

INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MEDIA BY THE FRONT NATIONAL IN THEIR  
RACE TO POWER



AMELIE LEPRETRE

JULY 2017




INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MEDIA BY THE FRONT NATIONAL IN THEIR  
RACE TO POWER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
OF IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

BY  
AMELIE LEPRETRE

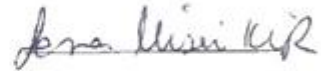
JULY 2017

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences



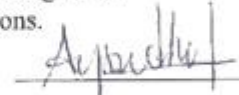
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ö. Osman DEMİRBAŞ  
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis  
for the degree of Master of Marketing Communication and Public Relations.



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sema MİSÇİ KİP  
Head of Department

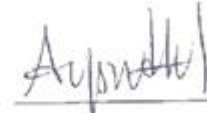
This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it  
is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of  
Master of Marketing Communication and Public Relations.




Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun AKAN  
Supervisor

Examining Committee Members

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun AKAN



Asst. Prof. Dr. İrem ÖZGÖREN KINLI



Asst. Prof. Dr. Zafer Fehmi YÖRÜK



## ABSTRACT

### INSTRUMENTALISATION OF MEDIA BY THE FRONT NATIONAL IN THEIR RACE TO POWER

Leprêtre, Amélie

Marketing Communication and Public Relations

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun Akan

July 2017

At first avoided by media, the Front National has now become a frequent visitor of television and radio sets, newspapers headlines and social media pages. The undemonisation of the Front National that has been undertaken years ago polished the facade of the party, which recorded a substantial increase of supporters. The aim of this study was to analyse the media strategies used by the Front National to transform the negative images connoted to their party into a respectable reputation. Subsequent to this their tense relationship to media and the uses they make of them were investigated. The study of their communication means, their normalisation methods and the reasons behind their growing popularity will contribute to unveil the confidence trick lying behind the party's normalisation. This thesis has been conducted through the analysis of French politicians, academicians and journalists' writings as well as through a content analysis focusing on nationalist radio interviews from 2013 to 2016. As perceived in the thesis since Marine Le Pen took the reins of the party six years ago she kept the party's communication under strict control. To counter traditional media which according to the Front National caricature their point of views, the Front National excelled at social media and is the most popular party online. They often portray themselves as victims of the elitist journalistic class that would reject them whereas they are regularly invited to join political debates. Media often drive them into a corner facing their own contradictions in the hope that it will expose the fraud of their undemonisation strategy. All in all despite their best efforts the Front National is still not considered as a mainstream party.

Key Words: Front National, media, politics, elections

## ÖZET

### FRONT NATIONAL'İN GÜÇ YARIŞINDA MEDYAYI ARAÇSALLAŞTIRMASI Leprêtre, Amélie

Pazarlama İletişimi ve Halkla İlişkiler  
Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. Aysun Akan

Temmuz 2017

İlk zamanlarda medyanın uzak durduğu Front National, şimdilerde televizyon, radyo, gazete manşetleri ve sosyal medyanın gündeminde sık sık yer almaya başladı. Yıllar önce başlayan Front National'ı iyi gösterme çabaları partinin dışarıdan görünüşünü değiştirip, partinin destekçilerinde büyük bir artış görülmesine neden oldu. Bu çalışmanın genel amacı, Front National partisine atfedilen olumsuz imgeleri saygın bir üne dönüştürmek için kullandığı medya stratejilerini analiz etmektir. Bu amaç çerçevesinde Front National'ın medyayla olan gergin ilişkileri ve medyayı amaçları çerçevesinde kullanışı analiz edildi. Partinin, normalleşme yöntemleri ve yaygınlaşan popülaritelerinin arkasındaki sebepler araştırılarak partinin sıradanlaştırılmasının arkasındaki sahtekarlığı ortaya çıkarmak hedeflendi. Bu tez çalışmasında Fransız siyasetçilerin, akademisyenlerin, gazetecilerin yazıları ve 2013-2016 yılları arasında FN'in konu ve konuk olduğu radyo röportajlarının içerik analizi yöntemiyle analiz edildi. Partinin lideri Marine Le Pen, altı yıl önce partinin kontrolünü aldığından beri partinin iletişimini sıkı kontrol altında tutuyordu. Front National, onlara göre, görüşlerini karikatürize eden geleneksel medyaya karşı sosyal medyada en popüler parti oldu ve üstünlük kurdu. Düzenli olarak siyasi tartışmalara davet edildikleri halde, kendilerini elit gazeteler sınıfı tarafından reddedilmiş kurbanlar olarak tasvir ettiler. Medya, partinin kendisini iyi gösterme sahtekarlığının ortaya çıkması umuduyla, genelde onları kendi çelişkileriyle karşı karşıya gelmeye zorladı. Sonuç olarak, bütün çabalarına rağmen, Front National hala daimi bir parti olarak görülmemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Front National, medya, siyaset, seçimler

To my twinsister Pauline for her careful proofreading and to my husband Dođancan  
for his relentless support



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Aysun Akan for her judicious advice and encouragement during this project.



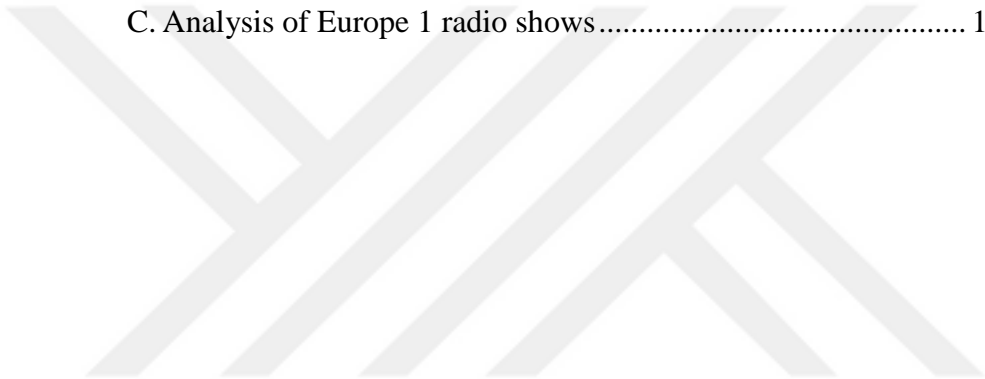


## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	iii
Özet .....	iv
Dedication .....	v
Acknowledgments .....	vi
Table of Contents .....	vii
Chapter	
1. Introduction.....	1
2. French Political Context .....	3
2.1 French Political Landscape .....	3
2.1.1 Front National.....	3
2.1.2 Republican Party .....	11
2.1.3 Socialist Party .....	14
2.1.4 Communist Party .....	16
2.2 Significance of Presidential Election .....	18
2.2.1 Primary Elections .....	18
2.2.2 Functioning of Presidential Elections.....	21
2.2.3 Importance of Presidential Elections.....	27
2.3 Political Support Base in France .....	33

2.3.1 Politics Popularity .....	33
2.3.2 According to Social Categories .....	35
2.3.3 Climate of Distrust .....	36
2.3.4 Front National Support Base .....	38
2.4 Current Political Environment in France.....	40
3. Media and Politics .....	42
3.1 Place of Media in French Society.....	42
3.1.1 Changes of Media through Time .....	42
3.1.2 Criticisms towards Media.....	47
3.2 Links between Media and Politics.....	51
3.2.1 Media Entwined with Democracy .....	51
3.2.2 Media as the 4 <sup>th</sup> Power .....	53
3.2.3 Creation of Infotainment .....	54
3.2.4 Media's Real Influence on Voters.....	56
4. Front National Uses of Media.....	59
4.1 Relationship between Front National and Media.....	59
4.1.1 Control of their Communication .....	59
4.1.2 Not a Regular Party .....	63
4.1.3 Role of Media in Popularisation.....	64
4.1.4 Journalists Put at Risk .....	68
4.2 Front National Media Plan of Action .....	70
4.2.1 Social Media and New Signs.....	70
4.2.2 Strategies .....	74
4.2.3 Media Have a Secondary Role .....	78
4.3 Case Study .....	80
4.3.1 Context of Radio.....	80
4.3.2 Methodology.....	82
4.3.3 Analysis .....	85

5. Conclusion .....	92
Bibliography.....	94
Appendices	
A. Analysis of RTL radio shows .....	100
B. Analysis of France Inter radio shows .....	101
C. Analysis of Europe 1 radio shows.....	102



## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The Front National always had a love-hate relationship with media. First ignored, then avoided at all costs and now regularly featured in the news, only a few can remain aloof when the nationalist subject is approached. And for good reason, born from the ashes of a violent xenophobic group the Front National has been dividing the political class for decades. Even when the extreme right is not represented in the media, a question prevail on all lips 'But what would be the position of the Front National?'. From there political stances have been formed in opposition to the Front National, a republican front consisted of more traditional parties swearing to block the extreme right ascent to power. But the thing is after successive economic crises, a high rate of unemployment and a climate of fear spread by terrorist attacks, the traditional parties such as the republicans or socialists are severely railed by most of the French population. Thriving in this climate of distrust the Front National is positioning itself as the perfect anti-establishment and anti-system party. According to them they would be the only one able to save France, endangered by permissive security measures and a total dependency on the European Central Bank. For their drastic policies to appear as conceivable offers, the Front National has undertook a huge undemonisation process since Marine Le Pen took the helm of the party in 2011. This undemonisation process, as she coined the term, aims at redeeming the Front National so that he could be considered as a regular party, not more controversial than any other political group. Demonisation literally means 'making into a demon' and this is what Marine Le Pen reproaches to politicians and media. According to her they leagued up against the Front National to tarnish its reputation by pretending it is a xenophobic, racist, homophobic and anti-Semitic

party. The Front National rejects these denominations in the first place and secondly vowed themselves to show what their true colors would be by undemonising the party through their media strategies. The goal of this undemonisation is to normalize the party, meaning that by making the Front National appear normal they would become socially acceptable. By claiming that others league up against them helps the Front National making a victim of themselves. These normalisation and victimisation process, which they are quite fond of, in return help them branching out to every electors who feel left out and abandoned by the current political parties that have been alternatively ruling the country for decades. In this way the Front National can appear as a conceivable choice for an election despite their controversial past.

At a time when a wave of populism mixed with nationalism is sweeping over Europe and the rest of the world several crucial votes have been taking place; the Brexit, the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States and others will follow. These important elections are shaping international relationships, domestic organisation, and many other elements. Even though times have changed, citizens should remember the events subsequent to the extreme right reaching executive powers in Europe less than a century ago. This thesis' goal is to provide a better understanding of the French extreme right and their main party the Front National. Moreover the study of their communication means, their normalisation methods and the reasons behind their growing popularity will contribute to unveil the confidence trick lying behind the party's normalisation. As several journalists seem to think exposing the ways the Front National takes advantage of media in their undemonisation process may hopefully be the response to counter it. This thesis has been conducted through the analysis of French politicians, academicians and journalists' writings as well as through a content analysis focusing on radio interviews with Front National members from 2013 to 2016. Firstly a summary of French political background and situation is given to better contextualise the elements favouring the Front National's rise. Secondly the relationship between media and politics in France has been reviewed to explain the ties linking them both and the assets at the service of the extreme right gained by using this relationship to gain credibility. The last part focuses on the tense relations shared by the media and the Front National as well as the media strategies they devised to one day become the first French anti-establishment party in charge of the biggest establishment there is, the presidential function.

## CHAPTER 2

### French Political Context

#### 2.1 French Political Landscape

##### 2.1.1 Nationalist Party

The French nationalist party called Front National has changed a lot since its creation in 1971 even if its leadership is still shared among the same family. The main nationalist party at that time was called Ordre Nouveau (New Order) and was consisted of young university students. They were always on the go to violently demonstrate their dissatisfaction with De Gaulle's politics of retreat in the Algeria War and the conduct of May 68<sup>1</sup>. They were discontent with each spectrum of French political scene and they had a bad reputation for being aggressive, not hesitating to use their fists to make their points across. However this reputation was prejudicial when Ordre Nouveau decided to establish itself as real party. Their 1500 students got themselves talked about but they were not carrying much weight on the political spectrum. Ordre Nouveau, which was preparing for the legislative elections of 1973, decided to create a sort of electoral cartel regrouping a maximum of small nationalist political groups, from ultraliberals, Catholics, anticommunists to neonazists, in order to increase their power. They also decided to appoint Jean-Marie Le Pen, who was deemed more respectable than other nationalist and who had a substantial political address book. Even though Le Pen had his fair share of arrest for fights and uproar, even in his adulthood, he still benefited from a more moderate image compared to the typical violent student. Le Pen was then used as the representative under the banner of the Front National which scored poorly in the elections. Consequently

---

<sup>1</sup> Huge socialist protest all over France, started by academicians, followed by workers that paralyzed the country for weeks.

Ordre Nouveau was dissolved, only remained Le Pen at the head of a party that he did not intend to create, but it allowed him to assert his power. His charismatic power and talent as an orator eclipsed all other nationalists' voices and all the small groups were forced to join the Front National or disappear. In the nineties the party was at his strongest point in terms of growing popularity and activists gathered to support their party by handing out leaflets and upholstered towns with Le Pen's posters. In 2002, for the first time and quite unexpectedly, the Front National reached the second tour of the presidential election because of a high rate of abstention. They would then lose to the Republicans but their arrival so close to power was considered as a fascist act and protests broke out in several cities. Adhering to the Front National gained again a negative connotation. The number of members of Front National remained the same but less and less members were willing to campaign publicly for their party with leaflets or posters. Between 2005 and 2011, Front National organized a huge purge among its executives for two reasons; one was to discard anyone who would be antagonistic to Marine Le Pen, the other one was to discard any radicals still preoccupied by the Second World War or the state of Israel. The double advantage for Marine Le Pen was that the two of them were usually matching. The Front National was no longer as her father intended it to be, a gathering refuge for all small nationalist groups willing to rally the Front National, but a true Marinism<sup>2</sup>. Marine Le Pen was officially elected at the head of the party in 2011 and deployed a brand new strategy so as to 'undemonize' the Front National. Externally her plan of action relies mainly on media and she appears frequently on television and radio talking about everything and nothing. It enabled the party to be normalized and conceived as a concrete alternative choice. Internally she fired all leaders of the party, even her father, who might have had radical remarks in the past and could have been judged too controversial for the majority of French people.

Front National does not belong on the political spectrum according to their own declarations. For Le Pen's family they cannot be considered as a rightist party and even less an extreme right party. In the nineties the party filled, and won, several lawsuits to drive this classification away. They stated they would be ready to undergo the same process to 'clear their name' over and over again if it was necessary not to be associated with republicans or extremists. To them they have nothing in common

---

<sup>2</sup> Play of words with her first name, people rallying under her banner because they did not have any choice

with an extreme right wing which can be characterized by nationalism, xenophobia, national preference and strong state policies. Far from being fascist, they would like to be considered as national-populists. In forty years their figure of speech remained the same. In their first program it is possible to recount some of Marine Le Pen's recent proposals such as an opposition to Europe, a tougher discipline in schools, or a defense of small merchants against big corporations. The basics of the Front National are well known and liked by their electorate. However the positioning of the party changed slightly over the years following the current events. Back when it was first created in 1973, their first program was evolving around the fight against communism, privileged agreements with the UK and the USA, repeal of Algeria independence... Marine Le Pen had to reinvent her father's party to adapt it to new concerns and to push it from receiving 1% of vote in the legislative elections of 1973 to 13,6 % in 2012.

The first change in their course of action was their pivotal view on power. Rebellious party at first, Front National had no intention to lead the country. They aimed at being the receptacle to all disgruntled people in France. Their quest was to exchange their views of the world to a greater number and to incite rebellion as well. They were against the government and its different forms of administration, or as Jean Marie Le Pen put it, they were against 'the establishment'. Consequently they could not accept to be a part of the government since they were not considering it as a reliable system. A change occurred in the late eighties when the number 2 of the Front National, Bruno Mégret, decided to normalize the party by deleting all outrageous words from nationalist speeches and programs. However Bruno Mégret could not succeed in giving a more approachable appearance to the party due to Jean Marie Len Pen numerous slips of the tongue. In 1987 he declared that the use of gas chamber by Nazis was a mere detail in the history of the Second World War, removing all chances of the party with him as a representative to enter governmental functions. On the contrary Marine Le Pen time and time again expressed her desire to accede to power through governmental functions to lead the country. Her Front National is no longer an insurgent organization but would like to be perceived as a normal party among others. To be branded 'against system', so as not to lose their electorate, but to still be considered as credible is one of the dilemma of the Front National. To polish their anti-system side, Marine Le Pen branded the party against banks and the elections process. Banks, according to her, are the ones in charge



nowadays and appoint their own men at the head of countries or organisation such as the European Central Bank. Moreover she is appalled by the elections process because it would systematically favor the same small oligarchic elite that have been bickering for power for decades. In order to counterbalance this against-system side of the Front National, Marine Le Pen is offering the principle of 'prioritizing' 'French' people to solve all society issues, especially unemployment.

Ordre Nouveau, the neofascist movement that created Front National was blatantly criticizing immigration from a racist angle in response to Algeria newly found independence. The first program of Front National was less incriminating towards immigrants. It was addressing immigration in terms of health, automatic screening of contagious diseases at the country's borders, and in terms of national unity. Indeed, Jean Marie Le Pen was asserting that the moral and material conditions in which extent immigration was permitted were shameful for the country and for the immigrants. At that time the party was not against immigration but it was supporting a stronger control of it to avoid immigrants living in disastrous conditions. The party was also campaigning against the creation of whole new villages created for the immigrants, which to them would ruin the national sense of unity. But a few years later, in 1978, Front National was displaying a new strong opposition to permissive immigration policies from a social angles claiming on posters that 'A million of unemployed persons is a million of a million immigrants too many. French people first.' This shift occurred in 1978 as a new strategic positioning. To turn the small nationalist group into an important party they had to take a strong stand on a public subject capable of rallying dissatisfied French people. The change of wordiness does not take away the present racism in their offers. As always immigrants are being treated as the mother of all evils; insecurity, unemployment, terrorism. Nowadays it would be impossible to flaunt such contempt for immigrants and the concept of national preference towards 'French' people has been turned into a concept of prioritization towards 'French' people in terms of jobs, social assistance and accommodation (Baltayan, 1998). After September 11<sup>th</sup> and the riots that ensued Jean-Marie Le Pen as a second tour candidate for the presidential elections in 2002, most executives of the party understood the need to alter the ideology of the party in answer to the changes in society. Today the Front National is following the path of Scandinavian neopopulist movement by proclaiming its faith in liberal values, a flexible but protective State and a denunciation of Islamism (Lecoeur, 2012).

In the first program there is no mention of religion yet it is nowadays one of the main thematic of the Front National. The fact that the party, which was at first filled with extreme right Catholics still supporting sovereignty and a king as a ruler, turned to add secularism to their program was a huge step towards normalisation. Nevertheless to protect its electorate the party should not become commonplace. That is why Marine Le Pen is pushing a reform asking for all hijabs, veils or kippahs to be removed from the public space. Since she knows it could never be accepted the party can still be perceived as different and offering extreme answers to society 'issues'. The Front National denounces Islamism, or what they call a 'radical Islamism', in the name of secularism. However the speech about immigrants stealing 'French' people their jobs is growing old. Consequently Marine Le Pen denouncing Islamism is presently a more suitable way to criticize immigration, which the party always fought against. In a way it prevents the party for being called out on xenophobia since they are using Republican values to undermine, not an immigrant but a religious extremist. The Front National is pushing a hotchpotch between secularism and Islam and is directing the arabo-muslim population in France as the sole cause for delinquency, intercommunity hatred, social deconstruction and insecurity. According to the Front National statements, they would be the only one to be the only one able to restore a sense of national unity and solidarity through national preference and extreme secularism. Nevertheless in a tense climate following terrorist attacks and misinformation, it is not said that everyone can make the difference between an immigrant and a religious extremist and the Front National is thriving on the fear of the unknown that they induced. Their words on Islamism echo their first program which was pointing out the communist party as an internal enemy coalescing with a greater powerful external enemy. Whether it is communism or Islamism, the national party is warning France that they must unite against a common enemy under the Front National banner to avert an impending doom.

One of the common points between all extreme nationalist parties in France is the rejection of the principles gained from the French Revolution in 1789. The Front National was never royalist but often claimed the need of a strengthening control over the Parliament. This measure was pushed by traditional Catholics which were rather influent in the seventies and eighties among the ranks of Front National. However a generational shift occurred at the same time than Catholics lost gradually their influence, and the foundation of the Republic became the reference for all

parties. Marine Le Pen formalised that change in the party's policies during her inauguration speech<sup>3</sup> at the head of the nationalist bloc in 2011. The creation of the Republic and the values on which the society as French people know it is based on, could appeal to a greater number compared to the obsolete traditionalist catholic notions. When it comes to mores, Marine Le Pen is trying to get a more modern image than her father. However she strongly disagreed with the same sex marriage legal text and same sex couples being able to adopt children. Correspondingly to the traditionalist catholic trend among the supporters of the Front National, the party always aimed at abrogating the Veil law which was passed in 1975 and decriminalized abortions. Marine Le Pen, in opposition with her father's position, is not reconsidering the law, which became widely accepted. However she wants to stop the full reimbursement, by the state, of what she calls 'comfort abortions', meaning abortions used as the sole contraceptive (Bastié, 2016).

The vision of the party changed the most when it comes down to economical propositions. Before the fall of the Berlin wall the economical part of the Front National program was ultraliberal in answer to the communist ascent which they were considering as a major threat. In the nineties the party took a social turn to attract a vaster electorate which could have been discouraged by ultraliberal measures reducing the domains of the government to a sovereign function. New catchphrases were flourishing such as 'Social matters are Front National', 'Neither Right, Neither Left' to address those on a modest income (Front National's website). This period also marks the collapse of the French communist party and the Front National hastened to fill the gap as the exclusive remonstrant party in France against the republicans and the socialists. However it is not because they filled the communist gab that they do branch out to all socio-professional categories. The communist addition was just another branch to their electorate tree linking to every dissatisfied type of French workers. Nowadays the party is not anticapitalistic. They recognize the market economy and the benefits of competition if it is done loyally. Nevertheless Marine Le Pen is positioning herself behind the social line and wants to be seen as the defendant, the savior, of the 'invisible' ones, who may be suffering through an open economy (Forcari, 2011). In her previous election manifesto in 2012 she was opposed to the European Union and to its single currency. She even stood up

---

<sup>3</sup> 15 uses of the word republic in a 1 hour long speech.

for public service which thoroughly represents the shift between ultraliberal measures and social partisan (Front National's Programme, 2012). She wants to be perceived as a direct link between the government and the citizens, beyond corrupted elites. Her apology of a closed nationalism seeking for a legendary sense of national unity is combining social values of left wing and political values of the right wing. Through these fluctuations we can see that the Front National election platform did change over the years. But it is doubtful that the party itself, which was born from a neo-Nazi group, underwent a true ideological change. It is much more likely that these changes are flowery speeches, strategical options chosen to increase the election scores and polish the image of the Front National. In France liberalism is negatively perceived and people are more drowned towards leftist speeches. Jacques Chirac did not get re-elected because he was presenting himself as a Reagan disciple but because he was thriving on what he called the 'social fracture'<sup>4</sup>. During 2007 presidential campaign Nicolas Sarkozy kept quoting Jean Jaurès<sup>5</sup>, one of the main historical figures of the French Left. It is not surprising then that the Front National is using a socialist angle to gain to power, especially after numerous economic crises. The French extreme right wing has always been disorderly and unstable. Its turning points are the results of external events and individual actions, not political congresses nor ripening. Indeed despite appearances and the Front National frequent meetings, there is no real discussions among the party members as the Le Pen family dictates their procedures to follow since the creation of the Front National.

Nevertheless the Front National cannot push too far away their standardization process or else they would lose the electorate they already won over with more aggressive propositions. When Marine Le Pen was campaigning for the presidential elections of 2012, her discourses were inclined to condemn technocrats and their stranglehold on euro (Poingt, 2016). However during meetings it was when she was tackling themes such as immigration, insecurity, and common people that the rooms were more receptive. Still today the Front National is struggling to be seen

---

<sup>4</sup> He used this expression during the 1995 presidential election, it shows the gap between those who are integrated in the society and those who are socially excluded due to economic precariousness and distress in council estates.

