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Conscription and Citizens Adherence to the Principles of Liberal Democracy

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Abstract

This study investigates if there is a beneficial link between conscription and the citizens adherence to the principles of liberal democracy. Taking France as a case study, based on a 2 steps design, mixing quantitative and qualitative analyses, using the manifestos of three major parties, I establish proxies in order to evaluate military personnel adherence from the principles in question, notably through an inspection of their voting behavior. The study concludes that there is no beneficial link between greater adherence to the principles of liberal democracy and undergoing military institutions such as conscription, but rather an inverse relationship.

1 Introduction

AFTER an electoral campaign built on economic worries resulting in the election of Donald Trump, recently becoming the first president of the United States to be indicted over criminal charges,¹ after the Brexit vote that revolved “around a deluge of imperial nostalgia and economic discontent”,² after a populist resurgence in Europe³ and a revival of “illiberal democracies” in Europe,⁴ Tansel pinpoints an ongoing concern of a “broader shift toward authoritarianism and the viability of (liberal) democracies.”⁵ What can we do? Can conscription be an answer?

On historical grounds, it is difficult to think of today’s consolidated democracies going through democratization without rebellions and preparation for war, as if it were a necessary condition for the process leading to liberal democracies.⁶ During the French Revolution, revolutionaries joined the military to prove one’s commitment to the country.⁷ Rousseau wrote in 1762: “As soon as public service ceases [...] the State is not far from its fall.”⁸ It is this idea of political virtue, being an old-fashioned remedy, that drives the normative interest of this research.

In times of democratic crisis, can any of these historical accounts help us pinpoint elements that would bring the principles of liberal democracy to life? This study therefore examines the extent to which the implementation of a compulsory military ser-

1. Nicola Slawson, “First Thing: Trump Becomes First Former US President to Face Criminal Charges,” *The Guardian: US news*, March 31, 2023, 10:31 a.m., ISSN: 0261-3077, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/mar/31/first-thing-trump-becomes-first-former-us-president-to-face-criminal-charges>.

2. Cemal Burak Tansel, “Neoliberalism and the Antagonisms of Authoritarian Resilience in the Middle East,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 118, no. 2 (April 1, 2019): 287, ISSN: 0038-2876, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-7381146>, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-7381146>.

3. Cas Mudde, “Europe’s Populist Surge: A Long Time in the Making,” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 6 (2016): 25–30, ISSN: 0015-7120, accessed April 5, 2023, JSTOR: 43948378, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43948378>; quoted in Tansel, “Neoliberalism and the Antagonisms of Authoritarian Resilience in the Middle East,” 287.

4. Jacques Rupnik, “The Specter Haunting Europe: Surging Illiberalism in the East,” *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 4 (2016): 77–87, ISSN: 1086-3214, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0064>, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/633754>; quoted in Tansel, “Neoliberalism and the Antagonisms of Authoritarian Resilience in the Middle East,” 287.

5. Tansel, “Neoliberalism and the Antagonisms of Authoritarian Resilience in the Middle East,” 287.

6. Everett Carl Dolman, “War and (the Democratic) Peace: Military Service, Citizenship, and the International Environment,” *Citizenship Studies* 4, no. 2 (June 1, 2000): 199, ISSN: 1362-1025, accessed January 31, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020050078050>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020050078050>.

7. Charles Tilly, “The Emergence of Citizenship in France and Elsewhere,” *International Review of Social History* 40 (1995): 225, ISSN: 0020-8590, accessed January 31, 2023, JSTOR: 26405181, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26405181>.

8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract & Discourses*, trans. George Douglas Howard Cole (July 19, 2014), chap. XV, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/46333>.

vice strengthens the citizens adherence to the principles of liberal democracy (later on referred to as PLD).

2 Literature Review

Civil-military relations, which is at stake here, has been studied for quite some time with different schools of thought and ongoing debates, but that are not necessarily related to each other. Indeed, civil-military relations is a very broad research topic.

The scientific literature in this field is much more concerned with the “civil” part of “civil-military relations”, understood as a civilian government and its political elites, which is of little relevance to this study. Nevertheless, the major work of Huntington, his book *The Soldier and the State: The Theory of Politics of Civil-Military Relations*,⁹ first published in 1957, must be cited as it provides theoretical and historical perspectives on military institutions and the state.¹⁰ One of his main arguments is the necessity of a strict delimitation between the civil sphere and the military sphere, where the former would take precedence in terms of policy ends, and the latter would take precedence in terms of the means to achieve these policy ends. Huntington was concerned by the growing liberal values during the Cold War in the United States that could influence the military sphere, when they should rather focus on their functional imperatives. Such concern led him to predict, incorrectly, that there would either be a weakening of the security threat or a weakening of liberalism.

Another landmark book, in contrast to Huntington’s view, is the book *The Professional Soldier: A social and Political Portrait*, first published in 1960.¹¹ Janowitz takes a sociological approach, examining the relationship of the military, but as made up of individuals, with the civilian society. He developed what is called a Convergence theory, pinpointing the civilianization of the military and the converging and overlapping of skills in the civil sphere to the military sphere. The product of this convergence is what he calls the citizen-soldier ideal, which is of peculiar relevance to this study. He came to a conclusion, that of the “constabulary forces” describing the militaries as continuously prepared to act, committed to the minimum use of force, and seek viable international relations, while citizens would have to balance civil rights with civil responsibilities.

