IMMIGRATION POLITICS IN FRANCE:
THE EFFECT OF FOREIGNERS ON ELECTORAL RESULTS

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The issue of immigration and its effects on the political situation in the European countries has been studied by many scholars in recent years. Immigration has often been singled out as one of the most important reasons for the rise of the radical right parties in the Western Europe, for example. Terri Givens notes, “each of the [radical right] parties relates unemployment and problems with law and order to immigration” (Givens 2000). The presence of foreigners¹ and the necessity of “fighting them off” or at the very least avoiding any future influx is a major raison d’etre for the National Front. A cornerstone of its agenda is the “France for the French” slogan and policies associated with ending further immigration and making it increasingly harder for the foreigners already in France to get their citizenship. At various points in time, the leader of the National Front, Jean Marie Le Pen had said, “I pledge an immediate end to all immigration and to send three million foreigners home” and “The foreigners will not be forced to leave. But once they can’t get jobs or benefits, there will be little incentive for them to stay.” (Ponte 2002). Le Pen has also consistently related the influx of foreigners to such social ills as unemployment and crime.

Thus, it would be likely that the actual presence of foreigners in turn affects the electoral results of the National Front. Two different causal stories can explain how the geography of immigration would be related to FN’s electoral results. On the one hand, we would expect a positive relationship because voters who live in

¹ Here and throughout this paper, I use the term foreigner to represent the French category of “étranger.” These are the individuals who identify themselves as having a nationality other than French. Once naturalized, these people can become “French by acquisition” and thus exit the “foreigner” category and become foreign-born citizens. On French censuses, they constitute a separate category and distinguished from the “French by birth.”
areas with substantial numbers of foreigners would be more likely to see them as competitors in the job market, and thus be more susceptible to the rhetoric of the National Front. This is the causal story behind Martin’s and Givens’ analyses (Martin 1996, Givens 2000).

On the other hand, one might expect a negative relationship between these variables for several reasons. First of all, foreigners may be more likely to live in more liberal areas where the native population is less hostile to them and consequently less likely to vote for a radical right party. Thus, there might be a self-selecting dynamic going on here where the foreigners would be choosing to dwell in the more pro-diversity, anti-National Front communities. In addition, those who live among foreigners may see them in a more neighborly fashion and less as a threat. Of course, there might not be any relationship at all between the geography of immigration and the vote for the National Front. It may be that a different aspect of the National Front programme appeals to voters, or that some voters see foreigners as a threat no matter where they live and whether they have direct communication with the foreign groups.

In fact, multiple studies have been done to test these models. None of them have found a negative relationship between the geography of immigration and the extreme right vote. Some studies have found a significant positive relationship between the geography of immigration and the National Front vote in France (Martin 1996, Givens 2000, Lewis-Beck, 1993). However, Mayer’s study on the effect of foreigners on the FN vote in the quarters of Paris found that there is no relationship between the two variables (Mayer 1996).
These differing results can be reconciled by looking at the levels of aggregation used and they underline the need to use the departmental level of aggregation in this study as opposed to a finer level of aggregation. In the smaller regions, such as the quarters of a city, the more xenophobic voters tend to move out of the neighborhoods with large percentages of foreigners. Those native French who stay in these neighborhoods tend to be accepting of foreigners, viewing them as friends and neighbors and not a faceless threat or a collective enemy (Martin 2000).

This explanation is substantiated by the studies done by Perrineau in the Grenoble metropolitan area and by Rey and Roy in Seine-Saint-Denis region (Perrineau 1985, Rey and Roy 1986). They have found that there was no relationship between the proportion of foreigners in the smaller communes and the vote share of the National Front in these communes. What Perrineau noticed, however, was a “halo effect” – the communes close to those with a larger percentage of foreigners were the ones in which the National Front got a larger vote share (Perrineau 1985). It is precisely these communes that experience all the fear of foreigners lurking around and taking their jobs and none of the mitigating factors such as the substantial presence of the foreign-born citizens or foreigners themselves that can sway the vote or dispel the stereotypes. If one looks at the departmental level, the communes with large foreign populations as well as their “halos” will be included in the department. The departmental level of aggregation gives us a bigger picture of how the geography of immigration affects the voting patterns of the French.
At this level, we find a positive and significant relationship between the number of immigrants in a department and the vote for the National Front (Lewis Beck 1993, Martin 1996, Givens 2000). On this larger scale, immigration geography has an important effect on the extreme right vote. An ironic deduction one may derive from this is that for all its xenophobia and anti-immigration policies, the National Front is doing the best precisely in the foreigner-populated, more diverse areas, not in the traditional all-French departments that the National Front sees as the model for what the whole of France should be like. The paradoxical conclusion is that some type of an influx – or at least a continued presence – of foreigners is in the best interest of the National Front.