<sup>5</sup> "I feel as I am Jean Jaurès' heir. I want to put back at the center of French political life the values that the Left betrayed. Nowadays' Left does not have much to do with Jean Jaurès' one. They abandoned the nation in the arms of the extreme right. They confused liberty with laxity and they denied Jaurès' Republic."

as a regular party and not a sort of cultural lobby. For now they only represent 0,3% at the National Assembly seats, this number should be taken cautiously as the next legislative elections might result in a high rise of nationalists deputies and senators. Even if their number is relatively low, not one political debate can be sparked without broaching the extreme right subject. This is the result of the party embodying the touchy topics worrying society such as immigration or the 'made in France'. The official program for the presidential election of 2017 was only published at the end of February. This delay can be explained by the necessity to adjust it to the other parties' propositions. As stated before it would be very risky for the party to alter their previous positioning so the odds were that the party's election manifesto would be similar to the previous one pushed toward in 2012 and similar to the ideology of the party. In the previous presidential election the Front National could be drawn closer to the republican party since they share some common economical ideas. Nevertheless it could also be distinguished from other rightist parties by their stand on public services, immigration and religions. For Marine Le Pen public services have a social mission that private companies could not handle. Their role is to ensure no citizen is being sidelined. Because of this the state must be given sufficient means to see through that task. In return the state must constantly look for new ways to make the means more efficient (Le Pen, 2017). When it comes to religions, instead of putting forward the principles of secularism like most parties do, the Front National is considering that even though religion could be an obstacle to individual freedom, directed to 'oppressed Muslim women', it also brings answers to existential interrogations. Deriving from religion, the homosexuality question is also differentiating the Front National's manifesto. They claim that homosexuality, although it is not embarrassing in itself, it is a nuisance when it is displayed in public places. The Front National encourages a traditional image of family, with a father, a mother and children, the only dynamic able to properly raise a child according to them. The Front National has asserted for years its intention to abrogate the jus soli law, which was granting the right to French citizenship based on being born on France soil. Nationalists only recognize the birth right, stipulating that to be French it should be required to have French parents, if not the nationality cannot be granted (Front National's website). Consequently immigrants without any French family members are unwelcome because they can never become French for the Front National. The party stated that immigrants belong to their own countries, for the sake

of France but also for the sake of immigrants whose integration cannot be guaranteed.

### 2.1.2 Republican Party

The major right party in France changed its name numerous times in the past. Since its creation by the general De Gaulle in 1947, the party subdivided, gathered together again and changed its name six times. The RPF (Rassemblement du Peuple Français, Gathering of French People) at first had for objectives to fight against exclusive parties' organisation, the spread of communism and to promote a new constitutional reform which would strengthen the executive power. From the RPF, to the UNR (Union pour la Nouvelle République, Union for the New Republic), to the UDR (Union pour la Défense de la République, Union for the Defense of the Republic), to the RPR (Rassemblement Pour la République, Gathering for the Republic), to the UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, Union for a Popular Movement), and finally to Les Républicains (The Republicans), they all have two things in common. They all share Gaullist origins and principles, and their change in names occurred when the leaders of the party wanted to breathe a new life into a party which reputation had been tarnished by political scandals or had been eclipsed by the socialist party. Even if the name Les Républicains might bring to mind the American republican party they are quite fundamentally different. The Republic, to which refers the name, has been conceived by Maximilien de Robespierre in the XVIIIth century as a unique and indivisible entity which must manage the life of its citizens (De Robespierre, 2016). On the contrary in the United States, the State should not interfere with its citizens' lives whose freedom is primordial. Furthermore on the political scope French right party would be considered as the Democrat party and the Front National would be considered as the Republican one.

When it comes to positioning, their opinions have been consistent and remained the same for several decades even if the changes of names or leaders could have altered them. The republicans consider themselves ideologically closer to the socialist party rather than to the Front National. Indeed they condemn the lack of republican value of the Front National's programme and always team up with the socialist party to defeat the Front National in elections. It is not reciprocal for the socialist party which considers the republican party closer to the Front National. However right and left major parties came together several times to prevent the Front

National to gain seats during legislative elections. However both republicans and socialists are quite different in their beliefs. Republicans consider globalization as a chance, since it opens new markets for France to thrive in. They desire a free circulation of goods and less regulatory constraints for French companies to stand a chance against foreign competition. They also wish to decrease taxes to allow companies and individuals to invest more money, which would at the end create more jobs and opportunities. To them if a company has less social benefits charges and less regulations, managers will be less hesitant to hire and the company will end up even more competitive. They consider that financially helping poor people too much encourage them to prey on the system. They aim at giving them less money and instead making them aware of their responsibilities. Therefore they will rely more on themselves and less on the State. As for the state, they consider public services to be too costly and to hinder its efficiency. To reduce this inefficiency they want to set up private companies as direct competitors of public companies<sup>6</sup>. Even if they would keep an eye on them, the competition would force them to be more competent. As for more societal issues, they consider that believer or not, individuals should not neglect the moral values carried by religions. Even if against same-sex marriages and adoption by homosexual partners they support a change of views in society towards LGBT communities to end discriminations. The want to preserve the abortion right but insist on raising awareness among women on the topic that abortion is not a trivial act. They are against cannabis legislation and fight against the use of all types of drugs.<sup>7</sup> They consider teenagers as responsible for their actions and wish for more discouraging sanctions to reduce delinquency.

On the subject of immigration they aim at ending clandestine immigration and wish for immigrants that if France grants them new rights, it also grants them new duties toward its nation. In their opinion only French people should be given the right to vote, and to become French an immigrant should show his/her emotional attachment to France, make efforts to be integrated into society and should voluntarily follow the process to gain French nationality. However the recent migrant crisis has divided the party between the strong leaders of the party hardening their speeches and a small part of Catholics wishing them to be more merciful. The

---

<sup>6</sup> In France, the post office or the railway transportation are under the supervision of the state.

<sup>7</sup> Les Républicains' health project for the 2017 legislative elections.

republicans used to cite Angela Merkel as an example but had to distance themselves from the German chancellor when she decided upon a more charitable course of action concerning immigrants. The general public opinion in France is opposed to welcoming immigrants and the right party deems it unnecessary to disagree with the popular opinion. Moreover being opposed to immigrants is the trademark of the Front National and any promise of help towards migrants would categorize them as being saintly by the nationalists. At first they were proclaiming that immigrants had to be saved from the sea and taken cared of humanely while they were processing their asylum application on the French soil. Nevertheless their discourse quickly changed following several terrorist attacks and the rise of racism and fear.<sup>8</sup> Their statement nowadays is that only firmness can help ending this humanitarian crisis and that it would be pure madness to allocate dozens of thousands of immigrants in countries where there are no job offers for them. Only a few countries would be eligible for requesting an asylum application such as Libya or Syria but people's requests from Balkan countries which are not ruled anymore by a dictator should be turned out automatically. Several leaders' remarks have been tempered by their spokesperson which realized their positioning was too close from the nationalists.

François Fillon has been elected as the official candidate to represent the right party in the coming 2017 Presidential elections. His programme conveys the Republicans party values even if deemed a bit too extreme by members of his own party. His main propositions were to raise the age required to retire to 65 years old, cut the 35 hours/week work time to a maximum of 48 hours, lower taxes for companies, cut 10% civil servants jobs, offer a referendum concerning immigration and concerning political organisation of French counties and regions, build more prisons, institute more sanctions in schools, forbid to preach in Arabic in mosques, make large retailers accept the terms of farmers, raise the army's budget, reopen nuclear power station that had been closed by the last president and lastly maintain the laws against illegal downloads.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Les Républicains' programme for the 2017 legislative elections.

<sup>9</sup> Les Républicains' programme for the 2017 presidential election.



### 2.1.3 Socialist Party

The French socialist party as we know it today was born in 1905 from the merger of socialist trends and the French branch of the Second International, a labour party. The union gathered a large electoral base composed of farmers, labourers, craftspersons, civil servants and intellectuals. Jean Jaurès became the symbol of French socialism and he was working to find compromises between the republic and socialism, between patriotism and internationalism, between Marxist ideas and the French Revolution. The party struggled during decades to get itself heard against the domination of Gaullist trends and the republican party. However after some successful legislative elections in the seventies they discovered that by gathering all small leftist groups under the socialist banner they could pile up enough votes to become the first party of the country (Villate, 2005). Yet their newly found success was short because the communist party, which was particularly popular at that time, quickly distanced itself from the socialist party. Without them the socialist party struggled to reach a majority and getting the approval of the most radical communists on the socialist election platform became a crucial task for the socialist party. In 1981 François Mitterrand was elected as the new president of the republic. It was the first time that a leftist president was elected under the Vth Republic. Several propositions of his program, such as the suppression of the death penalty, a raise of the minimum wage, the possibility to retire at 60 years old, were quickly adopted at the beginning of his mandate and popularized him. Despite international economic crisis and the feebleness of French companies that forced him to follow stricter economic policies he would later be reelected for a second mandate. But a growing unpopularity of the party pressured the government into forming the first coalition between the right and left parties. The socialist president picked Jacques Chirac as a Prime Minister from the republican party on the 20 March 1986 to appease citizens.

After the World Trade Center terrorist attacks a wave of fear did not spare France and the Front National thrived on this tragedy. On the 21<sup>th</sup> of April 2002 the results of the first round of the presidential elections deeply shook the political class. Lionel Jospin, the socialist candidate, 16,18%, is beaten by Jean-Marie Le Pen, 16,86%, who is representing the Front National, presidential elections results in 2002. For the first time an extreme right party reached the second round of a presidential election. The socialist party was then forced to rally behind the republican's candidate Jacques Chirac, who scored 19, 88% during the first round, to counter the Front National as

much as possible. After these failure socialists reconstructed their party, elected new younger leaders, campaigned for more seats in the Parliament and ten years later on the 15 May 2012 a new socialist candidate was elected, François Hollande.

The socialist party positioning is a direct opposition to the republican party and to the Front National on several fronts. Socialists have strong opinions about financial issues and reckon for example that taxes should be lowered for poor and middle class people whereas on the other hand they should be raised for the richest companies and individuals. This united impetus would in return help the State to fund public services. For companies they are planning on commanding the law on social progress and increasing the cost of hiring for companies that are gaining profit. The difference between right and left is quite distinct. Furthermore on social subjects they advocate an equality of rights for same-sex couples who should be able to display their homosexuality if they feel like it (Lecaplain, 2017). Socialists also defend the right for women to liberally and freely get an abortion or the legalization of cannabis which should be, as for alcohol, used in moderation. The socialist party recognizes that delinquency is developed in difficult situations such as a deteriorated family setting, unemployment, a lack of integration in society or bad living conditions in ghettos. However leftists do not overlook all delinquency acts due to their context and preach for a fair combination of discouraging sanctions and prevention exercises to efficiently challenge delinquency. Immigration is the topic on everyone's lips for the coming presidential election after several terrorist attacks in France in the past two years. Socialists demand that every immigrant, who has been living in France for a long period of time, should be granted the right to vote, at least for local elections. They are also aiming at facilitating the acquisition of French nationality. They are not against immigration and judge that fighting against unemployment would help the integration of immigrants who would not become withdrawn of society. By fighting against discriminations the rights of immigrants would be respected according to socialists. The official socialist candidate for the coming elections, Benoît Hamon, was appointed on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017, and their official election manifesto following those lines was released quickly afterwards.

#### 2.1.4 Communist Party

The history and popularity of the French communist party is intimately linked to international events. In 1920 communists left the socialist party to found their own party, feeling as their opinion was under-represented in large party gathering voices of all leftist groups. At first the communist party display revolutionary propositions, they were antimilitarist, internationalist and pro-Bolsheviks. They wished to overthrow the bourgeois class and their radical speeches cut them off from the rest of the French leftist parties. The number of communist adherents quickly fell down from 131 000 to 52 000 in two years but the movement attracted new intellectuals such as Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard (Santamarina, 1999). To fight against the rise of fascism the communist party joined back the socialist party in 1930, however they were aligning themselves with Stalin's politics and they were supporting the germano-sovietic pact. Therefore their party was forced to be winded up by the government and the communist organization became underground. The head of the party quickly left for the USSR after that. When the USSR was attacked by Hitler in 1941, French communists decisively joined the resistance and entered the National Council of the Resistance. Drawing on this active part in the resistance, the communist party became for the first and only time the most popular party in France with 500 000 adherents. They stayed a part of the government until 1947 where they were excluded at the beginning of the cold war. Their popularity remained strong nevertheless despite the revolutionary theories and the political isolation until soviet tanks invaded Budapest and Prague. From the sixties to the nineties the communist party tried to overcome their lack of following by allying themselves to the socialist party. This demanded to them to conform themselves to less radical propositions and to stick to the same goals as the socialist party. Nowadays the communist party is still a part of the French political landscape even if it is relegated to a position of secondary importance now that the Front National usually scores higher than the communists at various elections. The leaders of the party although less extreme than during the rise of the USSR are pushing utopian propositions and focusing on the living conditions of the middle class. The party took a bend in the nineties when they decided to no longer only represent the laborers but to also represent France in its whole diversity. The decrease of interest for the communist party can be explained by their growing lack of interest for the working class which now feels more represented

by the Front National or by the Parti Ouvrier, the French Workers' party (Mischi, 2015). By trying to disassociate themselves from Stalinism while rejecting workerism the communist party lost its main electorate. Moreover by associating themselves with the socialist party to gain more voters, communists got trapped by becoming more and more liberal to compete with republicans. They recently decided to separate themselves again from the socialist party to preserve their leftist image.

The positions of the communist party are usually quite similar to the socialist party but they differ on some points that are causes close to the heart of communists. At first internationalists, French communists consider now that globalisation is a huge threat. According to them it exacerbates the exploitation and pollution of poor countries and the relocation of industries are destroying employment in richer countries. The communist party pushes democratic international institutions that would protect the rights of the populations and not companies'. They also wish to increase taxes for international companies to support the development of third world countries. The place of the State is important for the extreme left that wants to make sure that anyone in the country is provided enough in health care, social aid, allocations to live decently<sup>10</sup>. For communists the number of civil servants jobs should be increased and more money should be allocated for these services so that every user, no matter its position in society, could have access to high quality services, in terms of health, education, culture, water, energy, communication or public transports. The communist party states that public services have a social mission and should not be turned into money-making processes. On more societal topics communists aims at fighting against religious moral which would prevent people from freely living and thinking. As for the extreme left party, delinquency is to them the result of difficult living conditions, unemployment, family issues, difficult integration, and ghettoization. But to get lasting results against delinquency prevention would not be enough. Communists aim at attacking the living conditions stated above to block the increase of misconducts. The communist party also considers that troubles linked to immigration do not originate from the immigrants but from the social, economic, historical context in which the immigration takes place. They ask for the rights of immigrants to be respected whether they are in a regular situation or not.

---

<sup>10</sup> Front de Gauche's programme for the 2012 presidential and legislative elections.

## 2.2 Significance of Presidential Elections

### 2.2.1 Primary Elections

A primary election aims at designating a candidate of a political party for an election, in here for the 2017 presidential election. Primary elections are relatively new since they have been introduced by the socialist party in 1995. The aim was to let the militants choose which candidate would represent the party for the presidential elections in case of internal conflicts with the leaders of the party. At that time the primary elections were automatically 'closed' ones. Meaning you could only vote for the candidate if you were an adherent of the party; if you had the party's card after paying a cheap subscription. Nowadays, all main parties mixed, only half a million French have an up to date party's card. Even though France was never a strong adherent militant country<sup>11</sup>, twenty years ago being an adherent was a bit more popular. Before internet's democratization and the advent of social media, an adhesion was a sure way to get in touch with others militants, to organise campaigns and to regularly get information about the party. Close elections were again used by leftist parties, socialist party, French communist party, Europe Ecology – the greens party, in all the following presidential elections. According to a Bonaparte's tradition, rightist parties choose a leader among themselves, usually the president of the party without suggesting a choice to their militants. Therefore rightist parties tended to overlook this process until the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as the official representative of the republican party for the presidential election of 2007. Primary elections became part of France mores after a decade, consequently Republican adherents became well-inclined towards casting their own opinion to elect their presidential representative.

'Opened' primary elections started in 2011 with the Europe Ecology – The Greens party being the first one to organize one to designate their candidate for the presidential elections of 2012. They were then followed a year after by other leftist parties such as the socialist party and the radical party of the left. This type of primary elections is no longer reserved for a party's adherent but it is open to anyone who is on the electoral roll. The only conditions to vote if you are not an adherent is to sign a charter stating you respect the values of the aforesaid party, and to pay a

---

<sup>11</sup> Except in critical times such as during the Liberation or the protests of May 68.

low subscription<sup>12</sup>. The interest of this system is to designate a candidate with a higher legitimacy that if he was chosen by only the adherents, which are few in France. The voters leave their contact details and can then be contacted again for the presidential elections awareness. Moreover the subscription is then given as fund to the candidate for his presidential campaign. Opened elections are also helpful to clear out the party's rising star(s) even though they are not the president of party or his/her people. It gives a more egalitarian chance to run for presidency even though you are not at the head of a party. Bills supervising opened primary elections did not come to a successful conclusion yet. Consequently there is no law regulating the organisation of open elections to the whole electoral roll and parties have to manage on their own to get the electoral roll and coordinate polling stations.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the absence of regulation induces the absence of public endowment, which renders a very expensive cost of organisation. It explains the difference between the prices of the subscriptions among parties. A less popular party like Europe Ecology – The Greens that gathered 25 000 voters in 2011 had to ask for a higher subscription, 10 €, to cover for the cost of the organisation.

For the presidential election of 2017, the two main parties both decided to organize opened primary elections. Some might argue that not having a proclaimed leader and having to go through a vote to pick one might make the party seem weak. Others than it is a valuable chance for a symphatiser to engage in political life even though he did not take the time to officially adhere to the party. However primary elections are mostly well-perceived in France. The only critics raised by this process concerns symphatisers being able to vote for an opposite party. Parties mainly wish for their own symphatisers to stay in their lanes since signing the values charters would be a deception and that they should not be concerned by others candidates. The establishment of primary elections also conducts a citizen to actually vote four times instead of two to elect a President, two times for his desired primary elections, so it could be even more than four, and two times for the presidential elections. Because of this at the first round of the primary election an elector must vote while anticipating the result of the third poll, the first round of the presidential election, to make his choice.

---

<sup>12</sup> 1€ to 10€ according to the party.

<sup>13</sup> National Assembly bill to modernize the presidential elections rules.

There was no primary election for the Front National. The president of the party has been automatically designated as the official candidate for the presidential election. This can be explained by the fact that being a less popular party, the presidents<sup>14</sup> of the Front National are the most well-known nationalist politicians in France. Therefore they have more chances to attract voters, being already well established in the French political landscape as the embodiment of the nationalist school of thought.

The republican party open primary elections took place on the 20 and 27th of November. With two rounds they chose a common candidate to represent the Republican side in the upcoming presidential election with candidates standing from the classic Republicans party, from the Christian Democratic Party and from the National Center of Independents and Peasants party.<sup>15</sup> The candidates remaining after the first round (20<sup>th</sup> of November) were Alain Juppé (28, 6% with 1. 156. 266 votes) and François Fillon who was by far leading (44, 2% with 1 786 951). François Fillon then won the second round on the election with 66, 5% of the votes.

Usually the runner-up President, who can run for the elections two times consecutively, is usually chosen as the party's candidate for the second election. Consequently François Hollande should have been designated as the socialist representative for this year elections. However due to a record of unpopularity among French citizens and the members of his own party, it was hinted as soon as one year after the beginning of his mandate that primary election will take place among the party to select a more suitable representative of the socialist party. Their open primary elections took place on the 22th and 29th of January 2017. With two rounds they chose a common candidate, Benoît Hamon, to represent the Socialist side in the upcoming presidential election with candidates standing from the classic socialist party, from the union of democrats and ecologists party, from the radical party of the left, from the ecologist party and from the new deal party.<sup>16</sup>

The extreme left front is a political label but not a party in itself. It consists of the French communist party and the left party, extreme left to left party, and other minor parties with similar ideologies. They decided to join their forces to designate a

---

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Marie le Pen and then his daughter Marine Le Pen since 2011.

<sup>15</sup> The primary election charter for 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Parti socialiste primary election's results.

candidate for the primary election that they see fits best to run later for the Presidential elections. The political intent to gather small parties to echo a shared opinion in unison nevertheless turned flat since they still could not agree on a candidate. Three men could have been endorsed by the Front de Gauche; Jean-Luc Mélenchon, André Chassaigne or Pierre Laurent. Jean-Luc Mélenchon already ran for President in 2012 representing the Front de Gauche and gained a surprisingly amount of support for a communist, reaching 11, 1% of votes in the first round<sup>17</sup>. In the polls he is presumed to get ahead of the socialist party if François Hollande was its representative, which is unprecedented in modern French political history. However a good speaker Jean-Luc Mélenchon is, his bold statement made him suffer the wrath of journalists, other politicians and from members of his own party. Due to this he decided to run for the primary election independently of the Front de Gauche and many communist personalities are pleading for the Communist Party to endorse him again as their representative. Pierre Laurent, the leader of the French Communist Party expressed his desire to endorse either the winner of the socialist party primary election if it is Arnaud Montebourg, Jean-Luc Mélenchon or a French Communist Party candidate. In this last scenario André Chassaigne or Pierre Laurent might have ran to represent the party. Pierre Laurent organized a first vote for the adherents to choose between these three choices in November 2016 and the majority, 53,69% voted to choose a French Communist Party to represent them. A close primary election took place at the end of November among the party to designate their own candidate, judging that endorsing Jean-Luc Mélenchon would do them a disservice.

There are many other different parties which are partially represented in the Parliament. They are gravitating from extreme left to extreme right. Their lack of mainstream popularity can be explained by their mild politics as center parties, or that their preoccupations do not appeal to everyone like for example Europe Ecologie - Les Verts, Europe Ecology – The Greens, or Lutte Ouvrière Laborer Struggle.

### 2.2.2 Functioning of Presidential Elections

The President of the Republic is elected through a direct universal suffrage for a 5 years mandate that can only be renewed one time consecutively. The President fulfils his functions at the Elysée Palace, which is the French President's

---

<sup>17</sup> Presidential election results for 2012.



official residence. The voting system is a two-round first-past-the-post system. This system has been chosen to bestow a democratic legitimacy in touch with extensive powers on the head of state. The voting system was conceived on the principle that the powers of the President are not bestowed upon him when he is elected but verge on from his own expertise and skills, which would justify in return his election. The electoral base directly votes by secret ballot on his own to elect a new President and they can only vote for one candidate per round. To be elected at the first round a candidate must gather the absolute majority of the votes or 50% of the votes plus one vote, as declared in official French administration website. Nevertheless this never happened so far since the utmost majority ever reached was 44, 6% for the General De Gaulle in the 1965 election. A second ballot has always been required for a presidential election. In order that an elective representative could gather this majority, the seven article of the Constitution stipulates that only two candidates are allowed to run for the second round of the election, those two candidates being the ones who received the most votes during the first round. The second round takes place the following Sunday of the first round and the candidate gathering the absolute majority of the votes is elected President of the Republic. The newly elected president does not assume his position as soon as he or she is elected. The mandate of the sorting president finishes ten days after the second round and an inauguration ceremony takes place before the new president takes office. There are almost 45 millions of voters in France, called to the ballot boxes. For cyber-security reasons the electronic vote for French citizens living abroad has been cancelled for the 2017 Presidential Elections, which represent almost 1 million votes. To be able to vote an elector must be over the age of legal majority, dispense the French nationality, be in full possession of his or her civil and political rights, and lastly be associated with a municipality, as declared in official French administration website. The president of the Constitutional Council revealed that the closing time of the polling stations will be pushed from the usual 6pm to 7pm and 8pm in big cities, to restrict the premature disclosure dangers of the first incomplete results. The Constitutional Council is the ultimate judge of the presidential election and on the day of the vote they send 1400 magistrates carrying out checks on the correctness of the polls. Their duty is to visit the polling stations to control that the legislation is being followed and that no administrative documents, ballot papers or voting booths are missing. Each polling station consists of a president, at least two assessors and a secretary. The polling

stations are supervised by the mayors, deputy mayors, town councilors or by default by towns' electors' picked by the mayor. The assessors and secretaries are also chosen among the towns' voters. The polling places' members must remain neutral all long so as not to influence the voters in any way. During all the electoral operations at least three members of the polling station must be present at all times as indicated in official French administration website. Before the opening of the stations, the members arrange the candidates' ballot papers, check that the ballot boxes are empty and close them. If there are voting machines, the staff must make sure that they are working and that they are reset. During the election the members must check the identity and registration on the electoral list of every voter, their mandatory passing through the polling booths, their insertion in the ballot box of a single envelop and lastly the voters' signatures. After the polls closing, the staff tallies the signatures, opens the ballot boxes and checks that the number of envelopes coincides with the number of signatures. Then the counting of ballot papers and the breakdown of votes take place in the presence of scrutineers who are common voters wishing to be there. Next a secretary writes an irrevocable statement and the president of the polling place can announce the results and display them in the room.