Building on Huntington and Janowitz, James Burk explains how both Huntington’s and Janowitz’s theories either sustain or protect democratic values but fail to do

9. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 19. print (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2002), ISBN: 978-0-674-81736-4.

10. David J. Galbreath et al., *Routledge Handbook of Defence Studies* (Milton, UNITED KINGDOM: Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 159, ISBN: 978-1-317-30709-9, accessed January 31, 2023, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sciences-po/detail.action?docID=5287712>.

11. Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1960).

both, giving valuable insights. Thus, he attempts to propose a normative theory in mature democracies (hereafter, consolidated democracies) explaining how the civil-military relations both sustain and protect democratic values.

On the other hand, Tony Ingesson has argued that conscription and its link to citizenship and democracy, specifically regarding the improvement of social cohesion or acting as a safeguard against military coups, has failed to hold up to empirical scrutiny. Nonetheless, he states that conscription can still be used by unstable democracies for different reasons, among them the integration of minorities and the franchise extension.¹² Furthermore, Everett Carl Dolman argues in his paper that “under a precise (and historically rare) set of organizing conditions, military forces can [...] promote democracy.”¹³

Finally, others, such as Stephan Pfaffenzeller have argued that a link between democracy and conscription is flawed and does not hold up to evidence, while influencing ongoing debates about this very topic.¹⁴ It is found that the association between democratic citizenship and conscription is the result of confusion and tensions between individual freedom and equality before the law.

Therefore, this study situates itself in this ongoing debate building on Pfaffenzeller’s argument, and will test the existence of a beneficial link between conscription and the strengthening of adherence to PLD within the population.

3 Research Design

3.1 Hypothesis

In sum, based on my personal experiences, personal inquiries and convictions, I expect conscription in consolidated democracies to build a better understanding as well as a greater adherence of the citizens to PLD. The formal hypothesis, hence, goes as follows:

Hypothesis: Implementing conscription in consolidated democracy¹⁵ increases the citizens’ adherence to the principles of liberal democracy

12. Tony Ingesson, “Conscription, Citizenship, and Democracy,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, October 27, 2020, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1909>, <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1909>.

13. Dolman, “War and (the Democratic) Peace,” 119.

14. Stephan Pfaffenzeller, “Conscription and Democracy: The Mythology of Civil–Military Relations,” *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no. 3 (2010): 481–504, ISSN: 0095-327X, accessed February 1, 2023, JSTOR: 48608899, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48608899>.

15. Meaning consolidated *liberal* democracy

3.2 Measurement of Concept

I have talked multiple times about PLD, yet no definition has been given. It is time to remedy it.

Democracy, in and of itself, is not an unambiguous concept. Multiple approaches (procedural, substantive, process-oriented, etc.¹⁶) can be taken to offer different definitions. A very important definition of democracy, nevertheless, is given by Lipset and Lakin, building on Schumpeter: "An institutional arrangement in which all adult individuals have a power to vote, through free and fair competitive elections, for their chief executive and national legislature."¹⁷

While this article is not here to give a historical genealogy nor a detailed analysis of democracy, we need to come back to two historical concepts to understand the underpinning of PLD: constitutionalism and liberalism.

Liberalism is a political philosophy offering "a prescription of how the state is to deal with citizens".¹⁸ There is a peculiar aspect of individualism for two main reasons: liberalism calls for states to treat citizens as equal individuals and for individuals to live their life as it pleases them as long as it does not harm others, Thomas Hobbes being the key figure to this political philosophy. In an historical context of absolute monarch rules and interventionist church, liberalism "aimed to create a uniquely private sphere for the individual in which neither the state nor the church could intervene".¹⁹

Constitutionalism, from mixed government to representative democracy is one tradition and has evolved in the context of monarchic rule in Europe as well. Later on another tradition took place, which reflects modern constitutionalism; going from enhancing mixed government by the separation of powers to strengthening the notions of individual rights in written entrenched documents, giving birth to judicial review and the legal aspect of constitutionalism.²⁰ All in all, constitutionalism is an inherent part of liberal democracy as laying down the foundations for a strong and effective

16. Juan J. Linz et al., "Democracy and Its Arenas," in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, UNITED STATES: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), ISBN: 978-1-4214-0492-9, accessed March 29, 2023, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sciences-po/detail.action?docID=4531140>.

17. Seymour Martin Lipset et al., *The Democratic Century*, The Julian J. Rothbaum Distinguished Lecture Series v. 9 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 19, ISBN: 978-0-8061-3618-9.

18. *Liberalism*, in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, ed. Leonardo Morlino et al. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., April 15, 2023), s.v. "1," by Russell Hardin, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412994163>, <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/intlpoliticalscience>.

19. *Democracy, Types Of*, in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., April 15, 2023), s.v. "5," by Bertrand Badie et al., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412994163>, <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/intlpoliticalscience>.

