



Immigration and integration policy change in France during Sarkozy's era

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Abstract

This paper sheds light on the factors behind the introduction of restrictive immigration and integration policy in France between 2002 and 2012, which is closely associated with Nicholas Sarkozy and his party Union for a Popular Movement (UMP). Using the evidence from semi-structured interviews, conducted with The Republicans (UMP) elected representatives, political advisors and civil servants, the paper argues that the introduction of restrictive immigration policies is explained not only through electoral pressure from the radical right *Front National*, but also by publics' perceived economic concerns, cultural anxieties around Islam, as well as the effects of the EU integration. The paper also contributes to immigration policy liberalisation scholarship, by highlighting the importance of non-economic benefits migration brings, which take a form of soft power, as a way to increase French influence (*rayonnement*) in the world, contrary to the previous literature that explains liberalisation from economic advantages of skilled migration.

Keywords Immigration policy · Sarkozy · Integration policy · Policy change · UMP

Introduction

During Sarkozy's time in office, both as a minister of the Interior (2002–2004; 2005–2007) and the President of the Republic (2007–2012) immigration and integration policies became more restrictive. Not only immigration policies, which are associated with the management of various immigration inflows, but also integration policies, which primarily focused on the integration of Muslims and immigrants from former French colonies, were considerably tightened. The cornerstone of Sarkozy's presidency was selective immigration approach, which aimed to increase highly skilled immigration to France and reduce family migration. Integration

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policies have also seen major tightening, making receiving benefits and long-term residence permit conditional on the success of integration. A number of restrictive measures towards family migration were introduced, including the Contract of Reception and Integration (CAI), which introduced increased financial requirements for family reunification, enhanced knowledge of French and Republican values and introducing CAI for migrants' families as well (Carvalho 2015: 61). Integration discourse was framed through a Muslim lens (Tiberj and Michon 2013: 586) and the presence of Islam in France was targeted through the introduction of two laws: one, which banned the wearing of religious symbols in public schools in 2004 and second law banned the face covering in public in 2010. His policies also targeted student migration, which was originally tightened, but later liberalised, explaining how public opinion can also be instrumental in liberalising immigration policies, contrary to previous scholarship, which argues that public opinion leads to immigration policy restriction. Keen to get overall immigration numbers down, Sarkozy's immigration minister Claude Guéant introduced a circular that limited non-EU graduates' right to stay in France upon the completion of their degree. The paper provides theoretical contribution to the existing literature on immigration and policy change by focusing on external to the party factors. The paper argues that the introduction of restrictive immigration and integration policies during Sarkozy's time in office is explained not only through electoral pressure from the radical right *Front National*, but also by economic concerns and cultural anxieties around Islam, as well as the effects of the EU integration. It also highlights the role of organised interests in subsequent liberalisation of student immigration policy, giving stronger ground to the literature that emphasises the role of 'organised public', which includes interest groups that can influence policy-making (Freeman 1995, 2002).

This article proceeds as follows. The first part examines theoretical explanations of why parties change their policy positions, focusing on external to the party factors and outlines the data and methods used to explain French immigration and integration policy change. The second part provides a brief history of immigration to France to understand developments under Sarkozy's era. Third part unpacks the logic behind the introduction of restrictive immigration policies between 2002 and 2012. Final part explains why cultural, but not socio-economic integration was the focus of Sarkozy's government. Conclusion emphasises the importance of external to the party factors in explaining restrictive immigration policies and highlights the role of 'organised public' (Freeman 2002) policy liberalisation in less politicised immigration domains like student migration.

Party policy change

Party policy change can be explained by focusing on internal and external to the party factors. Internal perspective argues that policy change happens due to the factors within the party, including the change in a party leader (Harmel and Janda 1994), a change in dominant faction within the party (Harmel et al. 1995; Harmel and Tan 2003) and electoral defeat (Budge 1994). Mainstream parties tend to be more receptive to voter changes that fringe parties (Ezrow et al. 2011), especially



if they have recently experienced a substantial defeat (Somer-Topcu 2009; Budge et al. 2010). While internal explanations have their merit, they cannot fully explain why position and policy change happens as parties are not immune to external pressures, which affect their decision-making (Partos and Tim 2015: 604). This is not to imply that the internal tradition is flawed, but to suggest that the internal tradition is not suitable for yielding sufficient explanations of party policy change and the examination of factors external to the party needs to be addressed. Two factors such as party competition and public opinion have been given central role in explaining party policy change.

Party competition is one of the most studied factors that make parties change their positions (Norris 2005; Meguid 2007; Hobolt and de Vries 2015; De Vries and Hobolt 2020; Green-Pedersen 2019; Spoon and Klüver 2014). Parties change their policies as they tend to respond to the shift(s) of rival parties (Budge 1994). Threatened by a rise of the competitor, mainstream parties chose an accommodative strategy to prevent voter defection and maximise their vote share (Downs 1957; Meguid 2007; McKeever 2020). Mainstream right parties have been more prone to coop positions of a competitor as a result of their ideological proximity to radical right (Abou-Chadi 2016; Akkerman 2012). Public opinion is also crucial in understanding why parties change their positions and adopt more restrictive stances on immigration (Abou-Chadi 2016, 2018; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2020; Spoon and Williams 2017). There are two sets of concerns that explain public hostility towards immigration: economic and cultural (Malhorta et al. 2013; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Public attitudes on immigration are partly driven by economic anxieties, where economically insecure people might perceive foreign workers as a threat on the labour market (Betz 2004; Shehaj et al. 2019; Carreras et al. 2019; Green et al. 2022), or when such anxieties are reinforced by high deprivation levels, with economy offering less opportunities for both citizens and immigrants (Calhoun 2017). In times of economic insecurity, mainstream right parties are prone to pursue restrictive immigration policies by blaming immigration for perceived economic problems, advocating welfare chauvinism, arguing for tightening immigrants' access to welfare and limiting it to the native population (McKeever 2020; Rodrik 2021; Savage 2022).