As one can see, there have been a substantial number of studies done and papers written on the interplay between immigration and extreme right parties in general and the geography of immigration and the National Front electoral outcomes in particular. However, the question of how the immigration geography affects the electoral outcomes of other political parties in France has been largely overlooked. This is somewhat surprising since immigration has become an increasingly important issue for all the parties across the political spectrum. It is true that immigration has been largely brought into the political debate by the National Front when it surfaced as an important political force in the 1980s. However, since then all major political parties have been forced to engage with the National Front on this issue in order to keep their constituencies. Whenever the mainstream parties tried to sidestep the issue, the National Front experienced electoral gains (Schain 1999). In fact, Chirac even created a Ministry of Integration and the Struggle against
Exclusion in 1995 as a response to Le Pen’s proposal for “national preference” in all policy areas (Schain 1996).

The Socialist party too has tried to walk the fine line between its traditional pro-immigrant policy and the desires of the electorate. When Jospin came to power in the 1997 elections, he did ease the citizenship requirements and regularized the status of some illegal immigrants, but he did not completely repeal the Pasqua-Debre laws, which tightened immigration control, thus breaking one of his pre-election promises (Safran 1999). While this caused the Green party to threaten leaving the coalition of the Socialists, many Gaullist politicians thought that Jospin went too far and by doing so pushed more established right voters to the extreme right (Webster 1997).

While the National Front to a large extent defines the use of immigration issues in politics, it is by no means the only party that deals with the issue. It would be wrong to see immigration and the number of foreigners as playing a part only in the success of the extreme right. It is plausible that the right wing parties in general – not just the extreme right – benefit from the larger percentages of foreigners in some departments. The policies of the right-wing parties have generally been less favorable to foreigners than those of the left-wing parties. In fact, Jacques Chirac declared as early as 1975 that “with one million unemployed and one million immigrants, France has the answer to its unemployment problem staring it in the face” (Milner and Mouriaux 1996).

It is also possible that the additional FN votes in the departments with greater foreigner populations are taken away from the established right, leaving the number
of the left-wing voters largely unchanged across the departments. This model is supported by Schain’s finding based on a survey conducted in 1996. It seems that there is a tradeoff between the established right and the extreme right as the number of immigrants increases and the Socialist and Communist votes stay roughly the same (Schain 1999). However, these results are only based on one survey, and they warrant further research using a greater number of data points.

It has been convincingly documented by the previous studies that the immigration geography at the departmental level has a positive and significant relationship with the electoral results of the National Front. According to Martin’s study, for example, the difference between the FN vote in the departments with the biggest number of foreigners and the departments with the smallest number of foreigners approached 10% in the regional elections of 1998 (Martin 2000). These extra votes are obviously coming from somewhere, i.e., they are the result of either a decrease in the vote share(s) of some other political party/parties, or are FN votes from those who formerly abstained from voting.

The second case deserves a close scrutiny since it can be plausibly argued that the radical rhetoric of the National Front mobilizes those French who are dissatisfied with the mainstream political parties and who therefore were likely to withdraw from the political process and abstain before the National Front came along. If this were true, we would expect to see that the voter turnout rates are higher in the regions where the National Front gets a higher percentage of votes. In
fact, according to the study done by Givens, the National Front actually receives more votes in the areas where the abstentions are higher (Givens 2000).

To substantiate this, I studied the voter turnout rates for the first round of the 2002 presidential election. The voter turnout rate for the metropolitan France was 70.85%. I took the ten departments with the highest proportion of FN vote\(^2\) and calculated the average turnout rate. If FN really does attract the votes from previous “abstenters,” this rate should be higher than the French mean; if Givens’ analysis applies, the rate should be lower. In fact, the average turnout rate for the most FN-friendly departments was 70.57% – virtually the same as the rate for France as a whole. This suggests that the FN does not disproportionately attract those who do not vote otherwise.

However, another scenario is possible. It could be that the departments with high potential FN vote are generally more prone to high abstention rates, maybe due to economic depression, demographics of the region, or other reasons. Even when the National Front mobilizes some of the non-voters, the abstention rates for these departments may be higher than the rates for other departments. Thus, the comparison between departments for one election – like the one done above – may not reveal an important relationship between FN vote and abstention rates.