20. *Constitutionalism*, in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., April 15, 2023), s.v. "5," by Bertrand Badie et al., <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412994163>, <https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/intlpoliticalscience>.

tive separation of powers as well as protecting individual rights based on entrenched written documents. The rule of law is yet another way to restrict the arbitrary actions of governments, “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights” being the quintessence of the concept as written in the first article of the 1789 version of the French revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.²¹

From these two interlocking fundamental tenets forming the backbone of liberal democracy, we need to identify more precise elements that constitute more specific principles of liberal democracy. To that end, liberalism focuses the sovereign power in the hands of the citizens. However, in contrast to simple democracy, populist democracy, or people’s democracy, liberal democracy handles individual freedom and majority rule under the protection of constitutional rights of minorities;²² *i.e.*, “it seeks to reconcile individual rights and the rights of the majority (the people).”²³ On more substantive grounds, liberal democracy precludes individual freedoms, fundamental rights, equality, and vibrant civil society.²⁴

Overall, the principles of liberal democracy emphasize individual freedom, political equality, and the rule of law, and seek to balance individual rights with the common good.

3.3 Methodology and Data

I take France as a single case analysis, although the question may apply to other consolidated democracies, for my personal inquiries and my civic engagement are related to France. Thence, the unit of analysis in this study is the French citizens’ adherence to PLD. Ideally, a situation where the citizens have to undergo conscription would enable me to derive two ideal research designs: 1) conduct surveys related to the adherence of individual citizens to PLD before and after they undergo conscription; 2) if conscription were to be re-implemented, it would be ideal to conduct an analysis of the overall population’s adherence to PLD before and after the re-establishment of conscription. However, this ideal situation does not exist in France today.

A work around would have been to obtain data, or interview both citizens that underwent the conscription and citizens that did not undergo the conscription, as the universal national service in France was suspended in 1997 and suppressed in 2002.

21. *Liberalism*, s.v. “5.”

22. Marita Brčić Kuljiš, “Are Anti-Immigrant Parties Compatible with the Principles of Liberal Democracy? A Case Study of Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs,” *The International Journal of Civic, Political, and Community Studies* 17, no. 2 (2019): 8, ISSN: 2327-2155, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.18848/2327-0047/CGP/v17i02/1-16>.

23. Kuljiš, 7.

24. Charles Tilly, *Democracy* (Cambridge, UNITED KINGDOM: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ISBN: 978-0-511-27750-4, accessed March 28, 2023, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/sfu-ebooks/detail.action?docID=293391>.

Though, this research design would have included important temporal biases, where the international context, namely the Cold War and post Cold War era, would have had too much of an impact.

Therefore, because the ideal situation, where the independent variable (conscripted citizens) is not available, I have to use proxies. The proxy for the independent variable will be military personnel. The reason behind it is that I need to evaluate if people's adherence to PLD increases or decreases whether or not they undergo military institutions. Thence, the use of military personnel as a proxy for people undergoing military institutions, with the control group being the rest of the population, is relevant.

Originally, the methodology was to be based on semi-structured interviews of reservists²⁵ and regular citizens, conducting a discourse analysis on the transcripts in an attempt to highlight patterns of rhetoric showing reservists' adherence to PLD. However, this method had one important drawback. Reservists are by essence motivated to defend the country as it is a voluntary engagement and is not driven by financial considerations and even less by traditions. Hence, interviews would lead to skewed results from reservists most likely demonstrating the rhetorical patterns of adherence to PLD.

Therefore, I have chosen to go with another research design. I have here a two steps research design. Because it would require randomized samples surveys to measure military personnel's adherence to PLD, which I do not have, I need to establish proxy variables in place of this survey; it is the purpose of this 2 steps design. The *first* step will establish the proxy variable for *PLD*. The *second* step will establish the proxy variable for the *adherence* to PLD.

3.3.1 First Step: Political Manifestos as Proxy for PLD

For this first step, I base myself on an explanatory sequential design, which will be useful to contextualize and explain the quantitative findings with qualitative analysis.²⁶

The first phase is quantitative. Based on the Comparative Project Manifestos Data (CMP) collection,²⁷ where a good content analysis work was conducted, we will pinpoint to specific categories that fall into PLD, or its contrary, from three major political parties' manifestos (FN, LREM, LFI) from the 2017 presidential elections. These cat-

25. I would have chosen reservists rather than regular active military personnel for practical reasons; It was easier to get reservists interviewees from my personal network.

26. W. Alex Edmonds et al., "Explanatory-Sequential Approach," in *An Applied Guide to Research Designs: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, Second, by Thomas D. Kennedy et al. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc, April 13, 2023), 2, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802779>, <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/an-applied-guide-to-research-designs-2e>.

27. Pola Lehmann et al., *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2022a*, 2022, <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.25522/manifesto.mpps.2022a>.

egories can be found in the Codebook of the project.²⁸ Please refer to appendix A on page 21 to view the categories of interests used in this study, and refer to the CMP Codebook²⁹ for more details.

The second phase is qualitative. I will complete a discourse analysis on the same three manifestos³⁰ highlighting rhetorical patterns “emphasizing the ways in which discourses give legitimacy and meaning to social practices and institutions”,³¹ hereafter the subjects’ adherence to PLD. The reason why I focus on parties’ manifestos is because they are “designed to pre-empt and direct media discussion”³² on the campaign, meaning that they are what the media will base themselves on to ask precise questions to candidates, leading to the debates, interviews, discussions, and *petites phrases*, that everyone remembers much better than the manifesto itself.

