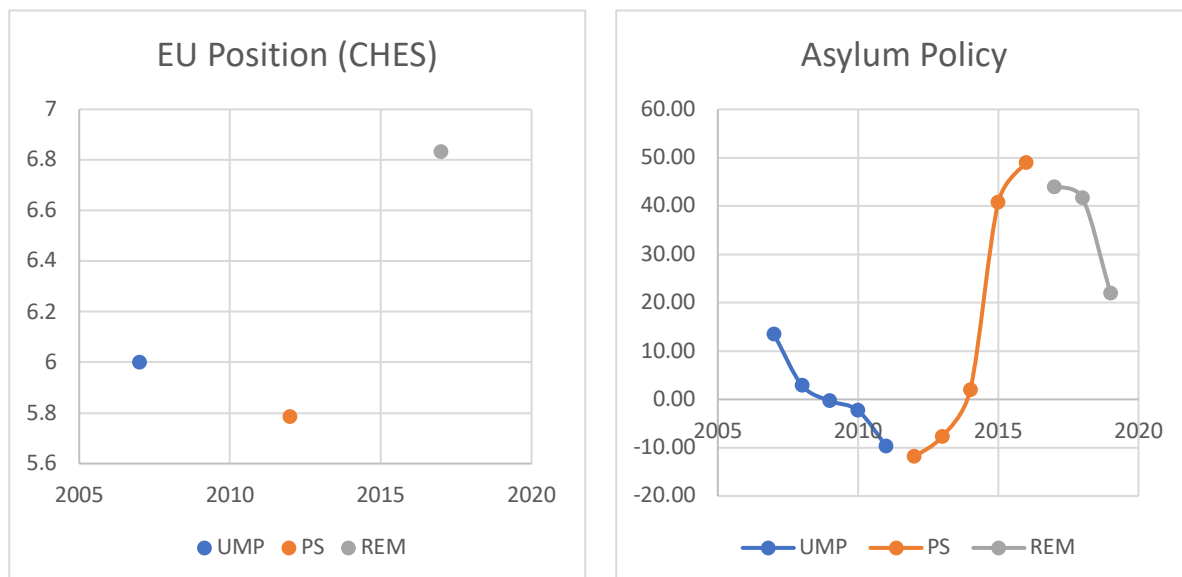
indicates that the position on Europe of the PS is higher than the UMP, unlike data from the CHES; though both do agree in low variance in and of itself (Bakker et al. 2015, 2017, 2020; Döring and Manow 2020). Accordingly, the relationship between Euroscepticism and asylum policy seems tepid at best; however, this is most likely because, low variance combined with overlapping standard deviations means that our measurement of position on the EU must be reinforced by other means. Therefore, a qualitative analysis of rhetoric from party officials must confirm either set of data.

For the most recent political party, the REM has been called the most pro-European political party in the 2017 French legislative and national elections. Indeed, Macron himself has accepted and championed this classification (Desmazes 2017). Noting that Europe is the "only credible way of" protecting national "populations," Macron called for the furthering of European integration through the creation of a "common European asylum system for third world countries" (Desmazes 2017). It therefore seems that Macron is not only favorable towards European integration in already existing EU projects, but also calls for the creation of others, even in the domain of asylum policy. In this way, the REM can be seen as federalist and very pro-Europe.

That is not to say though, that the REM is the only pro-Europe party in France. The Socialist Party, too, was quite favorable towards the European Union in the 2012-2017 election cycle. François Hollande, former president of the French Republic, was quoted saying that "Europe has allowed France to be stronger" at the end of his term (De la Baume 2017). Furthermore, he has called for further integration in the domains of border protection, tax harmonization, economic reform, and democratic governance (Briançon 2016). Accordingly, the PS, too, is in favor of European integration, even with respect to immigration policy. This rhetoric seems to conflict with the Chapel Hill study, but remember that rhetoric is not the same as policy and that variation in this the EU Position variable is very low. Each of the parties is already pro-European, but the question is whether the REM is more pro-European than the PS. Based purely on rhetoric, it seems that the REM is indeed more pro-Europe than the PS.

Finally, the UMP also appears to be pro-Europe, despite conservative voices from within the party. Claude Guéant, Interior Minister for the party, was quoted declaring that "leaving the European Union" would lead to "an explosion in unemployment" and "plunge the country into misery" (Saget 2011). Furthermore, head of the party, former president Sarkozy planned initiatives for a European Union sovereign fund and a "unified economic government" of the EU (Erlanger 2008). In this way, integration policy for the UMP also seems to favor Europe as a whole; however, it seems that support for Europe exists only because the alternative is worse. In this way, it seems that the UMP should be less pro-Europe than the PS: even the ParlGov data suggests that (Döring and Manow 2020). This further raises the question of the reliability of the data presented.

Despite these three parties coming from diverse political positions, the general consensus among the three is both pro-Europe and pro-integration. In this way, the lack of variation presented by the independent variable generally seems correct. The individual positions against each other do not seem to align with the dataset though. According to our qualitative analysis, the most pro-Europe party should be the REM, followed by the PS, and then the UMP, as suggested by the

ParlGov data. Nonetheless, it is necessary to analyze both instances to determine the most representable case.