In order to consider this scenario, we would have to figure out what the abstention rates for the departments with high FN vote would have been like if FN was not present. Of course, there is no perfect way to do this since it involves a counterfactual. However, what we could do is compare the current abstention rates to a past election in which FN was not present or did not play a significant role. I

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\(^2\) Alpes-Maritimes, Ardennes, Gard, Herault, Moselle, Oise, Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin, Var, and Vaucluse
compare the abstention rates for 1981 legislative election (where the National Front was not a contending party) to those of the first tour of the 2002 presidential election (where Le Pen received 17% of the votes nationwide). In order for such a comparison to be valid, we have to assume that the condition that caused higher abstention rates in certain departments (such as economic depression, demographics, etc.) stayed constant from 1981 to 2002. I then compare the mean abstention rates for the same ten “FN-friendly” departments for 1981 and 2002. The mean turnout rate for these ten departments for the 1981 election was 68.47%, compared to 70.57% in 2002. Considering that the overall turnout rate was virtually the same in 1981 and 2002 (70.46% vs. 70.85%), this result grants some credence to the thesis that the National Front electorate comes from previous non-voters. However, the decrease in the abstention rates from 1981 to 2002 is so small (2.1%) that the former non-voters could not account for much of the National Front’s electoral gains.

Thus, the extra votes of the National Front are most likely also coming at the expense of other political parties. Immigration geography affects not only the National Front electoral success, but also that of other political parties. As mentioned above, there are several different possibilities of who are the losers (or other beneficiaries) of the immigration geography. To see which one of these scenarios is most plausible, we should look at the existing data on the subject.

While no data exists that connects the immigration geography to the political parties other than the National Front, there were some surveys done asking people whether they agree that “there are too many immigrants in France” and subsequently asking them what party they voted for or associated with. Not surprisingly, 70% of

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3 See data at the end of the paper for the abstention rates for 1981 and 2002 subdivided by department.
those voting for the National Front strongly agreed with this statement and only 20% of those voting for the Socialists strongly agreed, while the population mean, 31%, lies in the middle (CEVIPOF 1997). Since Socialist and National Front voters see very differently on the issue of immigration, it is my proposition that the Socialist voters are not the likely source of these extra percentage points in the highly foreigner-populated areas. The electorates of these two parties see the issue of immigration very differently and thus Socialist voters are not likely to switch their votes to the extreme National Front when the number of foreigners in their departments increases.

The position of the established right voters, on the other hand, is closer ideologically to that of the National Front. In the Euro-Barometer surveys conducted in 1984-85, 45% of the RPR voters answered that there were “too many” immigrants in France, compared to 88% of the National Front voters and 24% of the Socialist voters (Lewis-Beck 1993). Granted, the difference between the FN and RPR voters is still quite large, but it is smaller than that between the National Front and the Socialists. Another poll conducted in May 1995 showed that out of those who voted for Chirac, 43% wanted “the ideas of the National Front [to] be taken into account more by the new president,” as opposed to 33% of the general population. Thus, the RPR voters are more likely to change their vote to that for the National Front than the population as a whole (Keeler and Schain 1996).

It could also be that as the number of immigrants increases, some RPR/UDF voters switch to the National Front while some Socialist voters switch to the established right, thus leaving the Socialist party as the loser in this situation.
However, the aforementioned CSA survey shows that the Socialist vote share is largely independent of the immigration geography (Schain 1999). There could be several reasons for this. First of all, Socialist voters are generally less concerned with the immigration issue than the established right voters or all voters in general (CSA exit poll 1997). Thus, the percentage of foreigners in their departments is less likely to influence the Socialist voters since they do not see immigration in general as an incredibly important issue. Based on the previously collected data, we should see no significant relationship between the number of immigrants and the Socialist vote in a given department. This hypothesis is of course based on very fragmentary data, which is exactly why it should be tested.

**Hypotheses and Controls**

1. As the percentage of foreigners in the departments in France increases, the vote share of the National Front in these departments also increases.

2. As the percentage of foreigners in the departments in France increases, the vote share of the RPR/UDF stays the same.

3. As the percentage of foreigners in the departments in France increases, the vote share of the Socialist PS decreases.

4. As the percentage of foreigners in the departments in France increases, the vote share of the Communist party decreases.
In order to see if these hypotheses are true or false, I need to control for other variables that might affect the vote share of these political parties. One of these factors is unemployment. Unemployment has been consistently linked to the success of the National Front in France. Increases in unemployment decrease the living standards of the citizens and thus lead to discontent with the established political parties and radicalization of the electorate (Givens 2000). The National Front has been very vocal in linking the unemployment problem to the presence of the foreigners. This ‘number of unemployed equals number of immigrants’ rhetoric has hit a chord in some sectors of the population and it is widely held to be an important reason in the success of the National Front (Milner and Mouriaux 1997).