This explanatory sequential design allows me to address three main theoretical limitations of the (CMP) outlined by Gemenis.³³ Indeed, firstly, he points to the flawed salience theory behind the CMP as it is based on the “false premise of majoritarian elections [...] [and that] in multiparty systems not all parties endorse the same position [...] because proportional representation gives incentives for [...] “niche” parties”.³⁴ However, this does not apply as France works on a majoritarian system. Secondly, he questions the document selection as there is a relevant number of proxy documents used in the data set.³⁵ While it remains questionable, it does not apply to our case, for we specifically choose three documents to compare, and these documents are verifiable to be the manifestos of the parties.³⁶ Then, Gemenis highlights the pertinent issue of coding reliability.³⁷ This very point is addressed here by using the mixed method of explanatory sequential design; by first analyzing quantitative data, I follow up with the qualitative data in order to interpret and clarify “the results from the quantitative

28. Pola Lehmann et al., *The Manifesto Project Dataset - Codebook. Manifesto Project (MRG / CMP / MAR-POR). Version 2022a.*, 2022, https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/download/data/2022a/codebooks/codebook_MPDataset_MPDS2022a.pdf.

29. Lehmann et al., 10–29.

30. Pola Lehmann et al., *Manifesto Corpus. Version: 2022-1*, 2022.

31. Halperin Sandra et al., *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 366, ISBN: 978-0-19-882062-8.

32. Jared J. Wesley, “In Search of Brokerage and Responsibility: Party Politics in Manitoba,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 1 (March 2009): 217, ISSN: 0008-4239, 1744-9324, accessed April 14, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423909090088>, https://www.cambridge.org/core/product/identifier/S0008423909090088/type/journal_article.

33. Kostas Gemenis, “What to Do (and Not to Do) with the Comparative Manifestos Project Data,” *Political Studies* 61 (1_suppl 2013): 3–23, ISSN: 0032-3217, 1467-9248, accessed April 13, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12015>, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9248.12015>.

34. Gemenis, 5.

35. Gemenis, 7.

36. Lehmann et al., *Manifesto Corpus*.

37. Gemenis, “What to Do (and Not to Do) with the Comparative Manifestos Project Data,” 10.

data analysis”,³⁸ hence bolstering the internal validity.

3.3.2 Second Step: Vote as a Proxy for Adherence

This second quantitative step establishes vote as the proxy for adherence with the help of a statistical observational large-n cross-sectional method. This method was used in the Ifop study of 2019 analyzing the vote of military personnel in France.³⁹ It will be the basis for this second step of this study.

Because the military population has too small a demographic weight in respect to the total French population, it results in unreliable data on the voting behavior of active military personnel if based on surveys of representative national samples. Hence, Fourquet and Manternach selected communes where the weight of military personnel and their families is significant (in small communes in order to avoid a diluted effect in larger ones).⁴⁰ In their study, they also control for the potential bias of the region or department being in favor of a specific party (thus not showing any particular voting behavior of military personnel distinct from the rest of the local population), by measuring the percentage point differential between the percentage of vote for a party in the commune and the percentage of vote for the same party in the department.

Finally, combining the findings from the first phase, establishing the proxy variable for PLD, with the second phase, being the basis to show the voting behavior of military personnel, it will enable me to highlight whether or not undergoing military institutions strengthens the adherence to PLD.

4 Findings

4.1 Content Analysis

The results of the content analysis of step 1 is shown in figure 1, illustrating the recurrence of the categories of interests from the three political programs. I have cleaned the categories for which they had a 0% frequency in all the three manifestos.

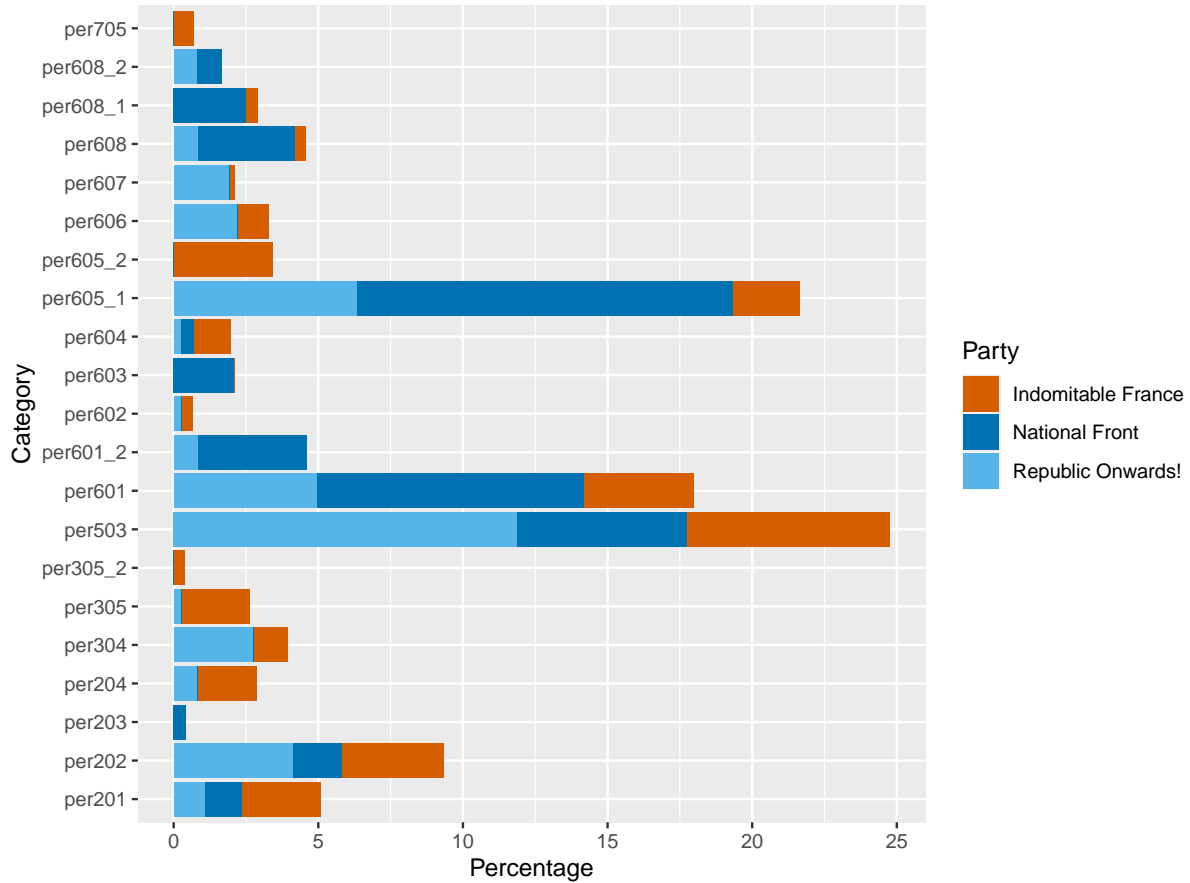
From the stacked bar chart, we can immediately perceive 3 dominant categories with high frequency (quasi-sentences appeared more than 15% of the overall allocated codes in the documents). These categories are, respectively, *equality: positive* (per503), *law and order: positive* (per605_1: only referring to the enforcement of status quo.), *national way of life: positive* (per601). Another high frequency category (9.3%) is *democracy*