For the quantitative information, the data suggests that being pro-European correlates with a negative asylum policy. The correlation is strong enough to hint that the more pro-European a party is, the faster that an asylum policy becomes restrictive. One should also consider that a positive position on Europe as an organization does not necessarily entail a positive position on all forms of European integration. The governing political parties may not necessarily favor a unified asylum policy by virtue of supporting the European Union.

For the qualitative information, the data suggests that the centrist REM, despite being pro-Europe, does indeed favor a restrictive asylum policy. This goes against the belief that the PS and UMP confirm, that generally less pro-European parties would favor a more restrictive policy. This opens an interesting case of whether a novel or centrist party is bound by the same institutional constraints as mainstream political parties.

In summary though, there appears to be no conclusive evidence that a positive position on Europe impacts asylum policy for all political parties based on our quantitative analysis. Several issues though, plagued this hypothesis. Firstly, total variation was remarkably low during this timeframe. Secondly, the variation that did exist was disputed among the CHES Experts survey, the ParlGov manifesto measurement, and the rhetoric by party officials. In this way, because measurement of the independent variable comes with some uncertainty, conclusions drawn from the relationship between pro-Europeanism and Asylum Policy also come with some level of uncertainty.

The rise of the Far Right and Institutionalism

For H3, it seems reasonable to expect asylum policy to become more restrictive as RN support increases because of the "contagion effect" cited by Abou Chadi and Krause (2020). While RN support does not necessarily indicate parliamentary representation, the increase in support over time indicates that a greater percentage of the population votes radical right candidates, at least in the first round. In this data set, RN support seems to increase in a linear fashion, by about 6.5% each election cycle, whereas the Asylum Policy variable experiences large fluctuations based on the governing party.

*Table 8: Annual RN Support prior to the term of a political party measured against the average annual change in Asylum Policy*

| Year | RN Support | Average Annual Δ Asylum Policy |
|---|---|---|
| 2007 | 15.94% | -4.642 |
| 2012 | 23.14% | 12.158 |
| 2017 | 29.75% | -7.328 |

Initially, it seems that an increase in RN Support in presidential elections has no effect on Asylum Policy, generally. It is important to consider, though, that there is no natural expectation that supporters of left-leaning parties originate from the RN, a populist far right party. In this

way, it seems plausible to say that increasing RN support would not have a substantial impact on left-leaning parties, if at all. Right-wing and centrist parties though, have a much smaller

*Table 9: Annual RN Support prior to the term of a political party (Graphical)*
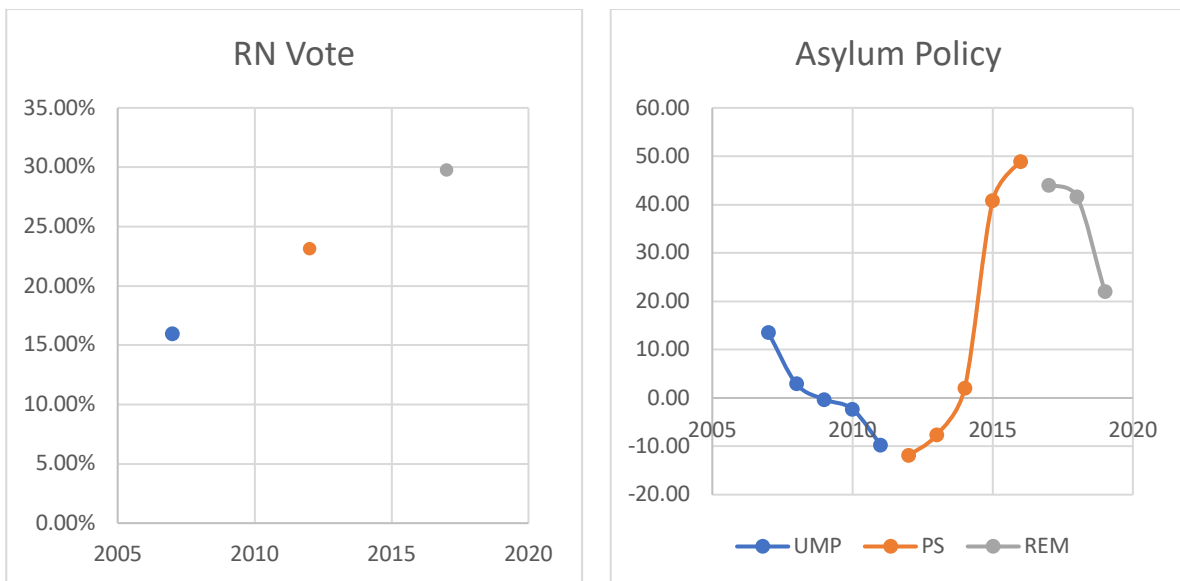


ideological distance from the RN. Accordingly, it seems likely that only right-leaning parties would be responsive to populist far-right support, and the data seems to mostly concur. During the five-year timespan of the UMP party, asylum policy decreases by 4.644 points per year; this stands in contrast to the only 3 years of the REM party, where asylum policy decreased by 7.3points. Given that RN support nearly doubled during this timeframe, this doesn't seem surprising.