There are three administrative formalities that must be completed to approve of a candidacy according to the official French administration website. Firstly a candidacy can only be accepted if it is sponsored by at least 500 citizens holding elective mandates defined by the organic law. Those picked citizens must be mayors, Congressmen, senators, European parliamentarians, regional councilors, departmental councilors, members of the Corsican Assembly or members of Overseas Territories Assemblies. A candidate can only be successful if among his 500 featured sponsors, 30 different counties or overseas territories are represented without more than 10% of the signatures coming from the same counties or overseas territories. Theoretically there are 45 000 proposers who could statistically endorse 80 candidates for the presidential elections. The candidates have at their disposal four weeks to collect their 500 signatures, even though many candidates start months before to amass promises of signatures. The names and the titles of the signatories are then unveiled to the general public by the Constitutional Council publishing them in the official journal. It is this council that establishes the list of the official list of the candidates after having checked if all the admissibility conditions are fulfilled. As soon as that list is published the presidential campaign is officially launched. This

500 signature system was created to number of applications and if it worked efficiently in the eighties and nineties with a maximum of 9 candidates per presidential elections, it is now on its last legs with a record of 16 candidates at the following elections in 2002. Moreover the system might be prejudiced in favor of the main parties, such as the socialist party or the republican party, against small independent candidates. Since the names of the signatories are published, mayors might feel threatened to vote for a small candidate or for any candidate at all due to possible reprisal in coming municipal elections. A mayor might also feel pressured to sign for the candidate of the most popular political party in its town's region by fear that some of his grants might be cut off in retaliation for giving his or her signature to another candidate.

Secondly, while applying for the first round of the elections, the candidates must also send to the Constitutional Council a full declaration on their patrimonial situation and commit to give another one at the end of their mandates. This declaration, transmitted to the High Authority for the transparency of public life, particularly focus on the private properties of the candidates. As for before 2017 only the declaration of the candidate, who would have been elected as the President would have been published afterwards through the Council. Nevertheless since 2017 and for the first time, the patrimonial declaration of all the candidates authorized to compete will be published before the first round of the elections starts. This declaration will have to be renewed two months preceding the end of the mandate or one month following that end so as to observe the changes of the estate.

The electoral campaign is funded through a public financing, coordinated by the organic law, and through a private financing. Private financings come from the political parties' subscriptions and from donations given by private persons. Those donations are limited to 4600 € for each patron and every donation superior or equal to 150€ must be made through check, bank transfer or debit card. Lastly, an account of the campaign expenses must be managed all along the presidential campaign and must be submitted at the latest on the ninth Friday after the second round of the presidential election. The National Commission of Campaign Accounts and Political Financing inspects them and check for example that the legal limit of expenditures has been respected. The spending's ceiling is set at 16,851 million euros for each authorized candidates for the first round, 22,509 million euros for the two candidates present at the second round. The upper limits, which are usually reappraised every

three years, have not been increased since 2012 due to the public administrations shortfall. In the event of transgression, a candidate must face monetary and criminal sanctions if he goes over the upper limit and he must pay back the overspend total to the Treasury. In case of litigation with the Commission's verdicts, the opposition party can appeal to the Constitutional Council. The accounts must thoroughly trace back the incomes' origin and the occasioned spending. A candidate cannot handle the account himself but must delegate this task to a financial agent. A flat-rate repayment of electoral campaign costs is anticipated and must never exceed the spending announced by the candidates. For the first round and for the candidates who received less than 5% of the votes, the repayment amounts at the most to 4,75% of the ceiling, for the year of 2017 it represents 800 423 euros. For the ones who received more than 5% of the votes it amounts at the maximum to 47,5% of the expenditures limit, which represents this year 8 004 225 euros. For the two candidates still standing for the second round, it amounts to 47,5% of the limit, representing at most a 10 691 775 euros reimbursement.<sup>18</sup>

The official electoral campaign, which roughly lasts thirty days, must be differentiated from the electoral competition, which gives rhythm to the French political life for a year before the actual election. The official electoral campaign starts on the second Monday preceding the first round of the presidential election and ends the day before the ballot at precisely midnight. It starts again on the day the names of the two last candidates battling it out are published in the Government Gazette, and finishes at midnight the day before the second round of the presidential election. The electoral competition lasts much longer since the potential candidates announce their desire to run several months before the beginning of the official electoral campaign. A presidential election has strict rules concerning the use of media in this politically charged time. The State must ensure that the totality of the authorized candidates receive the same quality of treatment from the public authorities, no matter from what political parties they are from. The government must guarantee them a minimum billposting, a minimum air time on radio and television, and that their manifesto's sending is taken care of. For the presidential election of 2017, the principle of equity replaced the principle of air time and speaking time equality during the electoral competition. However during the official electoral

---

<sup>18</sup> These information could be found on the French Administrative site.

campaign the principle of speaking time equality is maintained. The principle of equity means that radio stations and television channels must grant, to the candidates and their support bases, air times or speaking times that take accounts of their representativeness, through the results of recent elections. The media must also take into consideration the candidates' implication in the competition through the organisation of public meetings or debates, or through any initiatives aiming at bringing to the electors' attention to the election platforms. The opinion polls are also duly supervised. The opinion pollsters must follow a regulation with methodological requirements. They also have to communicate all their data related to the carrying out of the opinion poll to the Polls Commission such as their questionnaire or their samples' information. All of this material is then made available to the public. Media publishing an opinion poll are bound to follow some strict rules too. The number of interrogated people and the name of the research institute must be stipulated, such as the name of the organisation or person who ordered the opinion poll. If a media decide to only partially publish the opinion poll, the excerpts should not alter the general meaning of the survey. Additionally no opinion polls can be published the day before or on the day of a vote.

In the event of the resignation or death of the head of state, the president of the Senate will instantaneously provide cover until a new President of the Republic is elected. Unlike the National Assembly, the Senate cannot be dissolved which insures the presidential function's continuity. If the president of the Senate could not provide cover for the President, the government would have to act with collegiality as the substitute. In order to avoid the implementation of personal policy, the president of the Senate does not have access to the totality of the presidential executive powers. He cannot submit a law project to a referendum, nor dissolve the National Assembly, nor re-examine the constitution. The use of this interim has only been needed two times during the Vth Republic. The first time was in 1969 when General De Gaulle resigned from his position after the failure of the referendum he initiated. The second time was in 1974 after the passing of president Pompidou and in both cases Alain Poher, the president of the Senate, replaced them before new elections were set up. If the president of the Senate would happen to run for the election, his political authority while covering would be reduced.

The presidential election system with a direct universal suffrage has nonetheless been criticized in France by many political science academicians. In

their opinion this suffrage creates at best a competition between a President and parliamentarians, and at worst a social order in favour of the president who can pretend to single-handedly embody the whole society. General de Gaulle stated in 1967 that he perceived legislative elections as “487 local competitions” and to him “a deep legitimacy” could not come from the Parliament which he was describing as “numerous vague blurred representations of political leanings that divide the country” (De Gaulle, n1967). To him legitimacy was coming from the President who being elected through a direct universal suffrage could truly unite the citizens. Nowadays this type of voting system has become such a part of our mores that his possible modification would seem to put the nation's unity in jeopardy. Another ambiguity is since the change of the seven-year term of office for the President into a five-year one, the President can take an attitude on as not only the Chief of State but also the Chief of his political party because the heads of the main political parties are usually the ones running for presidential elections. A coalition government has shown during the Vth Republic the limits of the Presidents' powers. However this government set up could be avoided by the practical application of the electoral calendar since the results of the presidential elections tend to reflect on the following legislative elections. In a way the presidential system could be seen as weakening the political life instead of improving it. Another criticism against the system can be put forward. It is the difference of speeches when a party is an opposition party and when it reaches power, proving that campaign speeches are a genuine communication exercise. To win over an election a political party needs to broaden its electorate to new sympathisers with attractive speeches not too far from the ideology of the voters they desire to appeal to. But accessing executive power the actions tend not to follow the election manifesto, being confronted to many constraints limiting and standardizing what the President can actually do. Some critics may even state that whatever political party leader is elected at the head of the nation, the political measure that can be applied would all resemble in the end.

### 2.2.3 Importance of Presidential Elections

The President of the Republic is the embodiment of the State's authority. Regarding domestic policies, he makes sure constitutional texts are being respected. He also insures the proper functioning of public authority and the State's continuity. Concerning external policies, he guarantees national independence, integrity of the

territory and the respect of pacts made with France. The President is also the head of the army and holds a strategic role for the defense of the country while being the possessor of the nuclear weapons. The President has in addition an important diplomatic role since he is the one arranging and signing the treaties. He validates French ambassadors sent abroad and vice versa the foreign ambassadors stationed in France are accredited by him. He leads the French delegates in every international decisive meeting. Upon his arrival the President and his appointed ministers must set their proposals written in their manifesto up. The President definitely does not have all the powers, nevertheless the executive rights conferred upon the President are quite important. Some of his presidential powers are shared and the countersignature of the Prime Minister or any concerned ministers is required. On the contrary he also has his own powers exempted from any countersignature to put his instructions into effect. In this way he can appoint the Prime Minister, dissolve the National Assembly, resort to a referendum or call upon the Constitutional Council. Likewise he has crisis powers that allow him to take any necessary measures in the event of national danger. These exceptional powers ensuing from World War II have only been used once fifty years ago during the Algerian War. The Constitution was revised in 2008 so as to perceptibly limit what has been called before the 'presidential arbitrariness'. For instance the exceptional powers given during a crisis are now more supervised, the Parliament must give his approval for any external military intervention that would last more than four months and the President's appointments for important positions must not be condemned by 3/5 of the parliamentary commission. The traditional institutional way is to consider the President as irresponsible for his actions because he is not supposed to run the nation, the Government is supposed to do that. Only the ministers could be taken for responsible and the Government repudiated by the deputies. The President cannot be hold responsible for his actions taken as the President of the Republic and he cannot be charged for his presidential actions even after the end of his mandate. This irresponsibility is total and continuous. It is valid for the political, penal, administrative and civil fields. However now that the President has more powers than during the IIIrd and IVth Republic, the irresponsibility of the President seems out of step with his new rights. That is why the Constitution has been revised again in 2007 to insert a political responsibility mechanism. Therefore this irresponsibility has two exceptions. Firstly, the head of State can be prosecuted by the International

Criminal Court for crimes against humanity. Secondly, there is now a dismissal procedure punishing the ravages that the head of State might have caused to the dignity of the presidential function. The Parliament proclaims the dismissal in High Court, which is not considered as a criminal penalty but as a political sanction, bringing the President's inviolability and his mandate to a close. For the President's actions that were not carried out for his presidential duties, the President cannot be prosecuted during his mandate. He enjoys a complete inviolability but it is temporary and it finishes one month after the end of the presidential mandate. All of the head of States' personal actions carried out before or during his mandate can then be judged.

The presidential election is also an opportunity for the citizens to come together and directly participate to the political life of their country. The Republic works according to the principle of representative government. The first function of the presidential election is to allow the people to elect their government and representative who will then act on the citizens' behalfs. The election can be considered as a transfer of sovereignty and a safety valve. Indeed the possibility for the citizens to regularly be able to express their discontentment through the polls or quite the opposite to give another mandate to the sorting authority, spare the serious political disagreements from turning into violent street riots. Even if the abstention rate is increasing, the French people still come in waves to the presidential election and the president is still considered as an unmissable political figure. The presidential election is the election that draws the most attention and triggers a strong reaction. It could be explained by the fact that the electors vote for a person instead of a list, rendering the vote less abstract and the stake more personal. The risk is that voters might choose someone for his appearance or personality over his ideas. Nowadays almost all candidates hire communication consultants to provide guidance to them for all of their comings and goings. Their goal is to build an image that would attract voters. Whatever it is a presidential election has the potential to gather thousands of supporters to attend meetings or to get into action to pass the candidates' manifesto on through leaflets distribution and door-to-door operations. During the electoral campaign period the political parties can enjoy a renewed visibility thanks to an increased interest focused on them. The presidential elections' centrality is reinforced by the media sensation surrounding them. The use of media allows them to scatter their messages in every French household. It is the only period of time when media, especially televisual ones, concentrate that much time on politics. Since 1974



televised panel discussions before and between the rounds were set up as an institution. The debates dramatize the stakes of the elections and individualize the rounds. The first round vote became the way for the electors to vote for the candidate who portray their convictions the best, and the second round, supposing that the elector did not already vote for this candidate for the first round, compels the voters to pick the candidate they estimate the least bad. The presidential election might be crucial for the political life of the country but it does not bestow any immunity to its candidates. After the indictment of François Fillon, the 2017 Republican candidate, following a fake parliamentarian jobs scandal, his close relations deplored the failure to respect the separation of powers and a judiciary truce during the presidential campaign. Nevertheless there are no legislative texts mentioning any judiciary truce. The fact that a politician is in the middle of any type of electoral campaign cannot stop any inquiries regarding him.

This year's presidential election carries a different meaning through the rise of the Front National that will undoubtedly be present for the second round of the elections. A first for the Vth Republic, only preceded by Jean-Marie Le Pen whose presence during the second round in 2002 was due to a high level of abstentionism. He then only gathered 17,79 % of the votes. But Marine Le Pen presence in the second step of the election will be nothing accidental. Buoyed by their electoral success in 2014 and 2015, the Front National is putting down more and more roots into the French political landscape. Before the start of the electoral campaign the party had to pick one out of three political strategies to differentiate themselves (Bailet, 2016). Either the Front National could remain an opposition party known as protesting and against society. It would be at the other end of the right and left. An extreme right party that would center on protest against the democratic society, the French social model and the capitalist system. They would not protest in the name of the social class and class struggle but in the name of national identity or race struggle. Either the Front National could shift from an extreme right party to a radical right party that allied itself with a moderate right party. To do so the party would have to pursue its 'undemonisation' initiative to be able to become an ally of the republican party and the Union of Democrats and Independents party. In that case the Front National would not be different from the right by their nature like in the first strategy but by their degree. The Front National would become a nationalist right party, of course xenophobic, but cleared from their strengthened culture. It could be

seen as a government party within the framework of a coalition. Lastly the third strategy would be for the Front National to remain secluded but not to become an opposition party. Their goal would be to gather a maximum of voters who are more and more disappointed by the right just like the left. The Front National would then gain access to power on their own, without owing anything to any other parties. As far as the electoral campaign went, they seem to have chosen the last strategy. Indeed they did not form an alliance with a rightist party and they define themselves as reformer and against the system. Furthermore their new social speeches, intended for all dissatisfied employees and citizens, not forgetting those on a modest income, fall within the scope the traditional social scope of the extreme right parties. The Front National is rising above the other parties during this political campaign due do their new popularity and the impression they convey that their lack of rapprochement with parties who were elected and disappointed in the past offers them a stronger credibility. Nevertheless in case of the loss of the Front National, the presidential election could also be the base for the resistance against populism in Europe but also all over the world. After the results of the Brexit and the North American elections, a special attention is given to polls to indicate the trend of extreme right parties around the globe.

The presidential election takes on a special economic significance this year since France is suffering from unemployment and slow growth. Whoever gets elected, his or her business policies will have an impact on the economy.

According to a poll published six months before the presidential election what worry the French electors the most are the effect of terrorism, unemployment and immigration on their lives (Ifop, 2016). For example for 56% of the questioned people the reinforcement of security must go through more means given to the police forces and the army, even at the risk of giving up on other expenditures. In view of this poll two issues can be drawn. According to the way with which the candidates will tackle these issues they will be judged by the voters. Firstly an identity issue could be brought out. The globalisation of markets and men heightened migration flows, leading to cultural and social diversification with incontestable positive effects that are well-known. Nevertheless globalisation also set in motion what the political commentator Laurent Bouvier called a sense of cultural insecurity. The neighbour's culture is perceived as a threat and the assertion of owns' culture is perceived as an element of recognition for a certain number of social groups. Cultural insecurity

would drive to a competition between the different forms of religious, political and cultural communitarianism. This cultural insecurity would also be the reason for the magnification of the place of terror in society and the negative image given to the immigrants. It would also have caused an anti-western bitterness fueling terrorism. The cultural insecurity, with which the Front National is thriving on, also touched other countries as the Brexit and Donald Trump elections can prove. Another important stake for the candidates is the vast economical issue which encompasses numerous subjects such as the public debt, unemployment, differences between the social categories and even brain drain.

Regarding this last survey election there is one major issue that overtakes all the other and a multitude of motivations that concerns at least half of the population. Two preeminent themes, they are nearly equal, arise; terrorism and unemployment. It is the first time since the 2002 presidential election that unemployment is not the highest priority in the political climate surrounding the poll but on the contrary a safety theme is competing with unemployment. In 2002 the security issues tackled by politics were banditry and delinquency. Usually the main concern is an economical one and even if unemployment remains important the terrorist circumstances are slightly passing it. Even months after the last deadly terrorist attack on French soil, during a relative respite, terrorism remained at the heart of French citizens' worries. The other subjects that matter for the voters are the tax laws with the tax level, the fight against delinquency and the immigrants' question. France is way less exposed to immigration compared to countries such as Germany that welcomed thousands of them or Italy that receives hundreds of them every week. Moreover only a minority of French voters live where the majority of migrants can be found in slums, however the matter of refugees is considered by voters just as important as their taxes level. The immigrants' management is causing annoyance for the political class because of their inability to offer effective solutions to the European crisis of refugees. This theme is reflecting a particular period and an international context common to western societies. The immigration question was at the center of the Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom and so was it for Donald Trump campaign who promised to build a wall all along North America and Mexico's shared borders. The Austrian's extreme right party almost got elected while counting on fears linked to the migration coming from Balkan countries. Some subjects are relegated to a position of secondary importance such as education that is now 9 points behind the refugees

matter. A recurring pattern can be discerned, the first topics are ranked as the most pressing ones. There is a hierarchization in terms of urgent situation and precedence. The terrorist threat can strike at any moment whereas for ecological matters such as the climate or the construction of the European Union a bigger time scale to take actions is presupposed.

## 2.3 Political Support Base in France

### 2.3.1 Politics Popularity

With the unsatisfying level of François Hollande's popularity all along his presidency, one might think that French people would turn their back on politics. However far from being disgusted by politics, several French metropolises are displaying a higher rate of electoral roll registrations than usual, channeling their displeasure regarding the current political parties into a ballot paper. The rate of abstention is definitely rising too but a blank vote or abstinence is also all in all a way of expressing yourself in a political environment. In Orléans for example the rate of registration has considerably raised in the fall, following the usual presidential pre-election pattern. The presidential election has always been more popular than minor elections such as legislative or regional elections and the dissatisfied voters, this year also, do not seem to be giving it the cold shoulder. Numerous else factors can explain the resurgence of interest for the elections such as the possibility for the first time to vote for the Republican primary elections and the sense of alarmed caused by the media coverage of the American elections. Numerous electors must have wonder if their registration on an electoral roll was in order. Furthermore the election of Donald Trump reinforced the idea that Marine Le Pen could win the second round of the presidential election. Another indicator of the infatuation for politics is the impressive numbers of sympathisers going to meetings since the presidential election campaign started. On the 6 of February around 12 000 people went to a Jean-Luc Mélenchon meeting in Lyon, whereas his hologram was broadcasted at the same time in Paris where 6000 onlookers gathered to gaze at his 3D shape. He then registered 500 000 views on YouTube, proving that a minor candidate, only 5% of voting intention according to the last BVA poll, can also get a full house. During this hectic weekend, 5000 sympathisers gathered to a Marine Le Pen meeting, and 8 000 to an Emmanuel Macron meeting, representing the average

appeal and the queues in front of the auditoriums since the campaign began. It should nevertheless be underlined that every member of the crowds is not necessarily a voter. Underdogs such as Emmanuel Macron or Jean-Luc Mélenchon may attract large crowds due to their newfound interest or their judicious use of social media, but the appeal may not be transposed in the ballot boxes.

French people might be dissatisfied with the political system, the main two parties that led the country during the V Republic or the grasp of the media but the enthusiasm surrounding the presidential election does not run out. This passion could also be explained by the rise of candidates from political parties that never gained access to the executive power. The major asset then shared by the Front National, the communist party and the centrist party, Forward!, is that if they never accessed executive power before, they never disappointed. Whereas republicans and socialists try to erase the bad reputation earned through the last mandates, the other parties offer a fresh perspective and their notorieties are less prejudicial. The French political landscapes used to be two-coloured, blue for the republican party and red for the socialist party. However nowadays those two colours are being eclipsed by alternative parties such as the communist or nationalist parties, thriving on the blighted hope occasioned by traditional political groups and figures and waiting to prove their worth. The fracture between voters and elected represented is diminished by the brand-new possibility that every opinion can now be equally represented. Every political beliefs showcased in this election are gathering a fairer amount of attention, as much as the popular nationalism with Marine Le Pen, the liberal conservatism with François Fillon, the modern liberal socialism with Emmanuel Macron or the radical eco-socialism with Jean-Luc Mélenchon. At the top of the polls, France is no longer two-tone but four-colored. A higher level of representation induces a higher level of interest. There are two major topics outlining the debates in France. On one hand there is the globalisation issue. François Fillon, republican party, and Emmanuel Macron, Forward! Party support free-trade areas, the supply system, deregulation of the capital market etc... On the contrary Marine Le Pen, Front National, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, communist party, favour anti-dumping taxes, a stronger State power, a drastic control of financial markets, etc... On the other hand, the minorities issue such as the subject of Muslim minorities or LGBT minorities also divides the political landscape. Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Emmanuel Macron are progressive. They stand for accepting Muslim minorities as they are into

French society, fighting against discrimination and promoting LGBT rights. Unlike them, François Fillon and Marine Le Pen are conservative who demand the assimilation of Muslim minorities and the abrogation of LGBT rights such as their abilities to fully adopt a child or to get married. Political ideologies are crossing and uncrossing throughout the main four parties and thoroughly represent the different scopes of viewpoints on numerous societal topics. The support base in France remains rather fond of the presidential election campaign process and the political debates.

### 2.3.2 According to Social Categories

The political support base in France can be approximately divided according to the voters' social categories. Without going as far as caricaturing all the attitudes and behaviors of the voters, some patterns are distinctly observable. For instance, the agriculture sector is clearly placed on the right of the political spectrum. According to a survey (Ifop, 2012), that gathered 10 years of data, the number of farmers associating themselves with the Republican, Nationalist or Centrist party has been steadily rising unlike the number of farmers linking themselves to leftist parties. As reported by the survey, the farmers mostly share a conservative outlook even though they differ from the conservative average ideology and draw closer to the far right ideology on several matters. Compared to classic Republicans, they are more numerous to think that “Unemployed persons could find work if they really wanted to” or that “There are too many immigrants in France” and they are less numerous to think that “Homosexuality is just one of the ways to lead a sexual life” (Ifop, 2012). They go back to the conservative average with statements regarding the feeling of insecurity and the death penalty, for which the survey gives credits to a catholic influence. Even if the majority of farmers are voting for rightist parties, the comments need to be moderated since the vote in favor of Nicolas Sarkozy, the Republican candidate at the last presidential election, was correlated to the size of the establishment, the age of the farmer and his trade-union affiliations. Even if a social category group cannot be totally homogeneous in its voting intentions, a majority of its members tend to look up to one party in particular to endorse their cause and fight for their rights. One of the most loyal political support groups in France are the Front National’s sympathizers that are more deeply rooted into the society than the supporters of any other political parties. In accordance with the polls (Ifop 2017),

carried out at the beginning the year, Marine Le Pen is in the lead of voting intentions for 18-24 years old, who many are doing apprenticeships or looking for jobs, for 40% of the working-class, for 30% of the employees, for the majority of the unemployed persons. Marine Le Pen is placing herself on the political spectrum as the protector of anyone suffering from a loss of their bearings. 40% of the voters who claim they cannot decently live with their current incomes affirmed their intention to vote for the Front National. This is also the case for 28% of the questioned who earn less than 1250 € a month and for 31% of people renting a social housing. In a way Marine Le Pen replaced the communist party in the heart and voting intention of the industrial workers. However she also left a mark in all the social categories, not only on farmers or factory workers. It is arduous to distinguish if a voter picks a political party or if the party picks him. Marine Le Pen chose to fight for the oppressed citizens asphyxiated by the system; to such an extent that the ones who are not in cruel need of help will not turn to her. The Front National cannot reach more than 15% of voting intention for the voters with the highest wages, 6000 € or more a month, or for the voters who have a master degree or more.