Anxieties related to immigration are not purely of economic nature, but are also linked with fears of a clash of civilisations and identity concerns (Delanty 2008: 677). Public opposition to immigration is also culture based, where hostility comes on the basis of perceived cultural threat posed by immigrants, particularly those of different ethnicities, cultural and religious backgrounds (Oesch 2008; Hogan and Haltinner 2015; Oztig et al. 2021). As Orgard (2010: 61) points, culture becomes an instrument for selecting migrants as governments are concerned with the threat migrants that espouse different values pose to 'enlightenment values and national identity'. European states have shifted their policies towards much stronger acceptance of liberal values and norms by immigrants and have rejected multiculturalist approach, which is seen too tolerant towards cultural differences (Joppke 2012). Previous research demonstrates that public concerns about perceived threats to cultural and national identity are more important in comparison with the perceived threat immigrants pose economically, in relation to both labour market competition and



welfare access (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). In the case of France Adida et al (2017) highlight the presence of such cultural concerns, arguing that Muslim integration in France suffers from both rational Islamophobia, which centres around the inability of Muslim to integrate into the labour market. In similar research, Adida et al. (2016) argue that anxieties about Muslims in France increase, when their proportion and visibility in the society increase, which leads to more contact opportunities with them. While economic and cultural grievances around immigration are often presented by scholars as alternative explanations, the recent literature argues that the interaction between the two is crucial in understanding opposition to immigration. Thus, economic anxieties of the population shape cultural resentment towards immigrants and politicise cultural differences (De Vries 2018; Carreras et al. 2019; Joppke 2012; Magni 2020). This paper explores whether and both cultural and economic anxieties underpinned the introduction of restrictive immigration and integration policies during Sarkozy's time in office (both as a minister of the Interior and as a President of the Republic).

Liberalisation of immigration policies

This paper also contributes to the existing literature on immigration policy liberalisation (Freeman 1995; Menz 2011; Cerna 2016), highlighting the role of 'organised public' in exerting pressure on governments to liberalise less politicised domains like student immigration. While such immigration policy liberalisation has been problematic for national governments (Boswell 2007; Kolbe 2020), student migration has been largely immune to restrictions as countries aim to recruit the brightest and the best in the 'global race for talent' (Riaño et al. 2018: 295) and potential contributions to national economies that foreign students can make (Chiou 2017; Hawthorne 2012; Geddie 2015). Originally applied to the labour migration domain, Freeman (1995) developed a theory of 'client politics', in which he argued that political elites adopt liberalised immigration policies to accommodate to the interests of 'organised public', namely employers. While this theory has been challenged by various scholars (Wright 2012, 2015; Carvalho 2014), who emphasise that increased negative salience of immigration makes it more problematic for 'organised interests' to influence governments in the direction of policy liberalisation, this article demonstrates that such interests still matter. It contributes to the existing literature by pointing that organised interests can lead to policy liberalisation not only when benefits from immigration are economic or monetary, but when they take a form of soft power, reinforcing country's international influence.

Methods

The evidence that explains the black box of immigration and integration policy change comes from seven semi-structured interviews, conducted with the Republicans' MP Interior (see Appendix 1 for the type of interviews conducted). The first-hand accounts explaining policy change were collected during a trip to Paris,



between June and July 2016. Interviews were initially contacted via professional email addresses and via the phone (institutional phone numbers). Not all interviewees that initially agreed to take part in research, did so in the end, with some cancelling last minute. While this reduced the number of interviews conducted, snowballing technique was employed to increase the number of interviews. All interviews that took place were conducted face-to-face in Paris. Interviews with political elites 'offer political scientists a rich, cost-effective vehicle for generating unique data to investigate the complexities of policy and politics' (Beamer 2002: 86). The inclusion criteria for the interview sample included politicians and civil servants, who had access and influence on immigration and integration policy-making.

Interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, which identifies "themes and patterns of meaning across a data set in relation to a research question" (Braun and Clarke 2006: 35). Some of the codes were developed deductively from the theoretical explanations (Boyatzis 1998: 33), while other codes were data-driven (e.g. effects of the European integration), as not all theory-driven codes accounted for all possible explanations of immigration and integration policy change (see Appendix 2 for an example of coding framework). Interview data were analysed in two stages, using Saldaña (2013) coding approach, with the first stage being descriptive and the second one analytical. First cycle was the initial coding of data, that enabled the organisation of data into specific themes, while the second cycle of coding allowed to develop categories, patterns from the first cycle (Saldaña, 2013: 14, 207). The first cycle of coding identified the causes of immigration and integration policy change, which enabled the organisation of interview data into specific themes. Initially, passages of interview data were attributed a specific theme (Saldaña, 2013: 88; DeCuir-Gunby et al. 2011: 137). Codes were attributed based on the specific theme, where one code was attributed to the content of a particular topic that was expressed in different ways. Second cycle of coding, which was analytical, elaborated on a specific cause, unpacking how that cause explained immigration and integration policy change. For example, one of the first cycle codes, the effects of the EU integration, was broken down into further codes, including the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and national legislation and anxieties about EU's external border.

This research received ethical approval from Ulster University's School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences and adhered to the principles of integrity, transparency, accountability and respect. The purpose of the research was clearly communicated to the interviewees through the participant information sheet emailed prior to interview taking place, explaining why they were selected and what was expected from the during the interview. The interviewees signed consent forms, which indicated anonymity will be assured, given the sensitive nature of their work as information coming from a politician or civil servant could be damaging for their careers, as might any public expression of views that deviate from the official party line. However, in some cases interviewee did not object for their name to be revealed, and a note was made on the consent form that an interviewee agreed to wave the anonymity.



Immigration in France

France has long been a country of immigration and has a substantial share of immigrant population in relative to its population size, accounting for ten percent of the overall population (Institut National d'Études Démographiques, 2020). It is also the biggest country in terms of the number of Muslim population in Europe (Adida et al. 2014), which makes integration and the question of national identity prominent issues on political agenda. As a former colonial empire France has experienced a large intake of immigrants arriving primarily from former colonies: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Hollifield 2014). The socio-economic status of immigrants and French population of immigrant origin remains largely disadvantaged with higher unemployment rates and unfavourable economic positions (OECD 2017: 23). As a high percentage of North African immigrants are Muslim, the integration debate is mostly focused on Islam and the *co-habitation* of Islam with the French republicanism, which is egalitarian and secular in nature (Hollifield 2014: 157). Muslim immigration to secular France, where the principle of *laïcité* (secularism) dominates the French way of life (Roy 2016), has produced numerous debates on headscarves and veils and have long dominated French society and political elites. In French integration debate concerns about integration focus primarily on migrants from former French colonies (Simon 2015). Integration became a “major preoccupation in French politics since the mid-1980s” (Gastaut 2012: 333) as a result of increased family reunification during the decolonisation process (Freedman 2004: 128).