Several studies on the geography of unemployment and the success of the National Front have found that there is in fact a significant positive relationship between the level of unemployment in a region and the success of the National Front in that region (Swank and Betz 1995, Givens 2000). Thus, it might be the case that it is not the number of foreigners but unemployment that is driving the geographical changes in the vote share of the National Front and other political parties.

This alternative would present a substantial problem if the foreigners and unemployment were spread in the same fashion across the departments of France. In this case, it would be very difficult to gauge whether it is the foreigner population or the high unemployment rate that is driving the FN success. Fortunately, while there are some departments where both the percentage of foreigners and unemployment rate are above average, there are others where this is not so. In the
Alsace region, for example, the unemployment rate is below average (5.1%) while the percentage of foreigners is above average (7.9%) A similar situation happens in many other cases. (Givens 2000). Thus, I control for the level of unemployment in the departments across France.

In addition, it is plausible that it is not the foreigners or unemployment independently that influence electoral results, but the two factors acting together. One might imagine a scenario in which high unemployment without substantial foreign presence does not result in a vote-share increase for the National Front. Similarly, high number of foreigners – provided that unemployment is low – may not make people xenophobic enough to vote for FN. However, the two factors together – high unemployment and high number of foreigners – may make the voters feel like it’s the foreigners that take away the much-needed jobs and thus vote for FN. In order to take into the account this possibility, I create an interaction variable (unemployment x number of foreigners) that would indicate the presence of the interaction effect between the two variables.

I will also control for the proportion of foreign-born citizens in the departments. The electorate in each of the departments in France consists of both French-born citizens and foreign-born “citizens by acquisition.” The population census conducted in 1999 shows that the distribution of foreign-born citizens is roughly the same as that of the immigrants. A correlation coefficient for the foreign population and the “French by acquisition” group is quite high (0.8245). This also makes sense intuitively since most foreigners probably do not move upon attainment of French citizenship. As the number of foreigners in a community grows, so does
the number of the foreign-born citizens in that community. It makes intuitive sense that these former foreigners are not likely to vote for the National Front, the party that supports repatriation of foreigners and use of “national preference” policy to favor ethnic French in areas such as housing. This intuition is supported through the polls. In the CSA survey conducted on April 21, 2002, French citizens who have parents or grandparents of North African or Turkish origin were asked for whom they voted in the first round of the presidential election. Only 7 percent of the respondents voted for Le Pen as opposed to 18 percent of the “native” French and 17 percent altogether. (CSA Survey 2002).

Since foreign-born citizens may tend to be more left-wing than the French-born citizens, not controlling for them may skew the results. Looking at the general vote in the department without discriminating between native and foreign-born citizens can potentially conceal interesting trends since the more pro-immigrant attitude of the foreign-born citizens may “cancel out” the more xenophobic attitude of the native French in the departments where foreign-born citizens constitute a substantial part of the electorate. Consequently, I will separate the electorate into native-born and foreign-born citizens and control for the latter category.

Data and Method

I test my hypotheses using the distribution of foreigners provided by the census of the French population, conducted in 1999 by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE). While the number of foreigners in France has changed over the 1990s, the ratio of foreigners from one department to the next
tends to stay the same, so this census should be sufficient enough to accurately
gauge the distribution of foreigners across the departments in France. The 1999
census subdivides the populations of each of the departments into three categories –
French citizens by birth (i.e., native French), French citizens by acquisition (i.e.,
former foreigners), and foreigners. It further subdivides the “foreigner” category by
the country of origin. In my analysis, I will first use all foreigners and then a subset
of foreigners consisting of those of Turkish and North African origin.

I separate the foreigners in these groups for several reasons. First of all, the
foreigners of North African and Turkish origin account for the bulk of the increase
in foreigner populations in France in the 1990s. Their numbers increased 43 percent
during this time while the population of other immigrant groups increased by 3.4
percent (Hamilton 2002). This is one of the reasons why North African and Turkish
immigrants are considered to be a greater threat to the French national identity.