A political party targeting a precise electorate might create a more loyal support base but it is also risk-taking since stretching out to another social category might prove itself laborious and unsuccessful. François Fillon seduced a Republican electorate by offering a large choice of drastic measures aiming at national recovery through the decrease of public spending. Nevertheless to be assured to win the second tour of the presidential election he must attract more forces from different party to reach a majority. Yet many citizens value the need to reduce public spending cost but are timorous when it comes to approve of reforms that might have an impact on their daily lives. While presenting himself as the candidate for radical reforms, a large part of his dependable electorate, retired citizens over 60 years old, were scared away by his proposals on social security. He rapidly adjusted his program to reassure his supporters, thus proving the limited room to maneuver offered to candidates who need to reach new audiences while keeping their devoted sympathisers interested with the campaign.

### 2.3.3 Climate of Distrust

Political support base may actively follow the presidential campaign but a distrust of politicians can nonetheless be perceived. A study (Cevipof, 2016) was

conducted on attitudes towards politics and claimed that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the French population consider politicians as corrupted and are suspicious of their actions and motives. This mistrust pushed the presidential candidates to incorporate in their programs some proposals to legitimate again the political system by giving more power to the people with for example the reinstatement of referendums or the possibility for the citizens to suspend a law's application. With the upcoming elections several scandals threatened the credibility of a large number of candidates. The scandals that are unveiled in opportune times for the opposition did not spare one party. The most famous one struck François Fillon a few months before the elections and caused the foreseen winner at the bottom of the election polls for a couple of weeks. His program encouraging austerity measures was discordant with the accusations of parliamentary fake jobs hiring that would have cost almost one million euro from tax payers over several decades in favour of his family. Marine Le Pen must also face several scandals, from violently graphic tweets conviction to accusations of debatable jobs hiring for her partner and her bodyguard with European Parliament funds. The continual media coverage of public embarrassment from France's political leaders definitively immersed political support bases in a tense climate of suspicion and world-weariness. Individuals may favour such and such party according to their social categories and ideologies but they do not blindly follow a candidate as we can gauge from voters turning their back on a candidate after a scandal.

A distrust of politicians is also followed by a perceptible distrust of journalists and polls. An exposure is never totally objective, fluctuating between the ownership of the media and the political affiliation of the journalists. The viewer or reader becomes more and more aware of that fact in the saturated world of information he lives in. The political coverages that should be treated cautiously will be covered differently according to the channel, or radio station, or newspaper, or the journalist dealing with them. Therefore the report of the voting intention or the analysis of political support bases should be duly scrutinized without dismissing reading between the lines. During the socialist primary elections, several televised debates took place. The voting intentions and the superiority of a candidate among another were then discussed on every channel, with different conclusions on each channel that had different political commentators and different polls institutions (Elabe, 2017). Thus proving the unpredictability and lack of clarity surrounding the depiction of public opinions and political support base. The analysis of the voters'



behaviors through polls should also be treaded cautiously as proven by Donald Trump election and the Brexit result which were both denied by polls. Polls have dubious predictive worth and should not be taken as serious indicators of sympathisers' movements. If they can not reveal final scores for certain, they can on the other hand indicate perceptible a rise and fall of popularity for a specific candidate. Only on this extent can they be trusted to depict French political support base.

#### 2.3.4 Front National Support Base

One of the most loyal political support base are definitely the Front National's sympathisers whose number is constantly rising since Marine Le Pen took the helms of the Front National in 2011. Since the European elections in 2014 the Front National passed the republican and the socialist parties in terms of number of votes in every ballot; in the senate elections, the departmental elections and the regional elections. The Front National is gaining ground with every social category, even the most reluctant to them such as regular churchgoers, employees close to a trade union and civil servants. They are accumulating an unprecedented support which in a way renders it the actual first party of France, making them the supporters the first French support base. The Front National is thriving in a pessimistic atmosphere surrounding the population who is paralyzed by a distrust of politicians after numerous scandals and a fear of the results of a friendly policy towards immigration whereas they are already suffering from a crippling unemployment. The Front National might gather more votes but they are still behind in terms of official adherents' number who are up to date in their yearly subscriptions. In 2015 the republican party had 175.900 adherents, the socialist party had 70.000 adherents, same as for the communist party and the Front National had 51.551 adherents. Nevertheless it should be noted that every party has seen its number of adherents diving in the last decade as a result of the dissatisfaction felt among the population towards the political class. Every party except the Front National which was piling up ten years ago only 7000 adherents. It is the only party whose number of adherents increased that significantly or increased at all. It leads one to believe the rise of the nationalist support base is not about to stop. Holding almost a third of the voters, it is extremely likely than the party will pass the first tour of the presidential elections in spring. This growing popularity appointed Marine Le Pen as the candidate to knock down in the coming elections.

The nationalist support base can be correlated with three factors; the level of education, the unemployment rate and the regional belonging of the voters. For one, only 8% of degree holders voted for the Front National in the 2014 European elections while 41% of electors who did not pass their high school diploma voted for the Front National (Ifop, 2015). Secondly, and according to the numbers given by the Ministry of Interior, during the 2015 regional elections, the regions who voted for more than 50% for the Front National were also the regions suffering from the highest level of unemployment (Ifop, 2015) going from 12 to 16%. Lastly another indicator of the party's popularity is the distance of the voter from Paris (Ifop, 2015) or the distance from a train station. In the largest cities in France the numbers of jobs increased by 5% between 2006 and 2011 when the unemployment increased on a general level. Those financially and culturally attractive cities usually vote for leftist or centrist parties. Thus driving Marine Le Pen to claim that the representatives of these parties are detached from the reality of the struggling France. The inhabitants of industrially deserted cities and faded countryside farms are rallying under the nationalist banners to glean some of the globalisation benefits that skipped their regions or to at least stop the globalisation from putting them at a disadvantage. The nationalist support is particularly strong in the north and the south of the country, for which Marine Le Pen reserves two different speeches. The North has been hit with a high level of unemployment ever since the shutting down of all mining industries when coal stopped to be used as the primary source of energy. In these regions, which used to be predominantly socialist or communist, Marine Le Pen preaches the defense of small business owners and farmers against big corporations, an anti-globalisation policy and condemns the limits of the political systems. The South has been the refuge of French settlers coming back to France after Algeria became independent again in the seventies. As a result Marine Le Pen advocates there an anti-immigration policy and intensifies the speeches against Muslim tradition, focusing on Christian values. Another indicator of the nationalist sympathisers would be their level of intolerance against anyone different from them. Regarding a survey conducted by the National Commission for Human Rights, the nationalist supporters would justify their reputation by being much more racist and xenophobic than any other party's supporters (CNCDH, 2015). For every questions related to the perception of the 'other' in terms of origins, religion or culture the answers of the nationalists are always much more negative than the ones from any other political

parties. According to the survey results, 87% of questioned nationalists are considered very ethnocentric compared to only 18% of questioned socialists. Moreover there were 48 points more nationalists who agreed with the following statement 'I do not consider Muslim citizens as regular French citizens' compared to other political tendencies sympathisers. Lastly a negative image of Jewish citizens and the feeling that they form a group apart from the rest of society have only increased for the Front National supporters.

#### 2.4 Current Political Environment in France

To better understand the political positions taken by the parties toward the elections, the state of France and the assessment of François Hollande's five-year term must be apprehended. Even though his approval rating has been the lowest after any President's quinquennat in the 5<sup>th</sup> Republic, the socialist party does not despair. Anxious to lose the next presidential election in 2017 after such disappointing scores (only 9% of the population judges that François Hollande's politics has been/is satisfying), the socialist party wants to make up for his bad reputation with numbers. After all, the trust rate accorded to presidents at the end of their mandates has been relatively low for every president those last three terms (TNS Sofres, 2016). According to his party he is unjustly suffering from Hollande-bashing. His results are positive when it comes to economic matters whereas the opposition, and sometimes even his own party, behaves as if his whole mandate was a disaster on all levels. They claim that his results are even excellent when every county's statistics are put forward. Indeed it is undeniable that the creation of small companies has been facilitated, that more jobs have been created for youth, that more opportunities have been generated for teachers, that banks are more supportive of companies and that same-sex marriage has been permitted.

However if this redemption arc will be effective time will tell, but it seems dubious considering that François Hollande's unpopularity is not recent. It indeed began a few months after his election. His presidential campaign was based on an extensive list of promises that the public deemed unfulfilled therefore giving him a reputation of being indecisive, lacking authority and deceiving. His popularity only rose a couple of times, after the first two terrorist attacks on January 2015 and November 2015, the citizens judging that he was acting correctly as a strong leader who could unite the nation. Furthermore, due to low scores in regional and municipal

elections for the socialist party, the government reshuffled its Ministers in 2014, 2 years after François Hollande began his term. It was done in hope that a new approach would satisfy the population and that they would not lose their faith in the actual government and turn to other parties in spite. Later on more Ministers resigned judging that the socialist government policies were not socialist enough. His Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, began to be rumored to prepare himself to run against him in the socialist primary election. Emmanuel Macron, his Minister of Economy, resigned in August in order to organize his campaign for the presidential election of 2017 as a centrist candidate. This lack of unity in his own government transcribes the ripping of the socialist political class. All those critics, from his opponent, from the population and from his own party harshly sullied his notoriety and the credibility of socialism in France.

For many sceptics, judging François Hollande's term through a macro-economic glass is not representative of France state today. To them the economic development should not be the main indicator of the well-being of a country. Managing a growth while dealing with a budget deficit caused by previous Presidents is not enough for his detractors. Studying macro components prevents from asserting the bigger picture in which the rates of exclusion, insecurity, and violence are still high. While François Hollande is chanting “It is going better (than when I was first elected)”. The Front National is thriving on the country's division. If indeed all was well it would be impossible for an extreme right party to prosper through the fears of French citizens who have been severely marked by terrorist attacks during the last mandate. Cultural identity questions are tearing apart the population when it comes to the migrants’ crisis, the multiplication of jihadists, a better integration of Muslims citizens. Against the habit of the government on focusing on work related topics, many distraught persons turn to the Front National for reassuring, even if it comes in big empty proposals embellished by borderline racist combative speeches. If Francois Hollande does not reinvent himself and be more lucid on his first term appraisal, the odds were cleared from the beginning that he could not have gone through the first round of the primary elections, had he decided to run.

## CHAPTER 3

### Media and Politics

#### 3.1 Place of Media in French Society

##### 3.1.1 Changes of Media through Time

The place of mainstream media in French society keeps increasing at the same time that they are undergoing a profound change these past decades. The public sphere has been disrupted by an outburst of exchanged information, Internet's development, and a worldwide concentration of all media companies. The progression of media, from the creation of the printing press to the democratization of internet, transformed the media landscape and raised several questions. Media are at the heart of political, social and cultural debates for example with the questions of freedom of speech and of the creation of a code of ethics adopted in the wake of the First World War after years of brainwashing and censorship. Far from only concerning themselves with communicating ideas, media are incorporated within the framework of a political dimension and of economical, industrial, social stakes. Cradle of the first periodical in the seventeenth century, France has seen many new media flourish on its soil such as the first news agency with Agence Havas or one of the first general public newspaper called Le Petit Journal during the nineteenth century. Since the flood of new newspapers in Paris at the time of the French Revolution, media and politics are closely linked. Media have now such an influence on society that they could make and unmake journalists and politician with a click of fingers. It is also arduous to separate media and politics due to the involvement of the State into the development of media. For instance the government is a shareholder for public radio stations and television channels. It also incited the installation of

view data services and cable television and it supported written press through creating new regulations and backing up new agencies. According to Médiamétrie, a French audience measurement company, media are central to French people's lives. French people daily give 3 hours and fifty-two minutes to television (Médiamétrie, 2016) and 80% admit listening to the radio. Even if the numbers for newspapers are moving backwards magazines reading rate is one of the highest in the world with an average of 7 periodic publications reading a year.

In the late fifties and sixties, troubled with the Independence War of Algeria, media were totally mobilised by the government. The leftist press was controlled and the television was used by General de Gaulle to directly speak to French citizens and inform them of the meaning of the establishment of the Vth Republic. Radio was used by the head of state to rally military groups as to make them aware of putsch. But during the general strikes and occupation of factories and universities in May 1968 the media were finally overtaken by the opinion. The working class, more educated than their elders, was contesting the established authorities; employers and political class, while demanding for their works to be more esteemed. The traditional media or the ones considered too close to power or too close to 'bourgeois leftists' were contested by the youth. They were asserting their values and identities, but also stating their refusal of immobilism and their questioning of traditional authorities. In return they created their own media before the civil unrest ran out of steam. Young people followed the model of Chinese dazibaos and North American fanzines. The strongest criticism addressed to the media during this period was the total control of the government on audiovisual media. The State had a stranglehold on the articles of opposition press and on the ORTF (French Television and Radio broadcasting Office). In the years following the crisis the ORTF and Department of Information were taken down. Moreover autonomy was given to the three television channels existing at that time and to the official French radio channel. In 1981 underground radio stations were legalised and the following year audiovisual communication was liberalized for good. The critical time of May 1968 paved the way for the diversification and liberalization of audiovisual media. Nevertheless other matters emerged. The written press has been in the middle of a crisis since the seventies even if it keeps playing a counter power role. Newspapers are facing a loss of readership and profitability. Young people are not as drawn to these media as their parents and grandparents before them. While before newspapers were the main source of

information, they now have to compete with televisions, internet, radio and even the free press handed out near public transportation. To survive in this extreme competitive environment the written press relies mostly on the government's subsidies and the private investments of powerful businessmen, thus casting doubt on the freedom and independence of journalists working for those newspapers. Academicians such as Christophe Deleu (1998) were warning as early as in the nineties the press industry about the effects internet will have on the profession. They predicted cyber journalism, the new legal rules implied by internet use such as copyrights issues, the question of financing plans. Yet many newsrooms deliberately chose to delay the instauration of internet practices by fears created by a state of uncertainty concerning the future of the journalistic line of work. The privatization of television came with the establishment of a senior authority looking over the public service's autonomy. Television became the supreme media, consensual programmes and news bulletins became an institution in every living room. Televisions growing popularity was accompanied by an increase of hourly volume and a rise of the number of television channels. However at the end of the nineties and after years of remarkable escalation, the daily time spent by French people in front of the television set is decreasing. This fall is probably due to fast-growing new information and communication technologies linked to Internet's development and to the democratisation of new contents through smaller devices such as tablet computers or smartphones. When it comes to legalised underground radio stations, to avoid difficulties the state allocated frequencies to them. From them on radio stations perceived themselves on a competitive landscape to the extent that independent radio stations disappeared and they assembled into big groups.

Another phenomenon illustrating the changes in media from the past two decades is the division and thematization of media. They all indicate the same tendency to be intended for an audience that is more and more specific. Media are not necessarily general ones nowadays but can target a specific social category, age, sex or hobby. First initiated by press titles that were only printing 10 000 copies of a magazine, the segmentation movement joined radio stations that multiplied according to different music tastes, television with special offers for teenagers or history fans for example. Websites always intended to customize more and more their offers. There is a sort of balance between non specialized and segmented media that coexist together in the media landscape. Generalist media must meet national

even local expectations as closely as possible. It is not the same for media that have a special theme or targeting a specific audience. By means of national adjustments, a globalisation movement spread across magazines, new concepts of television channels or programmes such as game shows or reality television shows. As for Internet, it always had an international touch to it that is cherished by its users. Another aspect of the changes of French media is the rise of subscriptions and urges for advertisement. The development of radio, television, more recently Internet that was stating his free offers loud and clear could have led us to think that the access to information or entertainment through media would have been financed by advertisement. However the use of subscriptions has been a tendency more and more popular and the audience must then pay sometimes pay more than expected. It is true for the press industry, satellite packages for television and for a number of internet services, which were free at first but due to a lack of payment through advertisement are trying in their turn to establish a fee for their consultation. The issue of advertising resources has nevertheless not been entirely settled by subscriptions. There are now new forms of advertisement unfavourable for traditional media like leaflets deliveries or direct mailing campaign. These new means of promotions have replaced sometimes the purchase of advertising space. For lack of advertising resources, some media such as the writing press had to increase their selling prices which rendered the readers to be less loyal and more likely to jump at the chance of free newspapers handed out near public transportations.

Internet with everything it offers secures its place at the center of French citizens' lives. In 2016 in France 45,7 million of persons, 15 years old or older, reached a web page at least once through a computer, a tablet, or a smartphone, which represents 88,5% of French people (Médiamétrie, 2016). Among them there are 18,9 millions of persons who were using internet daily, whatever the screen, that being almost half of internet users. Even if newspapers offer a virtual expansion of their content, journalists are in direct competition with citizens groups, who can pass the information on, as well as evaluating them or commenting them. The traditional media do not necessarily have at their disposal the initiative of circulating information anymore. The web greatly accelerated the speed of the communication of information and the number of new sources such as podcasts. Most radio stations, television channels, newspapers adapted to fit with the recent changes brought by internet. Traditional media now offer an online version of their editorial content and



some newspapers appeared exclusively on web. The link between media and their audience has considerably changed by the massive participatory use of Internet. A new space encouraging discussions and arguments was created by the combination of media, politics and opinions. In this space there is a lack of differentiation between reporters and their audience, a criticized appropriation of the media by political men and women, who are always under an almost total close observation, and a constant lack of information checks nor sources verifications. All of these reinforced the suspicion that media need to be put in doubt, because of the part they play in the spreading of hearsays and fake news. According to a survey done by Kantar and published in February 2017 gauging the distrust of French people for media, one out of two questioned person answered that event are not truthfully portrayed by the media. As anyone can share his opinion on a website or through social media, the border between media and public opinion is becoming more and more blurred. The recent interfaces can be perceived as a communication tool as well as a political maneuvering tool. The quality and the trustworthiness of an information can also be questioned when it is not relayed by a professional. When it comes to media there is now an overabundant offer and an uninterrupted flow of information. Voters are nowadays wavering between a straightforward participation in civic discussions on social media and a sort of distrust of traditional media that are known to be controlled by viewing figures, cost-effectiveness issues and opinion polls. The proliferation of surveys led to the appearance of what has been called an opinion democracy. It is a form of direct and customized democracy that does not follow from the universal suffrage verbalization or from public debate. On the contrary this individualised democracy results from the constant influence of opinion on political actions. Opinion democracy has met mixed reactions, since on one hand it is seen by some as a positive phenomenon; a safeguard for rulers, a democratic added-value. But on the other hand, it is also condemned as a sort of tyranny in which everyone must be able to express his opinion on everything, which in return influences political action in a way that can go against decisions taken by elected representatives. Opinion polls must also be put into perspective because it is impossible to state if surveys are the true reflect of public opinion or if they are a tool used through media to shape public opinion. The suspicion of complicity between reporting, politics and the business world place on media a continuous mistrust for a part of the public opinion. Media have been powerful indicators of important public

opinion movements. In every political crisis media have witnessed the intensity of political life and citizens' commitment. However intertwined they are with the political landscape, many criticisms have exuded from their organisation and their high level of involvement in society.

### 3.1.2 Criticisms towards Media

The dominating spot of media in French political life bestow upon them many duties and the consequences of their actions are scrutinized. Several criticisms towards their effects on society are recurrent and have been denounced for years. However how practical the plurality and the permanent availability of media may seem, their power on society has been criticized. Media have an astonishing power of influence since they can put anything on the agenda and so indirectly guide the citizens' way of thinking. Therefore they can put any political, socio-economical topic on the agenda but they can also destroy the entire reputation of an organisation or an individual. Their true power lies in their ability to make, and undo the name of anything or anybody. Media push the appearance of modern values that would legitimize the importance of media in people's lives. The list of what media dictate is long; traditions, habits, fashion, consumption, ways of live, significant events in the world, anything related to the ways of thinking. The necessity for citizens to analyse information, to accumulate different information' sources and channels and to take a critical approach is primordial. But the growing distrust of media for French people seems to indicate of their awareness that information spread by media should be tread carefully.

Media, which are not a perfect, reflect of reality, also considerably lack of diversity in France, especially when it comes to television. Edouard Mills-Affif (2008) made an inventory of all television programmes directly or indirectly concerning a French person with an immigrant background from the sixties to the late eighties. He then moved forward two reasons that could explain the discrepancy between social reality and televisual representation. One was the enduring popularity for international reporting or documentaries on the time schedule for television. The other one was the ever-present predefined representations of French people coming from an immigrant background. The researcher highlighted the weight of ideological prejudices that portray an immigrant or a person with immigrant origins as someone always suffering. This, for instance, force producers to eliminate entire populations

for casting as soon as their social situations become commonplace. Hence the invisibility in media for French people with Italian, Portuguese, Spanish or Polish background and the focalization on people whose parents came from Algeria , or to a lesser extent black people with an African background. The last two are on their own the embodiment of the immigration 'problem' gradually placed at the center of worries. A couple of decades later French media are trying to showcase more positive characters but the groups with an older immigration background or the ones closer to French people culturally or geographically speaking are still for the most part absent from media coverage. Nowadays black people would be the 'over-represented' minority present in French media compared to other minorities. Delphine Ernotte, the chief executive officer of France Télévisions, criticized the present state while taking office by declaring that “Nowadays television is ran by white males over 50 years old and it needs to change”. In 2007 an observatory for diversity was created in order to orientate and express offers to the Superior Council of Audiovisual concerning questions linked to diversity in media. According to a study ordered by the council in 2015, if the data related to the origin of someone were crossed with the data related to social categories, the ratio of people perceived as non-white is 17% for the lower social categories and 11% for the higher social categories. Consequently the more a social category is represented as high, the less the level of people perceived as non-white would be high. In terms of acting parts, the study discloses that the rate of people perceived as non-white is 21% for extras but only 9% for main actors. Moreover negative attitudes are portrayed by 29% non-white actors whereas only 12% of positive attitudes are portrayed by people perceived as non-white.

Let's take the case of the press industry to illustrate the problem of concentration in France with the political affiliation of newspapers and their owners'. There are eight national newspapers in France that combined sell 1 million copies every day for 66 million inhabitants (ACPM, 2016). Political articles tackling presidential elections or the rise of the Front National are more likely to be found in non-specialized newspapers and broadsheet newspapers. Therefore they are the ones whose political affiliations are being combed. There are three non-specialized newspapers tackling all issues with their own political views. Le Monde, The World, was created in 1944. It is considered as a center-left newspaper; even though it claims to be a non-partisan newspaper most of its readers are leftist. The newspaper

is owned by the Le Monde Group that belongs to three business men: Xavier Niel<sup>19</sup>, Pierre Berge<sup>20</sup>, and Matthieu Pignasse<sup>21</sup>. Le Figaro newspaper's name takes after Figaro, a character from a Beaumarchais' play criticizing bourgeoisie's privileges. It was created in 1826 and it is considered as a right and center-right newspaper with classic liberalism and social conservatism. It is said to perfectly portray the right party political current and most of its readers are rightist. Figaro is owned by the Figaro Group and Dassault Media that both belong to Serge Dassault<sup>22</sup>. Lastly Libération, Liberation, was created in 1977. It is perceived as a center-left and social democratic newspaper. The majority of its readers are leftists, it is owned by the major shareholders Bruno Ledoux<sup>23</sup> and Patrick Dahi<sup>24</sup>. There are two broadsheet newspapers prioritizing specific information in France. La Croix, The Cross, have a focus on religious subjects. It was created in 1883 and proclaimed itself to be non-partisan as a Christian and catholic neutral newspaper. Quite paradoxically rightist consider it as a leftist newspaper and leftists consider it as a rightist newspaper. It is owned by the Bayard Press Group whose director, who is also the publication director of La Croix, is unclear about his political affiliation. L'Humanité, Humanity, which was created in 1904 focus on social subjects. It is considered as a communist and socialist newspaper as it used to be the organ of the communist party for 74 years. The newspaper is now owned by a company created by and for this press title. The publication director of l'Humanité, Patric Le Hyaric, is supporting the communist party with François Mélenchon for 2017. There is one newspaper specialized in financial matters called Les Echos, Echos, one working-class newspaper dealing mainly with minor news items titled Le Parisien, The Parisian, and lastly there is 1 main sports newspaper named L'Equipe, The Team.

The French Observatory of Media published a report concerning another issue resulting from the current management of media, their too high concentration.

---

<sup>19</sup> Non-partisan but rumored to be supporting the center right party with Alain Juppé for 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Leftist, Roosevelt democrat, supporting the socialist party with François Hollande for 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Leftist, supporting the socialist party with Arnaud Montebourg for 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Rightist, supporting the republican party with Nicolas Sarkozy for 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Leftist, supporting the socialist party for 2017 but did not announce to root for a specific candidate.

