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2022 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN FRANCE: AN ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Assessments of the foreign policy of France after the April 2022 presidential election will guide the scholars on the future of the internal and external policies of France and the European Union (EU). Within this framework, the paper aims to identify the foreign policy approaches of the presidential candidates and the political parties they have represented in France. The paper adopts a diverse approach from traditional foreign policy approaches which take internal and external factors separately as units of analysis in foreign policy-making processes. Contrary to the traditional perspective, the authors focused on the interaction of internal and external factors, because it is argued in the paper that this interaction creates mutual impacts on agents and shapes foreign policy-making procedures. Methodologically the paper elaborates on the interaction through an analysis of the discourses of seven presidential candidates and the programs of the political parties they have represented. It is concluded in the paper that the interaction of the factors in French foreign policy has currently concentrated on the themes such as migration, security, economy, climate change, Islam, NATO membership, and the future of the EU. The article tries to contribute to the foreign policy analysis literature through a comprehensive analysis from a perspective of neoclassical realism on the combination of internal and external factors and to illuminate the probable reflections of the presidential election process in France.

Keywords: Foreign Policy Analysis, France, Presidential Election, European Union, International Politics.

JEL Classification: F53, F59.

2022 FRANSA CUMHURBAŞKANLIĞI SEÇİMİ: DIŞ POLİTİKA ANALİZİ ÜZERİNE BİR DEĞERLENDİRME

ÖZ

Nisan 2022 cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimi sonrasındaki Fransa dış politikasına ilişkin yapılacak değerlendirmeler, araştırmacılara Fransa ve Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) iç ve dış politikalarının geleceği konusunda yol gösterici nitelikte olacaktır. Bu çerçevede makalenin amacı, Fransa'da cumhurbaşkanlığı adayları ile adayların temsil ettiği siyasi partilerin dış politika yaklaşımlarının tespit edilmesidir. Makale, dış politika yapım süreçlerinde iç ve dış faktörleri ayrı analiz birimleri olarak ele alan geleneksel dış politika yaklaşımlarından farklı bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Geleneksel bakış açısının aksine, yazarlar iç ve dış faktörlerin etkileşimine odaklanmakta olup makalede bu etkileşimin aktörler üzerinde karşılıklı etkiler yarattığı ve dış politika yapım süreçlerini şekillendirdiği tartışılmaktadır. Metodolojik olarak makale, bu etkileşimi, yedi cumhurbaşkanı adayının söylemleri ve adayların temsil ettikleri siyasi partilerin programları üzerinden değerlendirmektedir. Makalede, Fransız dış politikasındaki iç ve dış faktörler arasındaki etkileşimin, hâlihazırda göç, güvenlik, ekonomi, iklim değişikliği, İslam, NATO üyeliği ve AB'nin geleceği temaları üzerinde yoğunlaştığı sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu çalışma, iç ve dış faktörlerin bileşimi üzerine neoklasik realizm perspektifinden kapsamlı bir analiz yaparak dış politika analizi literatürüne katkıda bulunmaya ve Fransa'daki cumhurbaşkanlığı seçim sürecinin olası yansımalarına ışık tutmaya çalışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dış Politika Analizi, Fransa, Cumhurbaşkanlığı Seçimi, Avrupa Birliği, Uluslararası Siyaset.

JEL Sınıflandırması: F53, F59.

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INTRODUCTION

The students of international relations have been currently witnessing the transformation of actors and factors within foreign policy analysis (FPA). The transformation stems from the nature of politics both in domestic and international realms. Until the end of the Cold War, scholars separated domestic policy and foreign policy strictly from each other, and they considered that these areas had unique characteristics. However, with the end of the Cold War, the lines between domestic and foreign policy areas are blurred. As expressed by Kaarbo et al., FPA connects the study of international relations with the study of domestic politics (Kaarbo, Lantis, & Beasley, 2013, s. 2). Thus, the approaches within the FPA have become inevitable in analyzing these blurred lines.

The FPA is based upon different factors which influence the foreign policies of states. Traditionally, these factors were grouped into two categories: external factors and internal factors. While the first category refers to the international environment as the source of foreign policies, the second category refers to the domestic area shaping the foreign policy of states. Kaarbo et al. define external factors as *"the organization of the international system, the characteristics of contemporary international relations and acts of other actors"*. On the other hand, they define internal factors as *"characteristics of the domestic political system and its ingredients; citizens and groups within the system, the government organizations, and individual leaders"* (Kaarbo et al., 2013, p. 7). The literature refers to the constructivist approach and different units of analysis such as the public, societal groups, bureaucratic organizations, leaders, and political psychology as internal factors, whereas, traditional viewpoints benefit from realism, liberalism, dependency theory, and world-systems theory to conceptualize and explain external factors.¹

The literature centered on the divisions or one of these particular factors to identify foreign policies of states. However, neoclassical realist theory adopts a broad foreign policy perspective including both domestic and international factors. The realist school was composed of neorealism, structural realism, offensive realism, and defensive realism until the 1990s. Nevertheless, with the end of the Cold War, neoclassical realism as a more recent school has brought a new dimension to interpreting foreign policy. With this new trend, politics should be studied not only through the lens of systemic factors but also through internal factors such as leaders' choices and perceptions (Schweller, 2018, 28). According to neoclassical realism, external factors do not have direct effects since they are filtered by intervening variables, namely internal factors. To elaborate on the foreign policy of a state, one must observe *"the preferences and configurations of key domestic actors"* (Rose, 1998, 146-147). Since it is argued in the paper that the interaction creates mutual impacts on agents, this assumption can be tested by examining the discourses and promises of presidential candidates and their political parties in France. The paper is based upon

¹ See. Kaarbo, J., Lantis, J. S., & Beasley, R. K. (2013). *The Analysis of Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective*. Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective: Domestic and International Influences on State Behavior. United States: Sage Publications.

the argument by Devlen and Özdamar (2009, 136) that the political leaders' perception of the systemic environment, their prioritization of “*political survival*” and “*large group identity*” are determining factors in foreign policy-making processes. From this point of view, it is aimed in the paper to answer the following questions: How do the presidential candidates in France interpret the foreign policy priorities of the state? What is the impact of ideology, political survival, and large group identity priorities of the leaders during the April 2022 presidential election?