More importantly, immigrants from these origins are considered inassimilable by many native French, much more so than the immigrants from
European countries or from former French colonies in the Caribbean. This
perception is largely due to the religious differences. “Support for Islam, which
many people consider impossible to integrate into French civilization or at the very
least to be incapable of embracing a secular culture … is perceived … as a
challenge to the national tradition of integration” (Peignard 2001). It has been noted
that the populations of North African and Turkish origin are subject to more
xenophobia than other foreign groups (Martin 2000).
Not surprisingly, most of the National Front rhetoric is directed against the Muslim immigrants. This is illustrated in the CSA survey of French citizens with at least one foreign grandparent. They were asked for whom they voted in the first round of the presidential election. Only 7% of the respondents with at least one ancestor of the North African or Turkish descent voted for Le Pen as opposed to 15% of those with European origins (CSA Survey 2002). Thus, it seems that those coming from other European countries see the National Front as much less of a threat to themselves than those of the North African or Turkish origin. Accordingly, I expect to see a greater correlation between the vote for the National Front and the number of North African and Turkish foreigners in a department than between the distribution of all foreign groups and the vote for the National Front.

For the electoral data, I use the 1993 and 1997 legislative elections, and the 1995 and 2002 presidential elections (the first rounds). I combine the votes going to RPR and UDF (French Democratic Union) for all the election years since the political positions of these parties are very close and in some districts they even nominate candidates together. For the 1993 election, I combine the votes of the Socialist Party and Radical Party under the umbrella of Socialists. Radical Party put up its own candidates in only about a third of the departments and it has been allied with the Socialist Party in the 1990s. In addition, I add up the votes of Communist, Trotskyist, and other far left parties under the umbrella of Communists in order to see how immigration affects the whole of the far left.

I also control for levels of unemployment, which have been linked to French electoral results and especially to the successes of the National Front. I use the

To test my hypotheses I use the ordinary least-squares regression (OLS) and regress the immigrant data on the electoral data for each party separately. I have a regression equation for each of the political parties in question (Communist, Socialist, RPR, and the National Front). For example, the equation for the National Front looks as follows:

\[ \text{Vote}_{\text{National Front}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\% \text{ of all foreigners}) + \beta_2(\text{unemployment rate}) + \beta_3(\% \text{ of foreign-born citizens}) \]

As mentioned above, I will also run the regressions for only Turkish/Maghreb foreigners, with the equation being:

\[ \text{Vote}_{\text{National Front}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\% \text{ of Turkish and North African immigrants}) + \beta_2(\text{unemployment rate}) + \beta_3(\% \text{ of foreign-born citizens}) \]

I repeat these regressions for every election and every party.

**Results**

Initially, I use the percentage of all foreigners in France (including the ones from Maghreb and Turkey as well as other areas) as my independent variable. Regressing the vote share of RPR/UDF, Socialists, FN, and Communists on percentage of all foreigners \((p_{\text{foreign}})\), percentage of foreign-born citizens
(pforboci), and unemployment yields the following regression coefficients for pforeign:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
<th>National Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.16361</td>
<td>-1.02054***</td>
<td>0.5448</td>
<td>0.31225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>-0.16868</td>
<td>-0.65522***</td>
<td>0.4668*</td>
<td>0.35701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.26747</td>
<td>-1.25966***</td>
<td>0.51345*</td>
<td>0.47874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>-0.17618</td>
<td>-0.48642**</td>
<td>0.43641*</td>
<td>0.22619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
** = t > 3.0  
* = t > 2.0

Interestingly enough, FN does not seem to gain many votes when the number of foreigners in a department increases. The coefficients for all years, although positive, are insignificant: t never rises above 2.0 and in 2002 election, t is as low as 0.95. The established right makes some vote gains. With all coefficients except that for 1993 being positive and significant, an average gain of RPR/UDF when the number of foreigners increases by 10% is 4.5%. The big losers in this scenario are the Socialists, especially in the parliamentary elections. A 10% increase in foreigners led to a 10% decrease in Socialist vote share in 1993 and a 13% decrease in 1997. For presidential elections, the drop-off is much less (6.5% in 1995 and 4.9% in 2002). It may be that larger, national issues take precedence in presidential elections, making the percentage of foreigners in one’s department less relevant, while in parliamentary elections these local issues come to the fore. In any case,
further study seems to be necessary in order to uncover the reasons for the parliamentary/presidential election difference.

The coefficients for unemployment in the same regression equation (vote share = A1*pforeign + A2*pforboci + A3*unemployment) are as follows:

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
<th>National Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.85225***</td>
<td>0.07535</td>
<td>-1.48926***</td>
<td>0.56166**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.44892**</td>
<td>-0.00187</td>
<td>-0.85675***</td>
<td>0.40952*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.90911***</td>
<td>-0.26802</td>
<td>-1.14062***</td>
<td>0.49952*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.29487</td>
<td>-0.00144</td>
<td>-1.01819***</td>
<td>0.72475*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
** = t > 3.0  
* = t > 2.0

The coefficients for FN are comparatively small, but all are positive and significant, meaning that an increase in unemployment would lead to a better performance for FN, as was to be expected. A similar thing happens to the Communist vote – in all elections except 2002, increased unemployment leads to a substantial increase in Communist vote: In 1997 election, a 10% increase in unemployment led to an almost 10% gain for Communists. Once again, the type of the election (presidential vs. parliamentary) seems to make a difference. In parliamentary elections, the coefficients are at least twice as large as they are for
presidential elections. With Socialist coefficients insignificant, RPR/UDF is the victim of high unemployment in all elections, losing up to 15% of votes for a 10% increase in unemployment.

