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Nationalism through national identity narratives in refugee/migrant crisis: a comparative study of French mainstream left and right
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Abstract: The current refugee/migrant crisis has triggered a renewed discussion of national identity and a strong manifestation of nationalism in Europe. In contrast with the radical nationalism held by radical parties, mainstream parties generally resort to a different mode of nationalist expressions in both content and degree of nationalism. How is national-identity-laden nationalism demonstrated in similar or different ways among the mainstream left/right parties? What do they require the authorities at both European and national levels to do to cope with the crisis? Is the gap between the conventional stances of left and right mainstream parties on migration issue still holding valid? This paper endeavors to answer these questions by taking French left Parti Socialiste (PS) and French right Les Républicains (LR) as two cases. A new definition of state nationalism will be formulated in order to better situate this concept in current European context. This paper is mainly a thick description and comparative analysis. The data used here have the following sources: debates in both European parliament and French national parliament, publicized documents and public speeches on refugee/migrant issues by party representatives.

Key words: nationalism, national identity narrative, refugee/migrant crisis, PS and LR

Introduction:

The influx of more than a million refugees and migrants into Europe since the irruption of migrant/refugee crisis in early 2015 and the efforts undertaken by EU to cope with it has triggered a renewed discussion of nationhood and national identity. On the one hand, the presence of a huge number of newcomers from foreign cultures poses questions to the components of European nations, be they big or small. On the other hand, the proposal of solutions on European level by European Union encounters starkly varied responses from political parties in member states: ranging from lauded approval, acquiescence, doubt to blatant objection. What underlines all relative arguments is the articulation of nationhood and national identity as well as the manifestation of different degrees of nationalism.

This is also how and why these flows of migrants and refugees are framed as “crisis” which indicates more threat to European nationhood and EU decision making than the actual European capacity to shelter these migrants and refugees. In other words, this asylum crisis highlights the difficulties of EU member states to coordinate to face the phenomenon and points to a “European (decision-making) crisis” rather than “asylum crisis” (Van Wolleghem 2016). one of results is the sharp rise of nationalism, populism and a renewed discussion around European and national identity.

One of the four features of modern European liberal statehood is the idea of nationhood (Hampshire 2013:8). ¹Political theorist David Miller summarizes five key aspects of nationhood:

¹ The other three features are representative democracy, constitutionalism and capitalism.

- 1 nations are constituted by belief, which is to say they exist when members recognize one another and believe that they share the relevant characteristics;
- 2 national identity embodies historical continuity with its origins often ‘conveniently lost in the mists of time’;
- 3 national identity is an active identity, in that nations are communities that do things together;
- 4 national identity connects a group of people to a particular place or territory;
- 5 national identity requires that people have a set of characteristics in common, often a shared language, cultural traditions, or historical memory (Miller 1997: 6-21).

With regard to immigration politics, the nationalist commitment to the construction and maintenance of a particular national identity generates pressure for more restrictive immigration policies (Hampshire 2013:3). Europe is composed of nations in different sizes and with varied political status. In face of so large influx of foreigners in such a short period of time, the question of inclusion and exclusion is brought to the forefront once again. Who belongs to the nation directly affects the willingness of the nation to accept these newcomers and, at the same time, its attitudes towards EU’s role in tackling this crisis.

In representative democracies the chief mechanism for linking the government and public is political parties (Hampshire 2013:6). Nationalism and national identity narratives are communicated through a wide range of forms and agents, among which political parties are significant players. An analysis of the reasons behind the public’s anti-immigration attitudes reveals that, compared to interest-based theories (opposition to immigration is shaped principally by economic self-interest on the part of citizens), identity-based theories are more determinant (Hampshire 2013:23).² To compete for votes in a time when immigration issue is turning ever increasingly sensitive, political parties are driven to handle or at least to show their concerns. For instance, European radical right parties, a preacher of nativist and closed nationalism, have managed to mobilize a large amount of popular support over the past two years and witness increasing strength in several European countries. From this starting point, political party, representing the interest of a state nation, serves as one perfect object to investigate into in order to understand the nationalist arguments and national identity narratives articulated in the context of refugee and migration crisis at this moment.

Question:

What are the arguments/the content of national identity narratives by political parties representing nations in the context of refugee and migration crisis?

Does the left and right ideological positioning still have an impact on political parties’ articulation of national identity?

² This argument raises the question of the components of national identity. If the national identity also includes elements like high social welfare, enough employment and economic prosperity, then the economic self-interests and identity-based theories are not necessarily contradictory.

How parties are requiring about national and European competences to protect national identity?

Theoretical framework

I. The conceptualization of state nationalism vis-à-vis European integration

The academic world has seen dozens of definitions for and types of nationalism. It is beyond the reach of this research to provide a comprehensive overview of those conceptualizations. Instead, the focus here is nationalism vis-à-vis European integration and state nationalism in my research. As a premise, I follow the tradition of defining nationalism as a political doctrine. Eric Hobsbawm, for example, defines nationalism as the political doctrine that strives for the congruence of the cultural and political unit, i.e. the nation and the state (Hobsbawm 1990).