To answer the questions above, the paper elaborates on the first ballot results and public opinion polls released by Politico². The analysis covers both oral and written forms of different sources taken from the mainstream media, official websites of the political parties, and speeches given by the presidential candidates. From a neoclassical realist perspective, the paper highlights the interaction of factors in French foreign policy. Concerning the results of the latest polls, this paper handled seven candidates and parties or movements they belong to. Through the analysis, the paper aims to provide a broad understanding of the French foreign policy both for the present and the future, whilst shedding light on the foreign policy agenda of the EU as well. The first section informs briefly about the election process in France and its repercussions both in Europe and around the world. The second section elaborates on the presidential election from the perspective of FPA. The third and fourth sections inform and analyze the political parties/movements, leaders, and their foreign policy agendas during the election process. The final section provides prospects for the foreign policy agenda of France and the impact of the election on the EU and international politics.

2022 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN FRANCE AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

According to the Constitution of France which was mainly designed by General Charles de Gaulle³ in 1958, the president is the main figure in the democratic system in the country. In this semi-presidential system of France from 1958 to the present, namely the French Fifth Republic, the president appoints the prime minister as the head of the government and ministers. The government is accountable to French citizens, the National Assembly, and the Senate (Gouvernement, n.d.). Due to the president's position, the presidential election plays a crucial role for the French citizens.

² This paper exploited POLITICO's polls on the presidential election in France. POLITICO is a global nonpartisan politics and policy news organization. See <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/>, (Last Access: 09.04.2022).

³ Charles de Gaulle was a General in the French army and he was the leader of the 'Free France' movement which was founded by him to fight against the German invasion of France during World War II. He has been named the founder of democratic France after the war. General de Gaulle had a conservative and nationalist foreign policy rooted in the developments during World War II. He supported the 'national independence' and 'free and sovereign Europe' policy in the region and he had negative attitudes toward the presence of the US and the UK in Europe. He has seen the US and the UK as 'Trojan horses' against the peace and stability in Europe. For those reasons, he opposed both the membership of the UK and the 'supranational' efforts in the European Community during the 1960s. Within this foreign policy approach, France, under the leadership of de Gaulle, withdrew from the military command of NATO, in 1966 and favored a rapprochement with the Soviet Union to build up a 'pan-European' system 'ranging from the Ural Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean'. Since then, 'Gaullist' foreign policy sentiments have had a considerable place in the foreign policy preferences of the politicians in France (Sander, 1995, p. 348-355).

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The president with its highest authority is elected for five years with universal suffrage (Leterre, 2002). The results of elections, especially in states with major or middle power have a considerable impact on domestic, regional, and international politics. Regarded as a middle power democracy, France has been playing a central role in EU policies and a significant role in global politics (Kleinfeld et al, 2021). Considering the traditional foreign policy priorities of France, namely Europe, transatlantic relations, and Francophone Africa, the election for the presidency will have striking repercussions on both EU policy-making and international politics.

According to Article 7 of the French Constitution, if a candidate takes the absolute majority of the votes, then he or she becomes the president of France for five years. Otherwise, electorates vote for the second time but for the two candidates who take the majority of the votes on the first ballot (Leterre, 2002). The second round should be carried out two weeks later than the first round, and the candidates need just the majority of the votes to be elected in this round. Since Macron and Le Pen took 27.85% and 23.15% of the votes respectively in the election on 10 April 2022, they two passed to second-round elections on 24 April 2022. According to Article 6 of the Constitution, the same president can be elected by the citizens two times (1958, p.5). For that reason, Macron's candidacy has taken the attention of the French electorate, media, and foreign countries. In addition to Macron's candidacy, the election in April 2022 has various dimensions which need to be observed in detail.

This paper discusses the importance of the 2022 election within four main aspects: domestic politics, EU politics, relations with NATO, and international politics. The first and foremost aspect is the *domestic politics* of France which has been currently on the verge of various difficulties and changes. The major themes of the presidential election can be identified as migration, security, economy, climate change, Islam and Muslims, NATO, and the future of the EU. The second aspect of the election is on the *EU level*. The EU has been one of the main themes of the French presidential elections since the first years of European integration. While the election is a matter of domestic politics, it influences EU bodies and EU member states as well. As one of the six founding members of European integration, France has been shaping the core policies of the EU. As can be inferred from Macron's discourses, specific themes like "*security, defense, economy, sovereignty, migration, and leadership of the EU on global politics*" will dominate the EU in the long run (Çakır, 2021).

The third aspect of the presidential election revolves around *NATO* and its position in domestic and international politics. The historical roots of the significance of NATO in French foreign policy can be traced back to the establishment process of the Alliance after the Second World War, the French position against the American dominance over European security, the 1966 withdrawal decision of France from NATO's integrated military command under the administration of de Gaulle and its return to it in 2009. The position of France, as a NATO member, will determine the future of the organization. After the establishment of Australia, UK, and US alliance, namely AUKUS, a heated debate on the membership of France in NATO was restarted by the presidential candidates (Pollet, 2021). Therefore, the presidential election in

France touches upon the future of NATO and its power in a broad sense. The final aspect points out a more complicated and broad area: *international politics*. The changing characteristics of the balance of power and politics make French elections critical at regional and global levels. The stances of presidential candidates on international issues have an impact not only on the foreign policy of France but also on international politics.

In connection with the last aspect, a recent development has been highly affecting global politics and producing many repercussions on the French election. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 created a complex political environment in France. While the war has dominated the agenda, it has affected the discourses and campaigns of the candidates as well. In this respect, it is essential to consider the Ukraine war during the analysis within the context of assessing the impact on the election (Coffey, 2022; Quentin & Boiteau, 2022). By taking into consideration all these aspects and dynamics, it can be argued that the presidential election in France has the potential to open up 'Pandora's box' to assess regional and international politics in the short term. Moreover, it becomes necessary to analyze this presidential election from the perspective of the FPA to foresee the interaction of various factors.

FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEOCLASSICAL REALISM

It is argued in the paper that the interaction of external and internal factors determines the foreign policy preferences of the agents and the structure. The idea behind this stems from the insufficiency of traditional literature on FPA that separates internal and external factors and focuses on just one aspect to make an analysis. Hence, traditional analyses do not explain foreign policy-making and the preferences of actors in a broad sense. Therefore, it can be stated that the separation of factors reduces international politics to a narrow area of research.