38. Edmonds et al., “Explanatory-Sequential Approach.”

39. Jérôme Fourquet et al., *Pour qui votent les casernes ?*, July 15, 2019, accessed July 7, 2023, <https://www.ifop.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Focus-199-Pour-qui-vote-les-casernes.pdf>.

40. Fourquet et al., 2.

Figure 1: Percentage Share of Quasi-sentences in Manifesto by Categories and Parties. Data source: CMP Dataset version MPDS2022a. Chart created using R.



(per202: favorable mentions of democracy as “the only game in town”). Thus, it is important to note that the parties’ manifestos mostly adhere to PLD as positive notion of equality, statement to defend the status quo of France, considered a consolidated democracy in 2017 (rank 1 on the Liberal Democracy Index),⁴¹ is shown from all three parties. Also, there is relative global adherence for democracy to be the “only game in town” (per202).

However, we now need to differentiate between the different parties. In fact, the latter category (per202) is much less present in the National Front (FN) manifesto compared to Republic Onwards! (LREM) and Indomitable France (LFI), respectively 1.7%,

41. Anna Lührmann et al., *Democracy at Dusk?* (University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute), June 2017), 44, accessed April 16, 2023, https://v-dem.net/documents/18/dr_2017.pdf; “France: Freedom in the World 2017 Country Report,” Freedom House, accessed April 16, 2023, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/france/freedom-world/2017>.

4.1%, and 3.5% (For the precise figures, refer to table ??), which is an indication that there is less emphasis on PLD, particularly the constitutionalism part. Also, on *equality* (per503), a significant element of PLD, it is remarkable to see the difference between LREM (11.9%), LFI (7.0%) and FN (5.9%).

In addition, the *national way of life* (per601), along with the more precise category *immigration: negative* (per601_2), we observe a preponderance of the FN in that category which may include statements like “support established national ideas”, “appeals to nationalism”, and “suspension of some freedoms in order to protect the state against subversion”. This is where the qualitative analysis will come in handy. The per601_2 concerns statement such as “immigration being a threat” or “introduction of migrations quotas”. This category is dominated by the FN (3.8%), LREM coming second (0.8%), while LFI is absent. On the same topic of *multiculturalism*, the categories per608_1 and per608_2 are of particular interests. They appeal for “cultural homogeneity”, and calls for immigrants already in the country to “fully assimilate”, respectively. These statements tend to be against PLD, as they do not respect individual rights and freedoms, demanding to either not come in the country, or assimilate to the culture. per608_1 is dominated by the FN (2.5%), with LFI constituting 0.4%. Interestingly enough, per608_2 is almost equally shared between LREM and FN.

Furthermore, the *traditional morality: positive* (per603) says a lot regarding adherence to PLD. Indeed, statements like “prohibition, censorship and suppression of immorality and unseemly behaviour”, “maintenance and stability of the traditional family as a value”, and “support for the role of the religious institutions in state and society” are coded in that category, and are direct antitheses to PLD. The FN is the only one to mention such elements.

On the other hand, LREM is dominating in the positive side of *multiculturalism* (per607). Being almost the only one to mention it, this is rather siding PLD, advocating for individual freedoms. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that positive statements for the maintenance of the status quo regarding *constitutionalism* (per203) is only present in FN manifesto, while LREM and LFI rather state an opposition to specific or general aspects of the constitution (per204).