The term “state nationalism” is chosen to distinguish the nationalism manifested by a nation with a state or a majority nation from the nationalism demonstrated by sub-state nation/minority nation which is stateless (sub-state nationalism). State nationalism has been used by several scholars in this sense (Hobsbawm 1992; Keating 2001; McGarry and Keating 2006; Olsson 2007:51-65). With regard to the relation between state nationalism and European integration, scholars’ takes vary in a great extent. Olsson agrees that state nationalism is characterized by Euroscepticism and xenophobia (Olsson 2007:51). Keating holds that large state nationalists have been hostile to European integration, “fearing the loss of sovereignty and domestic control over policy” (2001:53). Ole Waever, however, chooses to put aside the extreme versions of nationalism and proposes to use nationalism for political programmes referring primarily to the nation--either the programme for creating the nation, or the one for defending the nation when (allegedly) threatened, or just a political programme mobilizing on the basis of reference to the nation (Ole Wæver et al.1993:38). In this way, Ole Waever succeeds in expanding the connotation of state nationalism.

Another scholar who shares similar views with Ole Waever is Suszycki. After analyzing nationalism in Sweden vis-à-vis its EU membership, Suszycki abandons the so-far narrow perspective for nationalist discourses analysis which generally equates nationalism with mere resistance to the transfer of the main nation-state functions to the European level and brings forward his definition of nationalism “as a legitimization of political action through a commitment to the narrative framework of national identity” (Karolewski and Suszycki 2007:84). In this way, whether a political actor is nationalist and the strength of its nationalism could be determined and measured by, first, whether it employs the narratives of national identity in its argument and, second, how many narratives of national identity are used in contrast with non-national narratives such as, for example, fundamental values of the EU, global interests, or general human values. From this point of departure, Suszycki comes to terms with three ideal types of nationalism: strong nationalism with exclusive resort to narratives of national identity, moderate nationalism with a balanced combination of national-identity narratives and nonnational ones, weak nationalism with a priority of nonnational narratives over national-identity ones

(Ibid:85). This redefinition of state nationalism in relation to European integration offered by Suszycki contributes something new to the conventional studies on nationalism in EU which generally treats nationalism as a mere policy against the transfer of the main nation-state functions to the European level. In this new frame, political actors should not be viewed as nationalists when they reject sovereignty transfer but argue on the basis of non-national narratives. If they argue exclusively on the basis of national narratives in case of support of sovereignty transfer, they are not nationalists either (Karolewski and Suszycki 2007:98). My research will draw upon Suszycki's idea. Whether a political actor, the political party in my case, utilizes nationalist argument for or against European integration, the measures at EU level in responding to the migrant/refugee crisis in my research, should be evaluated on the basis of narratives of national identity.

The above discussion indicates that "state nationalism" in relation to European integration, although not quite firmly established term in the studies of nationalism, could be used in my research to refer to nationalism manifested by a nation with a state or a majority nation. For a clearer definition, I would like to present the one offered by Kris Deschouwer:

state nationalism is an abstract ideology that defends the nation (with a state, added by me) against something seen as threatening or limiting its possibility/power.

By drawing upon definitions provided by Suszycki and Kris Deschouwer, I regard that

state nationalism is an ideology that legitimizes its political action through a commitment to the narrative framework of national identity and defends a dominant nation within a state against something, sub-state or supra-state, seen as a threat or limitation of its sovereignty.

II. *Nationalism as a degree: the definition of "state nationalist party"*

Though frequently appearing in media, the term "nationalist party" is hardly an established one in academic field. Political parties at state level, which demonstrate either moderate or strong type of nationalism are rarely crowned as "nationalist" parties. State nationalist party is an absent category in the literature about typologies of party families. With regard to nationalist parties, the literature either excludes it from party families or refer to those nationalist parties in history which succeeded in establishing their own states, or solely focuses on sub-state nationalist/regionalist parties in relation to European integration.

In his investigation into Euroscepticism in west European party systems, Paul Taggart identifies 12 party families in line with Klaus von Beyme's nine-fold categorization³ with slightly different terms (Taggart 1998). Among these 12 families (liberal, conservative, social democrat, Christian democrat, extreme left, agrarian, Ethno-regionalist, new populist, neo-fascist, religious, anti-EU), nationalist parties

³ The party families include 1) liberal and radical parties, 2)conservative parties, 3)socialist and social democratic parties, 4)christian democratic parties, 5)communist parties, 6)agrarian parties, 7)regional and ethnic parties, 8)right-wing extreme parties and 9)ecological parties.

are missing despite the fact that many parties from these categories share a certain amount of nationalism in various forms. Taggart holds that state nationalist party itself is not a party category (e-mail).⁴

The party families⁵ which appear in the works of Hanspeter Kriesi do not give a place to nationalist parties either (Kriesi et al. 2006; Kriesi 2007). Kriesi suggests not to use the criterion of nationalism for the definition of a party since there are party families like conservatives, liberals and radical right populists who are all more or less nationalist. Instead, nationalism could only be used to characterize (not define) parties (e-mail).