Hill (2003, p.28) defines foreign policy-making as a “*complex process of interaction between many actors, differentially embedded in a wide range of different structures*”. Freire (2012, p.3) supports this argument and adds that the co-constitutive relations between agency and structure lead to the process of foreign policy-making. Since the 1990s, neoclassical realists have stressed the role of “*firstly statesmen, not the states*”; “*cognition, strategic culture, state-society relations, and domestic institutions*” in foreign policy-making (Zakaria, 1998, p. 42; Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro, 2009, p. 68). In a similar vein, Devlen and Özdamar (2019, p. 149) argue that the foreign policy of a state is influenced by the perceptions of domestic political leaders. If the leaders have “*conflictual or cooperative*” actions, if they maximize the large-group identity and prioritize political survival over everything, then the foreign policy-making procedures will be directly shaped by those mentioned. The paper follows this perspective in assessing French foreign policy through the interaction of various factors during the presidential election process.

FPA proposes that the leadership style, personalities, and beliefs of the leaders construct and shape the foreign policy of states. However, foreign policy-making

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cannot be reduced to internal factors or actors such as the acts of presidents, prime ministers, or authoritarian leaders. It is argued in the paper that these actors play a significant role as components of the interaction between internal and external factors. It should be stressed that the discourses of French leaders and political parties or movements they act for during the presidential election campaigns unveil the interaction of factors in foreign policy.

LEADERS, PARTIES, AND THEIR FOREIGN POLICY AGENDAS FOR THE PRESIDENCY

The spring of 2022 has a special meaning to French citizens due to the presidential election. Although the number of candidates reached 60, there were 12 candidates in the first round as stated by Laurent Fabius, Head of the Constitutional Council. Accordingly, 12 of the 60 candidates obtained the required 500 valid signatures from the elected officials in at least 30 different French departments (Fitzpatrick, 2022). One of these candidates has been Emmanuel Macron who officially announced his candidacy on 3 March 2022 (France 24, 2022). The remaining candidates have been; Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement National), Jean-Luc Mélenchon (La France Insoumise), Valérie Pécresse (Les Républicains), Eric Zemmour (Reconquest), Anne Hidalgo (Socialist Party), Yannick Jadot (Green Party), Nicolas Dupont-Aignan (Debout La France/Stand Up France), Fabien Roussel (Parti communiste français/Communist Party), Jean Lassalle (Resist), Nathalie Arthaud (Lutte Ouvrière/ Workers' Struggle) and Philippe Poutou (Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste/ New Anticapitalist Party) (Tidey, 2021). The polls on the election focused on seven candidates who could have reached at least 4% of the total votes.⁴ In that respect, this paper focuses on these seven candidates, their political parties or movements, foreign policy choices, and goals. The candidates are; Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Valérie Pécresse, Eric Zemmour, Anne Hidalgo, and Yannick Jadot. In the section below, the authors take a closer look at those candidates and their parties to examine the interaction between the factors and elaborate on their foreign policy agendas and motives from a neoclassical realist perspective.

Emmanuel Macron- *La République en Marche (LRM)* / *The Republic on the Move*

As a former Minister of Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs, Emmanuel Macron is the founder of the political party, *La République en Marche (LRM)* as well. The party was founded in 2016 as a political movement to combine leftist, rightist, and other groups into its structure (Macron, n.d.) Starting with the 2017 presidential election, the movement *En Marche* has pursued its political goals under the leadership of Macron. He ran for a second term after he completed his first term as the president of France (Tidey, 2021). Politico estimated that Macron could take 26% of the votes in

⁴To narrow down the study, Politico's data on polls in France is studied. See. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/> (Last Access: 11.01.2022)

the first round of the election.⁵ As expected, he obtained the highest number, 27.8% of the votes in the first round which gave him the right to run for the second round.⁶

During his term in the 2017-2022 presidency, Macron followed an active and passionate foreign policy both in Europe and around the world to strengthen his position in domestic politics as well. Macron aimed to empower the EU by protecting both "*the international liberal order and European civilization*". He has underlined that this is the mission of France to maintain stability in the region as a reflection of the party's ideology. France has been following a consistent foreign policy approach to European security since the first years of the European integration. 1950 Pleven Plan was proposed by France to establish the European Defense Community. Even though this initiative could not be put into practice, France aimed to integrate the six founding members' foreign and security policies through Fouchet Plan in 1962. In the 1990s, Common Foreign and Security Policy and European Security and Defense Policy have been the turning points for the EU in terms of deeper integration in the political sphere. In 1998, the then president of France, Jacques Chirac, and the then prime minister of the UK, Tony Blair, agreed on the Saint-Malo Declaration to lead an autonomous foreign and security policy in Europe through a 'rapid reaction force'. Those efforts finally worked and NATO members recognized the individual capacity of the EU in defense policy through the 2002 Berlin Plus agreements (Bindi, 2022, p. 37). By following the defense policy initiatives of de Gaulle and Chirac, the latest French president Macron proposed the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) pact to boost European defense cooperation in 2017, and aimed at a more autonomous EU in terms of security and defense (Staunton, 2021). After France took over the rotating EU presidency in January 2022, Macron made a speech in the European Parliament (EP) by highlighting the European collective security and the 'strategic autonomy' of the EU (France24, 2022). Strategic autonomy has been on the agenda of Macron since the 2010s to exist with a strong "*European sovereignty*" in the international arena (European Parliament, 2021). As neoclassical realism explains, Macron has followed *En Marche's* policies which have been stated in the party program for his political survival and the continuity of the large-group identity.⁷

Macron announced the agenda of the EU as "*an independent, strong, sovereign and free EU*". The foreign policy agenda of France has focused on migration, defense, hate speech in social media, and the economy as large group identity preferences. Macron has stressed building forces for the EU borders to control migration and EU Joint Armed Forces to strengthen the defense in the region. To compensate for budget deficits in the EU, he has supported the reform of the existing rules on economic integration (Marin Pool, 2021). Thus, he planned to succeed both in domestic and foreign policy by using the interplay between these areas.