Following the Second World War, migration was driven by the need for foreign labour that came from former colonies to rebuild the country (Edminston and Dume nil 2009: 228; Guiraudon 2005: 154). The economy continued to be largely dependent on immigrant labour force during the *trente glorieuses*, the three-decade period of economic flourishing (Hollifield 2014: 164). However, following the oil crisis in 1970s, France halted foreign labour recruitment, with the exception of highly skilled and seasonal workers (Guiraudon 2005: 154). During d'Estaing's presidency (1974–1981) France experienced tightening of immigration policies, which was largely a result of the economic crisis. While it was relatively easy to slow labour migration as a response to economic difficulties, but it was more problematic to halt family migration, which was “humanitarian in nature and constitutionally protected” (Hollifield 2014: 165). Family migration, primarily from the former colonies constituted a large part of the immigration to France in 1970s despite d'Estaing's government attempts to stop and prevent further family migration by deporting the majority of North Africans, especially Algerians (Weil 2005: 18). The policy of forceful deportation of Algerians was abandoned as a result of substantial public opposition from civil society, churches, trade unions, left-wing parties and the Council of State (Weil 2005: 18).

After the election of left-wing president François Mitterand in 1981, French immigration policy experienced a U-turn, allowing all immigrants, who legally entered the country to stay in France (Weil 2005: 17), which subsequently led to the increase in family reunification from former French colonies. Since 1980s the radical right Front National (FN) has substantially influenced the immigration debate



in France (Haegel and Mayer 2019; Mayer 2018; McKeever 2020; Hutchins and Halikiopolou 2019). Immigration became a prominent issue in the early 2000s, when Jean-Marie Le Pen made it to the second round of presidential election, competing for presidency alongside right-wing candidate Jacques Chirac. Since then immigration and integration policies were substantially tightened under Sarkozy's time as a minister of the Interior (2002–2004; 2005–2007) and as a President of the Republic (2007–2012). Sarkozy's key immigration priorities included increasing highly skilled labour migration to 50 percent of the overall migration numbers, tightening family migration, preventing non-EU students from staying in France following the completion of their degrees and creating the controversial ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development. On integration, he introduced tougher entry requirements for new arrivals as well as number of laws that targeted the presence of Islam in France, including 2004 law, which banned the wearing of religious symbols in state schools and 2010 law, which banned face covering in public places. This paper examines the logic behind the introduction of selective immigration approach, more restrictive stance on family and student migration, and elucidates why cultural, but not socio-economic integration was Sarkozy's focus.

Selective immigration approach

The evolution of the French immigration policy between 2002 and 2012 can largely be understood to address the economic needs of the country, which has been a logical continuation of the immigration policies France pursued historically. When in 1970s, during the oil crisis the French economy became affected and unemployment was on rise, France adopted the policy of exporting unemployment in economically insecure times by halting foreign labour migration, primarily from former colonies (Malinvaud 1986). Similarly, the slowdown in French economic growth and subsequent increase in unemployment during 2005 (The Worldbank 2023) led to the introduction of selective approach to immigration, which aimed to increase highly skilled labour migration and decrease low-skilled and family migration (Sarkozy 2006). The change in immigration approach from imposed (*immigration subie*: family migration) to selective immigration (highly skilled migration) was dictated by high family migration levels, which led to the concerns within the French public (Interview with Sarkozy's special adviser, 2016). Indeed, between 2002 and 2012, family migration has been the largest immigration inflow, constituting from 50 to 60 percent of overall migration numbers, compared to labour migration, which remained below 10 per cent (D'Albis and Boubtane 2015: 503).

In order to limit imposed migration, which referred to family migration (Viprey 2010), the rules for family migration were considerably restricted. While Sarkozy was the minister of the Interior, the Law on immigration and integration (*Loi relative à l'immigration et l'intégration*) was passed in 2006, and was known as his "latest effort to open France to highly skilled migration" (The Migration Policy Institute 2007: 6). It reinforced selective immigration approach by welcoming highly skilled migrants and introducing the card of 'competences and talents' (CCT) (*la carte de séjour compétences et talents*), which aimed to attract highly skilled



non-EU migrants (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2014). While highly skilled migrants were welcome, the politics towards low-skilled non-EU migrants and EU migrants from new member states continued to be based on the occupation list and temporary work permits (Carvalho and Geddes 2012: 283). Sarkozy viewed selective immigration approach as an instrument in attracting the electorate prior to 2007 presidential elections and recuperating the electorate of Jean-Marie Le Pen (Interview with Sarkozy's special adviser, 2016).

Sarkozy and UMP perceived low-skilled migration as a burden to already increasing unemployment rate in French suburbs, which were double the unemployment rates in non-deprived areas (Observatoire des inégalités 2014). Increasing rate of unemployment prompted Sarkozy to adopt selective immigration approach that would focus on attracting highly skilled migrants that would benefit the French economy (Interview with a UMP MP, 2016). While between 2004 and 2008, French unemployment rate was higher, compared to the OECD average, it was nevertheless steadily declining. However, since 2008 it has drastically gone up from 7 to 9 per cent as a result of the Global financial crisis (The World Bank 2023).

In 2008, the French economy does not behave well, we already had quite high rate of unemployment prior to that [...] The economy does not function well and if we continue with the open immigration, we will not be able to give jobs to immigrants as much as we did in 1960s. In 1961–1964 many immigrants from Maghreb countries came to France. But back then we had economic growth, job growth and housing. In 2008 we did not have growth, we do not have housing or jobs. And this was the reason why we needed to slow down immigration (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016).

The UMP were also cautious about EU migration, especially from the new EU member states. Following 2005 and 2007 Eastern enlargements, France imposed temporary transitional controls on labour migration from new EU member states (Drew and Sriskandarajah 2007) to limit labour market competition and prevent the unemployment rate going up (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). For Sarkozy the aim was not just about decreasing low-skilled non-EU migration, which was assumed would come from new EU member states, but also about boosting highly skilled non-EU migration. Following his electoral promise for 2007 presidential election about increasing highly skilled migration to 50 per cent, Sarkozy introduced the CCT. However, in the period between 2007 and 2011, only 1143 such cards were delivered (Ministère de l'Intérieur 2014), and highly skilled labour migration did not increase to fifty per cent as aimed. This failure was explained by the fact that employers recruited non-EU migrants directly and migrants did not need this card to come and look for a job in France. As Sarkozy's former adviser put it:

It addressed the non-existent problem to please the electorate and demonstrate that you Sarkozy aimed to deliver on highly skilled migration. It is because of this we have delivered too little on selective immigration, because it responds



to the problem that does not exist. Those people who fall within the requirements of the card do not need it as they are recruited by the companies directly (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

The introduction of the CCT was a way to demonstrate Sarkozy's commitment to bring brightest and best immigration to the country, but in reality, it did not do much. Global financial crisis that unfolded in 2007 presented a constraint for Sarkozy to increase highly skilled migration to France. The crisis undermined the implementation and success of Sarkozy's selective immigration approach as it affected French economy, leading to the higher unemployment (Interview with UMP MP, 2016; Interview with a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control Patrick Stefanini, 2016). According to the Directorate General of the Treasury, in 2009 France has seen the worst slowdown in its economic growth since the Second World War, with a 2.6 per cent GDP drop with the crisis leading to the major job losses in the period between 2008 and 2009 (Vincent 2011: 1).