Some works indeed refer to the family party named “nationalist party”, but this category of nationalist party does not correspond to the state-level nationalism in my project. For example, in their extensive literature review of the four principal approaches used to identify party families, Peter Mair and Cas Mudde present 13 parties families⁶ and they are not necessarily exhaustive (Mair and Mudde 1998). However, the works in the category entitled “nationalist parties” are comparatively few, with merely one book mentioned, *The Social Origins of Nationalist Movements: the Contemporary West European Experience*. The authors of this book clarify in the beginning chapters that “A nationalist movement is the efforts of ethnic groups which are not identified with the state to reshape state structures....excluding the nationalist New Right of more recent years (Coakley 1992:1)...excludes state nationalism, fascist nationalism or nationalism directed against immigrants (Ibid:21). The nationalist movements and nationalist parties addressed in this book could rather be put into the category of regionalism and regionalist parties, or in other words, sub-state nationalism and sub-state nationalist parties.

Another comprehensive effort to classify parties made by Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond manages to come up with 15 party species under 5 genera (Gunther and Diamond 2003). Nationalism is put under the genus of mass-based parties and generates two major types: pluralist nationalist and ultranationalist. However, the nationalism of these two types of parties, in our current time, is respectively the sub-state nationalism or the extreme version preached by post-industrial extreme right parties. Other authors who specialize in the study of contemporary European nationalism in relation to European integration tend to concentrate on sub-state nationalism/regionalism (Catt and Murphy 2003; McGarry and Keating 2006; Elias 2009) other than state nationalism among state-wide parties, let alone state nationalist parties.

The book *Nationalism and European Integration*, edited by Karolewski and Suszycki, however, addresses this research deficiency by incorporating societal nationalism (Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic) and state nationalism

⁴ The following sentence with “e-mail” means that the conclusion is the result of my e-mail communication with these scholars.

⁵ They include classical left, radical left, new left/green, social democrats, liberals, Christian democrats, new populist right, conservatives, radical liberals, conservative liberals and new radical right.

⁶ The 13 party families referred to are communist parties, social democratic parties or labor parties, Christian democratic parties, agrarian parties, conservative parties, liberal parties, left-libertarian parties, regionalist parties, nationalist parties, racist parties, extreme right parties, green parties, and various versions of right-wing populist parties.

(Sweden, Denmark and Greece) in addition to regional minority nationalism. As is introduced in the section of “*The conceptualization of state nationalism vis-à-vis European integration*”, Suszycki not only formulates his own definition of state nationalism in relation to European integration, but also comes up with three ideal types of nationalism: strong nationalism with exclusive resort to narratives of national identity, moderate nationalism with a balanced combination of national-identity narratives and non-national ones, weak nationalism with a priority of non-national narratives over national-identity ones (Ibid:85). The seven Swedish political parties selected in his study all demonstrate a certain kinds of nationalism (moderate nationalism as the dominant type) in different times and on different issues, yet none of these parties are labeled as nationalist parties. The same is true of the two chapters on Greece and Denmark (Zolkos 2007:133-150; Triandagyllidou 2007:151-165). In sum, state nationalist parties are not an established party family and are absent even when it comes to state nationalism.

The above discussion reveals that, with regard to nationalism, the academia tends to concentrate their efforts on sub-state nationalism. Different from sub-state nationalism which can be easily labeled onto but limited to certain sub-state parties striving for various forms of territorial self-government, state nationalism is usually incorporated into the ideology of several types of state-wide parties, such as the moderate nationalism in conservative parties (Hooghe et al. 2002; Kriesi 2007), civic nationalism in radical left parties and ethnic nationalism in radical right parties (Halikiopoulou et al. 2012) or nationalism manifested by parties under the big family umbrella called new right (right populist and radical right parties included) (Hooghe et al. 2002; Mudde 2007:16-17). In sum, state nationalism is there, but few state-wide parties bearing nationalism features are named as state-nationalist party.

Taking the above discussion into consideration, my research regards state nationalism as a degree measurable in political parties instead of a category to classify them. Two methods are available to group political parties. One is to put them into different party families/types as listed above. The conclusion is yes or no, that is, if a certain party falls into a certain party family. The other one is variation, that is, to measure the degree. For instance, parties can be grouped into soft and hard euroscepticism by measuring the extent of their anti-EU stance (Aleks and Taggart 2000). By extension, nationalism, perceivable in parties representing a state nation, can be measured in the form of degree. The way to measure this degree of nationalism is to analyze the narrative of national identity, to see whether and how political parties argue for their nations by resorting to national identity discourse.

III. *National identity narrative:*

My research follows Suszycki’s definition of nationalism as legitimizing political action through a commitment to the narrative framework of national identity.