⁵ To see the tables, charts, and methodology. See. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/>, (Last Access: 11.01.2022)

⁶ For the results of the first round. See. <https://www.gouvernement.fr/actualite/election-presidentielle-les-resultats-du-premier-tour> (Last Access: 12.04.2022)

⁷ See the details of the program at <https://en-marche.fr/emmanuel-macron/le-programme/europe> (Last Access: 11.01.2022)

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As part of the EU policies on defense and security, 'Strategic Compass', was proposed in November 2021 by France to fortify self-sufficiency in European security. The goal of the Compass is to create "*autonomy on defense*" and decrease the dependency on the US and NATO. The EU aims to deploy 'rapid deployment troops', organize military drills, and facilitate partnerships among member states (Temizer, 2021). According to some analysts, Macron tries to fill the gap of leadership in the EU by taking major steps within the EU's foreign policy. On the issue of the full membership of Turkey to the EU, Macron has ensued disapproving stances of former French presidents. He thinks that Turkey does not share the EU's values and policies, consequently, he opposes full membership of Turkey (Euronews, 2022).

France has a considerable role in shaping the crises around the world. In Africa, France sought to "*project influence, build new alliances, repair old rifts and defuse the migration issue at home*" under the leadership of Macron (Chutel, 2021). Military operations have been launched by France in Mali to eliminate religious fundamentalism and terrorism in the country since 2013. In 2022, with a decision by the Macron administration, France announced withdrawal from Mali because of the disagreements with the junta regime. However, political leaders in the Sahel have announced that they need France in conflict resolution processes (France 24, 17 February 2022). On the other hand, Libya has been a significant North African country for France. NATO operations in Libya were held in 2011 with the support of France to change the regime in the country. The Macron administration has also strategic interests over Libya in the terms of energy sources, stability of the Mediterranean region, and migration control (Zahr, 2021). Accordingly, the operations in Libya have brought different results for France and the region than the Mali operations (Gros, 2014). These developments have also influenced domestic politics as a result of the interaction of domestic and foreign politics. The relations with the east and the AUKUS crisis⁸ have been a watershed for the foreign policy preferences of France and Macron's position. It was previously seen as a "*treason to France*", but currently it has been perceived as an instrument for the EU to have a key role in Asia as stated by Macron (Reuters, 2021). French opposition leaders share Macron's political stance on the AUKUS crisis and they reopen the debate on withdrawing from NATO after the row on submarines (Pollet, 2021).

The position of France in Russia and Ukraine has been particularly important for European security. The Macron administration supported NATO's position in the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Macron both wanted to communicate with Putin and strived to force Russia to refrain from a new clash. He aimed to improve relations with Russia the same as the other candidates. This had been one of the commonalities of leaders and political parties in France before the war in 2022 (Marlowe, 2022). However, during the

⁸ The AUKUS crisis stemmed from Australia's decision to cancel the 90 billion dollars contract with France for 12 submarines, which was negotiated between 2014 and 2016, and a new deal with the US, the UK, and Australia for building nuclear-powered submarines in September 2021. Although this new 'alliance' with Australia was named a huge success by the US and the UK against China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region, it annoyed France and caused a confidence crisis between these NATO allies (Scheffer & Quencez, 2021).

2022 Russian invasion, Macron stood against Russia and pledged support for Ukraine. He stresses the EU autonomy as a long-term policy, particularly on security and the economy (Leali & Moens, 2022). During the first round of the elections, the situation in Ukraine made Macron more favorable as a result of 'the rally-round-the flag effect'. It makes people tend to rally around the incumbent leader and the government in times of war and crisis. For that reason, the current presidential election and the expectations of voters have been acutely influenced by external factors, namely Russia and the war in Ukraine (Caulcutt, 2022b; Coffey, 2022; Quentin & Boiteau, 2022).

Valérie Pécresse- *Les Républicains* / *The Republicans*

Valerie Pécresse, the successor of Jacques Chirac and Nicholas Sarkozy in the party, *Les Républicains*, is a representative of a center-right liberal-conservative political party following the ideas of de Gaulle (Reuters, 2015). The mainstream media presented Pécresse as a strong contender for Macron. It was estimated that she would grab at least 8% of the votes in the first round (Sputnik, 2022). However, she was able to obtain 4,78% of the total votes and lost her chance to compete in the second round. She has been the governor of the Ile-De-France region of Paris and she served as a Minister for Higher Education and Budget (Tidey, 2021).

Les Républicains and Pécresse's view on foreign policy was explained within the party convention published on the official website, in September 2021.⁹ Their foreign policy agenda focused on three major goals. The first goal was "*to reconquer the independence of Europeans*". Pécresse believed that the EU needed various reforms in the sectors such as agriculture and industry (Les Republicains, 2021, pp. 10-16). Furthermore, in line with other candidates and political parties, the party planned to "*fight against uncontrolled immigration by setting up a European section of measures (in addition to measures at the national level)*". Pécresse promised to restore the Schengen Agreement and migration policy of the EU and France. The main difference between Pécresse and Macron seems to be her promise to abandon the "*uncontrolled migration*" as a reflection of large-group identity. The promise included halving the number of residence permits for migrants, holding a referendum to change the laws, and introducing migration quotas first in France and later in the EU (Chrisafis, 2021; Les Republicains, 2021, p. 20). To support these steps, they also planned to reform foreign aid to African countries.

Pécresse, who cares about large group identity priorities, has similarities with the foreign policy approaches of Macron. She has pledged to "*restore France's pride and protect the French*" by making France "*more sovereign*" in the world as a second goal (Chrisafis, 2021; Euronews, 2021a). The party has been critical of "*any further enlargement of the European Union or the Schengen area and put a definitive end to accession negotiations with Turkey*" (Les Republicains, 2021, p. 29). Pécresse stated that it is possible to take back control over the European migration policy with the regeneration of bilateral relations with Turkey (Les Republicains, 2021, p. 46).

