

WHAT FUTURE FOR FRENCH POLITICS IN AN AGE OF TERRORISM?
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Introduction: the return of fear

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Scholars have, for some time now, warned of an impending crisis of French politics. Fragmentation, ideological reorientation and widespread voter dissatisfaction have altered the boundaries of the political. An ever greater number of people seem to be unhappy with the present political 'system'—whatever they take that to mean—and many of these have turned to protest parties to express their disillusionment. Since early 2014, these problems have been stretched to breaking point by the wave of terrorism that has swept across the country. The result has been the re-emergence of deep fears amongst the electorate—a fear of death, a fear of the outside world and a fear that France may be on the verge of collapse.

These fears have a long history. Since the revolutionary tumult of the nineteenth century, the question of social cohesion and social control has played a prominent role in French politics. For the vast majority of French people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the overwhelming political priority was to avoid another revolution. The stabilisation of the Fifth Republic and the end of the colonial conflict in the 1970s evacuated this issue for a while, but it was only temporary: we now find ourselves in a position where the fear of collapse is, once again, a vital electoral concern. With the spectre of terrorism looming over French society, many people are asking themselves what kind of politics they want and how they want to be governed.

Nevertheless, the urgency of France's plight does not preclude cool-headed and historically informed analysis. On the contrary, it has become more important than ever to see how fast-moving current events interact with longer historical trends. That is why the three essays that follow all bring together very recent current events with long-term processes. This is especially true in my essay, where I focus on how 'republicanism'—one of the most ubiquitous shibboleths of French political language—has been manipulated, reshaped and deployed in a shifting political landscape. By contrast, Michael C. Behrent tries to figure out what remains of the great political framework of modern politics: the left–right divide. And, finally, Camille Robcis explores the relationship between the recent migrant crisis and the changing shape of neo-liberalism in France.

We do not seek in our essays to have the final word on our subjects. Given the speed at which events develop, such a claim would be foolhardy at best. But we do offer something of an analysis of the shape of French politics, its pathologies, its blindspots and its priorities. We also suggest fruitful avenues for future research—whether that is into the dynamics of party-political formation or the dissemination of neo-liberal ideas. Most of all, we want to show that a close examination of French politics can yield important insights into the direction of European politics in the years to come.

From the *banlieue* to the burkini: the many lives of French republicanism

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It has become a truism now to say that history weighs heavily on political debate in France. From the endless, unfinished battles over Vichy to more recent struggles over the colonial past, the legacy of the past continues to find its way into even the most banal political exchange. Some might find this insistently historicist mindset a welcome change to the amnesia and soundbite politics of the Internet age; it certainly has the benefit of adding context to every political utterance. But it can also have a stultifying effect. It is not necessarily productive to see every social disturbance involving young ethnic minorities as a replay of the Algerian War, nor is it helpful for political actors to claim the mantle of some distant eighteenth-century political ideal like 'Enlightenment'. In fact, this facile use of history often serves to close down discussion and distract attention from present-day concerns and genealogies.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the interminable debates surrounding the Republic and republicanism. Even for those—like me—who believe that republicanism has become one of the key structuring languages of contemporary French politics, it is hard to believe just how deeply it has penetrated the political space.¹ In the past 10 years, both the Front national (FN) and the far left have sought to reclaim and repackage republicanism, a tradition to which they were both resolutely hostile only a few years before. This has happened in conjunction with a growing reliance on the language of republicanism amongst France's mainstream centre parties, to such an extent that the main centre-right party was renamed Les Républicains in 2015.

Inevitably, this bewildering cacophony of republicanisms has been accompanied by an onslaught of historical polemic. Republicanism's deep roots in French history make it a perfect candidate for manipulation and there have been no shortage of attempts to give today's ideas a historical glow. Since the 1990s, we have heard left-wing intellectuals like Régis Debray celebrate republicanism as a way of bringing back the revolutionary spirit of 1789, and groups like the Indigènes de la République denounce republicanism on the grounds that it is a direct continuation of France's colonial practices. Above all, in recent years, there have been heated disagreements about the 1905 separation of Church and State, which provides the basis for France's strong form of secularism (*laïcité*). Whether or not any of these references to history are accurate is beside the point; what matters most is that republicanism be fitted into a vast historical canvas stretching back to the French Revolution and beyond.

The problem is that, while some of these historical references are helpful to understand present-day republicanism, most are not. For example, the ideological reconfigurations of the 1970s are much more important in explaining the re-emergence of republicanism in recent decades than the French Revolution of 1789. Likewise, the struggle to define *laïcité* in the 1990s has more to do with ethnic minority identity politics and the place of religion in late twentieth-century France than it does with the 1905 law. And, however significant the independence of Algeria in 1962, it is of surprisingly little relevance to the emergence of republican ideas of ‘integration’ in the 1990s and 2000s. In short, the only way to write about present-day republicanism is to break out of a historical teleology in which the only history that matters is the history of republicanism itself.²

But what does this mean in practice? And how can it help us make sense of today’s complex, fractured political scene? I want here to offer a few brief insights into the shape and function of present-day republicanism—or, as I call it, ‘neo-republicanism’. This means looking at where it came from and how it is being deployed in today’s political environment. It also means deliberately ignoring the supposedly ‘canonical’ historical reference points that form the bedrock of neo-republicanism. Above all, it means highlighting the uniqueness of neo-republicanism and exploring its power as a flexible and seductive language of politics. For, despite the fact that French republicanism has always aspired to become a universal and trans-historical value system, its very plasticity makes it highly dependent on specific contexts. At a time when everyone seems to be talking about the Republic, therefore, it is vital to understand what these contexts are.

Ideological reorientations and the roots of neo-republicanism

The first key point to emphasise is that neo-republicanism is a product of the ideological reorientations of the 1970s and 1980s.³ When politicians and intellectuals in France today refer to the Republic, they may be talking about Jules Ferry, Marianne or the Dreyfus Affair, but they are actually developing an idea that emerged from the explosion of the Marxist consensus on the left and the atrophy of Gaullist ideas on the right in the 1970s. In this context of ideological fragmentation, a growing number of historians, intellectuals and political actors began to turn to republicanism as a model of political action and community that could replace the lost ideals of Gaullist grandeur and revolutionary Communism. Prominent figures like Pierre Nora, Alain Finkielkraut and Jean-Pierre Chevènement effected surprising transitions from youthful Marxism to middle-aged republicanism, while erstwhile Gaullists such as Jacques Chirac and Philippe Séguin found that republicanism gave them a way of talking about the French nation without sounding hopelessly out of date.