The inability to increase highly skilled migration forced Sarkozy adopt even stricter immigration stance before the 2012 presidential election. In his presidential programme '*La France forte*' (strong France) he suggested decreasing current immigration levels by half, limiting family migration to those who speak French and who accept republican values and demanding better control of external borders (Sarkozy 2012: 3). In order appeal to the electorate, Sarkozy promised to cut overall immigration numbers by reducing immigration in half, adopting a non-traditional for France Anglo-Saxon quota approach (Sarkozy 2012). Immigration numbers have seen the overall increase during Sarkozy's presidency from 195, 000 in 2009 to 230,000 in 2012 (INSEE 2017), which led to more restrictive immigration stance in order to appeal to FN's electorate (Interview with Sarkozy's former special adviser, 2016). His minister of the Interior Claude Guéant proposed to cut legal immigration by 20,000 per year and maintain 180,000 net migration level. This Anglo-Saxon quota approach, not typical to France, was introduced to demonstrate that Sarkozy was addressing perceived public anxieties on immigration, which was impossible to achieve, but instrumental in attracting FN's electorate (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

Family migration

The major concern for Sarkozy and the UMP was immigration from former colonies, whose residents have mostly used family route to immigrate to France. During Sarkozy's tenure as a minister of the Interior, 2006 Law on immigration and integration (*Loi relative à l'immigration et l'intégration*) was passed, which foresaw the introduction of more restrictive rules for family migration, where an immigrant in order to bring a family member, needed to have lived in the country for eighteen months instead of one year as it was before and had to justify that they had enough means to support the family without accessing social assistance (Legifrance 2006). The new law also made more difficult for spouses of French nationals to receive permanent residence, increasing the number of marriage years required: from two to three (Chou and Baygert 2007: 5).



Shortly after becoming the president, Sarkozy charged his immigration minister Brice Hortefeux with the creation of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development in 2007. In 2007 the new ministry passed the Law on immigration, integration and asylum (*Loi relative à la maîtrise de l'immigration, à l'intégration et à l'asile*) that aimed to decrease low-skilled and family migration (Legifrance 2007). The law focused on family migration and integration of family members. According to the law, anybody, who would be applying for family reunification or for the long-term visa, needed to show knowledge of French and if need be, the applicant could be asked to follow a short, maximum two-month course in the country of application and to present an appropriate level of French after the completion of the course (Legifrance 2007). In addition, the Contact of Welcome and Integration for families was introduced, which required parents to look after their children's integration and made access to family benefits conditional on integration. The law also introduced tougher financial requirements for family reunification (Legifrance 2007). During the parliamentary debate regarding the law, one of the UMP MPs, Thierry Mariani, proposed a controversial DNA test on family reunion, but this was met with strong opposition from the left-wing parties and the Constitutional Council has ruled that this proposal would be unconstitutional, and it was later dropped (Carvalho 2017: 8).

The inability to reduce family migration was partially a result of the effects of the EU integration, which posed a challenge for Sarkozy and the UMP. These concerns related to the impossibility of the French government to reduce unwanted non-EU family migration (Interview with a UMP MP, 2016; Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). Family reunification Directive, which establishes that non-EU citizens, who legally reside in the EU, allowed non-EU citizens to bring their family members to reside with them (European Commission 2003). This resulted in the UMP highlighting the superiority of the EU's legal framework:

Nowadays the policies are communitarised, visa policies, border control... So, there are subjects where Europe exercises more competence than member states (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016).

International law puts constraints on the ability of the EU states to regulate migration policy in the way that they want (Joppke 1998; Freeman 1995). While bound by international agreements, states within Europe have their own national interests at stake and cooperation between the states in immigration domain becomes difficult when disagreements arise (Hampshire 2013: 85). While anxieties about the effects of the EU integration on immigration to France did not lead to the adoption of specific new legislation, they have affected the rhetoric pursued by Sarkozy and his party.

Security discourse on illegal migration

In the post-war period French governments had preferences for European migration instead of migration from former colonies arguing that it was easier to assimilate Europeans than North Africans (Schain 2012). Subsequent EU enlargements (2004



and 2007) did not present a significant problem for the UMP as France chose to impose transitional labour controls on the new EU member states (Drew and Skin-skandaragah 2007). Despite the absence of major concerns around intra-EU migration, the EU, nonetheless, played a salient role in Sarkozy's and UMP's security discourse on immigration, especially the 2007 EU enlargement has given rise to fears regarding Roma migration to France (Doytcheva 2016).

The rhetoric centred around stopping illegal migration coming to other EU member states and then subsequently to France through the absence of borders, especially via Italy and the protection of the maritime border with European Border and Coast Guard Agency FRONTEX (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016). In his 2007 presidential programme Sarkozy highlighted the importance of strengthening the European borders to prevent the inflow of illegal third country migration into France (Sarkozy 2007: 10).

The absence of border controls with neighbouring countries and Schengen free travel within the EU created anxieties about third country illegal migration stemming to France (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016; Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

So, they came primarily from the Middle East, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Syria to get to the UK or other countries in Europe. There is also irregular migration from French colonies, from the black Africa, Maghreb... People, who pass specifically through Italy and arrive to France. (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016).

The choice of stricter immigration security discourse was a result of events happening in third countries, such as Arab Spring, and the arrival of refugees from Tunisia and Libya to Italy (Cottey 2013: 255). Italy's weak external border controls created tensions and in spring 2011 France temporarily reinstated the border checks with Italy and turned away some of the third country migrants (Cottey 2013: 255), which was a violation of the Schengen Agreement. Such decisions were underpinned by the anxieties about illegal migration stemming from the Middle East (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016). EU integration, which manifested itself in the absence of borders within the EU, has had an impact on the Sarkozy's immigration stance, and did not only affect his discourse on illegal immigration, but also involved the suspension of border with another EU state, even though for a short period of time.