⁹ "Convention Europe et International". See <https://republicains.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2021-09-24-IR-convention-europe.pdf> , (Last Access: 12.01.2022)

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Moreover, in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change, she targeted to increase carbon taxes and include nuclear energy in the green taxonomy (Les Republicains, 2021, p. 33; Tidey, 2021). The last goal has been to give France a truly international role and “.. to face China, Russia, Turkey, and the US” (Les Republicains, 2021, pp. 37-48). They see China as a big rival and threat to European values. To balance China's hegemony, they suggested a new approach to the Indo-Pacific region by supporting Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and Australia both militarily and economically (Les Republicains, 2021, p. 42). While China has been maintained to be considered a rival and threat, Russia was considered a “*debatable*” actor. However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has changed the approach. Currently, they have not pursued this positive attitude and have supported Ukraine in the war against Russia. According to Péresse, “*the Russian president can no longer become an ally for France*”. She supports the sanctions against Russia and defines those as “*necessary*” for the security of Europe (Linfo.re, 2022).

Les Republicains has challenging ideas on the relations with the US. They have aimed to maintain the ‘Gaullist’ and ‘Chiraquian’ tradition concerning their relations with the US as can be seen in the discourses within the party convention: “*Allied but not aligned*” as stated in the past by Former Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine. They opposed the economic superiority of the US companies. Péresse stressed that France should not be “*dependent on the US*” (Les Republicains, 2021, p. 48). Their attitude toward the US is rooted in the historical goal of independence in foreign policy.

Last but not least, Péresse aimed to increase ties with French-speaking or *francophone* countries. The party delegates wished to strengthen the resources devoted to the Francophonie to make them a lever for economic, technical, and cultural cooperation with France (Les Republicains, 2021, p. 50). As a result, Péresse and her party hoped to fortify the position of France around the world by increasing ties with different regional actors from Russia to African countries which could ultimately strengthen the position of Péresse and the Republicans in domestic politics.

Marine Le Pen- *Rassemblement National* / *National Rally*

The leader of *Rassemblement National*, Marine Le Pen has had a long-lasting political career in France. As a far-right leader, she took over her father's seat at the party. Although she has followed radical sentiments on politics due to her father as a model of a political figure, she both has changed and has been changed within years. For instance, the party's name was changed from *National Front* to *National Rally* in 2018 to get more support from European citizens in the EP elections in 2019 (Deutsche Welle, 2018).

In the 2017 presidential election, Le Pen lost the presidency against Macron in the second round. Much as she lost in the 2017 election and popularity in France, she persevered in her ambition to unseat Macron in the 2022 election (Tidey, 2021). Even though she has lost popularity in the previous election, Politico's polls on the presidential election refuted this opinion for 2022. It was estimated that she could grab at least 23% of the votes and they succeeded in their prediction. She obtained 23.1%

of the total votes and she has the right to run in the second round election against Macron on 24 April 2022.

The leading characteristic of the party is that it centers on the leader's authority and discriminates against democratic participation within the organization. Due to this structure, charismatic leadership and hierarchy play a central role in this political party (Akgül Durakçay, 2021, p. 252-253). Moreover, Le Pen's discourse on foreign policy predominantly determines the preferences of the party. Le Pen has had radical and critical sentiments in foreign policy for a long time. She sticks to some themes, namely security, migration, independent foreign policy, a strong military, and the economy as a reflection of the party's ideology and for her political survival (Tidey, 2021). In the 2017 party program, Le Pen wrote 144 articles to clarify her party's stance on domestic and foreign policies. While she softened some policies, she kept many of them. She has seen the EU as a bond with France and has opposed the EU for years. After Brexit, she named the pledge for exit from the EU as "*Frexit*" (Akgül Durakçay, 2021, p. 262). However, she has currently emphasized how to "*transform the EU*", in line with far-right sentiments in European countries that can be assessed from a neoclassical realist point of view.

The party aims to direct EP and the EU towards a more conservative and nationalistic path. Le Pen's role is vital because she has been one of the strong candidates for presidential elections in 2022. She planned to expand her foreign policy preferences across the region by setting alliances in Europe. Initially, she planned to withdraw France from the Schengen Area and implement strict border controls. The party followed a campaign against the existing structure of the EU in the 2019 election. In this process, the party tried to influence Europeans to take their assistance for a "*new Europe*" (Akgül Durakçay, 2021, p. 264). Le Pen's opposition has not been indigenous to the EU. She opposes NATO membership and the role of the US in European security as well. As stated in the manifestation, France should "*leave the integrated military command of NATO so that France is not drawn into wars that are not hers*" (Le Pen, 2017, p. 19). Before the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Le Pen opposed the US position against Russia in the region and she pledged to improve relations with Russia. She believed that Russia had been a part of European culture and identity, but the US had not (Dagens Nyheter, 2016). Recently, she has turned against Russia and embraced Ukrainian refugees obviously for electoral reasons despite her strong ties with the Putin regime including financial support for her party. It should be noted that Le Pen has never condemned the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and improved ties with Putin's government. In recent, on the contrary, she has strongly condemned Russia due to the civilian casualty allegations in Ukraine. She has called these incidents war crimes and has demanded investigation (Caulcutt, 2022a; France 24, 2022b, p. 24).

Eric Zemmour- *Reconquête* / *Reconquest*

Eric Zemmour, who moved from journalism to politics, has been the most controversial candidate for the 2022 presidential election. He has been one of the far-

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right candidates and is considered a radical figure in politics. This has made Le Pen a moderate candidate in the election. Zemmour and Le Pen have followed different ways for their political survival to unseat Macron in the presidential election (Amiel, 2021). To follow his way, Zemmour set up his political party *Reconquête* in December 2021, instead of joining one of the right-wing parties. However, they have narrow policy agendas which focus on a few issues, particularly migration, Islam, gender, and Euroscepticism.¹⁰ Zemmour's campaign has been considered a mixture of nostalgia and searing provocation replication of de Gaulle in some quarters (Ramdani, 2021).

Zemmour has been famed for his provocation on Islam, migration, and women. He stated that France has been losing its power from the perspectives of geopolitics and economics for the reasons of "*migration, Islamization, and feminization of the society*" (Tidey, 2021). In illustrating his theory of the 'great replacement' based on the allegation that the French-born population is being replaced by immigrants, he has used hate speech and has a discriminative approach against different segments of the society. It was estimated that he would get at least 9% of the votes in the election.¹¹ In the first round, he obtained 7.07% of the total votes, therefore he did not run in the second round. He had promises predominantly over domestic policy areas. However, one can infer their foreign policy preferences from the "*priorities*" of the party which were released on the official website.¹² He planned to implement his policies primarily in Europe and later in the whole world, by using domestic and foreign politics mutually to the benefit of their large group's identity as can be explained by neoclassical realism.