The REM seems to be quite a pertinent case, especially given that it contended with the RN in the second round of the 2017 presidential election. As a result, the REM has direct knowledge on the far right and their impact in elections. Macron acknowledged that mainstream parties, including the ideological left, act in a bourgeois way, not considering the working class, towards immigration policy, noting that this has forced working class voters to migrate to the far right (Brunet 2019). By contextualizing the far-right electoral success, Macron indicates that a policy shift must take place to recapture lost working-class voters among all political parties. In this way, the REM admits that the RN will directly impact some policy shifts during his administration. Marine Le Pen noted herself that the REM immigration law was a move to sway far right voters, with Édouard Phillipe of the REM calling the move "the right balance between reassuring our citizens and not giving ground to populism" (Elizabeth Pineau and Lowe 2019).

The PS also seems convinced that mainstream parties have failed some of the working-class voters. Hollande is quoted saying that "there is a part of Le Pen electorate that comes from the left… who are against privilege, against globalization, against a Europe that doesn't work. It's up to me to convince them that it is the left that will defend them" (Bamat 2012). Notably, his argument seems less global than that of Macron, only speaking of the small portion of RN from the left-wing electorate. This perhaps demonstrates that Hollande might be less interested in this group of people, but also that he should "convince" them rather than change actual policy. That

is not to say though, that Hollande does not understand the gravity of the situation. Hollande agrees that a RN France would destabilize Europe as a political organization (De la Baume 2017). Altogether, this is interesting because Hollande bucks the trend of leftist governments having more restrictive asylum policy with increased support of far right groups.

The UMP, like the REM, seems more motivated towards gaining the RN electorate than disavowing the organizations goals. Others have noted that Sarkozy's moves have mirrored some of Le Pen's, calling his actions "a complete and worrying revival of the National Front's rhetoric" (Bamat 2012). In any case, the similarities between the leaders of the UMP and the RN in rhetoric perhaps demonstrates that Sarkozy envisioned a party closer to the far right. Ultimately, this hypothesis seems applicable to centrist and right leaning parties, but not to left-leaning parties.

Unemployment and Structuralism

Based on H4, it seems reasonable to expect a lower Asylum Policy with a higher unemployment rate. This is based on the idea that anti-immigration sentiment comes from the fear of labor displacement, that immigrants pose an economic threat to people already living in the country. The variation in unemployment though, does not seem to follow the variation in asylum policy very closely.

*Table 10: Annual unemployment rate measured against the average annual Asylum Policy:*

|      | Unemployment Rate (OECD 2020b) | Asylum Policy |
|------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 2007 | 7.99% | 13.52 |
| 2008 | 7.42% | 2.92 |
| 2009 | 9.11% | -0.32 |
| 2010 | 9.27% | -2.30 |
| 2011 | 9.18% | -9.70 |
| 2012 | 9.77% | -11.84 |
| 2013 | 10.32% | -7.66 |
| 2014 | 10.30% | 1.97 |
| 2015 | 10.36% | 40.78 |
| 2016 | 10.04% | 48.95 |
| 2017 | 9.43% | 43.95 |
| 2018 | 9.03% | 41.66 |
| 2019 | 8.45% | 21.97 |

With the r-squared being 0.1, there is mathematically almost no correlation between the unemployment rate and Asylum Policy. Perhaps this is because the two topics are not nearly as connected as immigration and unemployment; and, that partisan rhetoric does not necessarily align with party actions. The salience of unemployment and asylum policy are likely dissimilar for French political parties, and therefore policy proposals likely occur adjacent to one another without any dynamics between the two.