National identity is concerned with the question of exclusion and inclusion of someone in a national community. In contemporary Europe, large and self-sustaining identity groups (Buzan et al. 1998:119) happen to be mainly national and nation is then a special case of society; “ethno-national communities are not automatically or

necessarily the prime basis for society, but it is clear that “national identity, when employed, is an extremely powerful mode of subjectivisation” and “national identity is so far the most important form of large-scale social and political identity” (Wæver et al. 1993:21-22). Consequently, ethno-national identity, compared to other social groups, “has acquired particular prominence because of its historical association with the development of the modern state” (Wæver et al. 1993:23).

The content of identity includes what the community members can use to define “we” and is not fixed. National identity comprises a package of linguistic, ethnic and cultural similarity which for more than two centuries has been seen as decisive for the construction of large-scale communities. Weber assumes that nations are always built on some objective basis but defined by the subjective dimension, whereby objective factors are made significant (...). The most common basis is language, but this cannot be the sole criteria, since there are important cases of nations without a common language (Switzerland), and cases where language does not lead to joining the logical community (Quebec, Alsace) (Wæver et al. 1993:40). Consequently, the basis of identification should not be taken as a priory at any moment, but rather be studied through history; the significance/prioritized place of language and culture in national identity is rather a recent historical phenomenon than the essential trait of societal security (Wæver et al. 1993:40).

For example, the welfare state and society built in West Europe since modern times carry the collective national memory and mythology. Members of democratic welfare society enter into new social contract with the state who gains legitimacy by providing its members with social and economic security. In the meantime, welfare state becomes part of the national identity (Wæver et al. 1993:153). Access to social and economic rights is also crucial in the governance of belonging in welfare state (Huysmans 2000). The Swedish national identity, as shown in the rich literature on the topic, has been constructed on the basis of strong and clear narratives of welfare state, democracy, neutrality, modernity, as well as a sense of belonging to the Norden (North European area) (Karolewski and Suszycki 2007:86).

In sum, national identity is not fixed. It is rather in constant evolution and open to new identity marks which are convincing and powerful enough to differentiate “us” from “other”. The flexibility of national identity components and its subjectivity reveals that subjective actors like political parties are well positioned to present their perspectives of national identity on certain objective basis. For instance, a sub-state nationalist party would hold differing views about national identity from a branch of state-wide party campaigning in the same sub-state region. A leftist state party is likely to distance itself from the exclusive and ethnic connotation of national identity indicated by its radical right counterparts. The exact content of national identity narrative based on nationalism depends on what the spokespersons, here it is the political party, for a certain nation would put into their national uniqueness.

IV. The impact of left-right on political parties' stance on immigration and nationalism:

In the context of Europe, right-wing political parties have different concerns from

left-wing parties with regard to the regional integration and globalization embodied by European integration. In the conventional sense of left-right polarization, left parties are more concerned about the impact by integration on social welfare and European social model while the right focuses more on national identity and independence (Hooghe and Marks 2007). In addition, the two sides hold varied views upon the same issues. Take for example the cultural issue which is closely linked with immigration. In a general sense, the “cultural aspects of denationalization coincide with the left’s internationalist tradition” (Kriesi 2007). The situation is, however, more complex among the right. Christian democrats and liberal radicals tend to respectively hold an intermediate and a positive position to cultural dimension of integration whereas liberals conservatives are usually reluctant towards the political integration (Kriesi 2007; Marks and Wilson 2000). Conservatives, as a whole, are inclined to be nationalists on the aspect of cultural and political integration by opposing the opening of national borders and emphasizing the threat to national traditions and sovereignty posed by cultural and political integration. In the sense of new politics/post-materialism, the GAL end (Green/Alternative/Libertarian) and the TAN (Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalism) end have starkly different concerns, just as the name reveals. For example, the new populist right, an updated variant inside the conventional conservatives, is well known for its explicit opposition against integration in cultural and political terms as well as against immigration (Kriesi 2007) while the GAL pole hold generally positive stance on EU integration, especially on EU asylum and migration policy.

What can be concluded from this left-right differentiation is that the right supposedly owns the immigration issue, acting as the defender of traditional culture and values, the upholder of nationalism whereas the mainstream left have clear adherence to notions of solidarity, inclusiveness and internationalism (Hinnfors et al. 2012). Nevertheless, this does not deny that nationalism, as a means to legitimize political action through national identity narrative, can travel to and fro along the left-right political spectrum. Halikiopoulou, by studying both radical right and radical left eurosceptic parties in Greece and France, contests the conventional view that nationalism is a prerogative of radical right-wing parties. Her analysis indicates that radical right- and left-wing parties adopt a similar stance on economic and territorial nationalism, but exhibit divergence in their ethnic and cultural nationalism (Halikiopoulou, Nanou et al. 2012).