Initially, in the 1980s, the neo-republican turn was most clearly visible amongst the moderate socialist left. As François Mitterrand’s socialist experiment collapsed in 1982–1983—and as the Parti socialiste (PS) faced an unexpected challenge from the far-right FN—young socialists began to lean more and more heavily on a progressive republicanism in an effort to boost their governing credentials. With the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the bicentenary of the French Revolution and the first iteration of the so-called ‘headscarf affair’—all of which took place in 1989—the conversion of the moderate left to republicanism was almost complete. The Republic was an attractive, ready-made alternative to a now-discredited socialist ideology, and it provided a way for disaffected socialists to rally to strong political values. Not everyone agreed with the neo-republican wave that swept across the

party, of course; defenders of *le droit à la différence* in the 1980s and advocates for male–female electoral *parité* in the 1990s bemoaned the increasing reliance of the French left on a neo-republican framework. But they were gradually outnumbered so that, by the early 2000s, the moderate left had become firmly wedded to a neo-republican framework.

What was less clear at the time was the extent to which the right, too, had begun to domesticate republicanism. After a period in the 1980s when the centre right had flirted with neo-liberal ideas of free markets and privatisation, the 1990s saw a renewed emphasis on statism and national sovereignty, combined with a growing interest in republicanism. In advance of the right's return to power in 1995, Jacques Chirac and his party used the idea of *la fracture sociale* to describe the present state of France, drawing on classic neo-republican themes such as the fear of national disunity and the need for social integration. Once in power, this trend continued. The threat of Algerian terrorism in the 1990s and the recurrent debates over the Islamic headscarf provided another point of entry for the right, which was able to use neo-republicanism as a bulwark against the alleged 'Islamisation' of France. This was particularly noticeable in discussions surrounding *laïcité*. Once a value firmly associated with the French left, by the early 2000s *laïcité* had become a rhetorical tool for the right to denounce all public expressions of the Muslim faith, from the building of mosques to the wearing of the burqa and burkini. It is hardly a coincidence that the 2004 law banning religious symbols in public schools and the 2010 ban on the covering of the face in public spaces should have coincided with periods of centre-right rule.

Even more surprising than this trend on the centre right was the remarkable embrace of neo-republicanism by the far right. This began in earnest with the nomination of Marine Le Pen as the leader of the FN in 2010. After more than two centuries during which the far right had poured scorn on republican language and symbolism, suddenly Marine Le Pen's speeches were admonishing the French state for failing to uphold France's *valeurs républicaines* and urging it to use a more pro-active *laïcité* to combat everything from Islamic terrorism to the distribution of halal meat. The irony of this strategy was not lost on horrified socialist politicians, who realised that the neo-republicanism that had been developed in the 1980s in order to combat the rise of the FN was now being used by the FN to attack them.

To a degree, Marine Le Pen's accommodation to neo-republicanism has served her well and her party has continued to progress in national, regional and European elections. But the French electorate have not been entirely fooled; they recognise the difference between the neo-republicanism of the centre left and the far right. Thus, when the PS desperately called for a 'republican front' to block the FN in the 2015 regional elections, it ensured that the FN was unable to win a majority in any region. And polls consistently show that, despite its newfound neo-republican sheen, few believe that the FN can be a credible party of government. Nevertheless, the widespread use of neo-republican language, ideas and symbols by centre-right and far-right politicians is more than just a cheap electoral strategy. It suggests a potentially new form of republicanism altogether.

Where the neo-republicanism that emerged from the ideological reorientations of the 1970s and 1980s was dominated by themes dear to the French left—such as anti-clerical secularism, revolutionary passion and the French school—it is quite possible that the republicanism of the future will be dominated by themes that sit more comfortably with the right—such as anti-Muslim secularism, security, and the morality of the public space. Already, this shift was visible in the public controversy over the so-called 'burkini bans' enacted by a cluster of centre-right and far-right mayors on the Côte-d'Azur in the summer of 2016.

These debates mixed a language of neo-republican *laïcité*, with concerns over ‘public order’, ‘security’ and morality. In the specific local context of southeastern France, which has long been a bastion of far-right politics, such bans were widely accepted by the local electorate and could only be abrogated by an appeal to France’s highest legal authority, the Conseil d’État.

Another consequence of a more obviously right-wing form of neo-republicanism is the further disintegration of a centre-left consensus on the nation and national identity. France was unique amongst Western European countries in the 1980s and 1990s in rejecting forms of multicultural pluralism that seemed to fit with the dominant neo-liberal, democratic and post-Communist paradigm. It was especially unique in that this rejection was led, until 1995, by a centre-left leader and a series of centre-left governments. Since then, however, many other Western European countries have begun to question the value of multiculturalism—often through very public debates about Islam, terrorism or citizenship tests. The result has been a Europe-wide hardening in legislative practice that no longer makes neo-republicanism appear so unusual. If, as seems to be the case, neo-republicanism becomes an ideology of the French right, it will soon become indistinguishable from straightforward nationalist ideologies that can be found in countries such as the UK or Germany. Such a shift is bound to benefit the right more than the left, not least because the latter has relied so heavily on neo-republicanism as a bulwark against the far right.

But it is not just the political ecumenism of neo-republicanism that makes it unique; there has been another crucial transformation in the past four decades that has defined its shape, namely the rise of postcolonial identity politics. This is not as self-evident as it sounds. A good deal of scholarly and popular literature on contemporary France makes the claim that the current ‘problems’, particularly those associated with *laïcité* and national integration, are a replay or echo of the colonial past.⁴ In this way, urban unrest in the *banlieues* has become an extension of the Algerian War and demands for ethnic minorities to ‘integrate’ have been cast as a repackaged form of colonial ‘assimilationist’ ideology. Unfortunately, in the same way that references to 1789 and the Dreyfus Affair have obscured the more recent roots of neo-republicanism, an insistence on remaking contemporary France in the image of the colonial past has obscured what is unusual about today’s context.

The key point here is that France, like many Western European countries, has now become a land of postcolonial identity politics. In other words, the overwhelming majority of postcolonial activism in France—from anti-racism protests to local struggles over the placement of statues and memorials—focuses on group identity and memory. The origins of this development do not lie in the colonial period, but instead in the vast expansion of civil society mobilisation in the 1960s and 1970s. In the case of postcolonial minority groups, it was the *pieds-noirs* who first pioneered explicitly identity-based activism in their bitter battle for compensation that began in the early 1970s. This was followed by the emergence of a number of parallel organisations on the immigrant far left.⁵ As public debate over the colonial past became increasingly prominent over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, a growing number of identity-based organisations found a place in the complex tapestry of French politics. This culminated in 2005 with the creation of organisations like the Conseil représentatif des associations noires and the Indigènes de la République amidst a nationwide polemic surrounding a law that required French schools to teach the ‘positive’ aspects of French colonisation.