Unemployment Rate
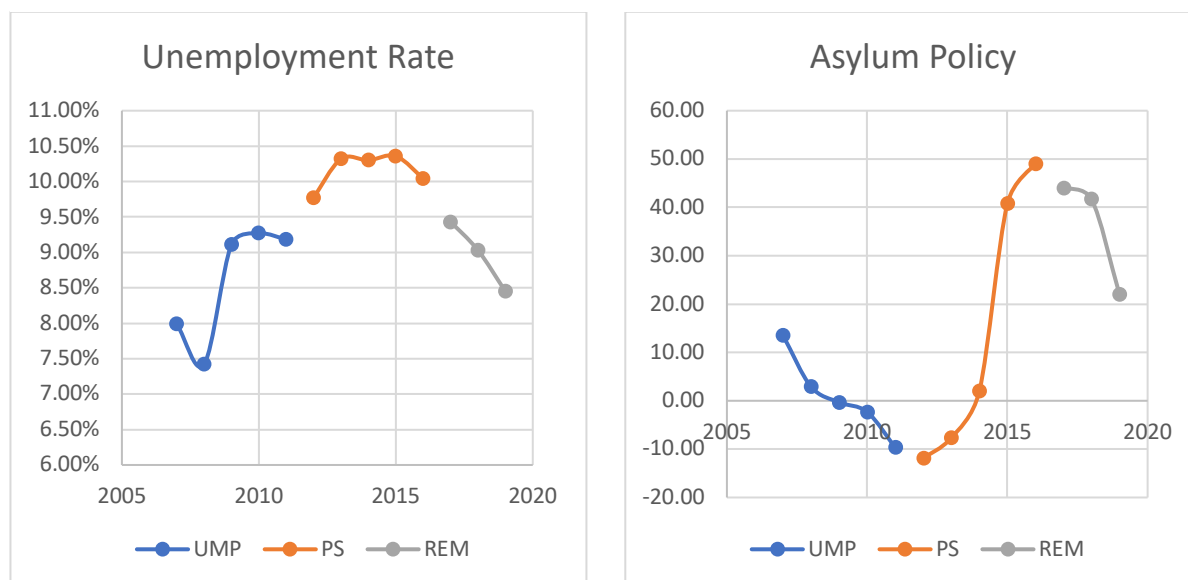
Asylum Policy

Qualitatively, conversations about unemployment are much more tied to immigration than they are to asylum policy. For the REM, Macron declares that working class people decry the cultural elite who make immigration policy, leading the working class to move to the far right (Brunet 2019). Alternatively, Hollande of the PS speaks about the difficulties in soliciting economic migrants during periods of unemployment (Wojazer 2012). Finally, the UMP doesn't directly relate asylum and unemployment, but rather decries administrative costs associated with asylum seekers (Leclerc 2013). These conversations highlight two things: the lack of association between unemployment and asylum policy, and that voters and parties understand the complex issue of immigration differently.

Foreign-born people and structuralism

Theoretically, in accordance with H5, it seems reasonable to expect the net Asylum Policy score to decrease as the number of foreign-born persons living in France increases, reflecting the assumption that an increased number of immigrants should in aggregate reduce the available supply of resources to care for the native and existing foreign-born population.

*Table 12: Percentage of the French population that is foreign born measured against the Asylum Policy in that year*

|  | Foreign Born Population (OECD 2020a) | Asylum Policy |
|---|---|---|
| 2007 | 11.30% | 13.52 |
| 2008 | 11.50% | 2.92 |
| 2009 | 11.50% | -0.32 |
| 2010 | 11.60% | -2.30 |
| 2011 | 11.70% | -9.70 |
| 2012 | 12% | -11.84 |
| 2013 | 11.90% | -7.66 |
| 2014 | 12% | 1.97 |

| 2015 | 12.20% | 40.78 |
| 2016 | 12.30% | 48.95 |
| 2017 | 12.50% | 43.95 |
| 2018 | 12.50% | 41.66 |
| 2019 | 12.80% | 21.97 |

The foreign-born population though, according to the OECD, follows a near linear positive progression during this timeframe, with very little variation from the trend. In the longer term, the percentage of the population that is foreign born has consistently increased since 2000, from little more than 7% of the population to currently 12.8% of the population. In any case, there appears to be no marked immediate short-term effect between the foreign-born population and asylum policy.

*Table 13: Annual change in the percentage of foreign-born persons in France by political party*
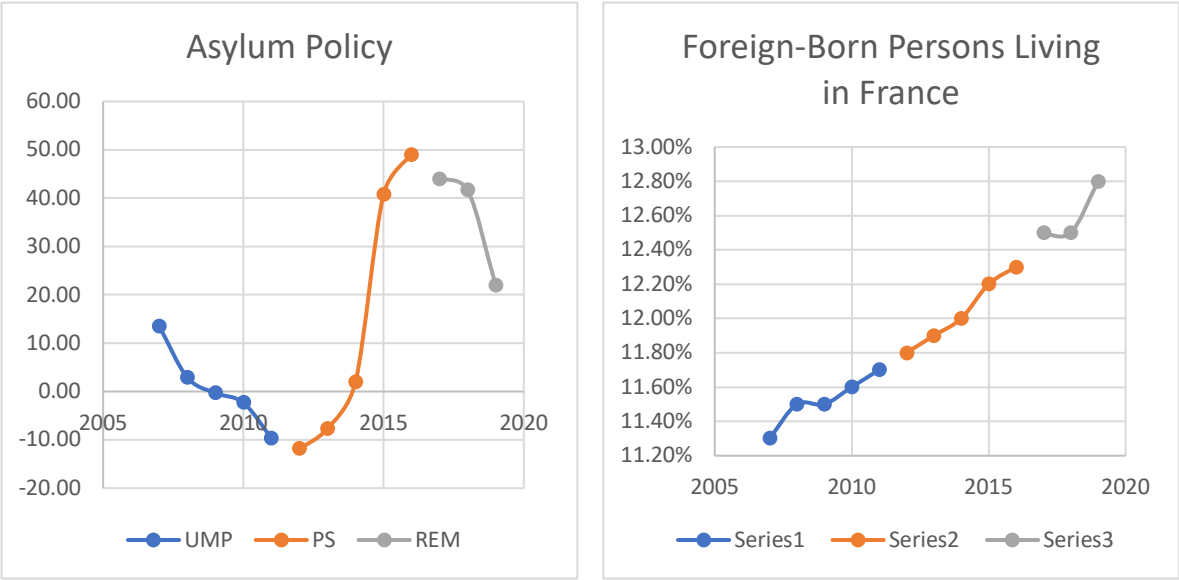


The parties themselves appear to invoke arguments generally that the country takes in too many migrants. Macron, for example, in the defense of healthcare changes for recent immigrants, declared that "France cannot welcome everybody if it wants to welcome them well" (Cl 2019). Here, he simultaneously applies both a humane argument and a protectionist argument. In another speech, he said that "entry flows into Europe have never been so low and the asylum requests have never been so high" (AFP Paris 2019). In this way, the REM seems to take the approach that asylum has been too high during his tenure, indicating that it may affect his asylum policy. This seems to make sense given that the rate of change of the percentage of foreign-born persons in France changed the fastest during his tenure.