Moreover, although it is the mainstream right or radical right who owns the immigration issue in most related debates, the left can also politicize or depoliticize it if needed. Researches have shown that both mainstream left and right parties may radicalize their immigration agendas since the salience of immigration issues increases with the globalization and Europeanization of policy-making (Alonso and Fonseca 2012), especially at present when the refugee/migration crisis reaches a new peak. A case in point is the Swedish Social Democratic Party which, since the 1960s, continuously backed and initiated strict immigration policies, out of the belief that there are distinct limits to the ability of “the people’s home” to make room for immigrants (Hinnfors et al. 2012). As for the mainstream right parties’ further move to the right on immigration issues, examples are more than enough, e.g., British Conservative and French right.

State nationalism and national identity narratives: A comparative analysis of PS and LR

In line with the above discussion, French mainstream left and right parties, PS and LR,

formulate their own definitions of national identity with varied emphasis. In French history, the traditional right was featured with an ethnic concept of nation while the left embraced the idea of political nation conceived as a result of voluntary participation of political community life. In the period of French revolution, this contrast opposed the aristocrats against the defenders of Enlightenment spirit. (Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2010)

Over the past decades, the changing political ecology in France has oscillated the sharp disagreement between left and right. The rediscovery of French nation in historical, political and philosophical sense brought about by the renewed discussion of republicanism, also termed as neo-republicanism, after the collapse of French Maxism (French Communist Party) since the 1970s preaches the primacy of a unified and political nation. This line of thinking is endorsed by both left and right. (Chabal 2010; Chabal 2015) One case in point is the gradual absorption of the civic model, republican heritage and universal thinking into its elaboration of French national identity by the right as showcased by the presidential candidate Nicola Sarkozy in 2007 as well as the Republicans' primary debates in this year's presidential election. Overlapping elements are now not uncommon in the discourse of national identity pronounced by French left and right. Both historical/cultural and civic/political models of national identity can be discerned in PS and LR. For the sake of convenience, my research draws on part of ethno-cultural and political models of nation summarized by Angeliki Koukoutsaki-Monnier (2010) in my own analysis. The following is the borrowed model:

Ethno-cultural definition	Political definition
Historical/cultural approach	Civic/political approach
National identity as a result of a common past, a cultural history, a religion and a shared language	National identity as a result of (1) a project of future, willingness to live together, dream (2) a sharing of republican values (human rights, citizenship, laïcité, humanity, equality between man and woman, justice etc.)

Since the start of the migrant/refugee crisis, France has been under huge pressure to call for intervening at both European and national levels. How to deal with this unprecedented influx of migrants and refugees and the debate about French national identity has involved both the mainstream left and right parties. The following part will provide a comparative analysis of the national identity conception by PS and LR followed by their respective proposals for the competences at European and national levels to cope with this crisis.

I. *The national identity components by PS and LR*

In its conceptualization of French national identity, PS attaches a great deal of emphasis on the triumph of Enlightenment and republican values attached. *Les cahiers de la présidentielle* in October 2016 entitled “Être Français au 21e siècle ” by PS writes:

We evidently do not find ourselves in a narrowly-visioned France rooted in any ethnicity, religion, or culture whose purity should be preserved. We think that France’s future is assured if it remains anchored to the republican and social base which has shaped modern France

Upon this, PS comes up with three components of French national identity.

Being French		
1 recognized as French (judicial principles)	2 being a citizen in a Republic with values (liberty, equality, fraternity and laïcité) which states clearly rights and duties	3 feeling like French in terms of language, history and culture

In the meantime, PS admits that it’s the politics in the past featured by the successive integration of immigrants that has contributed to making France as a nation.

The issue of immigration and national identity has long been owned by the right. France is no exception. Ever since the discussion of French national identity was placed under the spotlight in the 1970s, the French right has played an active role. Its emphasis on the ethno-cultural aspect of French national identity such as history, cultural heritage and a shared French language is known to all and finds its traces again in the more recent debate among the presidential candidates in the Republicans’ primary selection a couple of months ago.⁷

Former French president Nicola Sarkozy, since the beginning of campaign, placed “identity” as the second biggest challenges he intended to cope with.⁸ He claims that it was him who associated national identity with immigration as early as in 2007 in his first presidential campaign. This year, Sarkozy re-picks up the topic of national novel (roman national). During his speech in October 2016 at France’s Congress Palace, Sarkozy refutes that “those who don’t understand that our Republic is incarnated in its past, its symbols and legends can’t comprehend France. Our ancestors are the Gauls, the French kings, the Enlightenment, Napoleon and the great republicans...there is no these people’s history or that of those, but there is only one history to be learned at schools, the history of France. I would like the young French, regardless of their birth place, their skin color or their religion to learn the same history.” In defending the assimilation of immigrants, he added that “those who criticize the assimilation have accepted to renounce French identity”.⁹

⁷ For an extensive review of media coverage, please refer to

http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/le-debat-sur-l-identite-nationale_828154.html