<sup>24</sup> Claimed to be a non-partisan especially since he declined his Israeli-French double nationality to become fully Israeli, his shares in Liberation might only be a tactical business man move since he supports the right wing in Israel.

They stated that the big number of written press titles, television channels and publishing houses conceals the extent of media concentration and its disastrous impacts. Concentration within each media, radio, press, etc., is only one of the tip of the iceberg because the most powerful media groups are actually multimedia ones. They hold strong positions in every media and they are integrated to large industrial groups such as Lagardère or Dassault. Concentration is accentuated by coalition made between the different multimedia groups. Interests are coming together through those companies which capital is collectively possessed by allied groups. For instance Vivendi and Lagardère groups united and TF1 and M6, two of the biggest French television channels also formed an alliance. The scope of concentration is putting in jeopardy the independence of political men towards media, along with the pluralism and the quality of information. The owners of media often have other interests at heart that, for instance, their affection for journalism. It was revealed that after the arrival of Vincent Bolloré as one the main shareholder of Canal +, a French television channel, there were intrusion in the editorial policies. For example many topics up for documentaries such as the scandals of Volkswagen or François Hollande's implication in wars were turned down by the new board of directors. The observatory is demanding a new law to be passed to effectively regulate media concentration and the drifts caused by it.

Concentration is one of the reasons explaining the loss of freedom for the press in France. A non-governmental organization publishing every year a worldwide freedom of press rankings showcased the fall of France to the 45<sup>th</sup> place out of 180 audited countries (Reporters sans Frontières, 2017). The year before France was holding the 38<sup>th</sup> place to the advantage of worst displays from other countries. The ranking was made after analysis of the answers to an 87 questions evaluation form given to journalists, legal practitioners and sociologists. The questionnaire was established in accordance with the level of liberty granted to journalists, an estimation of pluralism, the quality of the legal setting and the security for journalists in this country. Several factors can explain the fall of France. Firstly the new laws that were passed as part of the fight against terrorism increased the chances of wiretaps and weakened the freedom of speech, especially on internet. Secondly the study also points out France's need to improve the laws on the protection of sources and on the independence of media. The law on information passed in 2015, even if it anticipates a more protective procedure for journalists, is at high risk for the

protection of their works secret. France is in a singular position in comparison to other similar countries because of the very strong relations between the owners of media and industrial powers, which are often coinciding. This situation exacerbates the concentration of media that are in the hands of a couple of big groups. Reporters Without Borders warns France about two points. One is to remind the profession that without a diversity of investments, there cannot be a diversity of editorial liberties. The other one is to point the paranoia of the ones in power and activists against journalists. The Front National distinguished itself in that case after restraining the access to political meetings to journalists in an aggressive manner. Not forgetting the scandal of journalists beaten up by nationalist sympathisers. The study aims at raising awareness around this type of violent behaviors happening more and more regularly during demonstrations. The links between politics and media are unbreakable, hence the need to recognize the importance of media in voters' life and the limits of media.

### 3.2 Links between Media and Politics

#### 3.2.1 Media Entwined with Democracy

Media and politics are entwined in the way that media are vital means of expression for the functioning of a democracy. They are used by democratic players who used them as a circulator of information. Media play a big part in the development of public opinion and can put some societal topics to the forefront as well as eclipsing others. The press can be used as a protest-tool, which would explain why the earliest constitutions texts were keen on protecting its freedom. Historically speaking there is simultaneity between the inauguration of the universal suffrage and the development of press for the masses. In the course of the nineteenth century newspapers were joined in the democratic debates by the television, radio and movies. A century later internet added itself to the spaces allowing the exchange of democratic ideas. The new technologies encourage the representative structures to alter their way of working by bringing closer politicians and citizens. Media are now completing the traditional medium of democracy by discovering new forms of transmission. Internet has been erected as a tool enabling the circumvention of vertical communication, from individuals on different levels, a greater autonomy for each user and a reinforcement of popular participation in the democratic life. Media

were made more accessible at the same time as democracy improved. Gaining access to media is more easily done, cheaper and fairer than before in the totality of the country. Media can be a conveyor belt between leaders and citizens and their multiplicity is mandatory for the proper functioning of a democracy which sovereignty depends on French people.

Media and democracy are dependent on one another. The State must democratically supervise the media with controlling organisations that are not subjected to political pressures such as with the creation of the Superior Council of Audiovisual. The implication of the government must guarantee pluralism of information, equality of access, and the neutrality of media while respecting the freedom of opinions. Internet is a delicate media as it allows people to get round internal obstacles, to multiply new spaces of freedom and freedom but also allows rumors and dangerous content to be spread. There is a triangular relationship between political figures, public opinion and media. The latter reflect as much as they shape societal trends. Media should respect citizens' choices and expectations and that is why, for financial viability reasons, audience rating is used as a tool to measure and make television programme up. In some ways media can be dangerous for democracy. In terms of transparency a government needs enough secrecy and intimacy to conduct international business or to take decisions. Nevertheless a democracy demands a total transparency afterwards an action or decision has been taken. Television is a mass media reaching citizens who could be considered as more passive than others. Television can simplify debates and create new opinions. However the viewing figures races among channels leave little chances for real democratic debates. Politicians caring about media feedbacks are denounced for shaping their speeches according to the current opinion or media outlook and not to their own beliefs. Democracy and discussions of political ideas and issues would give way to the stranglehold of television on election campaign. The importance of media during an election also causes a problem for the equality of media among them and the equality of access between the different candidates. Political men and women also depend on media and the format they establish. For instance during a televised debate some behaviors are predetermined like summarizing in a few sentences complicated matters. In other words media are necessary and in favour of any democracy but their usage can also be found to be tricky for their audience, the state and for politicians.

### 3.2.2 Media as the 4th Power

Media have been called the fourth power in a democracy, after the executive, legislative, judiciary powers, on account of its importance in citizens' lives. Apart from their task to relay information, media can help people deciphering current events by interpreting facts. Broadsheet newspapers are attached to different political parties and reading opposite ones can give a broader perspective of the different reactions to the same events depending on political affiliation. One of the risks with media influences is to get attached to the opinion of a recurring media which would dictate our thoughts and attitudes. Indeed the presentation of the same information to a large group of people could create common thoughts. Freedom of press in democratic countries sometimes led up to misdemeanors and misappropriation of information, while control of press by a government may bring about propaganda and censorship. In every case media are not independent but rely on the support and green light of the government.

Marcel Gauchet (2006, pp.17-29) made a distinction claiming that media could no longer be seen as counter-power but they were still a meta-power nonetheless. He justifies it by highlighting the implications of the relationship between media and political power. To him journalism must supervise governance to remind the State of its highest in importance duties. Media continuously condition the practicing of politics and therefore is linked to it. Media must observe, criticize, explain and inspect the leaders of the country through their different channels but also protect the social pact binding government and citizens. A democracy must at the same time take the risk of unveiling the truth to its citizens and be able to hear it back without causing any damage as a retaliation. As Michel Foucault (1967) stated this double-commitment is at the heart of a democracy and ensures its longevity. Media cannot be dissociated from politics since they are a key component of the democratic life. Media indeed have an important role to play as they materialize some interpretations of reality that are deemed influential on their different medium. Nevertheless politicians are not totally unarmed in this fierce competition to get the most recognition, especially during electoral campaign. Firstly media are under politicians' thumb in the sense that the political class is mostly the one pushing the agenda and not the opposite. Journalists interested in politics are more than often following more than outstripping a political offer. Secondly media professionals depend on the goodwill of politicians first to obtain unheard of information unknown



from their competitors and then to bypass communication specialists hired by politicians in the hope of getting a better access to political news.

The relationship between politicians and media is all the more asymmetrical as the political class often uses media as their perfect scapegoat. The stratagem is well-proven and used every time a political man or woman is involved in a financial scandal or else. They all proclaim themselves as victims of a plot orchestrated by media. In this way politicians can reverse the roles and become accuser instead of the accused, which diverts public's attention from the former scandal. The messenger who is involved is the mother of all evils rather than the actual message. French people are wary of media so politicians use this suspicion to their advantage (Lamothe, 2017). According to a Kantar survey ordered by the newspaper La Croix, less than one out of two French citizens trust media. Their credibility in the eyes of the population is in freefall. Every political party tends to castigate against the 'system', which media are a part of, categorizing media in accordance with their political views. For the Front National media gather the privileged, for the republican party media represent an established order and for the communist party media are a sort of oligarchy. Politicians are usually accusing media of being money powers' puppets because press groups are held by a few big bosses and also because there are hints of collusion between political, economic elites and well-known media figures (Halimi, 2005). Politicians are too becoming aware of social media potential and solicitous not to be limited by the reduced speeches time accorded to them on traditional media. They are more and more present on new channels such as video streaming or photography sharing websites. Media cannot be considered as counter-power inasmuch as the political class does not let media get in their way as it can be proven by their usage of media.

### 3.2.3 Creation of Infotainment

Long political debates became fewer and fewer on television and when aired the guests are often high-profile politicians, leaving small voices in the shadow. Nevertheless politics has never been more popular on television through news channels, entertainment show and the symbiosis of both titled infotainment. Infotainment's popularity increased a lot in ten years and politicians who understood how to use this new form of shows to their advantage are passing daily before the audience eyes. No matter how irritating it is for a politician guest to participate in

infotainment, due to unfavourable arrangement of the set, up-close framing or unexpected questions, it is essential for him or her to be a part of it. It enables them to show themselves on the political scene and to broadcast a message to people him or her is not usually reaching. The content of infotainment shows however only skims over politics since questions asked to political guests tend to only be superficial. As through other medium political men and women are in most cases asked if they will be candidates to some elections and not necessarily their motivations or ideas behind a campaign candidacy. In a general way media take interest in politics when it can be personified and when there is a quest for power. Infotainment has been criticized for the reconstructed vision of life it gives. The emphasis is put on squabbles among party members or on the politicians respecting the rules of the games. Many politicians follow the superficial rules of media instead of focusing on topics regarding the real life experiences shared by common voters. Infotainment favours emblematic leading figures and the coverage of political news promotes arguments and division among the guests. There is also a mirror effect between politicians and journalists. Political men and women enjoy marveling at themselves in the eyes of journalists and vice versa. The processing of information centered on machinery of power, cunning remarks and calendars fixed on political agenda is not within everyone's grasp. It is only fully understandable for the ones enthusiastic by political games and not the totality of voters. Journalists seem to address their own sources rather than their actual audience. Pierre Leroux is placing responsibility on the entwined interdependent system in which media and politicians thrive (Carasco, 2015). Media are a part of the political world as a big producer of political content. Political journalists draw closer to power to collect confidential and exclusive information, which makes them prisoner of the thought patterns of politicians. There is however a difference between the proximity of a journalist who wants to stay close to its source and the connivance of journalists who share the same state of mind than politicians, who are from the same elite, went to the same schools or frequent the same parties. Many politicians reached power through their previous positions as journalists. Furthermore political communication strategies often do not target citizens but journalists because a political decision seems much more legitimized and important as long as it is broadly covered on media. Even if this system appears as profitable for both parties in the short run, it is not in the long term. Social movements such as Nuit Debout in 2016, similar to the Occupy

movement in the United States and the Indignados movement in Spain, prove the need for French people to be able to voice over their opinion and to participate to public debates. On one hand politicians lose credibility while playing the games of media with cunning remarks and exaggerated stances. On the other hand media give the impression of prospering in a model of immediacy that led up to an excessive representation of present, an erasure of past and impossibility to put events into perspective. For instance, the establishment of laws takes too much time to be fully portrayed and explained in media so they focus on the drama of the production of it. It is harmful for politicians whose job is to offer long-time solutions throughout terms and to create new prospects and for media which are supposed to support the common good. In contemplation of the presidential election of 2017 more than a dozen more of Sunday political television programmes started being broadcasted six months before the election. Additionally excerpts from the shows are being rebroadcasted all day long on media and commented on social media. Day in, day out, the political class repeats the same language elements in the same media. The unremarkable audience figures for electoral campaign related television shows, whereas presidential elections are considered as a major event in the political life of the country, prove the boredom caused by a compulsive viewing of electoral shows. Both parties could be considered as losers with this immoderate media exposure; media by losing a share of audience and politicians by losing credibility. Politicians may think that the more they speak, the more they are understood and then supported. However it would be putting their target aside. Viewers, readers, social media users may ask themselves on the contrary when are the politicians actually working and if there is a connivance with the media. Politics is a special sort of communication.

### 3.2.4 Media's Real Influence on Voters

Instead of influencing an audience, it could be said that media orientate them. In accordance with a CSA study comparing media audiences and their votes during the 2007 presidential election, there are clear distinctions between the different targets. For instance readers of weekly magazines such as *Marianne*, *L'Obs* or *Le Canard Enchaîné*, that are leftist press titles, voted to a large extent for Ségolène Royal, who was the socialist party candidate. On the other hand, it has been established that readers of *Le Point*, a rightist press title, massively chose Nicolas

Sarkozy, who was the republican party candidate. Nevertheless granting a genuine influence to media seems to be an overestimation of their field of competences. It should be noted that nowadays media cannot afford to fly a party's flag too high since it would cut off a potential part of their public. Also to make their content credible media are now driving towards an objectivity ideal, which was not the case in the past. Rather than an influence, there is a convergence of opinions between media and their audience. People have access to a large number of information originating from many different sources. Citizens are shaping their own opinions and then corroborate them by media of their choosing (Esquenazi, 2013). During an electoral campaign voters could be more influenced by opinion polls instead of media. As said before there are close ties between media and politics. There is no political life without public opinion, and no public opinion without communication. There has always been media coverage in a democracy. Before the first appearance of television in politics, exposure was made by politicians through meetings, talks and press articles. Now voters must be appealed to. Specific targets such as the youth or the elderly must be reached through effective gratifying advertisements and catchy headlines. According to André Santini, a previous Minister of Communication, media cannot be considered as the 4<sup>th</sup> power as we already live in a media democracy. There is no 4<sup>th</sup> power like Alexis de Tocqueville could have suggested it but media have some power. To him the other powers are weakened by the daily interventions of media. When it comes to the legislative power, there would not be any more debates at the national assembly because media would be the ones creating public debates and when a decision is taken media would be the first to know as a priority. The executive power would be exploited by surveys and the judiciary power would be practiced by investigative press. Examining magistrates would live in harmony with journalists and the journalists' investigations would serve as a verdict or judgment. Even if his point of view must be qualified, it features the constant presence of media in political life. However media cannot be as powerful as some may think, since it is not possible nowadays to measure the part of media's accountability in the voting process. The decision-making process for an election is so perplexing and proper to each voter that the assumption supporting that media decide of the final score seem overrated. There is no real influence but there are indirect effects of media on voters and on their political attitudes. Ultimately media aim to reinforce pre-existing opinions. They produce little direct influence on citizens' choices and only strengthen

the initial choices of people when it comes to elections' votes or political preferences and affiliation.



## CHAPTER 4

### Front National Uses of Media

#### 4.1 Relationship between Front National and Media

##### 4.1.1 Control of their Communication

According to legend François Mitterrand, back in the days President for the sake of representativeness, opened the way for the Front National in the media by letting Jean-Marie Le Pen appear on a political television show called The Hour of Truth in 1984. In those times the Front National was automatically retained from the media due to their extreme speeches and was only representing less than 1% in the presidential elections. Three decades later her daughter is given favourite to win the first of the presidential election but her involvement in media is still causing troubles. Marine Le Pen's participation in the television programme Intimate Ambition stirred a new polemic because the television show episode was a huge success and the candidate was deemed too 'likeable'. The contradiction lies in the fact that even if the extreme right is being ostracized from media, they always insure a great audience figures. Consequently media are putting the Front National and its members at the forefront. The radio station Europe 1 counted that Marine Le Pen was the guest who was the most often invited on their morning shows in 2014. Far from Jean-Marie Le Pen walking on a media minefield, her daughter is on top of people magazines with glamorous photoshoots and present on every channel. Marine Le Pen also has the upper hand due to the fact that there is little competition within her own party. Some journalists tend to consider Marine Le Pen as a normalised political woman whereas she gives the same speeches that her father, minus the anti-Semitic or Holocaust denial remarks. It all started for Marine Le Pen in 2002 when she was invited on a

talk show to support her dad who won the first round of presidential election. Hervé Bérout, reporter at that time, stated that the electoral influence of the Front National was advancing and the Superior Council for Audiovisual was forcing media to represent this progress, they could not invite Jean-Marie Le Pen every week so Marine Le Pen came along at the right time. She was offering an additional voice and was also called Le Pen, making it easier for the audience to situate her. Another turning point in her media career was an open-heart interview and report in 2006 where she exposed a more human side by sharing her personal experiences; the murder attempt on her father, her parents separation, her mother on the cover of a Playboy magazine. These calculated confessions started replacing on the media her father's slips of the tongue and negative image. Before being propelled at the head of the Front National, Marine Le Pen was very accommodating with media. She was approachable, reactive, ready for confrontation on talk shows, available even if it was only for a 30 seconds interview and she was not demanding a proofreading of her journalistic interviews. She also understood early on the importance of news channel. The news channel BFM TV was incidentally nicknamed BFN TV due to the high level of appearances of a Front National member on it. The power of Marine Le Pen was to effortlessly inserting herself into the media system, profusely using it while keeping her distance from it, reaching to her electorate while criticizing the 'establishment'. Even though she grew up in a very wealthy closed off Parisian neighborhood, apart from the majority of French people, Marine Le Pen on air keeps lashing at journalists that they are the ones cut off from the reality shared by French citizens. Many journalists testified of the differences in her behaviour when the leader of the Front National is behind the scenes and when she is on stage. Backstage Marine Le Pen shows herself courteous and pleasant without familiarities. However when the debate starts she gets the upper hand by disseminating a palpable tension. Bruce Toussaint a television reporter stated “She comes to play a game and win it” (Groussard, 2014). The Front National aims at surprising; anger, combativeness, comedy, predatory smiles, the audience is lured by the unpredictable performance of the extreme right. Media professionals do not know for sure where Marine Le Pen stands and how to apprehend her. Another ability of the nationalists is to run through a series of sentences one after another in order to block out any undesirable questions. Despite the Front National being an unreliable guest, media are fond of their mischiefs, political stances and important viewing figures.

The time when Jean-Marie Le Pen's slips of the tongue was forcing the media to push forward the Front National seems very far away. Nowadays the undemonized party impresses by its control in the media. During the election campaign Marine Le Pen targets her interventions and Florian Philippot, vice-chairman of the Front National, deals with the daily interviews. Numerous improvised talk show participations have been cancelled by the extreme right, wishing to totally handle their normalisation communication. The Front National is notoriously in bad terms with some media such as independent newspapers or satirical television programmes to which they rarely grant any interview. To avoid suffering the wrath of the Superior Council of Audiovisual which forces each candidate to appear on all media the same amount of time, the Front National allows the vice-president or Marine Le Pen's partner to answer the questions of the media set aside while the leader continues to ignore them. The Front National keeps us his habit of dividing the press industry by friendly press or hostile press. The media sorting orchestrated by the Front National pushed several associations of journalists in several newsrooms to report the nationalist censorship in a press release. This supervision of media distinguishes the extreme right from other parties, except for some extreme left parties that may also indulge in pressures, blacklisting or journalists targeting. The Front National controls what they say to media and what is said of them. Between November 2011 and April 2012 Marine Le Pen took five times to SCA to bring before the council cases in which her party was qualified as 'extreme right' in the media, which is according to her deeply false and defamatory. As a lawyer she regularly threatens media of judicial proceedings. At the end of 2015 in the view of the coming presidential election, the communication strategy of the party pivoted to a 360° angle and the party went from omnipresence in the media to a spell in the wilderness. They were aiming at creating expectations of the leader' talks. A rarer speech would, in accordance with their theory, reach further if it is given at the most advantageous moment after a long moment out of the spotlight. There is stiffening in the position of the Front National towards media. They feel powerful enough so as to be able to pick up with media to address or not. This situation is probably due to the absence of doubt as for the inescapable signs of their close victory (De Boni, 2015).

A paradox embodying the complex relationship between the extreme right representatives and media is the numerous claims of nationalists who never stop portraying themselves as victims of media ostracism while constantly being present



on media. The Front National for a long time tells one another that they are being mistreated by media, manhandled by journalists and public television channels. They claim that media treat them harshly they feel as they are being ignored, journalists would be more aggressive with them, more partisan and less objective. This approach helps their victimhood and is a part of their victim identification stratagem. It enables the members of the Front National to tacitly tell to voters who feel wronged by the system and French politicians 'we are also victims of the system, just like you'. Criticizing media was for a long time the prerogative of the extreme left, but it now shifted to the right on the political spectrum. To counter traditional media that would oppress them, the Front National distinguishes itself on social media and on the web where they have been on the leading edge since the democratisation of Internet. The Front National is the first French party on social media in terms of visits and likes and they were the first party to equip themselves with an official website. They use these web channels as information feed to broadcast their own videos or reports without having to exchange with a journalist. This way they can have a direct communication tool and extend the space allocated to them in public life. When Front National and journalists collaborate, suspicion prevails and there can be an instrumentalisation of information from sometimes both sides. Rumor has it managers of the party have been in discussion with Donald Trump's communication consultant regarding the use of their web pages. Through press releases and the creation of websites specialised in analysing newspapers articles nationalists aims at delegitimize traditional media. According to the sociologist Yannick Cahuzac during presidential elections the Front National is the political party the most often quoted on forums' topics (Auproux, 2013). It is crucial for the Front National to be present on every social network to reduce the number of middlemen in the spreading of information in order to distinguish, legitimize and undemonize themselves. Numerous political figures of the Front National created their own websites which grant them outspokenness and the possibility to talk about any topic they desire at any given time. Many extreme rights websites and blogs have been created by sympathisers in the hope of redressing the balance that they deem excessively inclined towards the left by the press that is automatically leftist or corrupted. Those activist blogs claim to cumulate sometimes one million unique visitors a month, which is just as much as independent online newspapers. Those websites, that are not necessarily affiliated to the Front National, and social media

removed the guild attached to nationalist talks and votes. The web broke the spiral of silence that was preventing sympathisers from being comfortable with their extreme right activist position. Online anyone can express anonymously their political opinion without being afraid of retaliation in real life or feeling judged. Nowadays almost the totalities of the Front National's subscription are being completed online, since there is no need any more to go to a committee room to get a membership card. The use of web for undemonizing the party can nevertheless be a double-edged sword because of all the xenophobic comments posted by nationalists every time the party updates their feed. There is a profound difference between the image Marine Le Pen is trying to convey and the online display of her sympathisers which can be hurtful for the reputation of the Front National. The Front National frequently congratulates users who turned to online resources. However the climate of distrust surrounding media also touches the web especially since internet users are more becoming more and more aware of propaganda methods surrounding political election. For example there are robots created by parties used to up a particular subject on search engines or to spread fake news, and there are websites created with the sole purpose of guiding readers on other websites to favourable articles written on the chosen party.

#### 4.1.2 Not a Regular Party

Laurent Joffrin, the publication and redaction director of the leftist newspaper *Libération* which had a notoriously bad relationship with the Front National in the past stated that “We are trying to be coherent. We are not spending our time writing that the Front National is the devil, nor are we caricaturing their positions. Moreover we do not have any specific problem with them” (Alonso, 2016). But he also explains that, unlike many media, they still not consider Front National as a regular party because the party's base does not match republican values. Consequently the newspaper does not publish direct style interviews. *Libération* also devotes a special editorial space for a column titled 'An Eye on the Front' which they do not deem as an activist move but as a place to understand and analyse the Front National with experts. In the newspaper *Le Monde*, the national party is treated with the same journalistic tools as any other parties even if they do not put it in the political parties' box. However a particular attention is given to asking the right questions which would showcase the inconsistencies of the extreme right speeches and manifesto. For

the newspaper there are a lot of unsaid things in the Front National's communication so they make sure to figure out the signals linking the party to the extreme right, and to annotate them at the bottom of articles. The difficulty for journalists, or the opportunity for the Front National, is that the extreme right never reached power so they cannot always base themselves on the evidence. The risk is to give a voice to nationalists through media representation without questioning their speech. For instance for the recent presidential election a financial newspaper (Goetz, 2017) conducted a study demonstrating the extremely costly consequences of dropping euro in favour of a national currency. A distinction must be made between information media, such as newspapers, and communication media, like websites created by extreme right leaders. The latter can be perceived as propaganda tools because these types of blog article writers or video speakers are not faced with their contradictions. There is always a sort of tautness within an editorial board when the extreme right topic is approached because journalists have to face two obligations. One is that the theme of the Front National cannot be avoided and the other is that media should not grant the extreme right forgiving platforms. The key is the preliminary work of an interview, which must put into an analytical and calm perspective the nationalist speech. Marine Le Pen is known and renowned, she is at the head of a party that relies massively on a strong leadership, she has an expert knowledge of communication circuit and her party is growing more and more popular day by day. She then perfectly personifies the Front National and has a legitimate place in the media. If media like newspapers decided to boycott her it would be a breach of democratic ideal preached by the profession. Front National is legally authorised to run as a candidate in the presidential election and it is supported by millions of French voters so the party should receive the same media coverage opportunities as the other political parties for the sake of representativeness.