Hollande, on the other hand, seemed markedly quiet on asylum and even immigration policy during his tenure, despite the asylum crisis occurring then. While campaigning, he indicated that another candidate supported 200,000 new immigrants during his tenure but was campaigning to half the number (Wojazer 2012). Accordingly, it seems that the Hollande seemed more interested in pointing out the inconsistencies in his opponent's policies than the actual immigration policy

itself. While this does not necessarily indicate the entire policy position for the party, the lack of clarity does show an unwillingness to form a stance.

Finally, the UMP does indeed seem to believe that there are too many migrants in the country. Interior Minister Claude Guéant declared that there are "too many foreigners in France" (Allemandou 2011). Other local deputies mentioned that "Asylum seekers in 2013 are going to be 70,000, a figure that surpasses any imagined projections" (Leclerc 2013). The UMP, therefore, also appears to suggest that the number of asylum seekers entering the country is too large during its tenure.

In sum, it seems that the independent variable is only a high salience issue when it is under the control of non-left-wing parties in power. Overall though, as a result of little variation in the independent variable during this timeframe, and any variation existing occurring in a linear pattern, it is difficult to say whether the existing number of foreign-born persons in France affects asylum policy at all. This hypothesis and its result confirm that it is difficult to measure the effects of a long-term trend over a small sample size of 12 years. A more marked correlation may be evident over a longer period of time, but it does not exist in the current timeframe.

Additionally, this hypothesis at least partially relied on the assumption that a greater percentage of foreign born persons living in a country would work in conversation with literature on meaningful interactions between immigrants and native persons (Clayton, Ferwerda, and Horiuchi 2019; Karreth, Singh, and Stojek 2015). Unfortunately, the independent variable does not take into account the actual location of foreign-born persons nor whether individuals would have meaningful interactions with them.

A study of this phenomenon would likely be focused to one specific region that has indeed experienced high levels of immigration. Exploring this within a nation would make it difficult to analyze foreign-born person density on a local scale. Other scholars have indicated that interaction is only meaningful if certain factors are taken into account, namely political sophistication and the rate of increase of the outgroup in the target population (Danckert, Dinesen, and Sønderskov 2017; Hainmueller and Hangartner 2013). Modeling interaction, in combination with political sophistication and the rate of immigration, would likely provide evidence of changes over time.

V. Discussion

<u>Findings</u>
In sum, none of these factors can wholly describe the incentives for the governing party to change its their asylum policy in any direction. In some cases, the hypothesis worked cleanly for two of the parties presented but not for the third. In other cases, no correlation was found between the independent variable and asylum policy.

For H1, I find that governing parties with higher multicultural scores generally enact liberal reform<u>s</u> to asylum policy and parties with lower multicultural scores generally do not enact liberal reform<u>s</u> to asylum. Within the three datapoints though, there is an exception: new political parties do not necessarily conform to this ruleset. The REM proves to contradict the general applied rule. This may be possible for several reasons. Firstly, because the REM is a new party, it has not yet established a position in the traditional left-right dimension space. In this way, because the REM did not campaign specifically to reform asylum policy, the incentive structure for this political party to change asylum policy is not yet established. Secondly, rhetoric on multiculturalism does not necessarily entail multicultural policies being enacted. This policy gap creates a further distinction between the rhetoric on multiculturalism and asylum policy enacted.

For H2, if the governing party is relatively Eurosceptic, it will be less likely to enact liberal reform to asylum policy, with exceptions. While like with H1, the predicted effect works as intended for the traditional right and left parties, the UMP and PS respectively, the REM establishes another position that contrasts our assumptions. The REM, while the most pro-European force among the three governing parties, tends to enact conservative reform at the fastest rate. Once again, this is possible for several reasons. Firstly, like our theory on cultural protectionism, it is possible that the REM, as a centrist party, does not conform with the traditional left-right dimension space. Furthermore, there are developmental issues with this hypothesis: this thesis operated under the assumption that a theoretical pro-Europe position indicated further integration efforts in all European domains. The case of immigration, under which asylum falls, may be unique though, as it is a highly salient issue for many political parties. In any case, European integration on asylum policy seemed to be a secondary issue to economic issues. Accordingly, it becomes important to separate rhetoric and proposed policy from enacted policy.

For H3, in general, a high RN vote in the national presidential election matters to some extent, but mostly for non-leftist parties not left-of-center. While with this dataset it is impossible to comparatively examine a governing party's behavior to a second term during this timeframe, it is possible to compare their behavior with the other parties that did enact legislation during this timeframe. Both the UMP and the REM enacted a restrictive asylum policy during their tenure; however, the REM, despite being a centrist party and being elected after a record first round election performance by the RN, had a more negative rate of asylum policy change than the UMP. This likely indicates that the UMP moved immigration policy to be more restrictive in a form of vote maximization. When ideologically comparing the REM and the RN for example, the two competitors in the second round of the presidential election, the RN is far more right leaning than the UMP. Vote maximization strategies traditionally indicate that movement towards the center will yield more votes, depending on the design of the institutions. That said,

by moving to the right, the REM claims the position space of the centrists, moderate right, and the left, with only the far right being occupied by the RN.