⁸[http://premium.lefigaro.fr/politique/2016/08/22/01002-20160822ARTFIG00279-sarkozy-candidat-sous-le-signe-d-e-l-identite-francaise.php?a3=763-7610977-894724&een=51797113ced887b88be5d68b83fcf380&seen=6&m_i=XWcYH4_Nfjt0nDZ6wGkZHxzTLrhndWslqr%2B84q9d5QVQNfkZ5CNAX4I0OeMNEkZ7pajD32jmK2wFD%2BiWfaAgxMwEfwRx8g#xtor=EPR-300-\[matinale\]-20160823](http://premium.lefigaro.fr/politique/2016/08/22/01002-20160822ARTFIG00279-sarkozy-candidat-sous-le-signe-d-e-l-identite-francaise.php?a3=763-7610977-894724&een=51797113ced887b88be5d68b83fcf380&seen=6&m_i=XWcYH4_Nfjt0nDZ6wGkZHxzTLrhndWslqr%2B84q9d5QVQNfkZ5CNAX4I0OeMNEkZ7pajD32jmK2wFD%2BiWfaAgxMwEfwRx8g#xtor=EPR-300-[matinale]-20160823)

⁹http://premium.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2016/09/24/25001-20160924ARTFIG00144-nicolas-sarkozy-celebre-s-a-certaine-idee-de-la-france.php?a3=763-7610977-896225&een=51797113ced887b88be5d68b83fcf380&seen=6&m_i=nPTA38a8nmyHf8frZPOvhf9j_tnAD2QZvY%2BXfTxRmaYAghzdHIBHuiUCEONim142J%2BIBqi5inHJGTQ17iusk0JM2iVIBoy

Apart from defending this historical and cultural notion of French identity, Sarkozy doesn't forget to criticize the left which, in his opinion, has degraded from holding the "honor of promoting Briand and the laïcité, Lavisse and the national novel, Ferry and his idea about education" to being "poor, arrogant and and pretentious", "believing in the communautarisme other than the national novel". From now on, he continues, it's the right's honor to defend these unique thinking in front of attacks. 10 This is in line with his arguments for the civic notion of French national identity ten years ago in his first presidential campaign. For example, in his speeches in 2007, Sarkozy addressed quite often "the willingness to live together", the nation as "a project for the future", and "the desire to share" Republican values (Koukoutsaki-Monnier 2010). If, as proclaimed by Sarkozy, the right has taken the relay race from the left to uphold the Republican values, it is true that the right has validly incorporated the concept of civic nation into its ideology.

The past decades witnessed a gradual convergence of the left and right politics in Europe. The above analysis exemplifies this trend by showing that the French left and right promote their respective concept of national identity but with ever more overlapping content as Emile Chabal admits that "the debates over the national narrative...have transcended a number of political cleavages" (2010). The left moves to include history and cultural elements "feeling like French (language, history and culture)" while the right increasingly refers to republican values and nation as a political/civic project. This convergence readily in place, however, it's still too early to conclude that the French left and right are now the same upon the issue of national identity. The following section intends to showcase the convergence as well as the remaining differences between the two by a deep reading of their proposals for the competences at European and national levels to solve the current migrant/refugee crisis in relation to protecting their respective concept of French national identity.

II. *Proposals¹¹ to solve the migrant/refugee crisis by PS and LR*

In response to the migrant/refugee crisis and ensuing challenges, the left and right demonstrate some similarities and differences in their proposed solutions:

A European respond: common European asylum and immigration system

PS:

- set up a real European agency of asylum to supervise an equal and sustainable centralized system of division of asylum seekers among member states from hot-spots
- Harmonize the procedures and norms of asylum seeking
- Open and reinforce the legal channel of migration (humanitarian visa)
- increase the return rate of those not eligible for refugee status

LR:

¹⁰http://premium.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2016/09/24/25001-20160924ARTFIG00144-nicolas-sarkozy-celebresa-certaine-idee-de-la-france.php?a3=763-7610977-896225&een=51797113ced887b88be5d68b83fcf380&seen=6&m_i=nPTA38a8nmyHf8frZPOvhf9j_tnAD2QZvY%2BXfTxRmaYAghzdHIBHuiUCEONim142J%2BIBqi5inHJGTQ17iusk0JM2iVIBoy

¹¹ If not marked, the following quotations and conclusions are drawn on the basis of an extensive reading of European Parliament and French parliament speeches, party representatives' speeches, party news, party communications and other media coverage of PS and LR.

- Negotiate a common European immigration policy
- Create international detention centers in conflict zone, i.e. Iraqi-Syrian zone, outside Europe to process the asylum applications
- create a provisional judicial status to accommodate war refugees till the peace returns in their home country
- formulate a list of countries whose people are eligible for asylum seeking in Europe
- increase the return rate of those not eligible for refugee status

Schengen

PS:

- strengthen external border control instead of closing it to assure the functioning of Schengen
- Defend Schengen: to include all EU candidate countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania
- create European border and coast guard

LR:

- Suspend Schengen I and restore control of internal frontiers against non-European foreigners
- establish Schengen II: members should assure the protection of European external frontiers and conform to a common European immigration/asylum regulation
- harmonize the conditions for non-European foreigners to access social aid to fight against social tourism