The cumulative impact of these developments has been to raise the profile of issues relating to the colonial past. Slavery, the Algerian War, the ‘plight’ of French settlers, colonial

violence, France's 'responsibility' for its colonial past... all of these questions are now part of public debate. But they are also an integral part of neo-republicanism. As we have seen, the emergence of neo-republicanism coincided with a growing interest in postcolonial questions and, given the historic associations between French republicanism and France's civilising mission, it was inevitable that the two should become inextricably linked. Just as colonised peoples used mid-twentieth-century French republican rhetoric to demand greater independence from French tutelage, so today's disenfranchised minorities within metropolitan France are using neo-republicanism as a tool with which to attack the French state. This does not mean that France is still a colonial state, or that it treats its ethnic minorities in the same way as it treated 'indigenous' peoples during the colonial period. Rather, what is happening today is a battle over ownership of the colonial past that is framed within the discursive world of neo-republicanism.

The growing enthusiasm with which the right has embraced neo-republicanism has only served to harden the debate. This is because, in recent decades, the right has been much more comfortable with discussions of 'identity' than the left—witness, for example, the creation by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007 of a Ministère de l'immigration, de l'intégration, de l'identité nationale et du Codéveloppement and the subsequent 'grand débat sur l'identité nationale'. Even though the ministry itself was disbanded shortly afterwards in 2010, the episode confirmed that 'national identity' would be a major electoral tool for the right (and the far right). And so it has proved to be, with right-wing politicians at local and national levels increasingly claiming that 'threats' to French national identity are simultaneously 'threats' to French republicanism. Predictably, the response has been equally pointed on the part of ethnic minority and immigrant organisations, most of whom have roundly condemned the insufficiently 'decolonised' Republic or the creeping 'Islamophobia' of neo-republicanism. Indeed, the relatively soft and inclusive form of militancy of groups like SOS Racisme in the 1980s has given way today to the more strident and exclusive rhetoric of groups like the Indigènes de la République and the more recent Camp d'Été Décolonial.⁶ Or, to put it another way, as neo-republicanism has increasingly begun to resemble a form of identity politics, it has given rise to oppositional forces that also explicitly use the language of identity.

Amidst this growing battle of identities, the centre left has found itself completely disorientated. One of the reasons so many political actors on the centre left were drawn to neo-republicanism in the 1980s was precisely because it seemed to be a response to identity politics. Neo-republicanism promised to re-energise civic citizenship and forge national unity through a new political contract. But its main tenets—above all, *laïcité*—are now wielded more effectively by members of the renamed centre-right party Les Républicains than by any socialist politician. Even the prime minister Manuel Valls, who has long been a proponent of neo-republicanism, has found himself outflanked by his right-wing opponents. And the rest of the PS has struggled to develop a coherent response to the obvious manipulation by the right of neo-republican ideas in a context of global instability and terrorism.

What future for the Republic?

So what does this mean for the future of republicanism in France? Will the adoption of neo-republicanism by the right prove to be a step too far that will discredit republicanism entirely? If so, will we see a return to the period before 1960 when republicanism was largely absent from public debate in metropolitan France? Predictions for the future are notoriously

hazardous, but such a turnaround seems unlikely in the near future. This is largely because, unlike any previous incarnation of republicanism, neo-republicanism emerged in a context in the 1970s when the French Republic no longer faced an existential threat. It has therefore found a home, not simply amongst specific political elites, but also amongst the French electorate much more widely. This is why arguments that neo-republicanism has become a repressive ideology or form of ‘state communitarianism’ are so obviously inadequate (Balibar 2016). At the regional, local and municipal levels, political actors and voters of all stripes have been engaging with neo-republicanism for years. Sometimes this has involved compromise—for example, in the funding of places of worship—and sometimes this has meant radicalisation—as in the case of the ‘burkini bans.’⁷ In both cases, neo-republicanism was used as the benchmark by which political action was judged.

This being the case, I strongly suspect that neo-republicanism is here to stay, especially given that it provides a way for the French to talk about such pressing issues as social cohesion, immigration and national identity. At the same time, I would expect there to be a growing number of political groups who seek to break out of the neo-republican paradigm altogether. As France’s political, intellectual and business elites become ever more international, there is a good chance that neo-republicanism will appear increasingly parochial and ill-adapted to the complex realities of contemporary France. Already many of France’s economic elites have little interest in engaging with polemical social debates over the future of the French language or forms of Islamic dress. The question is, if neo-republicanism is not the framework within which debate is conducted in France, what is? The task of creating a similarly expansive and flexible language of politics seems to be well beyond the capabilities of any political elite in France. Which may well leave us with neo-republicanism, whether we like it or not.

Notes

1. This essay is an opportunity to both develop and question the arguments I made in Chabal (2015).
2. This echoes what Samuel Moyn (2012) has done for the history of human rights in *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. He too argues that contemporary human rights discourse has its origins in the ideological transformations of the 1970s.
3. I discuss this in more detail in Chabal (2016).
4. A good example of this analysis is Hussey (2014).
5. On *pied-noir* activism, see Eldridge (2016). On immigrant activism, the best account is Gordon (2012).
6. On the Indigènes de la République, see Bouteldja and Khiari (2012). More details about the Camp d’Été Décolonial can be found here: <https://ce-decolonial.org/>
7. This tension between compromise and radicalisation at the neighbourhood level is thoughtfully discussed in Epstein (2011).

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Twilight of the political? On the ideological disarray of French politics

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As historians know, it is to France that we owe the distinction between the 'left' and the 'right', the conceptual binary upon which modern politics is founded. So central has this language been to French history that Marcel Gauchet, the political philosopher, devoted an illuminating essay to it in a multivolume work on French collective memory: the left–right conflict, he suggested, is a 'site of memory'—a *lieu de mémoire*—in the national consciousness, a division that, perhaps less paradoxically than it would seem, serves as a fulcrum of national identity, a vocabulary through which the struggles that have marked French history have crystallised and become visible (Gauchet 1997).

Whether this long-inescapable distinction still has any purchase on reality remains, however, far from evident. While this 'lateralisation' of politics (as Gauchet calls it) has, throughout its history, engendered frequent dissatisfaction—witness the periodic calls for a 'Third Way'—it was not until the 1980s that it entered a period of sustained crisis. Since then, new forms of social cleavage brought about by globalisation have further tested the left–right binary's capacity to articulate the political realities of our time. In France, where 'left' and 'right' belong not merely to the abstract lexicon of scholars and political commentators, but are words charged with deep emotional resonance and markers of personal identity, the crisis of this terminology—and the political structures underpinning it—is particularly acute.