#### 4.1.3 Role of Media in Popularisation

The integration in the mainstream of the Front National has been at the heart of political debates in France for decades. Is the Front National often portrayed in the media because it is an important party or did it become an important party because it is often portrayed in the media? If all the legal parties must be provided the same access to media then how must a fascist party be covered and what role is media playing in the integration in the mainstream of the party? Some newspapers like Le

Monde decided not to publish opinion pages about the Front National because opinion pages dedicated to political leading figures tend to have a strong establishment value. Furthermore during the 2012 presidential campaign opinion polls started flourishing on media and were predicting high voting intention for the Front National. Media were stopping citizens feeling guilty about voting for the Front National because readings of opinion polls tended to show a sort of normalisation of the extreme right's choice. Few people could assume voting for the Front National while answering opinion polls. Therefore to transmit a truthful comparison with other political parties, the low forecast number of nationalist votes was picked up. Moreover many research institutes questioned voters a year before the election actually took place. Far from representing the reality correctly, opinion polls only served to portray the Front National as a common party. Not only the Front National is not as boycotted or censored by media as they pretend to be, but their exposure is quite lenient in terms of the space according to them in media. Editorial writers, despite their displayed contempt towards the extreme right, deeply contributed to its progress by regularly inviting the leaders of the party. Admittedly any topic related to the Front National would go down well and meet an assured editorial success because the extreme right's talent to combine popular demands and discourteous provocations. This excessive exposure only served the Front National's interests. It contributed to standardise the extreme right's presence in the media and to allow the party to undemonize itself. Marine Le Pen and her associates were able to broadcast to a wider audience a new storytelling of their party. One in which the Front National became an ordinary party through successive steps all cut in different events that could continuously supply news channel; the eviction of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the placement of nationalist members with minorities background to key post in the Front National's administration, etc... The changes in the ways media treat and produce information also worked in favour of the Front National. Jean-Marie Le Pen was rejected by media, on the contrary his daughter is not only seen as the president of the party but also as a political celebrity. As a celebrity her personal life, wardrobe tastes and favourite haircuts are plastered all over girly magazines. As the most famous representative figure of her party, she is also invited in infotainment television programmes. Even if she often declines the invitation, approaching the extreme right's thematic in an amusing way proves that the media coverage of the Front National fell into line with the new methods of covering political news. These

new methods, such as infotainment television shows tend to deconsecrate and depoliticise politics. By reporting the banal elements of Marine Le Pen's personal life, media have contributed to make her seem more commonplace. This undoubtedly helped the Front National's normalisation in current French society. Other than giving an ordinary vision of Marine Le Pen, media also contributed to nurture an anxiety-provoking climate through excessive media coverage of criminal minor news items or portrayal of terrorism. For shocking value and higher audience ratings, insecurity is a recurrent daily theme in media even if it does not truly depict the actual state of French society.

There are other factors that can be pulled up to explain the extreme right normalisation process. Media's portrayal of Marine Le Pen cannot be considered as the only guilty party. Many politicians, from left to right, went back over the ideas voted in by the extreme right, which resulted in legitimizing those ideas. Moreover the societal context with the refugees' crisis or the numerous terrorist attacks reinforced the Front National's racist and xenophobic vision of the world. Several editorialists decided to discredit the success of the undemonisation process of the extreme right to diminish it, but in return it discredited any critical speech toward nationalists. Furthermore there are very few media that are openly supporting nationalist ideas. In 1986 the Front National received almost 10% of the votes in the legislative elections and the reporter who granted three interviews to Jean-Marie Le Pen in *The Hour of Truth* between 1984 and 1986 was accused of playing into the hands of the extreme right. Nevertheless while putting things into context, there is very little that point out to the responsibility of media in the high score of the Front National during this election. Firstly they already got 11% of the votes during the precedent European elections in 1984 plus at that time the legislative elections were following the rules of proportional representation, ensuring a stronger influence for sorting candidates. Moreover at that time there was a socialist president at the head of the country for five years, which ensued a radicalisation of a part of the rightist traditional electorate very unfavorable to the leading left. Automatically accusing media for the rise of the Front National, or for anything gone wrongly, tends to be a recurring habit for politicians of all persuasions. The main evidence for the media's condemnation merely rests upon the belief of media's power and it allows politicians to frame journalists as scapegoats instead on taking a longer look on the nationalist voters' motivations. There is nowadays in France a strong reject of the 'establishment'

represented by traditional political parties that had a chance to govern but through their actions, speeches, helplessness to reverse the trend led to political despondency. This climate of political distrust pushed forward to the second round of the presidential elections two candidates from political parties who never reached the executive power before and who spent their presidential campaign rejecting the traditional political class; Marine Le Pen with the Front National and Emmanuel Macron with En Marche. The Front National vowed to rule the country differently, to adopt new customs, to give the power back to the voters and to help predominantly the ones who felt abandoned by the previous governments. Political men and women designating media as the sole responsible for the extreme right's growing popularity then seem to avoid facing up to their own responsibilities in the political disenchantment that stimulates nationalist views.

Since the undemonisation of the party orchestrated by Marine Le Pen it is more difficult for media and journalists to portray or talk about the Front National. The members of the party are less violent than back in the days of Jean-Marie Le Pen but journalists now struggle with approaching not the concerned party but the nationalist theme in itself. Since they refuse to be categorized as extreme rightist and that they gradually split up and distance themselves from their problematic historical roots, media struggle to put a name on their trends or to put their speeches in perspective. The Front National also often resorts to smear campaign against targeted journalists, to ethical blackmail and to the staging of ostracism organised by media against the Front National. The fact that Marine Le Pen is a woman is an added value for the Front National in that it could reassure voters and appease the extreme right reputation. Usually nationalist leaders are associated to manly attributes such as virility, violence or authority whereas Marine Le Pen might reinforce the victimisation process of the Front National. Nevertheless Marine Le Pen has it both ways as she also often adopts manly behaviors too. As a woman the leader of the party can also convey a modern image very different from her father's in agreement with the new spin she tried to put on the party. While Jean-Marie Le Pen was a clear target, journalists must change their approach to tackle the new leader who showcases herself more humanly, as a divorced woman raising children on her own, a real woman of the people. Marine Le Pen's Front National made a point of honour to get rid of their anti-Semitic and Nazi baggage made infamously famous by her father's slips of the tongue to focalise on Islamism and the negative consequences

brought by France's position in Europe. Consequently media ended up all of a sudden with no frame of reference with their main counter-argument taken away from them. Without the Second World War ghost hovering over them or the racist remarks, media lack of angles of attack to demonstrate the danger of the Front National and are sometimes compelled to depict the Front National as respectable (Devresse, 2011). However by being more and more considered as a regular party, media do not hesitate now to start investigating thoroughly the party; its manifesto, its mayors' appraisal, its finances. When it comes to the extreme right, some media from now on want to push forward cold hard facts instead of survey results, slips of tongues or the family debacle inside the party. If in substance the extreme right did not change, its appearance on the other hand is totally under control. The developments of the party are all the more so difficult for the media to illustrate as the speech of the traditional right parties also become stricter. Jean-Marie Le Pen could be brutal with journalists at times but he was still very talkative and a dialogue could easily be started with him. On the contrary his daughter talks with restraint in a more controlled and cutting manner. It may be impossible to measure the impact of media in the integration of the mainstream of the party but they definitely did play an undefined part and still do with an always evolving extreme right harder to tackle.

#### 4.1.4 Journalists Put at Risk

Relationships between the Front National and media have always been complicated to such an extent that it is not uncommon for journalists to be victims of them. The ratio of power is tense while at the same time nationalists never received such important media coverage before. The Front National does not hesitate to appear on media with the avowed goal to castigate media. It is not unusual for important members or sympathisers of the Front National to openly criticize, threaten, even verbally or physically attack journalists. By directly confronting media the extreme right informs the public that they are not a part of the system that they are battling against. Several times journalists had to make a statement in police stations after having been harassed by journalists. Media unions have condemned numerous times the party in press releases because of the way their employees were violently treated by nationalists. The Front National also keeps a blacklist updated preventing specific media or journalists to cover meetings or extreme right events. The

animosity and shared distrust of each other will not stop until they consider media to be friendly enough with them.

The treatment of nationalist information also causes arguments inside newsroom and within media's audience. Nowadays many media do not question anymore the high frequency with which the Front National leaders are invited to express their views on media or do not produce critical analysis of the undemonisation strategy of the Front National. Yet the public needs the help of media to decipher the extreme right speeches because a lot of specialised vocabularies are specially chosen for media to gain credibility on their channels. In the eighties when the Front National started gaining some recognition in the media after scoring 10% at the legislative election, media were either finding the party irrelevant or were completely avoiding it. Irrelevant because media preferred to focus on the main political parties or avoidance because the Front National was not considered as a republican one. Journalists were opposing each other, disagreeing on the procedure to follow. On one hand some journalists were claiming that the nationalist subject should be totally dropped otherwise they would only play into the hands of the Front National by raising its awareness. On the other hand the rest of journalists were claiming that for the sake of representativeness the Front National could not be rejected by media. Deciding to work on the national party raised a lot of disapproval and a lack of understanding in writing rooms because of the suspicions of trying to acquit the party. In our time the party has become so popular that media coverage of the extreme right cannot be refused even if it is to condemn it. The political class of all persuasions also often blames media for institutionalising the extreme right through their work. Abel Mestre, a reknown political enthusiast and journalist for *Le Monde*, was the extreme right specialist in the newspapers column for many years. However he admitted that because of the tense climate, mostly caused by pressures orchestrated by the Front National leaders and its sympathisers, he asked to be transferred to the sport section after his home address was disclosed to nationalist supporters (Manilève, 2015). It should be noted that even if there are bones of contention in a newsroom concerning the Front National there is also on a bigger scale a sort of solidarity between the different editorial boards because they are all confronted with a sizeable opponent. If journalists dealing with the Front National consider it as a regular party, they are held responsible for normalising it. On the other side if there is a lot of media coverage then media are accused of



advertising it but if journalists avoid the subject then they are blamed for underestimating the growing power of the extreme right. In any cases journalists will end up frustrated, especially as most of the media disagree with the nationalist school of thought. The extreme right is such a polemical topic that it is doubtful that some common ground on how to portray it in the media may ever be found.

## 4.2 Front National Media Strategy in depth

### 4.2.1 Social Media and New Signs

Leaders and sympathisers of Front National are more and more often trading traditional media channels such as television or newspapers for social media to display their political programs and views. It is true that social media gained considerable influence over the last decade as 77% of people between the ages of 18 to 24 years old admit promptly using social media to enquire about news (Tallis, 2017). Nevertheless the Front National did not wait for Internet's democratization to establish themselves on social media. Marine Le Pen is handling a successful online presence nowadays. However it is not only due to the Front National's accurate usage of new forms of communication. It also comes from Jean-Marie Le Pen who presented Internet to its fellow sympathisers as the best rallying point for nationalists as soon as in the nineties. Social media allow the extreme right to get round media that they perceive too leftist. Because of the traditional media being biased, the Front National gives top billing to 'reinforce' its campaigners. Social media are also useful to avoid having to deal directly with journalists who they deem with a committed position to always justify the successive governments that failed to set France back upright. The offensive digital strategy can circumvent the journalists 'cast' and the 'oligarchy' but it also gives the opportunity for Marine Le Pen to claim that she maintains a direct conversation with citizens 'outside of the system'. Marine Le Pen for example did several livestreams on Facebook where she answered questions from internet users. The staging was very simple with a common blue background, a library, some personal pictures displayed in the back and a computer, and the whole videos were taped by camera or webcam and viewed cumulatively millions of times. This way the president of the Front National could present her political platform and the topics cherished by extreme right while answering questions going along with it. Such livestreams enable candidates to erase all objections and have a direct

relationship to their audience even if there can be bugs or non-partisans and 'trolls' flooding the comments section. The same stratagem was used on Periscope where following the same pattern Marine Le Pen answered previously picked questions from internet users chosen to show the Front National to their advantage. Anti-government and anti-system replies featured to create a sense of community among the social media users who feel abandoned by the political class. Livestreams are used by the extreme right in order to run through arguments and to showcase their emblematic subjects like the state of Europe, the migrant crisis or farming's future while avoiding unpleasant ones. Being able to express their opinions without intermediaries is very important in the eyes of nationalists because they feel as their political stances are caricatured in media. Furthermore communicating online allows Marine Le Pen to remain in control of the communication and herself, unlike some of her appearances on television or radio shows where she had issues retaining her animosity when she was being contradicted. The Front National's online communication appears to be cut off from the world as it does not leave a possibility for counter speeches. All the content posted on their social media, with the exception of tweets signed by nationalist executives, sends an internet user to their official website. Newspapers articles regarding the extreme right are first imported onto the official website before being linked on their social media. Likewise the appearances of Front National leaders on traditional media such as television or radio are not directly linked but first posted on their official YouTube page. While reposting everything on their website the Front National is short-circuiting the social media users' comments. Only the content is visible on their website and the negative comments that might be posted on media about them can be bypassed. They keep their image unspoiled and are as much as possible in control of whatever may have an impact on their reputation. It also allows the visitors of the Front National's website to feel in a safe space. The negative comments posted on their content on social media could have paradoxically been beneficial for their victimisation process if they had let them be visible on their website. They could have pointed out to them as the proof that they are victims of constant discriminations and criticisms on media. The level of hostility displayed against them supports their theory that a political cast is working against them to maintain the same politicians at the heads of important administrations. According to them, these highly educated political elite would have fallen out of touch with the reality of common citizens' daily lives, especially the

middle-class and poor ones, and what they are incumbent upon. Unlike the Front National that would pay attention to their needs and could fix their problems if the cast, and their also highly educated sympathisers, would let them access executive powers. The level of hostility also displayed against Front National's sympathisers creates an impression of unity between them and the leaders of the party, all suffering for their ideals, rejected by society. Nevertheless their desire to showcase their programmes and ideas without being interrupted is stronger, as they leave the heated debates for traditional media. On YouTube a new video is posted every week with Florian Philippot, vice-chairman of the party, who appears relaxed delivering a monologue in the lunchroom of the party's headquarters. All is done to reassert the worth of the Front National and to showcase a more human or friendly side. Social media also help smoothing down and embellishing the somewhat negative image reflected by the Front National in traditional media. For instance on Marine Le Pen's website there is a personal photograph album showing her; as a mother with one of her daughter, as a regular French woman enjoying a dinner with friends, as a down-to-earth animals lover with cats, as an international political leading figure while being away on business trips, as a woman of the people negotiating with unions, as a national political leading figure being interviewed by media. All those pictures have been carefully chosen to wipe out the aggressive usual image of the Front National that could repel voters. The national party wishes to eliminate all signs perceived as too extreme from their speeches even online where their phrasing resembles ones used by television news channel. The Front National was one of the first parties in France to establish a platform online through view data services like Minitel in the nineties. They never lost their head start and are still today the first party of France considering online statistics such as the number of likes on their social media posts. Being active and responsive on social media through actions such as inviting friends, writing posts about a party or promoting a party event became a political activist act in the same way as distributing pamphlets on the streets. At first the Front National's twitter account was only used to relay electoral achievements of the party but it is now used to incite activity and visibility. Twitter is used as a thorough relay to share the noteworthy moments of Front National's members on traditional media during election campaign. Interviews are being tweeted about in live by community managers on the Front National's twitter account or the official personal account of the candidate. According to Julien Longui, a language sciences academician who

analysed the way the Front National used twitter during the presidential election of 2017, the words most used by nationalist leaders echo the most repeated ones in their program which are; 'free', 'safe', thriving', 'fair', 'proud', 'powerful' and 'lasting'. During the electoral election of 2015, five out of the ten chief candidates who received the most attention on social media were from the Front National (Squad, 2015). It is not surprising then that a strong online presence is at the heart of their communication strategy. After all Marine Le Pen announced from her an 'innovating' presidential campaign for 2017 based on new technologies. Their carefully designed online presence can sometimes be disturbed by contentious words posted by Front National's members who disrupt the normalised appearance the leaders want to assume. Some members have been sentenced to pay fines after letting internet users post racist comments on nationalist pages or have been expelled of the party for sharing xenophobic or homophobic comments themselves. A phrase has even been coined to describe zealous nationalist sympathisers gathering online, the fachosphère, meaning fascist sphere. The party has been defending itself claiming that with only a small team of employees dealing with their online presence it is impossible to check the thousands of comments left on their social media pages. To them they cannot be held responsible for the opinion shared by detached online users who are only tired of uniformity of thought divulged by traditional media. Some executives of the Front National such as Louis Aliot, Marine Le Pen's partner and vice-president of the party even blocked specific journalists from their social media accounts so as to prevent them from being able to read what they are posting online.

The Front National's makeover was completed by a total erasure of Front National's previous symbols. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the logo or even the name Front National have been put aside to finalise the undemonisation undertaking through an extreme trivialisation. Marine Le Pen's new website portray these changes as the only remaining elements from the previous Front National's corporate identity and style guide are the three colours of the French flag; blue, white and red. The logotype on the header's website is a drawn portrait of the president of the party which resembles Marianne<sup>25</sup>. The portrait gives a clue of the desire for the Front National to represent their leader as an ordinary republican politician. To distance themselves with Jean-Marie Le Pen's vision of the party, the website is packed with interview

---

<sup>25</sup> A woman with a Phrygian cap allegorising freedom and republic, an important national symbol in almost the same way as the French flag.

extracts from all the main channels, to prove that the Front National is nowadays an integral part of the political scenery. The Front National's political group or their logo is not mentioned anywhere unless an internet user wishes to become a member of the party or to give a donation. This way the nationalists can reach a larger audience that would not be repelled by the Front National's reputation straight away. The website's storytelling put the emphasis on Marine Le Pen's family origins in Brittany instead of on her controversial father who ran the party for decades. On the Front National's posters created for the second round of the presidential elections of 2017 Marine Le Pen appears quite feminine and calm wearing a blue suit with a black skirt completely out of step with her father's image. Since last summer her family name or the historical name of the party are not even written on the posters, proving the scission with the previous nationalists symbols. She changed the flame logo, which was a tribute to the World War I French soldiers and the symbol of the Front National since 1973, in favour of a rose. For her communication team the rose is a symbol of femininity in an election where she will be one of the only female candidates. These alterations have proven efficient to increase the percentage of women voting for the Front National, who were before averse to the violent aspect of the extreme right (Cevipof, 2011). The party is slowly fading in favour of its candidate as a sole representative.

#### 4.2.2 Strategies

The extreme right communication is under strict supervision and there is no place for improvisation in their media strategy which they divided in three think tanks; politics, strategy and logistics. Marine Le Pen surrounded herself with a strategic committee consisting of thirty-four nationalists who will direct all the aspects of the Front National's election campaign by her side during weekly meetings. In the media Front National adopts a head-on attack strategy to defeat their opponents and sceptics. A direct confrontation is the key for the party to differentiate themselves and they do not hesitate to insult other candidates publicly or to post libelous posters online about them. However this dividing strategy could prevent them from gaining support from politicians of other persuasions which they are cruelly lacking.

In contrast to this head-on strategy the Front National also aims at banalising itself by playing the cooling down card. On numerous nationalist posters Marine Le

Pen appears calm with the headline 'An Appeased France' below her whereas they are usually using society's tension to their advantage. The slogan is quite paradoxical as the Front National's speeches are thriving on political, social and community splits. During the last regional elections the voters massively chose other republican parties to block the Front National at the second round, proving that they are not the ones people usually turn to for calming. The headline 'An Appeased France' stands against the flow of the party and is a daring act to smooth down the extreme right's image. The party wants it both ways; an undemonized reputation while using people's fears in its speeches to get the voters' attention. As the citizens are more and more to consider that the Front National represents a danger for democracy in France (Moinet, 2016), is doubtful that the posters would have arrived on time to bring about major change. It is true that the extreme right progressively invaded the local political field but its results could never measure to the influence granted to it in the opinion polls or political debates.

To invigorate her sympathisers Marine Le Pen often holds meetings in different towns, for which address information are shared on her social media pages. Traditional media are also following her during these visits and are reporting her trips on television or radio. She wants to give the impression that she and her party are close to the people that they want to represent at the head of the state. This strategy of proximity aims at broadening the nationalist electorate as they do not want people to focus on their party but on the new personalities leading it. This is due to the spectre of Jean-Marie Le Pen still hovering over his ex-party whose intolerable speeches were preventing the Front National to seduce a majority of voters and pushed the party at the margins. As another part of this strategy Marine Le Pen announced on live television that she took a leave of absence from the Front National's presidency at the end of the election campaign so as to appear as a simple and free candidate above partisan consideration who could embrace all French citizens. The proximity strategy also go through an adaptation of speech in accordance with the targeted public as the same message addressed to a huge audience would be attenuated and so less heard. The Front National exerts a made to measure communication with specific messages categorized by the different socio-professional categories they wish to appeal to. Even if the messages are specific to the categories, all the categories have some things in common; they share the same feelings of abandonment, the same worries and the same professional or social

instability due to successive economic crisis. Traditional parties such as the republican or the socialist speak of the voters' hopes whereas the Front National wants to speak to the voters. For example Marine Le Pen made multiple promises to hospital staff who are suffering and are completely overworked by the new hospital policies or to teachers who do not feel valued enough despite their daily efforts. To them she speaks with a lot of empathy guaranteeing recognition, pay rise and the dismantling of the organisation which is unanimously condemned by the personnel. The communication drawn in perfectly straight lines shows that the Front National is no longer only trying to attract industrial workers like they used to at the creation of the party but all working classes.

Another characteristic of the Front National's media strategy is its ability to judiciously control when to appear on media or not. For instance at the beginning of 2016 Marine Le Pen was absent from television sets and radio shows as she foretold in a New Year speech. The omnipresence media strategy took a turn after the results of the regional elections where predicted as a winner, the Front National did not gain the supervision of any France's thirteen regions. By taking a leave from traditional media, the extreme right wanted to go meet the population through direct contact with the voters. This was done in the hope that a greater normalisation of the party's relationship with citizens and a longer time allocated to a media strategy change would break the glass ceiling during further elections. The Front National wanted to focus on the field before the beginning of her official presidential campaign in 2017. To expand its electorate they decided to go as closely as possible to the population to become the spokesperson of all the French people who felt left out and to embody hope and an appeased France to them. It is difficult to quantify the results of this strategy and if it helped the Front National to get rid of its negative image clinging to it. However in light of the omnipresence of nationalist themes in media the Front National takes over whether its executives are actually present in media to talk about it or not. This dry period of media presence pushed journalists and political experts at the end of 2016 to denounce a dishonest use of media. To them the Front National was restraining their number of appearances on television interviews on purpose to allocate their reserved speaking time to key moments that would ensure the extreme right a media overexposure. The Front National was to made up for their lost time by hogging the conversation with a way longer speaking time compared to other political parties as the electoral campaign start approached. It was reported by

television channels and radio stations that the party was systematically refusing to be on the air joining political guests for interviews that would consume their speaking time, and was consequently accumulating a suspicious reserve of speaking time. This way the extreme right could receive excessive media coverage until the end of January 2017, just before the speaking time meter would traditionally be reset before the official beginning of the presidential election campaign. Marine Le Pen would then benefit from a greater visibility. The Superior Council for Audiovisual was called upon by Michel Field, director of France Télévisions' information, to raise awareness on the nationalist overexposure before the important reset. France Télévisions group wishes to clear their name in this time stocking strategy, explaining that if television channels do not respect the speaking time accords it is not their fault, but the extreme right's one that is declining every invitations. The Front National defending themselves by claiming that they were not following any time stocking strategy and that it was in Marine Le Pen's rights to control when or not she wanted to appear on media especially since the main political events of 2016, the primary elections for other political parties, were in no way the Front National's business, therefore they did not have to systematically comment on them. The underexposition of the Front National is all the more so noticeable as the republican party was often on the news due to their primary election and the socialist party was also doing the bare minimum in terms of interviews to keep up appearances and to preserve their chances for the coming elections. In accordance with the Superior Council for Audiovisual's summaries, the Front National was especially absent compared to other political parties in televised political shows and debates. Consequently television channels had to distribute the speaking time evenly by massively inviting nationalist guests before the election campaign would start. The Superior Council of Audiovisual is very punctilious and the Front National apparently found out how to use it to their best advantage while distorting the rules of speaking time fairness. Moreover the council is forced to make sure that the volumes of political speaking time match the national democratic balances. Nevertheless when the participation of a nationalist executive is cancelled after having previously been agreed upon the Superior Council of Audiovisual is clear that their totality of speaking time will not be granted again. The extreme right sometimes cancels appearances when they think the other guests would win over the debate instead of them or if they feel the need to rethink their strategy. The latest example in



date was when Marine Le Pen forbade her niece, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, to join a two-hour televised debate after she herself declined the invitation using as an excuse that their official political program for the coming election was not published yet. Still these cancellations complicate the work of the council to restore fair speaking time equilibrium. Furthermore the blame could not be put on television channels since the politicians would be the ones backing out of the interview. The council also encourages media to report to them if parties are showing themselves too reluctant to appear on media so that they could adjust the speaking time rebalancing. One thing is for certain, the Front National keeps making things difficult for media with every passing opportunity.