Relocation and reinstallation

PS:

- devise a constraining and permanent plan of relocation and resettlement of refugees

LR:¹²

- The quota imposed upon France does not have any sense. It will attract more migrants and refugees risking their life to come to Europe

Calais

PS:

- respect their asylum rights and provide them with a decent and responsible accommodation
- create a national plan with 8000 places in reception centers around France to distribute these people

LR:

- the plan does not go under consultation with local officials; it is against Republican spirit
- renegotiate the Le Touquet Treaty with UK
- create reception center in UK to process these migrants' demand; ask them to apply for asylum in UK or Belgium like what happened in 2002 with the Sangatte camp

Integration of refugee and migrants

PS:

- assure the best integration of refugees; propose efficient integration policies; provide education, health care, housing and professional training for labor market
- grant them the same rights as local Europeans

LR:

- "we cannot welcome those who cannot integrate"
- the asylum system protects the rights of asylum seekers too much

¹² The stance of LR's on refugee quota is quite divided. Some MEPs show their consent while others staunchly oppose it. But the official message from LR at French national level is quite against it.

This table contrasts and compares the proposals by PS and LR in an explicit way. But what is more interesting is the arguments behind their stances. Republican values and concept of civic nation are borrowed by both PS and LR to construct their idea of French national identity as shown in the previous part. In arguing for their stance on European migrant/refugee crisis, the two sides simultaneously refer to these values, but sometimes, for totally different purposes.

The idea that France is a nation of immigration is accepted by both PS and LR. As PS' member European Parliament (MEP) claims "French identity is linked with welcoming (migrants)"; "France was and remains a country of immigration because France is a great nation" is applauded by socialist parliamentarians in French National Assembly. France's previous socialist interior minister Bernard Cazeneuve holds that Europe (France included) should face up to its responsibility to welcome migrants and to respect their fundamental rights, demonstrate its solidarity and fight against irregular immigrants; French National Assembly should be faithful to the values of French Republic and set an example of treating foreigners in Europe. Here, both universal and republican values are used to justify PS' stance of welcoming refugees and migrants.

The story in LR's camp takes a rather different look in that these universal and republican values are largely used to justify its conservative stance on migration. On one hand, LR refutes the ideology of complete closure by claiming that France has a history of openness to the wider world. "Zero immigration", a negation of globalization, is not acceptable to LR. "It is France's honor to welcome refugees". On the other hand, the ideology of complete opening does not hold true for LR either. LR member of French parliament (MP) Guillaume Larrivé, citing Pierre-André Taguieff, labels this ideology as "immigrationism" which regards immigration as a chance for France. Guillaume Larrivé warns Europe and France of not being deceived by this "angel-ism" because it concerns not only the future of millions of people who believe a better life is waiting for them and risk their life to come to Europe, but also the political stability of European continent. Contrary to their wish for a better life, a huge number of these migrants, after arriving in Europe, end up in ghettos with no line of hope for future, caught in high unemployment, living off social assistance, and unfortunately retreat to communitarianism and develop resentment even to their host country. Consequently, France should break away with this immigrationist ideology and adopt a more reflexive, rational, responsible and realistic approach.

LR turns to universal and republican values to defend its hard stance on illegal immigration. Firstly, LR calls for an immigration policy which should always prioritize French national interest (Les Républicains 2015). As a democracy, France should act in the name of French people. Secondly, the fight against illegal immigration is the indispensable condition for the integration of legal immigrants. The republican humanism is not insulting French law or welcoming all the world without any condition. In contrast, it is respect and make others respect French laws; it is the ability to legally and decently accommodate those to whom our Republic decides to grant residency right. For this end, France needs to improve the threshold

for social system. An irregular foreigner will be denied the access to French social system and the right to apply for asylum or be naturalized in order not to encourage more illegal migrants. Thirdly, French former president Nicola Sarkozy, in his campaign speech for president in 2007, condemned illegal immigration and the human traffickers for exploiting the misery of poor illegal migrants. "Because I believe in France for its universal values and human rights that I would like to fight against illegal migration". At last, as Guillaume Larrivé claims, if France has always been a nation-state, a democracy, a state of rule of law, a Republic, then France has the right to choose who it would like to welcome into its territory.

Deep cleavages could still be discerned between PS and LR despite their simultaneous reference to universal and republican values to defend their immigration politics although for quite different end. These cleavages are exemplified by PS' more frequent reference to universal and republican values like fundamental rights, liberty etc. and LR's preferred emphasis on the issue of French history and culture in its discourse. The equilibrium between liberty and security, migrant's social right, and issue of integration are salient examples to show the gap between PS and LR