It would be futile to suggest that the terrorist attacks of 2015 and 2016 were caused by the disarray of French politics that is associated with the unravelling of the left–right distinction as the organising principle of political life. Yet it would be equally short-sighted to disregard the consequences of the confused state of French politics on the attacks' broader repercussions. The question is not merely how a people reacts to a major crisis at a moment when its politics are in flux, but whether it even has the means to formulate a response when the fundamental stakes of its politics are so tentative and amorphous.

Dépassement, droitisation or new cleavages?

The muddled state of French politics is evident in the fact that, among political commentators and even politicians, the contemporary relevance of the left–right distinction has been the subject of considerable debate. Some contend that the time has come to transcend these categories, which, they maintain, have become obstacles to political change. Last April, Emmanuel Macron, the controversial former economics minister, launched a new political

movement, *En Marche!*, with the slogan *ni droite, ni gauche* (neither right nor left). In a similar vein, some have fantasised about the possibility of an alliance, for the 2017 presidential election, between Alain Juppé, a prominent conservative, and Macron himself, who is nominally a socialist, in which the former would, upon winning the presidency, appoint the latter prime minister (see, for instance, Treppoz 2016).

As these cases suggest, however, this call for a *dépassement* of the left–right cleavage is really a plea for non-partisan or transpartisan liberalism: Juppé and Macron both believe that the French economy must be stimulated by market-friendly reforms, which requires confronting the entrenched *corporatismes* that inevitably stand in their way: civil servants, unions and France’s culture of protest. The very fact that sectors of the left and right could rally around such a programme is grist to the mill of an alternative account of contemporary politics which emphasises the phenomenon of *droitisation*: the entire political spectrum’s shift to the right. This argument has been touted by the new protest movements that stormed the political stage last spring, such as *Nuit Debout* and the anti-El Khomri law activists. They denounced the rightward turn of President François Hollande’s socialist government, as evidenced by its law-and-order posture and perceived accommodation of business interests. Intellectuals, too, have embraced this thesis. The anthropologist Emmanuel Todd has argued that the wave of support Hollande received in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks was rooted in conservative and culturally Catholic values masquerading as the defence of liberal rights, while philosopher Alain Badiou has maintained that the triumph of global capitalism has unleashed a ‘new fascism’ and laid bare France’s latent ‘Pétainisme’ (see Badiou 2007, 2016; Todd 2015).

A third line of analysis holds that the left–right division is not being surpassed so much as replaced by a new set of cleavages. Marine Le Pen, eager to dissociate her National Front from the ‘far right’ label, presents herself as the voice of those who are ‘anti-system’. Jean-Luc Mélenchon of the *Parti de Gauche*, who hopes to galvanise the ‘left of the left’ in 2017, champions the ‘people’ against the ruling ‘caste’, while Arnaud Montebourg, a socialist who has announced his intention to challenge Hollande, calls upon the ‘people’ to take on the ‘elites’. According to this rhetoric, the vertical axis of social rank, reflecting hierarchies of wealth and power, has replaced the horizontal axis of political opinion.

Political parties: the formlessness of the ‘political supply’

The philosopher Claude Lefort (1986, 281) has argued that the ‘political’ refers to the way in which social relations are ‘given form’.¹ Politics, in short, makes society legible. Yet, at present, there is a sense that what the French call *l’offre politique*—the ‘political supply’, i.e. the parties, candidates and platforms through which the electorate can express its political will—has fallen out of sync with the tensions lurking within French society. Parties and movements, which typically structure democratic disagreement, no longer seem to offer a discernable set of alternatives—to ‘give form’ to conflict, in Lefort’s sense. The lines that have generally made it possible to identify distinct political options have become ever more blurred, jeopardising politics’ capacity to render society legible.

Perhaps the most damning evidence of the incoherence of the existing ‘political supply’ is that current state of the French left, and particularly that of the Socialist Party. Though it is commonplace to cite the fall of the Berlin Wall as a moment when the socialist alternative lost its coherence globally, the turning point in France was 1983, when, after two years of

attempting a 'rupture with capitalism', Mitterrand yielded to the market's dictates. Lionel Jospin's premiership (1997–2002) transformed this incoherence into the party's *modus operandi*: while pushing an initiative based on longstanding socialist principles—the reduction of work time, through the 35-hour work week law—it simultaneously pursued policies steeped in economic liberalism, notably an aggressive policy of privatising state companies.

The fact that the socialists came close to choosing the head of the International Monetary Fund as their presidential candidate in 2012 is emblematic of the party's ideological flux. Yet the collapse of Dominique Strauss-Kahn's bid and the selection of Hollande as the party's standard-bearer did little to alter this basic orientation. After his promised 50% tax on wealth—one of his few recognisably leftist proposals—was invalidated by the Conseil Constitutionnel, he pursued policies that were—or aspired to be—business-friendly. Barely six months into his presidency, Hollande announced his intention to pursue a supply-side economic agenda aimed at encouraging French industrial productivity. The centrepiece of this programme was a series of measures benefiting companies known as the *Pacte national pour la croissance, la compétitivité et l'emploi*, which included, among other measures, a tax credit intended to stimulate corporate investment and hiring (the *crédit d'impôt pour la compétitivité et l'emploi*, or CICE).

The problem was that such measures cost Hollande support on the left but failed to secure any allegiance from the right. Even though the 11 January demonstration, in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, was a brief high-water mark of public support, the policies that Hollande and his prime minister Manuel Valls pursued in the wake of the 13 November attacks exacerbated the haemorrhaging of support on the left as well as the right. Their government's proposal of a constitutional amendment that would make it possible to strip French citizens convicted of terrorism of their citizenship—*la déchéance de la nationalité*—was a shameless attempt to pander to the far right. Shortly afterwards, legislation designed to reform the labour market, named after Labour Minister Myriam El Khomri, appeared to borrow from the free-market playbook of the French right. Even more striking than the government's lurch to the right was the near perfection with which it managed to alienate nearly every constituency it appeared to be courting. Thus Hollande failed to secure enough votes from either the right or the left in parliament to move his constitutional amendment forward. The El Khomri law, for its part, triggered extensive—and often violent—social unrest, spearheaded by the activist movement *Nuit Debout* and a newly radicalised CGT. Inevitable government concessions did little to pacify the protestors, but did succeed in alienating the business community. The political season came to a dismal conclusion for the government when, on repeated occasions, Valls managed to secure approval of the El Khomri law in a socialist-led National Assembly only by invoking article 49.3 of the constitution, which allows the government to issue laws by decree unless it is brought down by a no-confidence vote. The government faced the humiliating—and unprecedented—spectacle of a dissident faction of its own parliamentary majority presenting a motion calling for its dismissal.