For H4 and H5, there seemed to be no plausible relationship between the unemployment rate or the number of foreign persons and the asylum policy of the governing political party. H4 tests the idea that unemployment rate is related to asylum policy and finds that there is no relation between the two. It is likely that asylum policy is a low salience issue compared to the economy. Economic threat theory indicates that the governing party will respond to unemployment by reducing immigration, but this doesn't take into account institutional constraints that limit changes to immigration policy during the timeframe. Nor does it take into account that the issue salience for immigration might be lower for the governing party in power, let alone the issue salience for asylum seekers. For H5, a linear progression in the number of foreign-born persons in France matches the long-term trend dating back to the early 1990s, which is not shown in this limited dataset.
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Limitations
This is indeed one of the many limitations of the research of this thesis. Perhaps most notably, the sample size of three cases is quite small. The limited sample size augments the importance of each individual case. For this reason, the REM complicates several of the hypothesis. A new, centrist party without well-established and precedent-created positions on several issues serves to be a political juggernaut. While defining a party neither left nor right as centrist is technically correct, it truly ignores the nuances of the party itself. A non-mainstream political party likely has much different incentives, especially as a third party. Consider the Green party, for example, environmental policy might be a very high salience issue compared to mainstream political parties. As a result, a third or non-mainstream party may not work within a framework design around mainstream political parties.

Another thing to consider is that it is likely that several of these variables are correlated. The given dataset suggests high correlation between multiculturalism and pro-Europeanism. It also seems plausible that the progressive increase in foreign born population over time moves similarly to the increase in RN vote over time, with both seeing steady increases since the early 1990s. In this way, it may be more likely that the independent variables interact with themselves rather than with the dependent variable.

Finally, consider that two of these hypotheses, H4 and H5, aim to capture the effects of long-term trends in a short-term timeframe. Capturing a longer-term trend requires a larger dataset that spans several decades rather than just more than one.

Generalizability
As a result of the limitations of the research, it is not indeed very generalizable, both on a global scale and on a national scale. The context of France between 2007 and 2019 is unique, even from other European countries at the time. In this way, government policies and incentives are likely different in this timeframe. Furthermore, France in and of itself proves a unique case, especially due to its electoral system, with a runoff semi-presidential republic that is unique even in Europe. Applying these results to another country would mark a misunderstanding of the research itself.

Even within France, the results are not indeed overly generalizable. The recent rise of the REM, RN, and the Green parties signal a shift in voter preferences from mainstream parties in the traditional left-right dimension space. Additionally, outcomes for non-mainstream parties are likely different than those of mainstream parties. This further complicates our understanding of the influence of political parties on asylum policies.

Implications for related debates in the literature
While the research design limits the conclusions from this thesis, its subject and findings connect deeply to current discussions in the academic and popular spheres. Within the context of H1 and H2, this case study provides evidence that more global studies ignore both cultural and ideological nuances in their understanding of ideology space for governing political parties. On a national level, the relative left of one country might be the relative right in another. The Democratic Party in the United States, for example, is considered center right by French standards (Struthers, Hare, and Bakker 2020). A nuanced, relativist approach is therefore necessary when understanding party variation on a national level. In France, there is fairly low variation in the policy position of Euroscepticism for example, despite the existence of a mainstream left and mainstream right party.

In another sense, this research highlights that while specific measurements of policy positions may be too specific for understanding asylum policy, the left-right ideology space also appears to be too general. Placement within this space begs the question of issue weighting and the salience of issues. Assumptions that policy in a low salience issue will match according to policy in a high salience issue seem unworkable. If voters choose their political party according to proximity to individual ideology as cited by Klingemann et al., it is likely that high salience issues are the determinate factor in their decisions (Klingemann, Hofferbert, and Budge 1994). For right leaning voters, this might be immigration policy. For left leaning voters, this might be labor policy. For environmental groups, this might be energy policy. In aggregate though, there are a number of issues that are likely not highly salient for the French people as a whole, or at least not as salient as the policy of immigration. For immigration, research indicates that the governing party will not tackle immigration issues if it expects a difficult upcoming election (Abou-Chadi 2016). In this way, changes to policy issues with low general salience such as Asylum Policy though, are likely more susceptible to other factors such as ideology or vote maximization. Policy changes to a low salience issue would not likely outweigh policy changes to a high salience issue.

Furthermore, the ambiguity and generality of terms generally degrade the meaning of some of the research that exists. Caravalho and Reudin made claims that parties on the ideological left are more willing to accept and integrate immigrants generally (2018). A one-dimensional definition of the ideological left is difficult given the variety of dimensions and the subjectivity on their inclusion, and their weighted importance. Our research specifically designated two metrics that fall into traditional left-right cleavages in Europe, and still suffered from the generality of terms. Stockemer defines Euroscepticism for his research as a "generic, catch-all term, encapsulating a disparate bundle of attitudes opposed to European integration, in general, and opposition to the EU in particular" (2020). Unfortunately, this measure does not entail negative perceptions on European integration an any particular domain, the most important of which for this research is

asylum policy. While broad interpretations of a defining term work for more global cases in order to capture cross-country variation, such an index is impractical for research such as this.