Also, it is important to highlight the dominant presence of LFI in the categories *political authority: party competence*, and *personal competence* (per305, per305_2, respectively). It is on the borderline against PLD. Indeed, while state capacity is very important for a liberal democracy to operate and “put its results into practice”,⁴² a too strong government, and particularly a too strong personal government based on so-called *personal competence* to govern, goes against the idea of limited government. On that note, the categories per605_1 and per605_2 needs to be pinpointed. Indeed, referring to *law and order: positive, negative* (greater or lesser law enforcement, on the status quo), respectively, LFI is the only party having “favourable mentions of less law en-

42. Tilly, *Democracy*, 15.

forcement or rejections of plans of stronger law enforcement". These categories hold the same aforementioned remark of state capacity: too strong goes against PLD, yet too weak and PLD cannot be enforced. Hence, it needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Nonetheless, we can observe that LFI also mentions favorably "strict law enforcement". Thus, we can infer that LFI has more balanced position than LREM and FN, the former being therefore closer to PLD than the latter.

4.2 Discourse Analysis

The documents are being analyzed in the context of the presidential election of 2017. They are written by the parties and published for whole French audience, not forgetting overseas territories. The election is peculiar in multiple ways. Indeed, the former incumbent is not running for a second term, which is unprecedented under the 5th Republic. Also, primaries are multiplying, which leads to surprising results with unexpected candidates from the major parties (François Fillon, Benoît Hamon, etc.). Some candidates are being exposed for corruption or fictitious jobs,⁴³ which favors parties that had never been in power, *i.e.* LREM. The social context at the time is of growing concerns and tensions related to immigration crisis coupled with high unemployment rate⁴⁴ and terrorist attacks that profoundly impacted France in 2015. Finally, a growing fragmentation between "globalists" and "patriots" (words of Le Pen, FN) takes place, documented by Jérôme Fourquet in his book, highlighting a divide between the winners and losers of globalization.⁴⁵

Regrading this discourse analysis in itself, I have focused on domains related to PLD. Hence, domains related to the environment, the foreign policy, international and domestic trade, finance and economics, were not dealt with.

First of all, these manifestos, emanating from 2017, after the 2015 and 2016 terrorist attacks, result in two valence issues: communitarianism and equality. Indeed, despite not being formulated the same way and not with the same degree, all promote the idea to fight communitarianism: LFI proclaims to "remove the breeding ground for communitarianism through more Republic";⁴⁶ the FN states that it will "fight against

43. Charlotte Belaïch, "Deux mois de révélations sur François Fillon," *Libération: Politique*, accessed April 17, 2023, https://www.liberation.fr/politiques/2017/03/14/deux-mois-de-revelations-sur-francois-fillon_1555669/; "Les six affaires qui menacent Marine Le Pen et le Front national," *Le Monde.fr*, February 2, 2017, accessed April 17, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2017/02/02/les-trois-affaires-qui-menacent-marine-le-pen-et-le-front-national_5073473_4355770.html.

44. "Chômage - Tableaux de l'économie Française | Insee," accessed April 17, 2023, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3676628?sommaire=3696937#titre-bloc-3>.

45. Jérôme Fourquet, "2017: Le point de bascule," in *L'archipel français: naissance d'une nation multiple et divisée*, Préface inédite, in collab. with Sylvain Manternach (Paris: Éditions Points, 2020).

46. *L'Avenir en commun: programme de la France insoumise et son candidat Jean-Luc Mélenchon*, in collab. with Charlotte Girard et al., December 2016, 34.

communitarianism",⁴⁷ LREM says "We will dismantle the associations that, under the guise of religion, attack the Republic",⁴⁸ while nuancing with the refusal to "extend the ban on the veil at the university."⁴⁹ Communitarianism in sociology has a precise meaning. However, in the context of public political discourse, it does not. Rather "it is a word with a strong nationalist ideological orientation, whose vagueness allows for numerous uses to disqualify certain points of view (those of minority groups). The term belongs to the field of public rhetoric and is strangely little used to qualify facts, for the simple reason that it disqualifies them from the start".⁵⁰ Hence, it clearly goes against PLD, on the basis of individual freedoms and rights, as "this nationalist discourse thus authorizes a "racism made respectable".⁵¹ However, there is a noticeable difference on the structural aspect of this theme. Indeed, it has an overwhelming presence in the FN's manifestos. Throughout the program, sentences like "Defend the national identity, values and traditions of the French civilization",⁵² give legitimacy to then proclaim the will to "establish French citizenship as a privilege for all French people by including the national priority in the Constitution."⁵³ This idea does not appear in any form in the two other manifestos. The idea of fighting against communitarianism is heavily linked to the principle of secularism, in all manifestos. In the FN, this principle is also dominant, going all the way to highlight their will to "impose strict respect for secularism and neutrality in all sports clubs,"⁵⁴ a rather anecdotal topic for a presidential platform that contains only 24 pages (compared to 130 pages for LFI, which thus could have been more detailed) showing the relentlessness of the theme. At any rate, in the case of the FN, their use of secularism needs to be put into context, as it is, at best, blurry, and sometimes even against the very concept, invoking the will to prohibit the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in the public space.⁵⁵

In respect to equality, which is an inherent part of PLD, it is rather explicit and without conditions. It matters for all parties to promote equal pay for men and women.⁵⁶ However, when it comes to discrimination related to race or ethnicity, or other types

47. Front National, *Au nom du peuple*, 144 *Engagements présidentiels*, June 20, 2017, 15.

48. En Marche!, *Emmanuel Macron président. Programme En Marche!*, March 13, 2017, 19.

49. En Marche!, 19.

50. Fabrice Dhume-Sonzogni et al., *Racisme, Antisémitisme et "Communautarisme"?: L'école à l'épreuve Des Faits* (L'Harmattan, 2007), 31, ISBN: 2-296-04006-3.