#### 4.2.3 Media Have a Secondary Role

It would be disproportionate to explain the current infatuations for topics usually carried by the Front National and their late election scores by only pushing forward the impact of media. A misconception would be to attribute main responsibility of the rise of the Front National to media. No matter how media are used they can only report on, accentuate or restrain trends of public opinions but not create them. Consequently they narrate the Front National's ascent but do not provoke their rise. There are external factors needing to be taken into account in order to explain the Front National's resurgence of popularity. For instance media are not lonesome, on the contrary they detain their power while coming together with other agents such as politicians or financial forces. The distrust of media reported by many polls proves that audiences do not hang on media's every word and the public is critical of editorial positions and journalists' customs. Speaking time in traditional media is also strictly regulated by media councils so the Front National cannot be favoured by appearing more often than others on media. An under-representation of the party would have only helped their victimisation process. Media are also quite critical towards them in general. The establishment of the Front National is before anything else the result of governments' successions that could never solve repetitive economic crises that were economically and socially disastrous for the voters. Added to this a political crisis with the slowing down of traditional political parties that used to divide France in half and a social crisis with a boost of communitarianism. A rise to executive powers for the Front National seems unlikely for now as the extreme right lacks support outside of their party. The two-round first-past-the-post system

makes it necessary for a candidate to have some electoral alliances to persuade sympathisers from other parties to vote for him or her and to win over an election. However the Front National is turning down coalitions. On one hand it makes the party appear more attractive and allows it to score really high at the first rounds of elections, but on the other hand it prevents it to win the second rounds of elections because of lack of votes' reserves. The reject from the majority of voters during the second rounds of elections no matter what candidate is facing the Front National will always be systematic until the party's undemonisation comes to a successful conclusion. To do so the extreme right must get equipped with a presidential dimension, and a greater credibility when it comes to its economic programme and its international stature. Admittedly media play an important part in the Front National's establishment in the mainstream. Even if their role is secondary in the greater picture, media helped popularizing the Front National as one of the main four political parties in France, whether it was through television exposure, radio interviews, online presence, ect... All in all, even if media have a lesser influence than the one led to believe, they can still be considered as successful in their own lane.

As the presidential election is coming there are two strategic paths that the Front National could follow in terms of the topics they could want to approach on media. The Front National could follow the sovereignty path while betting on the normalisation of its stance thanks to the Brexit consequences. If the consequences were positive the extreme right could argue that they were the only one perspicacious enough to guess this outcome and that they are in their right mind to push a Franxit. If the consequences were negative Marine Le Pen would have to back up her arguments more substantially to convert Europhiles into Eurosceptics. Otherwise the Front National could put paper over the cracks to the advantage of the fight against Islamism topic. The terror path can be followed to reach large sections of the population. By pressing the refugees' crisis and terrorist attacks themes she would bring again the migratory thematic to the forefront, this has always been the hobby horse of the Front National. The undemonisation strategy is questioned within the party by some of its leaders such as Gilbert Collard because it would drive numerous sympathisers away who are keen on the rougher traditional image of the extreme right. Its efficiency is also questioned as it often seems that the normalisation of the party did in no case change the party in itself but just its appearance in front of the public eye. This can be shown by executives of the party who did not hesitate to

make racist, homophobic and xenophobic remarks to other candidates during the previous legislative elections. The internationalisation strategy of the Front National has not been very successful so far. It can be observed from the last visit of Marine Le Pen in Canada where she was followed everywhere by protesters who pressured hotels and meeting rooms' reservations to be cancelled. Moreover no Canadian politicians accepted to be seen in public with her or meet her and no companies opened their doors for her. Canada seems an odd choice for the extreme right to try developing international relations as their stance on migrants could not be more different from the Front National's. A bitter failure for the Front National which has troubles establishing an important international posture.

### 4.3 Content Analysis

#### 4.3.1 Context of Radio

Radio has a special place in French people's hearts. It is the first contact with the outside world in the morning and the loyal companion on car rides from home to work and from work to home. 83% of French listen to the radio every day according to a Médiamétrie survey, it represents a huge audience of 45 million listeners. Renowned journalists are the pillars of this foundation and their transfer from radio station to radio station brings along a significant loss or gain of audience. Radio news coverage maintains their popularity contrary to newspapers which are desperately trying to convert themselves to the digital era. If people are no longer systematically picking a newspaper on their way to work, many of them still use their cars instead of public transportation to reach their workplaces. Without losing their audience, radio stations benefited from the digital revolution by creating websites platforms enabling listeners to search for previous shows in complete folders or to follow a show live through a computer or a smartphone connection. Radio stations are important media in themselves and they also created platforms on social media to better connect with their audience and win their loyalty. Politics is at the center of everyone's interest and stations tear each other to pieces to lay hands on exclusive interviews and debates with the current politicians and economists that are making headlines. In times of elections or controversies radio is definitely one of the best traditional medium, with television, to reach a maximal amount of individuals and politicians book their interviews accordingly. Presidential elections are particularly

popular among French voters and as they approach new shows are offered to the audience to showcase the candidates' political programs and to offer them the chance to explain their views in the public space. The radio stations with the highest audience for political shows are usually private and do not belong to the government group called Radio France, with the exception of France Inter, but belong to private groups such as Lagardère or M6. Their editorial policies must then be separated from the government even if the political penchants of the main investors must be taken into account.

The Front National executives can regularly be heard on political shows giving their opinions on current news items, promoting the extreme right vision or assertively debating on France's decadence that only them can fix. Despite their presence on media, the Front National never hesitates to present themselves as victims claiming usually put in the corner, forced to be silent during crucial debates. From a commercial point of view radio stations have everything to gain from inviting nationalists on their shows as their aggressive stances and sometimes manners always attract numerous listeners always expecting a clash at some point between the nationalist guest and other politicians from different political parties. Listeners are also expecting clashes between the Front National members and journalists who do not hesitate to quarrel with them, judging that directly contradict them is the best way to expose the flaws of nationalism and populism. Incidentally several extracts of altercations on radio political shows starring the Front National became viral online and perfectly represent the complicated relations between the extreme right and media. For example Jean-Pierre Elkabbach started a radio interview on Europe 1 with the Front National's president by greeting her in this way "Good morning Marine Le Pen, are you not ashamed?". Once the vice-president of the Front National Florian Philippot caught unawares during a debate that was going peacefully until then stated on air that no matter how the Front National was depicted, the radio show on which he was talking would be anyway cancelled after the following summer despite the direction never announced so. Regardless of the tensions between the Front National and the media, radio is a medium that cannot be overlooked given its importance in the eyes of the French citizens. To bypass their sometimes negative image resulting from radio interviews, the Front National linked those radio interviews from their own websites so that the internet users cannot read the comments posted on the radio websites. There are community radio stations with

extreme right views, the most famous one being Radio Courtoisie, which were blamed for the rise of the party in the eighties. They are independent from the Front National but they can still extend a hand to the party, they usually do not receive such friendly recognition from radio stations.

As the extreme right always criticize media for their apparent leftist bias it seems interesting to analyse their actual behaviour during a radio interview. Several items should not be lost of sight while examining nationalist interventions on radio, such as their victimisation, the supposed aggressiveness and snobbish attitudes of journalists towards Front National's members, the normalisation of the party through their presence on radio and the way the extreme right, far from being media novice, make the most of their appearances on air. Through the topics approached and the hostility measured during the debates some patterns may be found along the years explaining the establishment of the party, including, the part played by radio. Marine Le Pen has seen her party getting stronger and more popular with higher percentages of votes for every transitional election<sup>26</sup> and it would be compelling to see if the Front National success can be perceived through their use of radio debates over the years. A content analysis can prove helpful to get an enlightened understanding of analysed documents. It is firstly carried out with a first descriptive data enumeration level. It is then followed by the underlying level with everything implied by the analysis of data (Picard, 1992). This content analysis aims at discovering what lies under the used of political radio shows by the Front National in their quest to power.

#### 4.3.2 Methodology

To conduct this content analysis I first established a list of the most relevant French political based radio stations. I looked over researches published by Médiamétrie (Cabannes, 2016), the acclaimed French audience measurement company, to decide upon three radio stations that are gathering the biggest audience numbers; in respective order RTL, France Inter and Europe 1.

RTL or Radio Télé Luxembourg is a non-specialized private radio station owned by the Luxembourgish audiovisual group called RTL Group. It was created in 1933 and the shows were originally broadcasted from Luxembourg because only state-regulated radio stations were allowed in France until 1981. RTL is regularly

---

<sup>26</sup> Municipal, regional and European elections.

ranked as the most popular radio station in France with an average 6,3 million daily listeners in 2016. RTL's shows are based on news, entertainment and music and half of their content is based on talkshows. Two of its most famous hosts are the journalists Philippe Bouvard and Georges Lang. When these two were dismissed in 2000 to allow RTL to modernize its programmes, the audience ratings drastically decreased, thus proving the listeners' loyalty for their favourite presenters and shows. Two of their most popular programmes are *Les Grosses Têtes* and *Le Grand Jury*. They are political broadcasts and talkshows that have been on the air for decades with emblematic journalists as hosts.

France Inter is a non-specialized French public radio station, the most popular one out of the seven radio stations broadcasted by Radio France. It was created at the end of the Second World War and it is still today the most famous public radio station. As most of the famous radio stations France Inter offers a wide variety of programmes related to national or international world news, entertainment and music. Several beloved shows symbolic of France Inter due to their longevity were cancelled in the recent years to modernize the broadcasts or to comply with the government policies. Furthermore humorists were dismissed, hosts were censored and then resigned, journalists voted a motion against the director of the radio station. Although France Inter highlights the small number of advertisements broadcasted on the air, they are often criticized for their lack of political pluralism. It is even more significant for a public radio station because it is a public service that should represent the totality of the citizens.

Europe 1 is a non-specialized private radio station created in 1955. It was at first a pirate radio station, transmitting from Germany since only public organisms could transmit from France. The radio is following the same pattern than RTL and France Inter and broadcasts a mix of political news related shows. However it also has a more laid back attitude than the two other radio stations with a more important focus on entertainment with cultural information and listeners participating to many contests. Their ratings numbers have been decreasing since the middle of the eighties as they have issues distinguishing themselves and 4,2 million people listen to them on a daily basis in 2017. Moreover as for RTL there is an ageing of their audience which explains their rightist leaning, contrary to France Inter that gathers a more leftist audience. In order to modernize they constantly offer new programmes at the end of summer holidays, otherwise none of them seem to recently stick. Their most

famous host Jean-Pierre Elkabbach became the director before being dismissed three years later after prematurely announcing the death of a French television presenter.

I then searched in their archives every radio show linked to the key words 'Front National' and selected all the debates and interviews from 2013 to 2016 in which a representative of the party was invited to discuss. Some radio stations had archives going further than 2013 until 2011 but for purposes of equal representation I limited the analysis from February 2013 to December 2016. Marine Le Pen took the reins of the Front National in 2011 and started the party's undemonisation process immediately after. Consequently observing her media strategy in terms of radio for four years campaigning for several elections seem enough to get a better picture of the extreme right communication strategy toward the presidential election of 2017. The different interviews are issued from programmes from different stations that are airing on different times and are organised differently; one or several host, one or several guest, one main topic or several themes, questions asked from the public or not. It may seem as they have little in common nevertheless they all offer an opportunity for the Front National to show themselves on their best new behaviour and to portray the extreme right opinions on current societal and political issues tackled by French people. Observing how the Front National adapts their communication or not in consonance with different format of radio broadcasts is a key element to get an overview of their habits while dealing with media. In total I indexed and listened to a hundred broadcastings in which the Front National participated. It would have been of course more accurate if I had the time and resources to analyse the extreme right in radio on a greater scale; from the beginning of the undemonisation process and definitely from more radio stations airing political programmes. However the high audiences of the selected shows, the numerous invitations addressed to nationalists, the influential hosts in the political sphere render these broadcasts profoundly important in the analysis of the Front National in radio because of how deeply and extensively they can reach individuals.

Each column has been carefully designed to answer a specific question. There are three different tables for a better understanding, one for each radio station which was taken into account; RTL, France Inter and Europe 1. The first vertical column is simply the list of all the dates on which an executive member of the Front National participated on air to a political debate or gave an interview, from February 2013 to

December 2016. The second column 'Topics' is destined for finding out which subjects were spoken about during the broadcasts, whether they were approached by the journalists or the guests. It gives the big picture of what themes were important for which year. The third column 'Participants' is designed to filter which member of the nationalist answered the invitation and to find out to which type of debates they are assigned to. Lastly, the final column 'Hostility' is aiming at finding out if any trace of animosity can be perceived during the broadcasts between the Front National and journalists or between the Front National and other political guests of all persuasions. If their opinions were being undermined, if they kept being cut while talking or if they were showing any signs of aggressiveness towards a host or a guest, it would be transposed into that column. This fourth column is a valuable indicator of the relationship, good or bad, the extreme right maintain with media, and in this case radio.

#### 4.3.3 Analysis

According to tables attached in the annex there are no particular subjects that stand out in the analysis of RTL broadcasts during the first couple of years. RTL is the radio stations that invited them the less, or the one for which they accepted less invitations, and in 2014 they did not appear once on the air. The following year they joined one debate regarding the regional elections which were taking place during that time. It was a major event for the Front National that scored exceptionally well during the first round of the election. The topics approached on the broadcasts depend on the news that was on the front page at that time. The Front National has little influence on the choices of topics as they are asked to comment and give their opinions on specific themes previously picked out. However the extreme right leaders talking on RTL constantly calls out to journalists to explain that the subjects pushed by RTL, or the media in general, matter less than what they wish to talk about. According to the Front National French citizens do not care about the controversies making the headlines but they would be deeply interested in the themes in which they are specialized such as immigration, European Union or security. In this way they avoid answering questions while shattering the credibility of media in choosing the right debates. This constant avoidance of questions tend to create conflicts during interviews such as a desperate journalist asking numerous times in an irritated way to an executive of the party “Would you be so kind as to actually



answer the question I am asking you instead of changing the subject?”. It also allows the extreme right to position itself as a victim against the other political parties, because supposedly journalists and politicians would gang up to defeat the Front National. The closer in time the broadcasts are getting to the presidential election of 2017, the more often the Front National is asked to comment on their cherished subjects such as secularism or economic protectionism. On RTL the only leaders of the party received for an interview are the vice-president of the Front National or members of the Le Pen family, and the other nationalist figures are absent. On that radio station there is also a lot of hostility during the debates. This is probably due to the renowned bad relationships between the Front National and political journalists such as Jean-Pierre Elkabbach or Jean-Michel Apathie who are leading the debates. The hostility mostly comes from these journalists who are often interrupting the Front National’s members trying to answer the questions. Their strategy is to corner the politicians, to force them to answer the questions they are avoiding by making them lose patience. It usually results in tense passive-aggressive discussions verbal exchanges between the guests and the hosts. For example, questioning Marine Le Pen on the regional elections an interviewer asked her “Is my question funny to you?” to which she answered “Yes, well I was hesitating between crying or laughing but I think laughing is nicer”. On another occasion, exasperated by the Front National’s ability to divert questions’ topic to their advantage, a journalist asked “Am I allowed to ask another question Marine Le Pen?”, to which she answered “But of course and I can tell it will be about something crucial”.

On France Inter the Front National is invited to talk about his position in elections from the beginning in 2013 and as soon as the following year they could also expose their views on their most cherished propositions present in all of their political programs such as the institutionalisation of national preferences and the departure from the European Union. In a way France Inter goes backwards compared to RTL since with time progression they limited the subjects for which the Front National would be invited to controversies within their party. For instance in 2015 they were only asked to comment on the expulsion of Jean-Marie Le Pen from the party which was quite polemical because many sympathisers from the outset supported his hardened vision of the party more than the polished version offered by his daughter. Moreover in 2016 Marine Le Pen only came on the set to debate about abortion rights. A debate that her niece Marion Maréchal-Le Pen created after

promoting even harder views on abortion rights than the official Front National's stance on this subject. The split between both of the Le Pen women enforced the idea that there were two Front National, one in the north ruled by Marine Le Pen and one in the south ruled by her niece. Paradoxically there is less hostility on this station whereas France Inter is putting controversial topics for the Front National in the spotlight. In a way they were giving the opportunity to the extreme right to respond to these polemics, which they did in a surprisingly calm manner. The only exceptions being when Marine Le Pen was asked about her unfulfilled European deputy duties and her stand on abortion rights. During those interviews she lost her composure, her irritation was perceptible and she angrily answered the questions.

On Europe 1 they joined a lot of debates dedicated to the Front National in itself, its values, its political manifesto and they tried to make the best out of it to legitimate their position. 2014 was mainly spent criticizing François Hollande's presidency but also Nicolas Sarkozy's one to make the audience lose their faith in traditional political parties. With this loss of credibility they could showcase what could be expected of them if they could break the glass ceiling and reach the presidential power. They lengthily insisted upon what they deem crucial points to counter France's loss of prestige through new European or security policies for instance. The following years their number of appearances substantially increased just as much the variety of topics they were invited to debate on. Lastly 2016 was marked with another wave of violent critics directed again to François Hollande in order to exacerbate the general contempt with regard to its five-year mandate. There was a discrepancy between the claims of the government that the state of France was actually better at the end of the term considering economic data and the morose mood in which French people were facing the new presidential election. Consequently the Front National could swagger on radio station claiming that they were understanding the population's disappointment because they were not a part of an elitist cast like the rest of politicians. It is only on Europe 1 that the Front National put a lot of efforts to discredit the effectiveness of traditional political parties when they reach power. It is probably because they have sufficient speaking time to contextualise their arguments instead of diving right in since Europe 1 is the station that invite them the more often. Europe 1 is also the station with the lowest viewing figures. They could often invite the Front National to catch up with other stations by creating a more polemical atmosphere with extreme right members, which would

increase their listeners' number. After several terrorist attacks the extreme right was also pushing forward themes such as security, immigration and secularism to accentuate the climate of fear, in order to be the sole saviour because of the extreme measure they wanted to offer. Europe 1 is also the only radio station that invited nationalist contributors to discuss lighter subjects such as art or charity. The recorded hostility rate was mixed with Europe 1 broadcasts. It mainly depended on which journalists they had to face because over the years the full of fight journalists from RTL moved to Europe 1 and kept dealing with nationalists without respite. Consequently there were many passive-aggressive verbal exchanges such as when Wallerand de Saint-Just was asked if the Front National members could handle the jobs of mayors and handling towns. He then answered "I find your question extremely unkind and by the way borderline insulting. According to you (and the media in general) we would be violent anti-republican people, but in here on Europe 1 we would also presumably be mentally-retarded people", to which the host wittily replied "Well we invite you to convince us of the opposite". There were also a lot more members of the Front National who were invited and some of them had troubles staying composed compared to the usual leaders of the party who are more used to vigorous debates. For example younger nationalist participants such as Gaëtan Dussausaye often ended up bickering with other guests to the point that their voices could no longer be differentiated. The hostility was coming from both journalists and Front National's members but in average the nationalists lost their patience more often. They were often patronizing the hosts or other guests such as Florian Philippot, vice-president of the Front National, exclaiming "You are not even aware of the stupidities you say" or "You are summarizing by labelling people. This is what you do not understand anymore". They were also raising their voices and bickering more often compared to others.

All in all the Front National cannot complain about being put aside in the political media world. If Jean-Marie Le Pen was struggling to get recognition in the media, his daughter's party has been invited times and times again on radio broadcasts. On Europe 1 they have joined a debate more than once a month and on RTL their appearances rate has been steadily increasing over the years. The abandoned from the media posture that the Front National wishes to maintain has no foundation regarding their numerous interventions. Moreover they could also be declining invitations for the sake of victimisation, but their refusals cannot be

measured. The fact that they are being interviewed more and more often at the end could be a success indicator of their undemonisation process as their party is being integrated in the mainstream. If they answer more invitations to express their opinions about a bigger diversity of subject it could mean that their normalised extreme right views are being shared by a larger share of the audience and that they must be invited for the sake of equal representativeness with other political parties. It should be highlighted that Marine Le Pen only came once in 2016 on each radio station to join a debate. She indeed followed her proximity strategy when she promised to take a break from media to get closer to the public in person and not through a channel. However it was not because she was absent from media that the Front National would disappear from them also. She indeed delegated her communication to the vice-president, family members and leaders of the party who replaced her in numerous on air debates. Some quickly became frequent visitors such as Gaëtan Dussausaye or Florian Philippot who enabled the party to gain several familiar faces, or in our case voices, other than the constant presence of Le Pen family. As seen on the tables RTL is the only radio station with a hostility rate over fifty percent. It equals 62% which is the double of the one recorded for Europe 1. France Inter ends up last with only 21% of their debates displaying aggressive manners involving the Front National. Sniping at people, raising voices and condescending manners can be perceived from both the journalist side and the guest side. We can wonder if the lack of animosity met in two of the radio stations could also be a sign of the establishment in the mainstream of the Front National. Journalists would not feel anymore as if they need to put the nationalists in their place, because they would actually belong on radio broadcasts in the same way as traditional political parties.

As previously stated the hostility recorded in a broadcast is mainly due to which journalist the extreme right is facing. Journalists have duties of confidentiality as for their political affiliations and they must respect the freedom of opinions. Nevertheless some of them have sworn to bring to light the true values of the Front National that they deem not republican enough, or not at all, and to recall to everyone's attention that the party was born from fascist, xenophobic, violent groups. To them the party's undemonisation is a ploy deceiving disappointed voters to think that the visible changes of the extreme right coincide with deep substance changes inside the party. To expose their tricks and to shatter their credibility many

journalists and other guests during debates do not hesitate to point out their contradictions. The aggressiveness occasioned by journalists on purpose trying to push the Front National to the edge is caused by specific journalists who moved from radio station to radio station. Therefore journalists are the ones imposing their editorial styles in their shows with no regard for the radio station policy beforehand. Acclaimed journalists ensure audience and their political debates are expected by thousands of people. They are the ones leading interviews and putting forward a particular topic, not the radio station and not the Front National. On RTL and Europe 1 the extreme right cannot use the broadcasts as a platform for their manifesto views as there is always someone to object, debate and counter them. Most of the topics approached are not related with the organisation of the party and put them on the spot regarding their policies on news item. Knowing the procedure of a show the nationalist members are of course prepared to face those questions but nonetheless often try to divert the topic to subjects they judge have more priority, and which incidentally show them to their advantage. Their ways of thinking are rarely just asked to be asked but on the contrary are quickly discussed with a journalist, more politicians and sometimes contributors from the audience. Extreme right stances are not quickly validated on broadcasts, proving that they are still not considered as an ordinary party by the media. It is true that if the Front National is regularly invited to join debates, traditional parties must be invited more often than just a couple of times a month when we know frequent are political debates due to their important place on the radio landscape. It proves that the undemonisation process did not succeed, yet, if their opinions are not judged as valuable as the ones from republicans, socialists and sometimes communists who are invited more often than the nationalist members. On RTL and France Inter the Front National is asked to debate on news topics or polemics but never on themes with strong nationalist connotation such as protectionism or secularism. These choices cannot be accidental and it gives a reason for the nationalist guests' tendencies to always want to change the subject. It proves that the media are still in charge, not them and that the Front National is not completely institutionalised if it is trodden carefully on broadcasts.