Thus, unemployment and foreigner presence seem to have opposing effects on the electoral results. While a large proportion of foreigners cripples Socialists and results in gains by the established right, high unemployment hurts RPR/UDF and helps FN and Communists. This seems to counter the idea that the presence of foreigners and high unemployment reinforce each other. In order to further explore the relationship between these two independent variables, let us look at the same regression equation, but with an interaction term (pforeign*unemployment) included. The coefficients for pforeign, interaction term, and unemployment for the National Front come out as follows:

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>pforeign</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1.18414*</td>
<td>-0.07526</td>
<td>1.06368**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1.58389*</td>
<td>-0.09778*</td>
<td>1.0806*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1.55676*</td>
<td>-0.08637</td>
<td>1.09433*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2.383**</td>
<td>-0.21416**</td>
<td>2.30846***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
** = t > 3.0  
* = t > 2.0

Oddly enough, the interaction term bears a negative sign, meaning that the combination of foreigners and unemployment actually decreases FN’s vote share.
At the same time, the coefficients for $p_{foreign}$ are positive, significant, and high, especially compared to the small and insignificant coefficients when the interaction term was not included (see Table 1). What could lead to this surprising outcome?

To begin with, these results suggest that the effect of foreigners on FN’s electoral outcomes is not reinforced by local (departmental) unemployment. One could have imagined that it was not foreigners alone that led to a greater FN success, but a combination of foreigners and unemployment. When a department suffers from high unemployment rates AND has high foreigner percentage – it could be argued – then FN’s vote share goes up. Thus a greater presence of foreigners may be a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for FN’s gain. Both foreigners and unemployment would be necessary (and sufficient). This scenario would lead to a positive coefficient for an interaction term. However, we get quite the opposite. Foreigners by themselves (represented by the coefficient for $p_{foreign}$) have a significant direct effect on FN vote, while the interaction term has a negative, albeit smaller, effect. What does this result imply?

In the regression done without the interaction term, $p_{foreign}$ coefficient included the effects of foreigners due to their relationship to employment as well as their stand-alone effect. Together, these two effects made $p_{foreign}$ small and insignificant. However, when the two effects are separated through the interaction term, a different picture arises. $P_{foreign}$ now has a large positive coefficient and interaction has a smaller negative one. Why? Let us imagine that the foreigners make people vote for FN regardless of unemployment and unemployment makes people vote for FN regardless of the presence of foreigners. This supposition is
supported by the coefficients for unemployment, which are all large and significant. When unemployment is very high, more people vote for FN regardless the presence of foreigners. Thus, the overall effect of foreigners goes down when the interaction term is included.

Since the coefficients for the interaction term are much smaller than the ones for \( p_{\text{foreign}} \), this negative effect of interaction is not very profound, becoming significant only at high levels of unemployment. But still, the fact that the effect of foreigners on FN vote is higher when unemployment is zero than when unemployment is high is quite surprising. This means that when unemployment is high, foreigners matter less, not more, casting doubt on the argument that the effect of foreigners is connected to their perceived relation to the job market. Of course, it is still possible that the French electorate connects foreigners to unemployment on a national level and not in response to the changes in local, departmental employment. However, these results do suggest that foreigners affect FN’s success in ways independent of the labor market.

The addition of the interaction term also affects the coefficients for other political parties:
Table 4

Pforeign coefficients:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>-0.16985</td>
<td>-0.65098</td>
<td>-0.36332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>-0.38672</td>
<td>-0.81392</td>
<td>-0.38325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>-0.60275</td>
<td>-0.96947</td>
<td>0.01546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>-0.80254*</td>
<td>-1.35987**</td>
<td>-0.22059</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
** = t > 3.0  
* = t > 2.0

Interaction coefficients:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.2878</td>
<td>-0.0319</td>
<td>0.07837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.01738</td>
<td>0.01265</td>
<td>0.06775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.06972</td>
<td>-0.02325</td>
<td>0.0399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.06219*</td>
<td>0.08673*</td>
<td>0.06524</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
** = t > 3.0  
* = t > 2.0