51. David Noël, "Fabrice Dhume-Sonzogni, Communautarisme. Enquête sur une chimère du nationalisme français," *Lectures*, January 10, 2018, ISSN: 2116-5289, accessed April 18, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4000/lectures.24022>, <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/24022>.

52. Front National, *Au nom du peuple*, 15.

53. Front National, 15.

54. Front National, 12.

55. "Pourquoi une loi pour « interdire le voile » en France aurait peu de chances d'exister," *Le Monde.fr*, October 24, 2019, accessed April 18, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2019/10/24/une-loi-pour-interdire-le-voile-dans-l-espace-public-comme-le-veut-marine-le-pen-est-elle-possible_6016737_4355770.html.

56. En Marche!, *Programme En Marche!*, 13; *L'Avenir en commun*, 59; Front National, *Au nom du peuple*.

different than disability and wealth (as LREM and FN mentions fighting against those latter), only LFI mentions it and focuses on it throughout its manifesto: “discrimination based on gender, disability, appearance, skin color, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, social origin or wealth.”⁵⁷ Even more so, when the FN states that they want to “defend women’s rights” their solution is “fighting against Islamism, which undermines their fundamental freedoms”⁵⁸ relating it, again to its main theme.

Finally, we need to come back the case of LFI. In the findings of the quantitative analysis it was highlighted that LFI ranked second in terms of disengagement from PLD mainly based on *constitutionalism*. This category refers to an “opposition to [...] the constitution.”⁵⁹ In fact, LFI calls for constitutional changes as it questions the the 5th Republic stating that there is a “democratic urgency”.⁶⁰ However, it is not anti-constitutionalism, but rather calls for a new democratic system with more parliamentary power⁶¹ (that was the limit Gemenis pinpointed regarding the CMP dataset⁶²), giving more tools for the citizens to control their representatives: “Create a right to remove an elected official from office”.⁶³ Even the change towards this new constitution does not call for a revolution outside the legislative and legal means to establish it, but rather through the use of referendum outline in article 11 of the current Constitution.⁶⁴

4.3 Military Vote Analysis

From table 1, we can observe a strong vote for the FN in municipalities with an important military presence. The gap, referring to the percentage differential of vote between the FN and the winner in the department of the corresponding municipality, suggests that, in most of the cases, the municipalities with important military presence vote at least 10% more than the department for the FN. The gap mean being 11.6%, it is substantial. Also what is striking is that every single municipality has a positive gap, meaning, every single municipality with important military presence voted more for the FN than their corresponding department.

In order to have a macro perspective at the same time, suffice it to say that all these municipalities and the departments are within a FN enclave. Hence, it is even more striking to see those results. It evokes a clear tendency for military personnel to vote for the FN.

57. *L’Avenir en commun*, 28.

58. Front National, *Au nom du peuple*, 4.

59. Lehmann et al., *Manifesto Project - Codebook*, 12.

60. *L’Avenir en commun*, 26.

61. *L’Avenir en commun*, 26.

62. Gemenis, “What to Do (and Not to Do) with the Comparative Manifestos Project Data,” 10.

63. *L’Avenir en commun*, 25.

64. *L’Avenir en commun*, 23.

Table 1: 2017: Vote In Municipalities with a Military Presence. Table adapted from *et al.*. Complementary data taken from the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas.

Municipalities	1st Round 2017				
	LFI	LREM	FN	Department Winner	Gap [*]
Mailly-le-Camp	8	12.4	41.4	FN	11.1
Sissone	15.7	14.5	37.4	FN	1.7
Suippes	10.2	15.1	47.1	FN	19
Mourmelon-le-Grand	11.2	14.3	44	FN	15.9
Mourmelon-le-Petit	14.3	13.9	43.2	FN	15.1
Auxonne	15.4	20.8	30.5	LREM	6.8

Note: Table adapted from Fourquet with complementary data taken from the Ministry of the Interior and Overseas.

^{*} Gap is for FN score in commune minus department winner.

5 Discussion

The results of the content analysis gives us some evidence to draw the following conclusion: while on the face of it there is a consensus for democracy between parties, we also mostly observe a divergence towards PLD first and foremost from the FN. LFI, comes second, mostly due to the *constitutionalism* and *law enforcement* aspects. LREM, comes last as few quantitative evidence shows a disengagement from PLD, though not being entirely definitive. In addition to those results, we need to combine the findings gathered from the qualitative analysis, which also shows manifestly that the FN party ranks first when looking at the divergence towards PLD.

From the two analyses combined, it gives us a clear idea that the FN is the party with the manifesto that least adheres to PLD based on the constitutionalism and liberalism principles that tries to guarantee fundamental rights and individual freedoms. These two elements are either the most absent from the manifesto, or those for which adherence is the least obvious. It is all the more apparent when these facts are compared with the two other manifestos.

The rather short, but to the point, quantitative analysis of the votes of military personnel provides us with conclusive information to attest that the majority of military personnel vote for the FN.