The texts within his website of Zemmour show that his ideas on foreign policy have been challenging in some respects. For example, he wanted to "save" France from decades of migration and liberalism. He thinks that these two phenomena have caused the decline of France in international politics. In his opinion, Europe has had a "*Christian heritage*" and "*without Christianity, the EU wouldn't be possible*". He argued that the "*Islamization of Europe reflects the clash of civilizations*". From his viewpoint, European countries must forbid the movement of Muslim migrants to "*protect Europe*". He has extended his ideas both for the region and around the globe by referring to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He argued that European states must protect Armenia from regional "*threats*", because, Armenians reflect the Christian heritage in the region as well. Zemmour's foreign policy perception and choices signify his radical thoughts (Euronews, 2021b).

Zemmour's campaign consisted of five priorities, one of which reflected his main goal in foreign policy: "*independence*". He stressed that France should follow de Gaulle's approach to foreign policy. He rejected the judgments of supranational bodies by implying judicial bodies of the EU. He has also opposed the role of NATO by pledging to withdraw from it to follow an "*independent*" policy. Furthermore, he opposed the role of the US in Europe as well. He aimed to strengthen relations with Russia and loosen with the US respectively. To follow these goals, he stressed the role

¹⁰ Zemmour's program for the presidential election. See., <https://programme.zemmour2022.fr/>, (Last Access: 13.01.2022)

¹¹ See. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/>, (Last Access: 13.01.2022)

¹² For more details. See. <https://www.zemmour2022.fr/priorites>, (Last Access: 13.01.2022)

of military power and he planned to ramp up the armed forces of France (Pujol-Mazzini, 2021). At the beginning of the war in Ukraine in 2022, Zemmour supported building negotiations between the two parties and *the "neutralization"* of Ukraine on NATO membership. The civilian massacres in Ukraine made those views controversial. Henceforth Zemmour was also forced to change his position on Russia while in the past he used to declare he dreamed of becoming a Putin. Recently he has called Putin *"a dirty image of Russia"* (Franceinfo, 2022b, 2022c).

Jean-Luc Mélenchon -*La France Insoumise / Rebellious France*

La France Insoumise is a left-wing populist party that was settled by Jean-Luc Mélenchon in 2016 as a democratic socialist party. Following the socialist ideas, Mélenchon was previously co-leader of the Socialist Party until 2008 (Mullen, 2018). To start changes in France, he started a movement called *La France Insoumise*, which means 'rebellious France' or 'insubordinate France'. He first showed up in the 2017 presidential election as a candidate and took 19% of the votes in the first round. However, he lost against Macron and Le Pen in the second round. Politico estimated that Mélenchon's popularity decreased to 17% (Tidey, 2021). In the first round of the 2022 election, he obtained 21.95% of the total votes but he lost his chance to run for the second round.

Mélenchon's campaign in 2022 focused mainly on domestic politics and the EU. The party shares the idea of Le Pen and calls the EU a *"dead"* organization. They assert that *"the EU is not Europe. The current Union boils down to a single market where the people are subject to the dictatorship of banks and finance"*. Following this idea, Mélenchon and his party aimed to regenerate the current treaties of the EU (*La France Insoumise*, 2018). The party also supports a French referendum to see the supporters of Frexit (France 24, 2017). In addition to their socialist and ecologist views, the party keeps a Eurosceptic approach to EU affairs. Consequently, this approach indicates that Mélenchon, Le Pen, and Zemmour have been in agreement with each other on the functioning of the EU. As neoclassical realism argues, they elaborate on the EU issues from their parties' ideological points of view and by prioritizing their political survival.

The aforementioned leaders have also critical arguments on the role played by NATO and the US in European security. They oppose the hegemonic role of the US around the world. Mélenchon pledged to withdraw from NATO (Jouve, 2016). The party asserted that the United Nations (UN) is the only legitimate body for collective security. She aimed to *"organize a European conference on the internal and external borders of the EU, peace and collective security within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to promote peace and cross-border cooperation (Ireland, Cyprus, Hungary, Austria, Italy, Catalonia, Ukraine, Russia, etc)"* (*La France Insoumise*, 2018).

Mélenchon's party has been following socialist views on trade and economy. The party aims to withdraw from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and aims to replace them with a *"Social Emergency Fund"* and a *"Social*

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Investment Bank". Moreover, Mélenchon pledged to empower the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) against G20, G7, IMF, and WTO. Since he objects to the dollar monopoly in the international system, he encourages the plan of China to propose a global currency (France 24, 2017). In terms of relations with Middle Eastern states, the party has discrete and critical ideas. It has pledged to end *"hypocritical alliances with Gulf petro-monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates"*. Mélenchon has supported Palestine's claims and two-state solutions in line with the UN resolutions. On the other hand, while he has criticized domestic politics in Russia due to the authoritarian regime, he has promoted some of Russia's interference in different regions like Syria (La France Insoumise, 2018). He had supported relations with Russia and had aimed to build dialogue on common security. However, in terms of war in Ukraine and Russian aggression, Mélenchon has reflected a clear attitude compatible with his stance. He names Putin as *"the only culprit"* and defines this war as *"Putin's crime against his country"*. He thought that it was not possible, thereafter, to *"pursue personal relations with a man like Mr. Poutine who has had personal responsibility for war crimes"*. Mélenchon wanted to prevent France from becoming a *"co-belligerent"* on Ukrainian soil. Moreover, he reaffirmed his goal for France to be a non-aligned country (Franceinfo, 2022a; Laurent, Oberdorff, & Peiron, 2022).

Anne Hidalgo-Parti Socialiste / Socialist Party

The latest mayor of Paris since 2014, Anne Hidalgo, has been the candidate of the Socialist Party for the 2022 presidential election. The Socialist Party or in French, "Parti Socialiste" is known as a central-left, social democratic, and pro-EU political party which has had deep roots in the political life of France for half a century (Tidey, 2021). Although they cannot gain the majority of the total votes for the presidency as estimated by Politico's polls, they pursued their goals for the 2022 presidential election under the leadership of Anne Hidalgo. It was estimated that Hidalgo would grab at least 4% of the total votes in the election.¹³ However, she could only get 1.75% of the total votes in the first round and she did not run for the second round on April 24. While Hidalgo and Socialist Party mainly focus on domestic politics for this election and represent their arguments towards domestic policies, they explain their point of view for foreign policy mainly referring to the EU.