That the socialist government has repeatedly strayed into territory that has long been the preserve of the right and even the far right can be explained by a number of factors. The Socialist Party's membership now consists of top civil servants and career politicians rather than the *militants* who still filled its ranks through the Mitterrand era. At the same time, the party's commitment to the European Union places serious limitations on its ability to pursue traditional Keynesian policies. Yet perhaps the most decisive factor in the socialists'

rightward drift has been their almost complete rupture with the working class. This was precisely the conclusion of a now notorious report written by the socialist think tank Terra Nova in 2011. The report argued that, not only had the ranks of the working class been decimated by deindustrialisation, but workers seemed no longer to be interested in voting for the left. In 2002, for instance, the percentage of workers voting for Jospin (13%) was less than that of the electorate as a whole (16%). Moreover, the left and workers no longer shared the same values. As an increasingly urban, middle-class socialist electorate embraced the *libéralisme culturel* of May '68, the working class evolved in the opposite direction, rejecting immigrants and welfare recipients while lamenting the 'loss of moral values and disorder of contemporary society' (Ferrand, Prudent, and Jeanbart 2011). Terra Nova's conclusion was that the socialists could win the election with a variegated coalition of well-educated voters, young people, racial minorities and women—conceding, in practice, working-class voters to the right. Yet, as Hollande's presidency has made painfully clear, the Socialist Party has, by cutting this sociological anchor, jettisoned one of the only forces capable of resisting its rightward drift on economic issues.

The right, too, has faced increasing challenges in defining its values and electorate. As René Rémond (1954) explained long ago, the French right has always been defined by its divisions. For much of the Fifth Republic, it has been split between Gaullists and a non-Gaullist pole consisting of a mixture of liberals and Christian democrats. But Gaullism is now dead, at least as an organised political force, which has left the main Gaullist party the UMP (recently rebaptised as Les Républicains, LR) almost completely free to rally to economic liberalism. Indeed, some of the most prominent figures in the party, such as Nicolas Sarkozy and Alain Juppé, seem to be engaged in a competition to determine who will commit the country to the severest free-market cure. The real dividing line on the right is between supporters and opponents of marrying economic liberalism with the right-wing identity politics associated with the Front national (FN). Certain currents within LR, such as La Droite populaire, have embraced this *identitarisme*, but the most vocal advocate of this position remains former president Nicolas Sarkozy, who is campaigning to be his party's candidate yet again next year. The tactical appeal of his gambit is that it could allow the mainstream right, whose electoral constituency consists primarily of older and professional voters, to tap into what the Terra Nova report called the 'no man's land' of French politics: the unaffiliated and politically up-for-grabs working-class electorate.

It is true that the right has not descended into the ideological muddle in which the socialists find themselves, but its coherence has nonetheless been undermined by two unresolved questions. First, how serious is its commitment to economic liberalism, not only in light of the relative weakness of that tradition in its history, but particularly given French leaders' poor record in successfully implementing such reforms once they actually come to power? Second, can the mainstream right carve out a political identity that is independent of the far right, or does its future, as Sarkozy believes, depend on living, vampire-like, off the lifeblood of xenophobic nationalism?

For decades, the rising popularity of the FN owed much to the fact that, in an increasingly confused ideological market, its programme at least offered a kind of rough logic, rooted in the idea of 'national preference'. Yet Marine Le Pen's dramatic break with her father, her attempt to reform the party through a process commonly known as *dédiabolisation*, and the likelihood that the party will, for the first time since 2002, be a serious contender in the upcoming presidential election, have scrambled the FN's ideological trademark at a

moment when it seems on the verge of a breakthrough. Back in the 1980s, when fighting the left was its *raison d'être*, the FN had paid lip service to free-market principles, but now it unequivocally defends a statist and protectionist economic agenda (Crépon 2012). It has specifically recruited former *chevènementistes* (i.e. left 'sovereignists'), the most prominent of whom is Florian Philippot, the party's second-in-command. It has adopted a distinctly critical discourse on globalisation and neoliberalism. And while Marine Le Pen has stated that she would rescind Hollande's same-sex marriage law, she has tried to disassociate the FN from the conservative and Catholic forces that were mobilised during the 'Mariage pour tous' protests in 2013. Consequently, not only has Le Pen's revamped FN triggered considerable internal discontent—of which her niece, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, has become the unofficial standard-bearer—but it has fuelled the quest for a 'new' nationalist right, lying somewhere between an FN perceived as too 'leftist' and the LR, who are deemed too centrist. The idea seems to be that such a political movement would bring together a motley crew of conservative Catholics, reactionary cultural critics like Eric Zemmour, and anti-statist liberals. Even if recent efforts to bring together a coalition of the *droite identitaire* have failed, it seems more and more likely that a new party will emerge to fill the space left by the FN's move towards the mainstream (Goar and Faye 2016).

Muddled politics and the terrorist crisis

The end result of these transformation is a rightward-leaning left, a centre right stretched between liberalism and nationalism, and a far right actively reclaiming the economic positions abandoned by the left. These trends have left the French political class singularly ill-prepared to handle the recent terrorist attacks. No mainstream political party has a solution that flows directly from the principles or programme it purports to defend, nor are they able to formulate an explanation of the problem of which 'terrorism' is the name—that is, to organise the kind of public pedagogy that might generate consensus around a particular policy.

The socialists have torn themselves apart in their effort to determine the respective priority to give to the principles of security, nationality, liberty and *laïcité*. During the debate over *la déchéance de la nationalité*, the government went to almost comical lengths to contend the law would apply to 'every' French citizen, rather than solely to dual nationals of immigrant origin—as if an awkward appeal to republican universalism might serve as a fig leaf for a distinctly particularistic conception of the nation. Meanwhile, many on the left expressed perplexity at the government's willingness to implement and prolong the *état d'urgence*, declared after the November attacks, and expressed astonishment over Valls' statement, concerning the attacks' perpetrators, that 'to explain jihadism is to seek to excuse it a bit'. During August's 'burkini' affair, Valls, adopting the language of *laïcité de combat*, defended the conservative mayors' contention that unrevealing bathing suits were politically provocative and threats to the public order, even as several of his ministers rejected the ban as an unwarranted restriction of individual liberty that could also fuel racism.

Because Valls and Hollande had already made the defence of the nation and security the cornerstones of their policy, the right has not so much proposed a distinct alternative to the socialists as it has recapitulated—albeit in more muted tones—the debate tearing apart the left. Former prime minister Alain Juppé, a leading contender for the LR primary, has tried to take the edge off the identity debate, embracing the vapid idea of *une identité heureuse*,

even as Sarkozy, his fiercest opponent in the battle to represent the party, has made the protection of French identity against the Islamist threat the centrepiece of his campaign.