Student migration

The inability to decrease non-EU migration to France, Sarkozy, for the first time during his presidency targeted student migration to get the overall immigration numbers down. In 2011, Sarkozy's close ally minister of the Interior Claude Guéant issued a circular, which prohibited foreign non-EU graduates staying in France and looking for a job upon the completion of their degree (Pellet 2015). As Guéant put it, student migration debate centred around student migrants' stay in France upon the completion of their degree and their access to the labour market, in the period of economic crisis and in the context of high unemployment.



‘I say that in a country, where there are 2750 millions of unemployed people, where every year more than 110, 000 people arrive on the labour market, it is necessary to first respond to the situation with unemployment in our country’ (Guéant 2011).

This proposal contradicted Sarkozy’s previous stance on immigration, which sought to increase highly skilled labour migration to fifty per cent (Carvalho and Geddes 2012: 291). The circular aimed to decrease the numbers of non-EU migrants on the French labour market by making it more difficult for them to obtain a residence permit upon the completion of their degree. Limiting student migration was an attempt to cut the overall immigration numbers and boost Sarkozy’s popularity prior to 2012 presidential election as the immigration numbers have gone up from 195, 000 in 2009 to 230,000 in 2012 (INSEE 2017).

When Claude Guéant became the minister of the Interior, and his former adviser told me what happened. So, when he became the minister of the Interior, he saw the immigration statistics since 2007 and he saw that it has increased. So, at the time we are in the midst of presidential campaign and the president is going to tell the people that he increased immigration. This is impossible. And at that particular time he had a brutal politics regarding immigration. (Interview with Sarkozy’s former adviser, 2016).

This circular was met with widespread criticism not only by the public, civil society and the Socialist party but by a lot of UMP deputies as it ‘endangered France’s ‘universal education mission’ and ultimately an attack on its intellectual influence in the world (Geisser 2011: 3). It provoked a strong reaction from representatives of higher education establishments, student unions and foreign students. The Conference of Grandes Ecoles (CGE), the Conference of Directors of French Engineering Schools (CDEFI) and the Conference of University Presidents (CPU) worked jointly for almost a year to ensure that the circular was repealed, warning of the negative effects at the international level. The CGE was also responsible for identifying all cases of students being refused the opportunity to stay in France to begin their working life. The various interventions of these actors in the media as well as the role of the Collective of May 31, emphasising the conflict of objectives between the policies of welcoming foreign students and the policy of issuing visas at the end of studies, contributed to the emergence of this problem in the public space and to the reaction of political decision-makers (Ministère de l’intérieur 2012:12).

Such opposition led to the modification of the circular in January 2012, which subsequently allowed non-EU graduates with a masters degree and above stay in the country and look for a job (Floch 2012). The logic behind such U-turn was underpinned by the fact that the circular was detrimental to the French educational system and French ‘*rayonnement*’ (influence) in the world (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). Student migration became the target of UMP’s government as a means to limit the overall migration numbers, which manifested itself in an attempt to protect French labour market from foreign labour and the possibility of rising unemployment. As Leruth (2017: 75) points out: ‘the country’s GDP rate fell



to -0.53 per cent. Unemployment increased from 6.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2008 to 9.2 per cent by the end of 2009, with youth unemployment at an all-time high of 22.3 per cent by the second quarter of 2009'. Global financial crisis posed a constraint for Sarkozy's attempts to increase the share of highly skilled immigrants as France at that time experienced increasing unemployment rate, and particularly youth unemployment and low demand for foreign labour. While the previous literature explains the liberalisation of certain routes like highly skilled labour migration (Carvalho 2014; Freeman 2002; Money and Falstrom 2006) or student migration (Riaño et al. 2018) from a perspective of economic benefits such migration brings, this paper argues that liberalisation of student migration policy can occur, where the benefit is not monetary or economic, but takes a form of soft power (Nye 2005). Repealing Guéant's circular and liberalising student migration aimed to reinforce France's soft power in higher education sphere.

Integration, FN's impact and perceived identity anxieties about Islam

In France, the politics of immigration is not only focused on the management of the inflows but is also centred around the issue of integration (Interview with former French prime minister, 2016). Identity concerns remain a contentious issue because of the colonial past, which led many people from former colonies settling in France, often with their families (Schain 2012). After the decolonisation of French empire and the 1970s oil crisis, France experienced large inflows of family migration primarily of Muslim background (Hollifield 2014), which was creating tensions in secular France. Integration policy in France has been closely associated with colonialism: "current 'problems', particularly associated with *laïcité* and national integration, are a replay of echo of the colonial past" (Chabal 2017: 71).

France belongs to assimilationist type of citizenship regime, which does not recognise cultural differences and prioritises migrants' acceptance of the French republican values. Emphasising equality and secularism, French integration model prioritises assimilation of immigrants (Marthaler 2008). The emphasis of the French citizenship regime is primarily on the cultural acceptance of French values: "France combines short residence requirement and the allowance of dual nationality with fairly strong linguistic and cultural integration requirements and a strong *jus soli* for the second generation" (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010: 779). Secular setup of France, which is underpinned by adherence to the Republican values, helps to explain integration policy changes. One of the underlying principles of French republicanism is the concept of *laïcité* (Drake 2011: 66), which means that the state does not favour any confession or any particular conception of the good life, while guaranteeing the free expression of every confession, with certain limits (Haascher 2017). *Laïcité* embraces "the removal of the religious factor from public life" (Drake 2011: 66) and it comes as a particular challenge for Islam because Islam does not recognise the separation of church and state. In this way, Islam's conflation of private and public sphere of religious expression has entered integration and national identity debates in France. As Islam is the second religion in France in terms of adherents (Hollifield 2014), the integration of Muslims into a French



society have been the subject of numerous debates, which question the ability of Muslim migrants to assimilate (Marthaler 2008).

While French republicanism requires strong separation between private and public spheres, Islam fails to accept that separation when it comes to religion. The incompatibility between ‘republican values’ and Islam led to the numerous debates on integration of Muslims into French society, including contentious debates on headscarves and full veils. In France the debate around integration has been influenced by the colonial past and has been calibrated by the issue of Islam and perceived danger that it poses to the French national identity. Changes in French integration policy during Sarkozy’s time in office both were driven by the perceived anxieties about the disappearance of the French national identity and about the impact of foreign cultures on it, which was represented primarily through the lens of Islam:

The French society is afraid. It is afraid to be invaded, it is afraid to recognise itself (*de se reconnaître*), it is afraid to lose its identity and all these fears crystallise through the question of Islam nowadays. (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

However, it should be noted that there is no accepted definition of what the French national identity is, given the multicultural nature of the French society. Prominent national identity debate, which was launched by then immigration minister Éric Besson in autumn 2009, was designed to come up with such definition. The debate was halted three months later and was unable to yield a definition of what French national identity is.