Hidalgo's program for election targets eight major topics and 70 articles within them. It includes work conditions in the country, ecology, democracy, education, social security, the rule of law, providing the means for economic recovery by ecology, foreign policy within the voice of France, and the strength of Europe (Hidalgo, n.d.). Among these major issues, the last section covers 13 articles that explain Hidalgo's and Socialist Party's perspectives on international politics. To begin with, it must be underlined that Hidalgo and her party are pro-European. Their foreign policy agenda has been based on the role and significance of the EU. They consider the EU as a guarantee of French sovereignty and power in world politics. The EU is defined in the party program with the following words:

¹³ See. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/>, (Last Access: 15.01.2022)

“...powerful asset for controlling their security in the face of the major challenges facing all Europeans like climate change and the biodiversity crisis, health and food crises, the influence of multinationals and in particular digital giants, but also geopolitical challenges” (Hidalgo, n.d.).

Moreover, they consider the US and China as rivals by calling them “G2 states”, and point out the brutalization of international politics by referring to Russia as a reflection of the party’s ideology. Furthermore, the party is skeptical about these great powers. Hidalgo has underlined the importance of cooperation and alliances among the EU member states as an antidote to these powers. On the other hand, she has aimed to change the economic structure of the EU to improve social security and implement more ecological arrangements. She has supported reducing emissions by 55% until 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality until 2050. In line with these goals, she aimed to change tax policies within the EU to decrease income inequality (Hidalgo, n.d.).

As a controversial debate among the candidates, migration, and migrants play a very distinct role in the arguments. Hidalgo and Socialist Party evaluate this phenomenon mainly from a humanitarian perspective. They state that *“the EU must adopt a more humane, united and effective migration policy”*. They consider migrants as *“contributors to the construction and the history of their country”* (Hidalgo, n.d.). In addition, Hidalgo had a positive look to improve relations with Francophone countries to preserve and empower the position of the French language, which reflects the large-group identity priorities as well. She considered French as a cultural and political space for countries sharing universal values (Hidalgo, n.d.) Moreover, she promised to use diplomacy as a *“soft power”* tool to expand the consciousness of climate change around the world and to build a new international regime on environmental issues. Through these goals, Hidalgo has pledged a state with more social priorities and policies to promote democracy both in domestic and international politics. She has supported Ukraine and has shown solidarity with Ukraine against Russia in their war. She stated that *“It is a sine qua non-condition for this war to end.... It must be done now, otherwise it will drag on.”* (Loaec, 2022).

Yannick Jadot – Europe Ecologie Les Verts / Green Party

As a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Yannick Jadot ran for Greens in France for the presidential election in April 2022. The Greens or Les Verts have positioned themselves in the center-left and have a green political ideology. By following this ideology, Jadot aimed to extend his party's policies nationwide by unseating Macron and grabbing the presidency. Jadot’s and Green Party’s programs for the election have focused on green politics in France, the EU, and world politics (Kayalı & Bermingham, 2021). According to Politico’s opinion polls, Jadot would have got at least 5% of the total votes in the first round of the presidential election.¹⁴ Following Politico's estimation, Jadot obtained 4.63% of the total votes in the first round. However, he had no opportunity to participate in the second round.

¹⁴ See. <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/france/> , (Last Access: 15.01.2021)

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Green Party's program and project for the election consists of six main pillars. One of these pillars had been the motto of the party, "*building a world in peace*" (Europe Ecologie Les Verts, n.d.). They aimed to transform the state into an ecological state and make it possible to transform society as well. In line with this aim, they supported reinforcing the diplomatic capacity of the EU, increasing their power of action in favor of a renewed multilateralism, to protect fundamental rights and democracy as explained in the program. By supporting the role of the EU, Jadot and Greens manifested their positive attitude towards the supranational structure of the EU. However, they did not believe that the EU and its bodies have been adequate for these goals. Therefore, they aimed to transform the EU in the name of promoting ecology, social security, and democracy as well. Moreover, they clearly explained their stance on international conflicts. They supported the use of non-military instruments such as economic sanctions as means of international action. They supported the strengthening of the role of the EP in defining the EU's foreign policy. On the other hand, they aimed to support disarmament measures around the world, and abolish nuclear weapons under the aegis of the UN and with the support of European states (Europe Ecologie Les Verts, n.d.).

While Jadot pursued "*building a world in peace*", he planned to follow a security policy that reminded the goals of Macron. He wanted to create a European operational military command for an autonomous Europe. As stated in the party program, he supported the strengthening of military cooperation at the EU level in strict compliance with international law and multilateralism. The party attributed this plan to two strategic goals: one is conflict resolution through security cooperation, and the second is preventing conflicts arising out of climate change. Furthermore, according to him, this approach will allow Europeans to weigh within the Atlantic framework and to make it more consistent with European interests. Related to this goal, he aimed to "*emancipate*" from the other great powers and balance the role of the US in Europe (Europe Ecologie Les Verts, n.d.). This attitude towards the US has been a reflection of the large-group identity priority of the party. Contrary to other candidates, Jadot pledged to reform the relations with Africa. As in the program, the party recognized the ecological responsibility contracted in the industrial era and during colonization. Withdrawal of the French army from Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, and ending the predation of the large industrial groups such as Total and Bolloré International where the French state has been present have been aimed (Europe Ecologie Les Verts, n.d.) On the war in Ukraine, Jadot has been following a certain policy against Russia by emphasizing the significance of peace with the following words: "*Peace is not about making big speeches; peace is about building the balance of power to put an end to these atrocities*". In his view, the EU should have turned off the Russian gas and "*play collectively*" against Russia to balance the power in the region (Franceinfo, 2022e).

ANALYSIS OF PARTIES, LEADERS, AND FOREIGN POLICY AGENDAS

The comprehensive analysis of seven candidates, their political parties, and foreign policy agendas for the 2022 presidential election sheds light on the interaction

between internal and external factors as it is argued in the Introduction part of the paper. It is worth highlighting that the categorization of different factors helps us to understand patterns of behavior in foreign policy-making. Although the categorization seems useful for special cases, it has been currently insufficient to understand and analyze rapidly transforming international politics.