Additionally, global conclusions drawn from large datasets often diminish the impact of a third, centrist, or novel party. This such party came to power in 2017 with the rapid ascension of the REM. Some existing research is based on the assumption that policy will change according to the ideological space that the party has historically occupied (Breunig and Luedtke 2008; Carvalho and Ruedin 2018). This linear approach works most of the time, but not all of the time. A novel party has no policy history to predict future intentions; and this thesis has already established some of the shortcomings of manifesto-based measures. Furthermore, political parties change over time, with new leaders and new constituents. Thus, attempting to predict the ideology space of a party seems to yield uncertain results. In this way, this thesis challenges the assumption that the governing party's ideology space remains constant, even though a small subset of time.

Finally, governing parties do not necessarily translate their voters' preferences into policy. Individuals who are predisposed to anti-immigration tendencies are likely to support political Euroscepticism (Evans and Mellon 2019; Stockemer et al. 2020; de Vreese and Boomgaarden 2005). This theory seems tenably applicable for right and left mainstream political parties, but fails for novel political parties. This disconnect likely stems from the failed assumption that individual preferences are the same as the governing party's preferences. This conclusion builds on Morales et al., which indicates that policy congruence on immigration between voters and political parties is not universally present (Morales, Pilet, and Ruedin 2015). Within the case of France, hypothesizing policy congruence is oversimplistic design that ignores institutional designs and international constraints that may render policy change difficult (Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020).

This case study also presents an interesting study of centrist parties and their incentives in a national election environment with relation to extreme right parties. In the first case, it seems that centrist parties can go about national elections in a unique way according to the institutional environment in which they exist. Because the French national elections are runoff elections, a unique incentive seems to exist for centrist parties. In the first round, so long as the centrist party is allowed to continue, it would like to run against an extremist party in the second round. In the case of the REM, ideally it would position itself just centrist enough to maintain a voter base from both the mainstream left and the mainstream right party. The cannibalization of center-right votes from the mainstream Les Républicains and of center-left votes from the mainstream PS decreases available votes for all three parties, increasing the likelihood that a centrist party can continue to the second round of elections, even if they only win 24% of votes as in 2017.

If the centrist party can face an extremist party like the RN in the second round, it can rely on the "Front Républicain" to ensure electoral success, at least on a national level (Fennema and Maussen 2000). By then pushing issues that are highly salient for right of center voters, it can cannibalize some of the right leaning voters while hoping to maintain a centrist position and winning the election against a far-right candidate. At the same time, Macron is called by the far right leader Le Pen both elitist, globalist, and out of touch with the French electorate (Cohen 2017). An administration like the above likely supports the existence of an extremist party like the RN, whose voters mostly aim to counter them. While the 2017 vote may simply reflect

changing attitudes towards populism, it is unwise to conclusively reject, given the evidence, that Macron's attitude had some effect on the RN vote.

While this entire strategy may seem risky, some elements of it have already come to fruition. Macron himself spoke of electoral reform to a proportional representation system to boost parliamentary representation of smaller parties in 2017 (Rouquié and Louet 2017). Under the assumption that Macron would act rationally and discourage party competition, the suggestion of electoral reform indicates that another factor is indeed at play. By pushing highly salient issues for right-leaning voters such as immigration and assimilation, the REM cannibalizes right leaning voters. This strategy increases the odds that his party will remain in the top echelon of parties in the first round of the election. At the same time though, Macron is thought to be elitist and out of touch with voters. These traits embolden populists, both the RN and the left France Insoumise without directly changing any policy. Accordingly, Macron can both reduce the impact of the mainstream LR and PS and also increase the likelihood that an extremist party like the RN or FI can make it to the second round.

Most research on the impact of the far right on immigration policy focuses on already established political parties, who "emphasize more anti-immigrant and culturally protectionist positions" when faced with a far right challenger to crowd them out of the electoral space (Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020). This phenomenon occurs within both the mainstream left and the mainstream right (Abou-Chadi 2016). Our findings provide a unique illustration of how that a centrist party may, emphasize anti-asylum policy, but also, intentionally or not, support the presence of extremist parties.

One might ask whether a centrist party can move so fluidly between multiple position spaces without electoral consequences. Here, another unique aspect of the REM becomes apparent. Because new political parties do not have an existent track record, nor a determined policy space until elected, they may have a lot of liberty in choosing positions once elected, especially for issues that voters deem low salience. Research has shown that established political parties, namely left-center parties, suffered vote losses from rightward shifts to capture undecided voters (Karreth, Polk, and Allen 2013). It is unclear whether this theory is applicable to already centrist and novel political parties, but a conclusion worth considering is that voters remember policy shifts.

For H4 and H5, neither hypothesis has necessarily confirmed existing research on economic threat theory. Within H4, it seemed that there was no relationship between unemployment and the Asylum Policy of the governing party. The conclusions that can be drawn from H4 build on research that shows no relationship between anti-immigration tendencies and unemployment (Dustmann and Preston 2007; Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020). For further study, it may be wise to look towards other economic indicators as endorsed by both Natter and Breunig (Breunig and Luedtke 2008; Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020). It is possible that measures such as real GDP may have a closer relationship to asylum policy than unemployment.

Within H5, this thesis confirms that research that suggests that high levels of past migration are not tied to anti-immigration tendencies is indeed applicable to asylum seekers as well, at least within the given timeframe (Natter, Czaika, and de Haas 2020).