How to strike a balance between liberty and security is under fierce dispute. Liberty and security weighs differently in PS and LR's agenda. LR claims security as one of the pillars of republican orders and believes that there is no liberty without security. "This is clearly what differentiates us from the socialists". In contrast, PS puts liberty well before security, especially on the issue of establishing European border and coast guard and the adoption of PNR (Passenger Name Record, part of EU's efforts to combat terrorism). Both LR and PS supports EU's initiative to set up a European border and coast guard, while PS emphasizes, on more than one occasions, that the objective of this guard is not only for security but also for delivering humanitarian assistance to those migrants entering EU. The adoption of PNR in 2016 is loudly applauded by LR MEP. They accuse their PS counterparts of blocking this legislative proposal in the past years. As LR's EP deputy Brice Hortefeux contends that "our priority is to fight against those who pose threat to our liberty, but the liberty can only be realized in a world which assures enough security to express personal opinions and disagreements". PS, after years of resistance, finally approve of PNR, only after the inclusion of two texts aimed at the protection of European citizens' personal information and the respect for fundamental rights and individual liberty. As PS argues that liberty is one of three pillars of republican values (the other two are equality and fraternity).

On the issue of migrant's right and treatment, PS insists that refugees and migrants enjoy humane treatment and a respect for their fundamental rights under the principle of non-refoulement. PS promises a humane return for those not eligible for refugee status in the shortest delay. LR, at least in its rhetoric, seems to be in favor of more strict criteria for migrant's status recognition and return. In the first place, LR insists on a clear differentiation of political and war refugee, economic migrant and asylum seeker. Its proposals include the creation of a provisional judiciary status to accommodate war refugees in Europe and send them back to their original country should conflict be over. One LR MEP voted against a resolution in European

Parliament on the ground that the latter grants refugees fleeing from poverty the same status as those fleeing from war. The repatriation rate of illegal migrants needs to be largely improved while the maximum duration of administrative detention of those failing to obtain a refugee status should correspondingly extended. In the second place, LR sets out to restrict migrant's social rights in order to discourage irregular immigration. A foreigner who shortly arrives in France is not eligible for social aid financed by the tax paid by other French long-term residents. The right to access family allowances and housing assistance is granted only after a residence period in France for 5 years. In addition, an exceptional and provisional medical aid, instead of a state medical aid, is allowed to illegally-staying foreigners. In this sense, compared with PS, LR is more mindful of and protective of the social welfare rights in France in relation to migrants. This corresponds well with the idea that West European social welfare system has long been incorporated into the definition of national identity in history.

The biggest divergence between LR and PS lies in their varying levels of attachment on French history and culture when it comes to migrant's integration. Both PS and LR address the integration with regard to professional training, language learning, and diploma recognition for the purpose of a smooth entry into European labor market of migrants. Apart from this, during one debate on the legislation entitled "Droit des étrangers" (Foreigners' rights) in 2016 French National Assembly, former socialist interior minister Cazeneuve lists out two pieces of requirement for integration: practice of French language and access to Republic's values. Different from the complete "communautarisme" decried by LR, PS also highlights republican values on the issue of integration. However, different from PS' strong hold on republican values, LR takes a more historical and cultural approach in the requirements of integration. As LR states "we cannot welcome those who cannot integrate". In LR's new proposal for a French immigration policy, it is stressed that before the delivery of long-stay visa to a person, he/she must prove his/her ability of integration into French society. To achieve this, three criteria should be met: a sufficient command of French language, adhesion of Republic's values and essential values of French society, a proof of professional capability and financial autonomy. At a first glance, LR's suggestions are not quite different from those of PS, but a closer examination reveals that "essential values of French society" actually speak more than just a few words. LR does not deliberate on the exact content of these values in the proposal, but we can presume that a society's essential values mainly point to France's history and culture, judged by LR's rhetoric in the past. At last, LR puts the question of nationality law onto the renegotiation table by adding more restraint on "le droit du sol" (the right of the soil) which is regarded as a national tradition and part of French identity. Whatever the words, compared with PS, LR intends to drive the migrant's integration into a more historical and cultural direction as explained by its definition of French national identity.

Conclusion

State nationalism, as an ideology that legitimizes its political action through a commitment to the narrative framework of national identity and defends a dominant nation within a state against something seen as a threat or limitation of its sovereignty, finds its outlet in the national-identity narratives in the proposals to cope with European migrant/refugee crisis by French PS and LR. My research shows that PS' slight rightward shift to ethno-cultural component of French national identity and LR's continuing leftward move to republican values testifies to the ongoing convergence of mainstream left-right politics in west Europe in the past decades. However, the deep cleavages remain. This is indicated by PS' more frequent reference to universal and republican values in its argumentation and LR's obvious leaning towards the historical/cultural components of French national identity. When the event of the Jean-Quarré high school in Paris' 19th borough broke out, LR accuses PS of disrespecting Republic's law, negating State authority and undermining republican ideas. PS, in return, criticizes the right for turning their back on republican values and mixing their propositions with that of the extreme right in blocking the entry of refugees on French land. In addition, LR representatives also point out the importance of defending national sovereignty upon the issue of migration. This is a topic largely missing in the PS camp.

With the come into power of centrist force led by Macron, how is the overlapping elements and remaining cleavages on immigration politics between French left and right going to evolve is worthy of future academic attention.

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