Representing a threat to the French national identity through the lens of Islam has stigmatised Muslim population in France and contributed to anti-Islam sentiment, which was also fuelled by the FN. The electoral success of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of 2002 presidential election has triggered the adoption of accommodative strategy by the mainstream right UMP on issues of immigration, integration and national identity. During Sarkozy’s tenure as a minister of the Interior and as a President of the Republic, perceived identity concerns underpinned the logic of integration policy change as a way to demonstrate that the party owned this issue (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). However, by trying to capitalise on such concerns and appeal to FN’s voters, Sarkozy only deepened the existing divisions between minorities and receiving society (Tiberj and Michon 2013: 586).

First major example of integration policy change and Sarkozy’s attempt to attract Le Pen’s electorate was the controversial headscarf affair, which led to the creation law on banning the religious symbols in French public schools in 2004. It started with the expulsion of two female students, wearing headscarves in public school in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis in 2003 (Van Eeckhout 2007). In 2003, then French president Jacques Chirac “succumbed to public pressure and set up a commission to investigate the wearing of religious symbols at schools” (Chabal 2015: 66). He established the Stasi commission, which examined the application of the principle of *laïcité* and issued a recommendation to ban wearing of ‘ostentatious religious signs’ in public schools Le Monde (2003). In March 2004 both chambers



of the French parliament voted in favour of the legislation (*Loi encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le port de signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics*) banning religious symbols in French public schools (Legifrance 2004). This legislation targeted primarily the issue of headscarves, worn by Muslim girls, even though, the word ‘headscarf’ was not explicitly mentioned in the law as it is against the law to discriminate against a particular religion.

Despite its contentious character, this law was supported by more than three quarters of the public (IFOP 2015: 9). The French were largely in favour of the law, as concerns were centred around immigrants that are culturally and religiously different, representing a potential threat to the French national identity (Martigny 2009: 27). Even though Muslims represented only seven and a half per cent of the total French population, compared to sixty-three per cent of Christians (Pew Research Centre 2015), the presence of Islam in France and integration of Muslims remains a contentious issue as Muslim immigration in a strongly secular France poses certain challenges. French society is multicultural in nature, but it rejects multiculturalism as such, arguing for the assimilation of immigrants (Marthaler 2008; Van Hout et al. 2011). With a large proportion of French immigrant population and population of immigrant origin, who are ethnically and religiously different from the host society, the issue of integration is viewed primarily through the lens of Islam.

The situation with integration of immigrants and French of immigrant origin further intensified in 2005, provoking riots in Parisian suburbs, which were a public backlash against the electrocution of two teenagers of immigrant origin, who hid in an electrical substation to escape police, who was following them (Mucchielli and Goaizou 2007). It signalled about the marginalisation of the French citizens of immigrant origin by the French authorities and triggered integration to become a primary preoccupation for Sarkozy prior to 2007 presidential elections. Riots in Parisian suburbs and the FN’s rhetoric on integration and law and order led to the change in Sarkozy’s integration paradigm from that of anti-discrimination to the equality of chances (Van Eeckhout 2007). As one UMP MP remarked, the evolution of the French integration policy has been effectively focused on the French citizens of immigrant origin, on those living in French suburbs (*banlieues*), and on those, who are French, but who do not feel accepted by the French society:

Of course, the problem is not 200, 000 immigrants that arrive every year, rather the problem is 5-6 million of people in France, whose grandparents were immigrants, but they are now French, but they have a problem with national identity. [...] The problem is not the foreigners, it is the French that are not assimilated. (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016).

The danger of Sarkozy’s electorate defecting to the radical right FN and the constant politicisation of immigration, national identity and integration by the FN contributed to toughening of Sarkozy’s discourse and legislation he pursued. National identity and integration became one of the major preoccupations of Sarkozy’s (2007) presidential campaign with Sarkozy stressing the importance of integration into French society by learning French before coming to France, respecting republican values of *laïcité* and equality between men and women (Sarkozy 2007: 14). He also



promised to create the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development to tackle the crisis of national identity (Sarkozy 2007: 14). Associating immigration with the crisis of national identity and portraying immigration as a danger was comparable with the rhetoric of the radical right FN (Carvalho and Geddes 2012: 283) and aimed to attract part of the FN's electorate (Carvalho 2017). This accommodative strategy proved to be successful in attracting FN's electorate in 2007 presidential campaign (Mayer 2007). Immigration was a crucial issue for the voters with forty percent of them indicating that immigration was very important in influencing their vote (Brouard and Tiberj 2007: 2). Soon after the presidential election, Sarkozy fulfilled his electoral promise and created the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development with the intention to reduce immigration, improve integration and promote national identity (Duelund 2016: 213). The rhetoric around the creation of this Ministry was a sign of 'soft nationalism' (Noiriel 2007) and aimed at targeting FN voters during the presidential campaign with stressing the importance of national identity and integration (Marlière 2013: 33). Following the establishment of the Ministry, launching the debate on the national identity in 2009 was another example of Sarkozy's accommodative strategy towards FN.

The debate on national identity arose under the pressure from the FN. There would not have been the debate if we did not have such strong FN. Immigration and the defence of national identity is the electoral question of the FN. And Nicholas Sarkozy knew that and used that. (Interview with former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

It was important for Sarkozy and UMP to demonstrate the ownership of immigration and national identity issues to appeal to the FN's voters. This prompted the launch of the national identity debate in autumn 2009, however, contrary to the aim, the debate on national identity, launched by the immigration minister Éric Besson (Besson 2009), did not find much support within the French public and was viewed negatively by the majority of the population (Libération 2010). Associating immigration with the crisis of national identity and portraying immigration as a danger was comparable with the rhetoric of the radical right FN (Carvalho and Geddes 2012: 283) and aimed to attract the FN's electorate (Carvalho 2017). However, this debate proved to be detrimental to Sarkozy's attempts to recuperate FN's voters prior to 2012 presidential campaign and endangered the alienation of his own electorate. Thinking about political gain, Sarkozy did not account for the difficulty in defining national identity, especially in such country as France, which has a long colonial history.

This was a political sign for the FN's electorate to reassure them that he wanted to take care of national identity, but the big mistake is that nobody knows what French national identity is and nobody can give specific definition of what it is. (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016).