One might well argue that such an ideologically fluid context affords the luxury of coherence to the FN alone. At some level, this is true: the confusion in both the socialists' and the right's internal debates boils down to their attempts to come to terms with the conception of national identity that the FN has managed to keep at the forefront of political debate. Yet Marine Le Pen's leadership is premised on the insight that her party must take visible steps towards the mainstream if it is to be a contender for political power. Thus, at the very moment when many in France seem primed to hear its message, the FN is careful to cast its programme in the acceptable language of universalism, avoiding the racist and exclusionary asperities that once peppered its discourse. In particular, as Emile Chabal notes in his essay, the FN has adopted the language of *laïcité* in an attempt to conflate the idea of religious neutrality with its own anti-Muslim conception of French identity.

The *déchéance* debate and Sarkozy's emphasis on identity do, of course, suggest that if there is one identifiable trend in French politics, it is the FN's uncanny ability to pull political conversation into its own discursive orbit. In this sense, the *droitisation* thesis is justified. Yet the way in which the FN's ideas (such as national preference and security) have been grafted, often awkwardly, onto other political traditions, and the fact that the FN, despite the growing appeal of its message, must constantly confront the lingering public perception that it is, as a political movement, dangerous and beyond the pale of respectability, has done more to blur the contours of French political cleavages than it has to push the entire spectrum to the right.

In his essay, Gauchet described the left–right distinction as the paradoxical heir to the notion of the royal body: in the democratic age, however, the corporeal metaphor symbolises not society's 'inescapable unity' but its 'constitutive division'. Situating political forces along a lateral spectrum is, Gauchet maintains, the 'incarnation of conflictuality' (Gauchet 1997, 2586). Yet what happens when division ceases to be constitutive, when conflict no longer finds adequate embodiment? The wave of terrorism that has struck France in the 18 months obviously raises any number of practical questions relating to security, law, foreign affairs and relations between the country's ethnic and religious communities. But it also calls attention to the slackening, in recent years, of the structuring principle of French political life. The resulting crisis—a failure of politics to represent the conflicts at play in society—risks making the quest for a response to France's current predicament all the more elusive.

Note

1. The French term used by Lefort is *mise en forme*. I confess to having downplayed Lefort's crucial distinction between 'politics' (*la politique*) and 'the political' (*le politique*).

Disclosure statement

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Debt, refugees and the failure of the European project in 2015

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In December 2015, as French newspapers and magazines prepared their annual ‘closing of the year’ issues, the expression *annus horribilis* came up more than once. The year 2015 had opened with the horrific attacks on the offices of *Charlie Hebdo* and the kosher supermarket that left 17 dead. The year was closing with the even deadlier massacres of the Stade de France, the Bataclan and the streets of Paris that killed 130 and wounded 350 more. As President François Hollande put it in his new year’s message to the nation, 2015 had been a year of ‘suffering and resistance’ and he was eager to ‘turn the page’. Terrorism, however, was not the only shock that France had experienced in 2015. As Hollande himself indicated in his speech, in addition to the ‘security state of emergency’ brought about by terrorism, France was facing an ‘economic and social state of emergency’.¹ Indeed, the economy dominated the headlines throughout 2015, beginning in January with the electoral victory of Syriza. The Greek left-wing party led by Alexis Tsipras had pledged to roll back austerity and renegotiate Greece’s colossal debt. By the summer, despite a referendum that largely confirmed the Greek population’s support of Syriza’s plan, Tsipras was forced to accept the new and harsher austerity measures imposed by the ‘troika’—the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank—as the condition for a third bailout. After the six-month stand-off between Greece and its creditors, two things were clear: first, that neo-liberalism had become the dominant policy of the European Union, even for democratically elected governments who chose otherwise; second, that the Greek crisis was shaking the economic and political core of all the Eurozone governments, including France.²

Social questions, too, were at the forefront of current events throughout the year. These came in two forms. First, there was the classic problem of employer and employee relations. French unions and employers’ associations failed to reach an agreement on ‘social dialogue’, and various segments of society—from health care professionals to national radio employees—took to the streets to protest budgetary restrictions and layoffs, and defend workers’ rights.³ But Hollande’s reference to the ‘social state of emergency’ did not simply pertain to labour relations. It also pointed to the massive influx of migrants and asylum seekers—mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and sub-Saharan Africa—that entered the Schengen zone illegally.

According to the border agency Frontex, these amounted to over one million in 2015.⁴ During the month of April alone, 1200 refugees drowned in the Mediterranean, 3700 over the whole year (see Vaudano and Les Décodeurs 2015). For many, the humanitarian catastrophe was brought into focus with the publication of the picture of a three-year-old Syrian boy, Aylan Kurdi, washed up dead on a Turkish beach. The image, which went viral almost instantly, gave a human face to the tragic plight of refugees.

As if the twin economic and social states of emergency were not enough, Hollande faced a third pressing problem: the political crisis resulting from the success of the Front national (FN) in the regional elections of December 2015. Not only did Marine Le Pen's party finish first with 28% of the votes, but with more than 40% of ballots in the north and southeast regions of the country, it managed to score some of its highest numbers since its creation in 1972. With a campaign premised on the sealing of borders, the deportation of immigrants and the rejection of the European Union for the sake of French sovereignty, the FN's spectacular rise was intimately related to the economic and social circumstances of 2015.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to think about these overlapping crises—debt, the refugee question and xenophobic populism—not as separate events, but as multiple iterations of the same problem. The economic policies embraced by Hollande's administration and especially by his prime minister Manuel Valls must be understood alongside its reticence on immigration. The 'denationalisation of economic space' and the concomitant 'renationalisation of political discourse' did not, of course, begin in 2015 (Sassen 2015, 63–64). As Miriam Ticktin has shown, pro-immigrant groups throughout the 1990s were already well aware of the contradictions between global capital and labour restrictions.⁵ This trend, however, has been accelerated by a consistent turn to the right since the 2002 elections.⁶ Given the magnitude of the refugee crisis in 2015, Hollande, under the auspices of a Socialist platform, has simply extended this project of national redefinition in which capital can flow while immigrants cannot. This dual process has ultimately led to the pulverisation of the European project—which was conceived in the aftermath of the Second World War as a guarantee for peace, democracy and human rights—and to the rise of the FN (Feher 2016).

We can see clearly how these interrelated economic and social crises of 2015 played out through two case studies: the Air France negotiations that culminated in a violent confrontation between employers and employees on 5 October, and the development of the Calais 'jungle', the camp in the north of France, close to the UK border, which in November 2015 housed 6000 migrants and refugees.