In summary the increase of Front National's popularity is indisputable through their recent scores in several elections and their new custom of often frequenting radio stations. Whether their growing popularity encouraged more invitations or whether more interventions on media increased their number of

sympathisers cannot however be asserted for certain. Their successful communication strategy also incubates the normalisation of different party's member, other than Marine Le Pen. They want to appear as a normal party, more accessible even if the presidency of the Front National was granted from the father to the daughter. Nevertheless as we can observe in the content analysis the Front National is still not considered as a normal party. They are invited less often than other parties on broadcasts and the topics approached in the debates are selectively chosen beforehand. The tense relationships between the extreme right and media did not spare the radio as we can notice from the hostility prevailing in some interviews whether it is a journalist losing patience with a nationalist, a Front National's member harassing a journalist hoping he or she will snap to portray the lack of objectivity in the media or guests of all persuasions aggressively bickering to have the last word. The extreme right is using this hostility that can be sensed to represent themselves as victims of the media system or the political system in general to gather the support of French citizens feeling left out by the system too. Journalists do not let themselves be fooled as they seem to remain in control of their own shows and to have sworn to contradict the Front National as many times as possible. The risk for them is to appear too patronizing reinforcing the idea of media being under elitists' thumbs, favoring nationalist speeches in return. On radio broadcasts, and on all media, a middle-ground must be found by the journalists to expose the Front National for what is really is without caricaturing their positions. Some manage to do so more than others but whatever it be, the race to a successful undemonisation before a next important election is likely to bring a few surprised in terms of their use of media which would be interesting to analyse.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

The Front National always had and probably will always have strained relationships with media. Media are however indispensable to gain larger numbers of voters and the Front National does not hesitate to exploit media in their hope that one day they will reach the executive power. The instrumentalisation takes place on different levels. For one, the extreme right has the odd particularity to go on media to criticize media and to position themselves as a victim of their neglect. They also use the journalists' disdain for a party born from fascism to pursue their victimisation. Their use of media can also be defined by their ways to pick media and avoid some on purpose while maintaining a blacklist of journalists and politicians. The undemonisation process they undertook years ago plays a key role in their quest to power. To attract a greater crowd they gradually abandoned the historical symbols of the Front National in favour of emblems with less negative connotations. Polishing their image and avoiding confrontations with journalists are tricks designed by the extreme right to appear as a more commonplace party. Social media are also playing a crucial part in the establishment in the mainstream of the party as the Front National nurtures a significant support base on internet. Nevertheless despite all the party's tactics and use of media at their convenience the Front National is still not considered as a regular party by the media class and by the French citizens. The journalists' strategies to expose the extreme right by contradicting them on media appear to be effective and it does not look like the glass ceiling will be broken any time soon. It is nonetheless not an excuse to stop there as the Front National is a dangerous party that will not be taking breaks until it can defeat the republican front

and win the second round of an election. Their second place at the last presidential election will only motivate them even more to pursue their undemonisation strategy. They will elaborate new plan of actions, which would probably involve media, in order to make more voters validate their extreme policies and point of views. It would be interesting to study on a bigger scale their moves in the next five years while the Front National prepares for the new presidential elections. It would be all the more so interesting as if such complete media strategies failed to convince the audience of Front National's legitimacy, it makes us wonder by what means the extreme right will have recourse next time.





## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abadie, A. 2015. *Réseaux Sociaux: Comment le FN Tisse sa Toile* (Social Media, How the Front National Weaves its Web). Les Echos, 10 June 2015.

ACPM. (2016). Presse quotidienne nationale (Rankings of national daily press).

Alemagna, L. 2016. *Si, si, le Parti Socialiste a un Programme* (Yes, Yes, The Socialist Party Has a Program). Libération, 29 November 2016.

Alonso, X. 2016. *La Relation Compliquée des Médias avec le Front National* (The Complicated Relationship of the Media with the Front National). Tribune de Genève, 16 December 2016.

*An Unprecedented Election, with Unprecedented Risks*. 2017. The Economist, 4 May 2017.

Auproux, A. 2013. *Le Front National et les Médias: Je t'aime, Moi non plus* (The Front National and Media: I Love You, Neither Do I). Les Inrocks, 25 June 2013.

Baillet, D. 2016. *Les Trois Scénarios du Front National* (The Three Scenarios of the Front National). Humanité, 21 September 2016.

Baltayan, M. 1998. *Fascismes d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui* (Fascisms from Yesterday and Today). Editions de l'Atelier.

Bastié, E. 2016. Comment Marine Le Pen a Evolué sur l'Avortement (How did Marine Le Pen Change on Abortion). Le Figaro, 12 December 2016.

Berdah, A. 2016. *Macron Exhorte Hollande à Faire son Bilan Avant la Présidentielle* (Macron Urges Hollande to Draw Up his Report Before the Presidential Election). Le Figaro, 13 April 2016.

Besse Des Moulières, R. 2016. *A Défaut de Candidat pour 2017, le PCF Elabore son Programme* (For Lack of a Candidate for 2017 the Communist Party Elaborates its Program). Le Monde, 8 October 2016.

Bonnefous, B. 2016. *Le PS Ebauche un Programme pour 2017* (The Socialist Party Starts their Programs for 2017). Le Monde, 29 November 2016.

Cabannes, P. 2016. *Audiences Radio* (Radio Audience Ratings). Le Figaro, 20 April 2016.

Carasco, A. 2016. *Médias, Un Rôle Démocratique à Assumer* (Media, A Democratic Role to Assume). La Croix, 24 May 2016.

Cevipof. (2011). Les femmes: des intentions de vote évolutives (Women: Scalable voting intentions).

Cevipof. (2016). Le baromètre de la confiance politique (Political trust barometer).

Chazot, S. 2007. *Les Médias ont-ils une Influence Politique?* (Do Media Have a Political Influence?). L'Express, 26 April 2007.

Chupin, I. 2009. *Histoire Politique et Economique des Médias en France* (Political and Economic History of Media in France). La Découverte.

CNCDH. (2015). Rapport annuel sur le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie (Annual report on racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia).

Dancourt, A-C. 2016. *Comment l'Imagerie du Front National Dévoile la Stratégie de Marine Le Pen pour 2017* (How Does the Front National's Imagery Reveal the Strategy for Marine Le Pen in 2017). Les Inrocks, 24 November 2016.

De Boni, M. 2015. *La Paradoxe Stratégie de Tension du Front National Contre la Presse* (The Paradoxical Tense Strategy of the Front National against the Press). Le Figaro, 19 June 2015.

De Boni, M. 2016. *L'Equipe de Campagne de Marine Le Pen, Melting Pot des Différents Clans du FN* (Marine Le Pen's Campaign Team, Melting Pot of the Different Front National's Clans). Le Figaro, 17 November 2016.

De Boni, M. 2016. *Le PS Renonce à se Doter d'un Programme pour 2017* (The Socialist Party Gives up on Adopting a Program for 2017). Le Figaro, 8 February 2016.

De Gaulle, C. 1967. Conférence de presse (Press conference) (Elysée Palace, Paris, May 16, 1967).

Deleu, C. 1998. *Les Médias et l'Internet en France* (Media and Internet in France). Les Cahiers du Journalisme, n°4.

Desplat, Y. 2016. *Un Signe d'Engouement pour la Présidentielle dans le Loiret* (An Infatuation Sign for the Presidential Election in Loiret). La République du Centre, 30 December 2016.

De Robespierre, M. 2016. Discours sur la Religion, la République, l'Esclavage (Discourse on Religion, Republic, Slavery). L'aube.

Devresse, J. 2011. 'Les Médias et la Famille Le Pen: 20 Ans d'Ambiguïté' (Media and the Le Pen Family: 20 Years of Ambiguity). Paper presented at the annual symposium of the memory territories, Liège.

Dézé, A. 2013. *La Banalisation Médiatique du FN* (The Media Banalisation of the Front National). Libération, 11 February 2013.

Doussot, O. 2016. *Front National: Une Stratégie de Communication Taillée pour la Présidentielle* (Front National: A Communication Strategy Carved for the Presidential Election). L'Express, 18 May 2016.

Ecoiffier, M. 2015. *Les Médias Accordent une Attention Démesurée au FN* (Media Grant an Excessive Attention to the Front National). Libération, 11 December 2015.

Elabe. (2017). Qui a été le plus convaincant? (Who was the more convincing?)

Eschapaspe, B. 2016. *La Stratégie Numérique du FN Confortée par la Victoire de Trump* (Digital Strategy of the Front National Bolstered by Trump's Victory). Le Point, 14 November 2016.

Esquenazi, J-P. 2013. *L'écriture de l'actualité* (The Writing of News). 2nd edn, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble.

Faille, O. 2016. *La Campagne de Dédiabolisation du FN Marque un Coup d'Arrêt en 2015* (The Undemonisation of the Front National Takes a Break in 2015). Le Monde, 5 February 2016.

Ficek, I. 2017. *Les Dix Incertitudes de la Présidentielle* (The Ten Uncertainties around the Presidential Election). Les Echos, 2 January 2017.

Fleury, C. 2011. *Médias et Politique: Liasons Dangereuses* (Media and Politics: Dangerous Liaisons). Le Monde, 17 June 2011.

Forcari, C. 2011. *Marine Le Pen Défend les 'Oubliés' et Tire sur la Gauche* (Marine Le Pen Defends the Forgotten ones and Shoots at the Left). Libération, 12 December 2011.

Fortin, D. 2015. *La dédiabolisation du FN ? Une Supercherie* (The Front National's Undemonisation? A Fraud). Les Echos, 13 March 2015.

Foucault, M. 1967. Conférence de presse (Press conference) (Paris, March 14, 1967).

Gallot, L. 2015. *L'Influence des Médias sur la Société* (Influence of Media on Society). Les Echos, 5 November 2015.

Gauchet, M. 2006. *Contre-Pouvoir, Méta-Pouvoir, Anti-Pouvoir* (Counter-Power, Meta-Power, Anti-Power). Le Débat, Vol. 138:17-29.

Goetschel, P. 2007. *Revue d'Histoire* (History Review). Presses de Sciences Po, Vol. 96:3-9.

Goetz, E. 2017. *Front National: Les Conséquences d'un Retour au Franc* (Front National: Consequences of the Franc's Return). Les Echos, 13 February 2017.

Grand, S. 2016. *2017: Manuel Valls Déclenche la Bataille avec François Hollande* (2017: Manuel Valls Starts a Battle with François Hollande). L'Opinion, 13 November 2016.

Groussard, V. 2014. *Comment Marine Le Pen a Pris le Pouvoir dans les Médias* (How did Marine Le Pen Take the Power in Media). Le Nouvel Obs, 9 November 2014.

Guérolé, T. 2017. *Vers la Quadripolarisation de la Vie Politique Française* (Toward a Quadripolarisation of French Political Life). Le Figaro, 9 January 2017.

Hache, A. 2015. *Le FN et les Médias: Les 7 Dérapages Marquants* (Front National and Media: 7 Memorable Misdemeanours). Les Inrocks, 6 February 2015.

Halimi, S. 2005. *Les Nouveaux Chiens de Garde* (The New Guard Dogs). Liber.

Hausalter, L. 2016. *Le Quinquennat de Hollande Ressemble à un Bilan Municipal* (Hollande's Quinquennat Looks Like a Municipal Appraisal). Marianne, 13 May 2016.

Houchard, B. 2016. *Marine Le Pen, la Stratégie du Trou de Souris* (Marine Le Pen, the Mousehole Strategy). L'Opinion, 1 September 2016.

Ifop. (2012). Votes paysans (Farmers votes).

Ifop. (2015). Profil des électeurs et les clés du scrutin (Profile of voters and keys of the polls).

Ifop. (2015). Distance de la capitale (Ring around the roses).

Ifop. (2016). Ce qui importe pour les électeurs pour le vote présidentiel de 2017 (Decisive stakes for the presidential election vote of 2017).

Insee. (2015). Où il n'y a pas de travaux (Where the jobs aren't).

Ipsos. (2017). Comprendre le vote des français (French electoral survey: Understanding 2017).

Joffrin, L. 2016. *Engouement* (Infatuation). Libération, 28 December 2016.

Lamothe, J. 2017. *Les Politiques s'en Prennent aux Médias Quand leur Honneur Est Mis en Cause* (Politician Lash Out at Media when their Reputation is Questioned). Le Monde, 7 February 2017.

Laurent, C. 2016. *Présidentielle 2017, le PS Dévoile un Début de Projet* (2017 Presidential Elections, the Socialist Party Unveils a Beginning of Project). La Croix, 26 April 2016.

Laurent, S. 2011. *Marine Le Pen, une Ascension Très Médiatique* (Marine Le Pen, an Ascent Widely Broadcasted on Media). Le Monde, 16 January 2016.

Le Blevenec, N. 2015. *Les Sympathisants FN sont bien plus Racistes que la Moyenne* (Front National's Sympathisers are much more Racist than Average). Le Nouvel Obs, 4 December 2015.

Lecaplain, G. 2017. Droits des LGBTI (LGBT Rights). Libération, 19 April 2017.

Lecoeur, E. 2012. *Un Néo-Populisme à la Française* (A French-style Neopopulism). La Découverte.

Le Pen, M. 2017. Conférence de presse (Press conference) (Paris, March 2, 2017).

Le Pen, M. 2011. Discours d'investiture (Inauguration speech). (Congress of Tours, January 16, 2011).

Licourt, J. 2013. *Le FN est-il d'Extrême Droite?* (Is the Front National an Extreme Right Party?). Le Figaro, 12 March 2013.

Licourt, J. 2015. *Dédiabolisation? Parler de Nouveau FN Relève de la Fiction Politique* (Undemonisation? Talking about a New Front National Falls Under the Political Fiction). Le Figaro, 1 May 2015.

Manilève, V. 2015. *La Difficile Mission des Journalistes Politiques Face au Traitement Médiatique du Front National* (The Difficult Mission of Political Journalists Against the Front National's Media Treatment). Slate, 29 June 2015.

Marchand, L. 2015. *Le FN Dit-il la Même Chose que les Communistes il y a Trente Ans? (Is the Nationalist Party Saying the Same Things as Communists 30 Years Ago?)*. Le Monde, 20 April 2015.

Médiamétrie. (2016). L'année internet 2016 (Internet statistics for 2016).

Médiamétrie. (2016). L'année TV 2016 (Television statistics for 2016).

Mercier, A. 2015. *Le FN et les Médias: Petite Histoire d'un Couple Turbulent* (Front National and Media: Quick History of a Troubled Couple). Le Figaro, 22 October 2015.

Mestre, A. 2012. *The Front National Is Not The Same But Did It Really Change?*. Le Monde, 20 September 2012.

Mills-Affif, E. 2008. *De la Visibilité aux Contenus* (From Visibility to Content). Institut Panos.

Mischi, J. 2015. *Comment un Appareil S'éloigne de sa Base* (How Does a Party Separate from its Electorate). *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2015.

Moinet, J-P. 2016. *Pourquoi la Stratégie de la France Apaisée Est un Pari Risqué pour le Front National* (Why is the Appeased France Strategy a Risky Bet for the Front National). *Atlantico*, 7 February 2016.

Nataf, O. 2013. *La Com' en 4 Temps de Marine Le Pen* (The Four Steps Communication Strategy of Marine Le Pen). *Le Nouvel Obs*, 13 October 2013.

Perrier, G. 2014. *De Bruno Mégret à Marine Le Pen: La Dédiabolisation du Parti n'est qu'une Façade* (From Bruno Mégret to Marine Le Pen: the Party's Undemonisation is only a Facade). *Le Nouvel Obs*, 20 March 2014.

Picard, A. 1992. *Utilisation de l'Analyse de Contenu dans une Recherche en Education Musicale* (Content Analysis Use in a Musical Education Research).

Poingt, G. 2016. *En 15 ans, le Programme Economique du Front National a Viré à Gauche* (In 15 years, the Economic Programme of the Front National Turned Leftist). *Le Figaro*, 27 April 2016.

Rabreau, M. 2016. *Primaire à Droite : Comparez les Programmes Economiques* (Republican Primary Election: Compare the Economic Programmes). *Le Figaro*, 22 February 2016.

Reporters sans Frontières. (2017). *Classement de la liberté de la presse 2017* (International ranking of the freedom of press in 2017).

Santamarina, Y. 1999. *Histoire du Parti Communiste Français* (French Communist Party History). *La Découverte*.

Sarkozy, N. 2007. *Discours de campagne électorale* (Electoral campaign speech). (Presidential election, April 12, 2007).

Squad. (2015). *Baromètre d'activité autour des têtes de liste sur les réseaux sociaux* (Activity barometer on the chief candidates on social media).

Tallis, J. 2017. *Les Réseaux Sociaux Bouleversent la Campagne Présidentielle* (Social Media Disrupt the Presidential Campaign). *Le Parisien*, 13 January 2017.

TNS Sofres. (2016). *Cote de confiance 6 mois avant la présidentielle* (Trust rating six months before a presidential election).

Ubertalli, O. 2016. *France Télévisions S'attaque à la Stratégie Médias du FN* (France Télévisions Attacks the Front National Media Strategy). *Le Point*, 10 November 2016.

Villate, L. 2005. *Socialistes à Paris: 1905-2005* (Socialists in Paris: 1905-2005). Creaphis editions.

## APPENDIX A

### Analysis of RTL radio shows

DATE	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	HOSTILITY	
			journalist	FN
10/04/2013	tax avoidance	Jean-Marie Le Pen		
03/10/2013	national education, trade unions	Marine Le Pen	x	x
09/12/2015	elections	Florian Philippot		
15/03/2016	strikes, same-sex marriage, EU	Marine Le Pen		x
17/04/2016	strikes, same-sex marriage, secularism	Marion Maréchal-Le Pen	x	
02/05/2016	Front National	Florian Philippot		
18/11/2016	national education, trade unions, elections, Front National, protectionism	Florian Philippot	x	
30/11/2016	elections, abortion rights, mass layoffs	David Rachline	x	

## APPENDIX B

### Analysis of France Inter radio shows

DATE	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	HOSTILITY	
			journalist	FN
05/04/2013	tax avoidance	Marine Le Pen		
03/05/2013	EU	Marine Le Pen		x
15/09/2013	elections	Marine Le Pen		
14/10/2013	elections	Marion Maréchal-Le Pen		
02/03/2014	elections, national preferences, international situation, economics	Marine Le Pen		
18/08/2014	security, international situation, EU	Florian Philippot		
08/04/2015	Jean-Marie Le Pen	Bruno Gollnisch & Steeve Briois		
03/05/2015	Jean-Marie Le Pen	Marine Le Pen		
28/07/2015	Jean-Marie Le Pen	Gilbert Collard & Jean-Marie Le Pen		
12/12/2016	abortion rights	Marine Le Pen		x



## APPENDIX C

### Analysis of Europe 1 radio shows

DATE	TOPICS	PARTICIPANTS	HOSTILITY	
			journalist	FN
13/02/2013	immigration	Marine Le Pen		
18/04/2013	Front National	Florian Philippot	x	
24/04/2013	Front National	Florian Philippot	x	x
25/06/2013	Front National	Florian Philippot		x
21/08/2013	security	Florian Philippot		x
22/08/2013	youth	Julien Rochedy		
17/09/2013	Front National	Florian Philippot		x
07/10/2013	Front National	Gilbert Collard		
31/10/2013	minor news item	Marine Le Pen		
16/11/2013	strikes	Florian Philippot	x	
27/11/2013	Front National	Louis Aliot		
09/12/2013	minor news item	Marine Le Pen		
16/12/2013	immigration, Front National, wars	Marine Le Pen		
01/01/2014	abortion rights, unemployment, François Hollande's presidency	Florian Philippot		
14/01/2014	François Hollande's presidency	Florian Philippot		
19/03/2014	elections	Wallerand de Saint-Just		
21/03/2014	François Hollande's presidency	Florian Philippot		
27/03/2014	Front National	Wallerand de Saint-Just	x	x
31/03/2014	elections	Wallerand de Saint-Just		
09/04/2014	economics, communitarianism	Marine Le Pen		x

<b>18/05/2014</b>	EU	Florian Philippot		x
<b>19/05/2014</b>	EU, economics	Marine Le Pen		
<b>26/05/2014</b>	elections	Louis Aliot		
<b>27/05/2014</b>	François Hollande's presidency	Bruno Clavet		
<b>09/06/2014</b>	Jean-Marie Le Pen	Florian Philippot		
<b>10/06/2014</b>	Front National	Bruno Gollnisch		
<b>12/08/2014</b>	wars	Florian Philippot		
<b>14/08/2014</b>	economics	Florian Philippot		
<b>08/09/2014</b>	François Hollande's presidency, unemployment	Julien Rochedy		
<b>12/09/2014</b>	wars	Marine Le Pen		
<b>26/10/2014</b>	secularism	Louis Aliot		
<b>01/12/2014</b>	referendums	Louis Aliot		
<b>02/12/2014</b>	elections, Front National	Jean-Marie Le Pen		
<b>27/12/2014</b>	minor news item	Wallerand de Saint-Just		
<b>23/01/2015</b>	EU, security	Florian Philippot	x	
<b>03/02/2015</b>	Front National	Sébastien Chenu		x
<b>05/02/2015</b>	François Hollande's presidency	Florian Philippot		
<b>19/02/2015</b>	Front National, elections	Nicolas Bay		
<b>09/03/2015</b>	Front National	Gilbert Collard		
<b>12/03/2015</b>	Front National	Gaëtan Dussausaye		x
<b>13/03/2015</b>	national education, economics, elections, security	Marine Le Pen		
<b>23/03/2015</b>	elections	Florian Philippot		
<b>25/03/2015</b>	elections	Nicolas Bay & Florian Philippot		
<b>03/04/2015</b>	Jean-Marie Le Pen	Nicolas Bay		
<b>04/05/2015</b>	Jean-Marie Le Pen, Front National	Sébastien Chenu		
<b>05/05/2015</b>	Jean-Marie Le Pen	Jean-Marie Le Pen		
<b>16/06/2015</b>	immigration	Gaëtan Dussausaye		
<b>29/08/2015</b>	Jean-Marie Le Pen, economics	Jean-Marie Le Pen		
<b>03/09/2015</b>	immigration	Gaëtan Dussausaye		
<b>07/09/2015</b>	François Hollande's presidency	Florian Philippot		

<b>30/09/2015</b>	Front National	Franck Allisio		
<b>01/10/2015</b>	elections, economics, wars	Marine Le Pen		
<b>22/10/2015</b>	Front National	Marine Le Pen	x	
<b>17/11/2015</b>	immigration, security	David Rachline		x
<b>23/11/2015</b>	international situation, security	Florian Philippot		
<b>01/12/2015</b>	economics	Florian Philippot	x	
<b>02/12/2015</b>	secularism, assimilation, art	Gaëtan Dussausaye		
<b>03/12/2015</b>	immigration, elections, secularism, unemployment, polls, media	Marine Le Pen	x	
<b>07/12/2015</b>	elections	Gaëtan Dussausaye		
<b>07/12/2015</b>	elections, secularism	Florian Philippot		
<b>09/12/2015</b>	elections, security, Front National	Marine Le Pen	x	
<b>11/12/2015</b>	elections, immigration	Florian Philippot		
<b>14/12/2015</b>	elections, EU	Florian Philippot	x	x
<b>14/12/2015</b>	elections	Gaëtan Dussausaye		x
<b>28/12/2015</b>	EU, secularism, strikes, nationality, justice system	Nicolas Bay		
<b>04/01/2016</b>	elections	Gaëtan Dussausaye		x
<b>24/02/2016</b>	Front National, EU	Jean-Marie Le Pen		
<b>06/03/2016</b>	Front National, EU, immigration, economics, agriculture, paedophilia	Florian Philippot		
<b>14/04/2016</b>	François Hollande's presidency	Gaëtan Dussausaye		
<b>15/04/2016</b>	François Hollande's presidency	Gaëtan Dussausaye		
<b>15/04/2016</b>	François Hollande's presidency, gay marriage, economics, security	Florian Philippot		
<b>18/05/2016</b>	strikes, unemployment	Davy Rodriguez		x
<b>20/05/2016</b>	Front National, security	Marine Le Pen	x	
<b>25/05/2016</b>	strikes, unemployment	Gaëtan Dussausaye		x
<b>16/07/2016</b>	security	Florian Philippot		
<b>29/07/2016</b>	security, secularism	Florian Philippot		
<b>27/08/2016</b>	secularism	Nicolas Bay		

<b>21/11/2016</b>	elections	Nicolas Bay		
<b>28/11/2016</b>	elections	Florian Philippot & Gilbert Collard		
<b>22/12/2016</b>	Front National, security, abortion rights, charity	Nicolas Bay		