The pforeign and interaction coefficients for Socialist party become insignificant, except for the 2002 election in which pforeign has a large negative coefficient and interaction – a small positive one. Once again, the different signs for pforeign and interaction suggest that the foreigners play a role in the electoral politics of France that is independent of unemployment’s role. In fact, for all the parties, pforeign and interaction have different signs.
All of the above results were computed with foreigners defined as all foreigners permanently living in France – no matter what country they came from. I also ran the regressions with foreigners of only Maghreb and Turkish origin, since these are the groups that are most often considered to be the “problem,” as discussed earlier. The correlation between all foreigners (pforeign) and those of Maghreb/Turkish descent (pforeign_magh) across the French departments is quite high (0.9181), but the results changed substantially when pforeign_magh was used instead of pforeign.

The following are the pforeign_magh regression coefficients for vote share = A1*pforeign_magh + A2*pforboci + A3*unemployment + C:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
<th>National Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.00871</td>
<td>-1.59773***</td>
<td>0.76585</td>
<td>0.82318**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>-0.39364*</td>
<td>-1.26498***</td>
<td>0.42989</td>
<td>1.22873***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.26747</td>
<td>-2.21524***</td>
<td>0.53793</td>
<td>1.51285***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>-0.5167*</td>
<td>-1.20483***</td>
<td>0.332</td>
<td>1.38953**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
**  = t > 3.0  
*   = t > 2.0

The differences between this table and Table 1 where all foreigners were used are quite profound. First of all, the gains of established right when number of immigrants increase become insignificant for all years used. This implies that
whatever gains RPR/UDF experienced in Table 1 are due to non-Maghreb/Turkish foreigners, but those from other parts of the world. Moreover, the losses of Socialists are almost doubled with $p_{foreign\_magh}$ as an independent variable, suggesting that it is precisely this group of foreigners that causes the Socialist vote drop-off. As expected, the coefficients for FN are high and significant (as opposed to low and insignificant coefficients when all foreigners were used). Since FN’s rhetoric specifically targets Muslim foreigners as inassimilable and “un-French,” this result seems logically sound. It is precisely when this “un-French” group of people is on the rise that the potential FN voters feel threatened enough by them to go ahead and vote for the National Front.

The coefficients for unemployment, on the other hand, remain largely the same no matter which foreigner variable is used (compare Table 2 and Table 6):

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
<th>National Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.80021**</td>
<td>0.38492</td>
<td>-1.65533***</td>
<td>0.47021*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.49219***</td>
<td>0.16791</td>
<td>-0.98058***</td>
<td>0.32047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.83395***</td>
<td>0.04744</td>
<td>-1.27896***</td>
<td>0.39757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.3588*</td>
<td>0.17213</td>
<td>-1.16402***</td>
<td>0.63308*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0  
** = t > 3.0  
* = t > 2.0

This makes intuitive sense, since the way of defining foreigners should not have an effect on the effect of unemployment, considering the previous finding on the
relative independence of the effects of foreigners and unemployment on the
electoral outcomes.

I repeat the regression equation with interaction term, but using
pforeign_magh instead of pforeign as the independent variable and as a factor
within the interaction:

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
<th>National Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>-1.09976</td>
<td>-1.15218</td>
<td>-0.1579</td>
<td>2.40984*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>-1.22899</td>
<td>-1.5253</td>
<td>-1.62391</td>
<td>4.3782**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>-2.30544</td>
<td>-1.54298</td>
<td>-0.74973</td>
<td>4.59814**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>-1.8351*</td>
<td>-2.89719***</td>
<td>-1.30087</td>
<td>6.03316***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interaction coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Communist Party</th>
<th>Socialist Party</th>
<th>RPR/UDF</th>
<th>National Front</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>-0.03778</td>
<td>0.07834</td>
<td>-0.13455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.06542</td>
<td>0.02039</td>
<td>0.16084</td>
<td>-0.24664*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.19464</td>
<td>-0.05298</td>
<td>0.10147</td>
<td>-0.24314*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.13411*</td>
<td>0.17214*</td>
<td>0.16609</td>
<td>-0.47234***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** = t > 4.0
**  = t > 3.0
*   = t > 2.0
The regression coefficients for \textit{pforeign\_magh} largely mirror those for \textit{pforeign}: RPR/UDF coefficients remain insignificant, as do Socialist and Communist coefficients except for the 2002 election. The coefficients for FN are all positive and significant. The size of the significant coefficients, however, changes quite a bit depending on whether \textit{pforeign\_magh} or \textit{pforeign} is used. The \textit{pforeign\_magh} coefficients for FN increase with every election and are at least double (and for 2002 election triple) the coefficients for \textit{pforeign}. The coefficients for the interaction term, while larger with \textit{pforeign\_magh} than with \textit{pforeign} (compare Table 3 and Table 7) are not large enough to make up for the huge \textit{pforeign\_magh} coefficients. To take the 2002 election as an example, a 10\% increase in the number of all foreigners (with unemployment being the national average of 9\%) would lead to $23.83 + (-0.214 \times 10 \times 9) = 4.57$ percent increase in FN’s vote share. A 10\% increase in the number of Turkish and Maghreb foreigners, on the other hand, would lead to $60.33 + (-0.472 \times 10 \times 9) = 17.85$ percent increase. This once again shows the importance of foreigners for FN’s success and growth of this importance in the recent years.