Deregulating the skies: the Air France crisis

By 2015, the 'crisis' at Air France had already been brewing for some time. Since 2008, four years after its merger with KLM, Air France's debt had risen to 4.5 billion euros. According to Alexandre de Juniac, Air France's CEO from 2011 to 2016, three factors were responsible for the airline's growing deficit: the rising cost of fuel; the company's high salary costs; and the fierce competition of other airlines, from low-costs on short-distance flights (45% of the European market) to those from Asia and the Gulf region on long distances. While low-cost companies could reduce their expenses by drawing their workforce from European countries with more flexible and precarious labour laws, the Gulf companies were heavily subsidised by their home states. As Juniac explained in a talk in December 2014, Air France had little room to manoeuvre in terms of fuel prices. It could, however, target the other two factors by reducing personnel costs. Labour rights and social benefits, Juniac continued, had always been highly contingent, both historically and geographically, and there was no reason why these could not adapt to the realities of the global market.⁷ One way to remain competitive, he added, was to expand Air France's low-cost airline Transavia, delocalised in Germany and Portugal.

Juniac's speech came two months after a pilot strike that had cost the company 400 million euros. In September 2014, Air France pilots had gone on strike for 13 days to protest against the working conditions at Transavia. Worried by Air France's desire to 'externalise and delocalise', the pilot unions demanded the same single contract for all pilots, whether they flew low-cost or regular flights. Juniac judged this demand unreasonable and the pilots went on strike.⁸

The conflict between the pilots and the leadership continued throughout the year and in October 2015, the negotiations reached an impasse as the pilots refused to comply with the new cost-reduction plan that included adding 100 extra hours of flying per year (amounting approximately to an additional month of work) without any salary increase. If the pilots refused to accelerate their productivity, the Air France leadership declared that it would lay off 2900 employees as part of its 'Perform 2020' business plan. Once again, the pilot unions called for a strike and several angry workers stormed into the Air France headquarters demanding Juniac's resignation. Some of these workers began to chase several executives gathered in a meeting, including Xavier Broseta, the director of human resources, and Pierre Plissonnier, the head of long-distance flights. The executives' shirts were ripped and they had to flee the protestors by climbing out of the office premises over a wire fence. Seven others were wounded. The image of a shirtless executive escorted by bodyguards circulated all over the world, a picture that many took to symbolise the obstinate refusal of French workers to accept the reality of globalisation (Alderman 2015; Mainliève 2015).

While most commentators agreed that violent acts were unacceptable, these events did lead to a broader conversation about the social violence at the heart of Juniac's vision for the company. In both strikes, the state—Air France's major shareholder with 17% of the company's stock and three representatives on the company's executive board—reaffirmed its support of Juniac. Manuel Valls asked the pilots to 'be responsible', to adapt, evolve and accept the 'reasonable propositions' of the Air France leadership.⁹ Yet, despite its stake in the company, Hollande's government failed to intervene directly or to take Juniac to task for his various strategic errors. These confirmed Janet Roitman's (2012) definition of a crisis, not as a failure of knowledge or an error in calculation, but as a judgement about value.¹⁰

Valls claimed that 'the state assumes and will assume its responsibilities... but the solution for Air France must come from within the company' (Belleville and Motte 2015). Yet the state did intervene more than once, especially when it chose to lift restrictions on Gulf carriers to allow them to land in provincial airports such as Lyon and Nice, and when it raised airport taxes. The state's opening of financial borders was pointed out repeatedly by the Communist Senator Pierre Laurent, who also mentioned that Air France's debt had tripled between 2012 and 2013 as a result of Juniac's initiatives. This debt, he argued, had profited Air France's two main creditor banks: BNP Paribas and Société générale.¹¹ The administration's inconsistencies were also highlighted by Erick Derivry, the president of the main pilot union, who pleaded for more state involvement. As he suggested in one of his editorials, the current Socialist administration might as well have turned to the previous president Nicolas Sarkozy to deal with the Air France crisis since it was using all of his tactics (Derivry 2015).

Calais and Europe's new borders

As France was opening its borders to airline competition and capital investments, it was closing them to migrants. Since 1999, migrants and refugees had set up various 'jungle'

camps in Calais with the hope of reaching the United Kingdom. These unofficial camps multiplied after Sarkozy and his Minister of Immigration Eric Besson decided in a controversial move in 2009 to shut down the Sangatte Centre, a facility operated by the French Red Cross.¹² After coming to power in 2012, the Hollande administration wavered between pure negligence—closing its eyes to the deplorable conditions in which the refugees live—and staged performances of control—erecting new razor-wire fences or providing containers to house migrants.¹³ On 20 October 2015, 800 intellectuals, writers, filmmakers and academics, alarmed by the ‘disengagement of public powers’, signed a petition urging the government to remember France’s commitment to the values of asylum and universalism and to come up with a viable long-term plan for Calais.¹⁴ Four months later in February 2016, despite meeting with the representatives of this collective and agreeing to build a more permanent structure, Bernard Cazeneuve, the Minister of the Interior, ordered once again the evacuation of the camps with the help of bulldozers, water cannons and tear gas. In a second editorial from 6 March 2016, the 800-strong ‘Appel de Calais’ condemned Hollande’s violent handling of the camp as a ‘complete failure’.¹⁵

In fact, Hollande’s inability or unwillingness to address the camp in Calais was symptomatic of his larger ambivalence on immigration. In August 2015, in response to the growing wave of migrants and asylum seekers entering Europe and to the thousands of migrant deaths that had occurred over the course of the spring, the German chancellor Angela Merkel declared that Europe had a legal and moral obligation to welcome refugees and that Germany was ready to take in as many as 500,000 asylum seekers for several years—a plan that Merkel also described as economically beneficial. In the days that followed, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic responded by closing their borders, sometimes with an actual barrier as in the case of Hungary.