Following public disapproval of the debate, the pressure from the left-wing camp and also from within the UMP, this debate ended in February 2010



(Lemarié 2012). The halt of the debate, which did not yield any substantial results and subsequent dissolution of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development in autumn 2010, demonstrated that public opinion was essential in liberalising some of the aspect of immigration and integration policy (Wihtol de Wenden 2012: 326). While on issues of national identity and immigration, Sarkozy's co-opted FN's positions, on economic issues UMP and FN were quite distinct (Haegel and Mayer 2018). While FN, as most of radical right parties, has distanced itself from the neoliberal economic programme in 1980s, adopting protectionist stance, advocating for expansive welfare assistance limited to native population (Crépon et al. 2015), mainstream right UMP and Sarkozy highlighted the need to tighten welfare assistance in general, by introducing a number of economic and social reforms (Marthaler 2008). In the height of economic crisis, Sarkozy also transitioned to *neo-dirigisme*, which 'does not rely on further welfare spending to maintain demand from low-income groups' (Leruth 2017: 75).

After the dissolution of the Ministry, integration still remained a priority for Sarkozy alongside the reduction of overall migration numbers (Carvalho 2017: 10). Integration did not disappear from the political agenda, on the contrary, it saw further development in 2010, when the question of Muslim integration and secularisation was once again put on the agenda in the French parliament. The law, more commonly known as a 'burqa ban', prohibited the full face covering in public places (*Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public*) (Legifrance 2010). Interestingly, this debate was not launched by Sarkozy or UMP MPs, but originated from the request of the French Communist party MP, with an aim to create a Commission on the practice of the wearing of niqab and burqa on the national territory— "Commission on the practice of the wearing of niqab and burqa on the national territory" (*Commision d'enquête sur la pratique du port du niqab et de la burqa sur la territoire national*) (Roger 2010). However, Sarkozy has endorsed the proposal and expressed his support for the ban of the full veil in France arguing that: "Burqa is not welcome on the territory of the republic, [...] it is not a religious problem, but a problem of liberty and dignity of a woman" (The Guardian 2009). This led to the adoption of the above mentioned law in October 2010, which prohibited the coverage of the face in public places (Gabizon 2010), despite a tiny minority of the women (approximately 20,000) of the four million Muslim population, wearing a full veil in France (Camus 2024). Even though the text of the law did not explicitly mention the word 'burqa' or 'veil', and did not target a specific religion, it was implicitly directed against Islam and Muslim women wearing full veil. The law envisaged a 150 Euro fine for women for wearing a full veil and one year prison sentence and 30,000 Euros fine for men, who would force female members of their family to wear a full veil (Legifrance 2010). This law was later upheld by the International Court of Human Rights, which indicated that French authorities have the legal right to preserve the idea of "living together" (Jamet and Ceilles 2014). Despite its controversial character, the law was largely supported by the public, with eighty-two per cent approving of the ban (Pew Research Center 2010). By reinforcing this kind of discourse and adopting legislation, Sarkozy politicised the issue of Islam, emphasising strong attachment of the French to *laïcité* (Interview with a former head of the



Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016).

Cultural, but not socio-economic integration

While Sarkozy's discourse and policies focused on cultural integration, he failed to address the socio-economic one: unfavourable socio-economic status of immigrants and French of immigrant origin. On the contrary, "between 2008 and 2011 the unemployment rate gap widened between 'sensitive urban zones' and surrounding areas" (The Economist 2013). It should be noted that in June 2008 Sarkozy's government introduced *Espoir Banlieues*—the plan for the disadvantaged suburbs, led by Fadela Amara, secretary of state for the Ministry of Urban Policy. The plan aimed to promote socio-economic integration of *banlieue* residents by, among other measures, improving educational attainment for everyone, creating internships and jobs for young people from deprived areas, improving public transport and promoting social diversity through 'busing policy' that would allow pupils from disadvantaged areas to attend schools in other areas (Cassaigne 2009). The initiative signalled more a change in a discourse, rather than political will to invest in economic means to achieve the objectives, as the majority of the objectives it set out were not achieved and the plan was abandoned in 2011 because of the budgetary vigilance (La Tribune 2011).

This demonstrates that the inability to improve socio-economic integration stemmed from the absence of political will to go beyond the rhetoric and stick to long-term commitment to invest financial resources in such integration measures. Sarkozy feared that increasing economic investment into integration would not find widespread public support and would go against what he campaigned for: not bring more family migrants who need to integrate, but limit family migration because of economic and cultural anxieties.

If we refer to the politics of integration of immigration, there are talks that we should do something positive for the immigrants, but politically there is no courage to do it. There is no wish to really do it because it is easier to blame immigrants and those of immigrant origin than help them (Interview with Marie-José Bernardot, former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, 2016).

The politicisation of immigration by the FN has forced Sarkozy to adopt a tougher stance on cultural integration, banning wearing religious symbols in state schools and prohibiting the covering of full face in public, but not on socio-economic one (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016). By addressing integration issue from only one perspective—cultural, which has been widely exploited by FN, Sarkozy attempted to neutralise the competitor, which similarly to Sarkozy, did not care about improving economic position of immigrants.

There is an influence in a sense that FN neutralises two principal parties of the government. It neutralises or, in other words, simplifies the debate. So,



all the stakes are at addressing the debate and leaving the FN aside. (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016).

While there was sufficient discourse about the intention to improve integration, there was a lack of political will to finance the integration policy and to improve socio-economic situation of the immigrants and the French of immigrant origin (Interview with Marie-José Bernardot, former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, 2016). In an attempt to boost his popularity and prevent the alienation of his electorate to FN, Sarkozy targeted cultural integration, by reinforcing the Republican values of *laïcité*, but has not focused on addressing economic integration of immigrants, which aims to integrate people into French society by erasing discrimination and creating opportunities for achieving better educational results, decreasing unemployment and increasing wages. Socio-economic deprivation in the French suburbs was highlighted on the agenda in 2005, when violence erupted in Parisian suburbs, following the death of two teenagers, who were electrocuted to death while being chased by police. These riots in Parisian suburbs spread to other cities and led to the evolution of integration policy, shifting it from an anti-discrimination to an equal opportunities paradigm. The adoption of the law for equality of opportunities (*Loi pour l'égalité des chances*) in March 2006 represented a legal basis for this change. The creation of *Agence Nationale pour la Cohesion Sociale et l'Égalité des Chances* (ACSE) in August 2006 aimed to improve social cohesion and finance the development of disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, this change in approach erased an important legal instrument of punishment of those who were discriminating and drew attention away from discrimination to equal opportunities:

Nicholas Sarkozy closes the only public institution in charge of discrimination—FASILD (*Fonds d'action et de soutien pour l'intégration et la lutte contre les discriminations*) and proposes to create the institution that will focus on the notion of equal opportunities [...] which is not attached to legal framework, meaning that in case of discrimination you cannot prosecute anyone. (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

The lack of political will to properly finance the integration budget was an obstacle to developing integration (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016). While it was easier to demonstrate the electorate that Sarkozy addressed cultural integration by adopting legislation that would require stronger assimilation, but it is more politically risky to address socio-economic integration in socially deprived areas with high concentration of immigrants and citizens of immigrant background (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). Despite the introduction of equality opportunities approach, residents of disadvantaged areas have not felt much improvement (Chrisafis 2015). On the contrary, the gap between unemployment rates in sensitive urban zones (*zones urbaines sensibles*) and other zones widened (Observatoire des inégalités 2014). Sarkozy's change to equality of



opportunities paradigm was only present on paper, but in reality the socio-economic situation in French suburbs did not improve.

Conclusion

Immigration and integration policy change in France underwent a considerable transformation during Sarkozy's time in office, both as a minister of the Interior and as a President of the Republic. His approach focused on increasing highly skilled labour migration, decreasing family and student migration and introducing more restrictive integration legislation. In this paper I argued that restrictive character of immigration and integration discourse and policy changes is explained by examining external to the party factors such as party competition, public opinion, which is underpinned by economic and cultural anxieties as well as effects of the EU integration.

Such change was partly explained by electoral rise of the radical right FN, which fuelled identity anxieties of the public and led to the introduction of legislation that implicitly targeted the presence of Islam in France. Integration was addressed primarily from a cultural perspective and focused on the prohibition of ostentatious religious symbols in public schools and the ban of full veils in public places, as well as making welfare assistance conditional upon success of integration. Socio-economic integration was only addressed following 2005 riots that erupted in suburbs of Paris and other cities, but effectively the change in paradigm only happened on paper, shifting an emphasis from fighting discrimination to providing immigrants and people of immigrant origin with the equality of opportunity. As Sarkozy aimed to reduce family migration to France and not to incentivise further migration, there was a lack of political will to improve the socio-economic position of *banlieue* residents that are largely immigrants and of immigrant origin.

The logic behind limiting student migration was driven by concerns about the French economy, which were aggravated by 2007 Global financial crisis, resulting in higher unemployment and specifically youth unemployment. Selective immigration approach was the focus during Sarkozy's presidency, which aimed to attract only highly skilled migrants into the country, who were less likely to become unemployed. However such promise was not achieved as the French economy was not coping well with the crisis and French companies were not seeking to recruit even highly skilled migrants. Furthermore, Sarkozy and UMP tried to 'export' the possibility of higher unemployment by limiting student migration and making it more difficult for third country students to remain in France. Legislation that entailed such changes—the Guéant's circular, was later amended as a result of civil society disapproval, specifically the 'organised public', which included representatives from higher education institutions, who argued that such legislation threatened French soft power and attractiveness in the world in the education sphere.

The effects of the EU integration emphasised the importance of the protection of the EU external border from illegal third country immigration. The absence of



border control between EU member states affected Sarkozy's security discourse on illegal migration, with the anxieties centred around illegal third country stemming to France through Italy, which had weak maritime border controls with non-EU countries. This resulted in France temporarily reinstating the border control with Italy, albeit for a short period of time. Effects of the EU integration also underpinned discourse on family migration and presented an obstacle for cutting family migration as European legal framework allowed non-EU immigrants to bring their family to settle in France. It also identifies new factors such as the effects of the EU integration, which led to toughening of the discourse around illegal and family migration.

This paper also contributes to the existing literature on immigration and integration policy change by highlighting the importance of external to the party factors in explaining such change and identifying new factors such as the effects of the EU integration. It contributes to the immigration policy liberalisation literature, by highlighting the importance of non-economic benefits immigration brings, which take place in a form of soft power, as migration is also reviewed as the way to increase French *rayonnement* in the world.

Appendices

Appendix 1: list of the interviews conducted in Paris, between June and July 2016

Type of interview/person	Interview date	Location
Marie-José Bernardot, chief of the bureau of social, cultural and territorial integration within the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development and then Ministry of the Interior	27 June 2016	Saint-Denis
The Républicains MP	28 June 2016	Assemblée Nationale
Patrick Stefanini, Senior civil servant and former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control	30 June 2016	Direction générale d'Ile-de-France
The Républicains MP	5 July 2016	Assemblée Nationale
Nicolas Sarkozy's special advisor	6 July 2016	Office of a private law firm
Frédéric Callens, regional director of FASILD et ACSE (2006–2009)	5 July 2016	Saint-Denis
The Républicains MP	7 July 2016	Assemblée Nationale



Appendix 2: coding framework (examples of coding scheme)

Codes	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the code	Examples
Party competition on the right	This code addresses UMP's changing position on immigration as a result of increasing electoral pressure from <i>Front National</i> , when the UMP tightened its policies and proposes new policies as a way of trying to prevent its right-wing electorate from alienating to the radical right	Mentioning of <i>Front National</i> , Marine Le Pen's positions on the issue, loosing electoral base, elections, extremists, election results	This was a political sign for the FN's electorate to reassure them that Sarkozy wanted to take care of national identity but the big mistake is that nobody knows what is French national identity is and nobody can give specific definition of what it is. (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016)
Public opinion	This code concerns the importance of public opinion on immigration to understand further tightening of immigration discourse and policy. It examines whether the UMP considered public opinion in the context of their immigration stance and whether the party and Sarkozy were worried about loosing public support. It focuses both perceived economic and cultural anxieties of the public on immigration	referencing to public concern, public debate, general election, perceptions, French people, public, electorate, or phrases, where these words are not explicitly mentioned, but where it is implied that public opinion was important while considering how immigration discourse and policies should be developed	It addressed the non-existent problem to please the electorate and demonstrate that you Sarkozy aimed to deliver on highly skilled migration. It is because of this we have delivered too little on selective immigration, because it responds to the problem that does not exist. Those people who fall within the requirements of the card do not need it as they are recruited by the companies directly. (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016)
Effects of the EU integration	The theme centres around the EU's free movement of people, absence of border controls within the EU. It also addresses the supranational character of the legal framework with regards to immigration and border management within the EU	EU migration, increasing numbers of EU migrants, external border controls	Nowadays the policies are communitarised, visa policies, border control... So, there are subjects where Europe exercises more competence than member states (Interview with the Republicans MP, 2016)



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