VI. Conclusion

This thesis contributes to literature on the impact of political parties on public policy by studying the case of asylum policy in France. The analysis presented here suggests that both ideological and institutional theories on governing parties preferences towards immigration help explain shifts in government policy towards asylum seekers during this timeframe in France. Structural theories on the governing parties preferences towards immigration, in contrast, do not seem to predict asylum policy. Accordingly, it seems that political parties and the institutions in which they participate are important. In this way, political parties seem to make decisions on asylum policy based on factors that they can, to some extent, control, as opposed to unemployment or the percentage of foreign born persons in France, which depends on numerous factors outside of the political parties' locus of control. This conclusion indicates that, at least in regards to asylum policy, the governing party is better seen as an institution itself rather than simply an expression of voter preferences, and the findings on the novel REM party especially seem to support this conclusion. Ultimately though, entering a new millennium, given the rise of asylum seekers globally, if this trend remains constant, the salience of asylum policy for political parties may increase. Debates and discourse might become more contentious. It is therefore necessary for this sort of research to exist, and to explain how the governing party may choose to uphold or deny the moral obligation towards others in a globalized society.

VII. Further Analysis

This thesis will be complemented by an analysis of the French department Seine-Saint-Denis in the French language. It will focus on the human aspect of policy provisions and the impact that asylum policy can have individuals. It is easy to forget that a drop in asylum policy by 14 points has an impact on people's lives and livelihoods. That could be the difference between individuals dying without healthcare or individuals forced away from their families. Accordingly, it is also necessary to take a less empirical and a less clinical approach towards understanding the plights of these individuals.

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## VIII. Annex

The table below lists the Asylum Policy Scores that I generated for this project.

| Date | Domain | Changes | Calculation | Score |
|------|--------|---------|-------------|-------|
| 12/3/19 | Healthcare | Asylum seekers must have 3-months residence before being able to access the French universal healthcare system | 9*-1 | -9 |
| 11/1/19 | Accommodations | Credit card issued to asylum seekers can no longer be used to withdraw cash | 4*-1 | -4 |
| 9/10/18 | Accommodations | Labor market access time reduced from 9 months to 6 months after arrival | 7*1 | 7 |
| | Detention | Increases the period of time asylum seekers can be detained, from 45 days to 90 days | 7*-1 | -7 |
| | Detention | New fine for unauthorized crossing of borders: 1 year in prison, 3,750 euro fine | 7*-1 | -7 |
| | Law | International protection now extends to 4 years from 1 year | 10*1 | 10 |
| | Interview | Allows a third-party health professional to be present during OFPRA interview if the applicant has a disability | 4*1 | 4 |
| | Law | Appeal of transfer decision deadline lengthened back to 15 days | 5*1 | 5 |
| | Law | Shortens time to launch standard appeal from 30 days to 15 days | 6*-1 | -6 |
| | Accommodations | Family reunification with siblings now possible | 5*1 | 5 |

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| 3/20/18 | Law | Deadline for the appeal of a transfer decision shortened to 7 days | 5*-1 | -5 |
| 7/12/17 | Law | The "Guaranteeing the right to asylum and improving control of migration flows" action plan of 12 July 2017 states that persons refused asylum will systematically be issued with a removal decision." | 6*-1 | -6 |
| 3/7/16 | Detention | Prefectures can use house arrest to ensure that applicants under the Dublin procedure do not flee | 4*-1 | -4 |
| 7/29/15 | Accommodations | The spouse or children of a beneficiary of refugee or subsidiary protection may live with them | 6*1 | 6 |
| | | A third party may be present during an interview at OFPRA | 5*1 | 5 |
| | | Suspension of decision during the CDNA appeals | 4*1 | 4 |
| | | Improved assessment for vulnerable populations | 3*1 | 3 |
| | | Standardization and nationalization of reception conditions through the Guichet Unique (GUDA) | 1 | 1 |
| | | Standardization of the allowance system | 3*1 | 3 |
| | | Access to labor market after 9 months of residence | 8*1 | 8 |
| 6/26/13 | EU Regulation | Dublin III | 3*-1 | -3 |
| 4/23/13 | Accommodation | Minister of the Interior instructed OFPRA to provide temporary allowances to people under the Dublin procedure | 3 | 3 |

| 6/16/11 | Law | Illegal third country nationals in France are subject to removal after 30 days | 4*-1 | -4 |
|---------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----|
| | | To be naturalized, an indivudal must fully demonstrate knowledge of French language, history, culture, and society," and understand the civic principles of the country | 6*-1 | -6 |
| | | Foreign persons with abusive spouses are allowed protective temporary residence cards | 6*1 | 6 |
| 10/1/08 | EU Pact on Immigration and Asylum | Urges member states to not grant mass amenities to irregular migrants | 10*-1 | -10 |
| | | Extensions of the detention period of irregular immigrants for 18 months | 6*-1 | -6 |
| 11/20/07 | Law | Official creation of the CNDA asylum court | 3*1 | 3 |
| | | OFPRA placed under the Minister of the Interior | 1*0 | 0 |
| | | Foreigners admitted to France with children must sign a contract obligating "Republican integration" of their children | 5*-1 | -5 |
| | | Criminalization of individuals who provide assistance to irregular immigrants | 6*-1 | -6 |
| 7/1/07 | | Creation of the Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity, and co-development | 1*1 | 1 |