On 7 September 2015, Hollande declared that France would take in 24,000 refugees over the next two years out of the 120,000 that the European Union committed to distribute within its different countries. In addition, he insisted on the importance of setting up ‘hot spots’ at the external EU border, especially in Italy and Greece, to distinguish asylum seekers from economic migrants. The latter would be instantly sent back: ‘We can understand them,’ Hollande clarified, ‘but we cannot welcome them.’¹⁶ Given that 4.8 million Syrians have left their country since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011 and that in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, refugees now represent a fourth of the population, the French number of 24,000 seems meagre to say the least.¹⁷

On 13 February 2016, Valls went back on Hollande’s promise to push the EU to accept more refugees. In the few months that had followed Hollande’s press conference, France had faced a new terrorist attack and Valls was trying to persuade the French parliament of the value of his controversial law on the *déchéance de nationalité* that would strip French citizenship from any terrorist suspect who held dual nationality. On an official visit to Munich, Valls referred to Merkel’s immigration policy—which had been strongly attacked not only by her Eastern European neighbours but within the confines of her own country—as ‘unsustainable’. In his words: ‘we need to pass a message of efficiency and firmness: Europe cannot welcome any more refugees’. France, Valls continued, was no longer favourable to a ‘mechanism of permanent relocation’ and it was time to return to the implementation of hot spots and the control of external borders. The solution to the migrant crisis was not in Europe, Valls argued, but in the Levant, in Turkey, in Jordan and in the Mediterranean. ‘Saying “come all”, Valls concluded, ‘would end up destroying the foundations of Europe’.¹⁸

What is left of Europe?

In fact, the foundations of Europe had already been destroyed. In her speech on 10 December 2015, Marine Le Pen, beaming from her electoral victory, called for a return to the nation and a new form of republican assimilation anchored in French values. 'The idea of living-together [*vivre ensemble*],' Le Pen declared, was a 'cliché promoted by the partisans of multicultural society.'¹⁹ For months, Le Pen had relied on grossly inflated numbers to mobilise the spectre of a massive and uncontrolled illegal immigration that was overwhelming France's social and economic foundations.²⁰ Similarly, Le Pen presented her programme as a defence of everyday people against the excesses of unbridled capitalism and globalisation. Claiming to transcend the classic division of left and right, she argued for the importance of a strong state directing the economy and for monetary sovereignty. A few months later, the ascendancy of Donald Trump in the American electoral race and the 'Brexit' vote in the United Kingdom confirmed that the deep entanglement of austerity, immigration and xenophobia was not simply a French phenomenon.

Instead of pursuing the left-wing agenda for which it was elected, Hollande's government chose to simply extend many of Sarkozy's defining policies. It has embraced austerity and financial deregulation, sapping two centuries of workers' rights and labour laws; it has violated individual liberties in the name of security; and it has closed the door to immigration. The government's position in both the Air France and the Calais crises are symptomatic of its political ambivalence, and in some way, its own desire to move beyond the left-right divide. It is not surprising therefore that many of the recent anti-austerity movements and political parties in Europe have also insisted on the importance of developing a Europe-wide infrastructure to welcome refugees. For instance, Ada Colau, the mayor of Barcelona who began her political career as a critic of the evictions caused by abusive mortgage clauses and the collapse of the Spanish property market in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, circulated a manifesto in September 2015 in which she called for a network of 'refugee cities' extending across Europe.²¹ Similarly, Syriza included some of the most progressive immigration policies in the Eurozone in its political platform (Chen 2015). The discourse around refugees and humanitarianism also featured prominently throughout the discussions of *Nuit Debout*, the French social movement that arose out of the protests against the 2016 labour reforms.²² As these political movements emphasised again and again, another Europe was possible, a Europe anchored in humanitarianism, solidarity and real cosmopolitanism.

Notes

1. "Hollande tourne la page de 2015, 'année de souffrance et de résistance.'" *Le Monde*, December 31, 2015.
2. I am using the term 'neo-liberalism' to describe not just an economic doctrine but, following Wendy Brown (2015, 30), as a form of governmentality, a 'normative reason' that extends a 'specific formulation of economic values, practice and metrics to every dimension of human life'. For a historical perspective on how the French Socialist Party came to embrace neo-liberal policies, see <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/09/how-french-socialism-built-and-destroyed-the-european-union/>
3. "Dialogue social: syndicats et patronat échouent à trouver un accord." *Le Monde*, January 22, 2015. For a history of the 'dialogue social' under Hollande, see <http://www.gouvernement.fr/action/le-dialogue-social>

4. According to Didier Fassin (2016), these figures were significantly inflated since a large number of people were counted when they arrived in Greece and counted again when entering the EU a second time through Hungary or Croatia. As Fassin suggests, the real 'crisis' is not the number of refugees but the unequal distribution of asylum seekers among the nations of the EU and of the world more generally.
5. Ticktin (2011, 41–46) mentions for instance the *sans-papiers* protests outside the Paris Stock Exchange (*Bourse*).
6. For a study of Sarkozy's immigration policies, see the anthology *Cette France-là* (2009).
7. Alexandre de Juniac develops this idea in his "Entretiens de Royaumont", December 6–7, 2014. <https://vimeo.com/116748738>. As an example of the historical contingency of social benefits, Juniac mentions the fact that in 1840 children under 8 could work: 'what is a child? Should we make them work, not work? Not sure.' In terms of the geographic diversity, Juniac recalls the reaction to the Air France strike from one of his colleagues in Qatar Airways: 'In our country, this would be impossible. We would have all sent them to prison.'
8. "3 questions sur les raisons de la grève à Air France." *L'Obs*, September 14, 2014.
9. "Crise Air France: Valls en appelle à la 'responsabilité' des pilotes." *Le Point*, October 3, 2015 and "Air France: Manuel Valls vole au secours de Juniac." *Les Echos*, September 22, 2014.
10. Juniac was criticised for instance for setting up a series of new long-distance routes at his arrival, most of which were inefficient and later abandoned, and for investing 500,000 euros in the Première class and 18 million on the company's new offices. See <http://www.economiamatin.fr/news-juniac-polemique-droit-greve-air-france-travail-bruant>. On 'crisis' as a normative category, see Roitman (2012).
11. "Air France—Pierre Laurent interpelle Manuel Valls au Sénat." <http://www.economie-politique.org/76274>
12. Sara Prestianni (2014, 327) describes the government's actions in Calais as guided by a 'logic of invisibilisation', an attempt to render the migrant question invisible.
13. For more on how these politics of containment under the guise of humanitarianism played out in Calais, see Ticktin (2016).
14. "Jungle de Calais: l'appel des 800." *Libération*, October 20, 2015.
15. "Appel des 800: la fracture détaillée." *Libération*, March 6, 2016.
16. "6e conférence de presse du président de la République." September 7, 2015. <http://www.elysee.fr/conferences-de-presse/article/6e-conference-de-presse-du-president-de-la-republique/>
17. <http://syrianrefugees.eu>
18. "Crise des réfugiés: Manuel Valls joue la fermeté face à Angela Merkel." *Le Monde*, February 13, 2016 and "Manuel Valls s'oppose à Angela Merkel sur la question des réfugiés." *Le HuffPost* avec AFP, February 13, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2016/02/13/manuel-valls-refugies-allemande-angela-merkel_n_9227962.html
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Disclosure statement

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