\textbf{The Big Picture and Conclusions}

As one can see, the presence of foreigners does have a positive and significant effect on the electoral chances of the National Front. When all foreigners are used and interaction term is put in, the coefficients are positive and increasing with each subsequent election (from 1.18 in 1993 to 2.38 in 2002) indicating that the influence of foreigners increased in the recent years. Some of
this effect is mitigated by the negative coefficients of the interaction term, so the overall effect of the presence of all foreigners in a particular department is not very large (as shown above). When we focus only on the foreigners of Turkish and Maghreb descent, the effect of foreigners is more dramatic. When the interaction term is included, the coefficients for foreigners are very large and once again increasing with each subsequent election (from 2.4 in 1993 to a whooping 6.0 in 2002). Once again, the negative coefficients for interaction term make up for some of this, but they are not large enough to completely mitigate the effect of \( p_{foreign\_magh} \) coefficients. Thus, a 10% increase in Turkish/Maghreb foreigners with the average level of unemployment leads to a 17% increase in FN vote share (as calculated above).

So where are these extra FN votes coming from? Who is losing in the districts where the foreigners represent a substantial proportion of the population? As we have seen in the discussion of abstention rates, the increase in FN vote share cannot be fully contributed to the former non-voters. Based on the previously conducted surveys and studies, my hypothesis was that the loser is the established right (RPR/UDF). However, the data does not support this conclusion. RPR/UDF coefficients are insignificant for most of the regressions. They only become significant when all foreigners are used and no interaction term is put in. Even in that case, the coefficients are positive, meaning that the presence of foreigners actually helps RPR/UDF.

Interestingly enough, the data suggests that it’s the parties of the left, most notably the Socialist Party, that lose when the number of foreigners in a given
department increases. Even when we look at all foreigners and do not include an
interaction term, the coefficients for the Socialist Party are quite large, especially
for parliamentary election. When Turkish/Maghreb foreigners are used (without
interaction term), the coefficients become even larger and quite close to the FN
coefficients, except with the opposite sign. This seems to suggest some kind of
trade-off between the Socialist and the National Front votes as the number of
foreigners increases. However, when interaction term is used, the pforeign_magh
coefficients for the Socialist Party become insignificant except for 2002 election
when the coefficient is negative and quite large (-2.89). A similar thing happens to
the Communist Party’s coefficients – they are all insignificant except for the 2002
election when they are negative and quite large. This suggests that in the 2002
election in particular, the parties of the left lost some of their votes to the right-wing
parties in the departments with a large percentage of foreigners.

Of course, it is impossible to draw any substantive conclusions as to the shift
of the votes from one party to another. It may be that the erstwhile Socialist voters
in departments with many foreigners were more likely to abstain and the former
non-voters were more likely to vote for the National Front. It is also possible that in
these departments some Socialist voters switched to RPR/UDF and some RPR/UDF
voters switched to the National Front. Whatever the mechanism, this study suggests
that the losers in the departments with large foreigner population are the parties of
the Left and the winner is the National Front.

Another surprising outcome is that the effect of foreigners on the vote share
of the National Front seems to be independent of unemployment concerns. A
presence of Turkish/Maghreb foreigners has a strong positive effect on FN’s electoral performance that a high level of unemployment actually *diminishes*. It seems that unemployment and foreigners, while both important concerns that lead to a greater FN vote share, act independently of each other. This raises a host of other questions as to the reasons for the influence of foreigners on FN’s performance. If it is not connected to departmental unemployment, why is it that a substantial presence of foreigners makes more people vote for the National Front? Is it due to fear that these foreigners will bring about unemployment in the near future? Does it have to do with national-level unemployment statistics? Is it independent of unemployment at all, having to do with the issues of crime, housing, or old-fashioned bigotry? None of these questions can be answered here, but all of them merit a close scrutiny and research.
Bibliography