In the case of the 2022 election in France, the paper points out this argument through the analysis of the discourses of candidates and political party programs. Their agendas for foreign policy indicate that external and internal factors interact with each other. The foreign policy preferences of leaders as presidential candidates illuminate, on the one hand, the characteristics of contemporary international relations and acts of other states as external factors; on the other hand, characteristics of the domestic political system and its components such as citizens, groups, the government organizations and individual leaders as internal factors. These two dimensions shape each other through a complex process that can be studied from a neoclassical realist perspective.

The role of external factors in the presidential election can be found in the viewpoints of candidates and their parties over the international system. Regardless of the right-wing or left-wing views, the majority of the candidates and their parties have predominantly realist points of view. They indicate this in their policy preferences as explained in the previous section. Candidates regard the international system as an area of competition, conflict, and distrust. To manage these difficulties, leaders like Macron and Jadot suggest creating an army with the EU whilst leaders like Zemmour and Le Pen prefer to boost the military power of France, especially after the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. As the neoclassical realist approach assumes, the external factors bring long-term foreign policy approaches. French attempts to establish an EU army since the 1950 Plevin Plan indicates the realist background in foreign policy-making tradition. On the other hand, some of the leaders have critical standpoints toward the international liberal order. For instance, Zemmour and Mélenchon oppose the existing liberal economic system and consider it a threat to France.

The aforementioned candidates keep different perceptions of the international system and the actors such as NATO, Russia, and China. Pursuing a separate attitude, Zemmour, Mélenchon and Le Pen oppose the role of NATO and the US in the region. They regard the US as a rival and perceive NATO as an obstacle to stability in the region. Before the war in Ukraine, these actors aimed to improve their bilateral relations with Russia, while others like Hidalgo opposed this. The foreign policy agendas of a few of these candidates also follow realist and liberal approaches on considerable issues. For example, their support for European integration indicates this perspective. Jadot, Hidalgo, Macron, Péresse keep these ideals contrary to other leaders. They aim to strengthen the EU and EU bodies to promote security and prosperity in the region.

While the impact of the systemic factors, external actors, and geopolitics are regarded outside the control of policy-makers, it is a fact that these are reinterpreted by

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groups and individuals within states (Kaarbo et al., 2013, p. 7). These are leaders, the public, societal groups, and government organizations. Therefore, foreign policy-making is not a one-sided and linear process, rather it is a process of interaction of all these factors as we witness in the discourses of candidates for the presidential election in France. To clarify this point, one can observe the positions of candidates and their parties on a certain number of international developments. The discourse of 'migration crisis' has been an apparent case to observe how the migration influx has been perceived by the political society and how it has been currently used as a populism tool not only in France but also in a large number of countries, especially the developed ones. The Turkey case analyzed by Kaya (2020) indicates that domestic and international factors have been influential in Turkey's migration policy and Turkey-EU relations under the Justice and Development Party government. In the same manner, French leaders' discourses are influenced by this external development. The presidential candidates have differentiated perceptions on the issue of migration. From a neoclassical realist perspective, these perceptions have arisen from the group-level identity formation processes and for the political survival of party leaders which can ensure their footing in politics. While the majority of the candidates such as Macron, Zemmour, Le Pen, and Pécresse consider migration as a threat to their country, others such as Hidalgo and Jadot refute this idea. It is clear that the approaches of Socialist and Green party leaders on migration have been based upon their ideologies. However, Macron, Zemmour, Le Pen, and Pécresse have maintained populist and xenophobic approaches to migrants to influence the votes of party bases. On the other hand, Hidalgo and Jadot prioritize environmental and social issues in their foreign policy agendas. The reflections of these foreign policy preferences influence both domestic and international politics, because, this is a mutual process among various factors. In sum, the interaction among factors determines the actions from the perspective of FPA. The international system together with the leaders and their perceptions has currently played a great role in the foreign policy-making processes of France. Therefore, both the external and internal factors construct the building blocks of the next five years' foreign policy agenda in France.

CONCLUSION

Intending to focus on the mutual interaction between internal and external factors, this article examined the April 2022 presidential election in France through the analysis of the discourses of seven candidates and their party programs. While their policy agendas include both domestic and foreign policies, the scope of this paper is limited to their foreign policy preferences and programs for the election. By bringing into discussion the traditional categorization of different factors for FPA, this paper tried to put a new and inclusive approach in the area of research. The authors argued that interaction between internal and external factors creates mutual impacts on agents and this can be observed in the presidential election process in France. Analysis of the discourses of candidates and their party programs clarifies various interwoven policies influenced by internal and external factors.

While one categorization within the traditional FPA attributes these candidates' foreign policy preferences to the structure of the international system, the other categorization attributes these preferences to the sources internal to states. However, these factors are two sides of a coin and they shape each other through interaction. The election process in France represents this idea via candidates and their political parties. As stressed above, various themes and issues dominate the agendas of the candidates in international politics. Although their ideologies and opinions are different, these themes are predominantly common among them. They are shaping and being shaped by these themes. Thus, they determine internal and external factors and are determined by internal and external factors. This mutual and complex process among them represents the main feature of the presidential election in France. Whilst this article analyzes the election process in France from an FPA perspective, the results of the election will shape these prospects in the long run. The re-election of President Macron with 58.2% of the votes in the second round will be confirming France's firm stand within the EU and enhance its cooperation with NATO with regard to the Ukraine war.

As a crucial historical turning point, the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, less than forty days before the presidential election, has influenced the discourses of the candidates and the voters' choices. Ties of candidates like Le Pen, Zemmour, and Mélenchon with Russia and Putin and their position towards the war, have affected the first round of the election on 10 April. While Zemmour's ambiguous attitude decreased his votes, Le Pen's and Mélenchon's stance in favor of Ukraine slightly increased their votes in the first round. The war in Ukraine has shown that France as a middle power will maintain its historic security-oriented policy goals in its foreign policy and within the EU. However, the discourses of the presidential candidates over migration, Islam, and European integration can be read as the signals of the policy fields which can be manipulated dramatically through the internal factors.

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