Finally, combining step 1 and step 2 we can now compare the results and evaluate the pertinence of the hypothesis developed in section 3.1. The explanatory sequential design allowed us to establish which party, based on their manifesto, adhered the most to PLD. The quantitative design of the vote results allowed us to establish for which party military personnel voted the most. The evidence collected and analyzed clearly contradicts the hypothesis. As a significant percentage of military personnel

votes for the FN, which is the worst party in terms of adherence to PLD (compared to the other parties studied), it is not possible to show that implementing conscription in consolidated democracy increases the citizens' adherence to PLD. It rather shows quite the contradictory; people undergoing the military institution tend to disregard or neglect those principles.

These findings, hence, situate themselves on the side of Stephan Pfaffenzeller in the scientific literature. Indeed, has he found no evidence to hold up the idea of a link between democracy and conscription.⁶⁵ This study even goes further as no empirical evidence could prove a beneficial link between the implementation of conscription and a greater adherence to PLD that would lead to a stronger liberal democracy overall, but it also shows an inverse relationship.

6 Policy Implications

With respect to the policy implications, it is rather quite straight forward. The idea mentioned just above needs to stop influencing the ongoing debate, specifically regarding public policy. Politicians should not advocate for such policy, as no evidence proves the beneficial aspect of military conscription related to a betterment of democracy.

In that perspective, what the government of Macron is currently implementing, the SNU (*Service National Universel*),⁶⁶ which is closer to a mandatory civic engagement than a military engagement, seems to be the way forward, if the need for, and a beneficial link, can be established.

As a matter of fact, there is still important critiques that could be made to the SNU. The very fact that it is both under the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Armies is criticized. Also, the military aspect of it is still very present and created uncomfortable reactions from French citizens.⁶⁷

7 Conclusion

To conclude, the study, through quantitative and qualitative analyses of the three major parties' manifesto in the 2017 presidential election in France combined with an

65. Pfaffenzeller, "Conscription and Democracy."

66. "Le service national universel (SNU) : Jeunesse engagée," Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.education.gouv.fr/le-service-national-universel-snu-jeunesse-engagee-5381>.

67. "Ces « Marseillaises » du service national universel qui créent le malaise sur Twitter," *L'Obs: Société*, June 18, 2019, 6:49 p.m. (+02:00), accessed April 18, 2023, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20190618.OBS14584/ces-marseillaises-du-service-national-universel-qui-creent-le-malaise-sur-twitter.html>.

inspection of the voting behavior of the military personnel, leads us to conclude an nonexistent beneficial link between conscription and the principles of liberal democracy, and rather an inverse relationship. One could think, therefore, that we are left with one tool less to address the issues mentioned in the introduction of liberal democratic decline, but we ought not to be so pessimistic. Instead, it is crucial to acknowledge that some ideas or policies that we thought would work, based on personal experiences, were actual flawed or at least not educated enough.

Nevertheless, it is also critical to point that no research design is perfect. While I have addressed issues and biases of the design, there is definitely more. Proper peer-review would greatly benefit the work done. One peculiar weakness must be borne in mind: conceptual stretching. Using too many proxies potentially lead to a too great conceptual stretching and a problematic operationalization of the variables.

At any rate, this study is one more stone added to the edifice in this ongoing debate, siding Stephan Pfaffenzeller. A lot more can be done; there is still lots of room for research in this particular field.

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Appendix A Content Analytical Categories of Interest from the CMP⁶⁸

Domain 2: Freedom and Democracy

per201 Freedom and Human Rights

per202 Democracy

per203 Constitutionalism: Positive

per204 Constitutionalism: Negative

Domain 3: Political System

per304 Political Corruption

per305 Political Authority

per305_2 Political Authority: Personal Competence

per305_3 Political Authority: Strong Government

per305_4 Transition: Pre-Democratic Elites: Positive

per305_5 Transition: Pre-Democratic Elites: Negative

Domain 5: Welfare and Quality of Life

per503 Equality: Positive

per504 Welfare State Expansion

per505 Welfare State Limitation

Domain 6: Fabric of Society

per601/per602 National Way of Life: Positive/Negative

per601_2 National Way of Life: Immigration: Negative

per603 Traditional Morality: Positive

68. Lehmann et al., *Manifesto Project - Codebook*.

per604 Traditional Morality: Negative

per605 Law and Order: Positive

per605_1 Law and Order: Positive

per605_2 Law and Order: Negative

per606 Civic Mindedness: Positive

per607 Multiculturalism: Positive

per608 Multiculturalism: Negative

per608_1 Multiculturalism: General: Negative

per608_2 Multiculturalism: Immigrants Assimilation

Domain 7: Social Groups

per705 Underprivileged Minority Groups

Sub-Categories (mostly for Central and Eastern European countries)

per2022 Restrictive Citizenship: Positive

per2032 Republic: Positive

per6013 National Security: Positive

per6061 General Crisis

Appendix B CMP Precise Figures

Table 2: Percentage Share of Quasi-sentences in Manifesto by Categories and Parties.

Categories	Party Name		
	Indomitable France	Republic Onwards!	National Front
per201	2.729	1.105	1.255
per202	3.509	4.144	1.674
per203	0.000	0.000	0.418
per204	2.047	0.829	0.000
per304	1.170	2.762	0.000
per305	2.339	0.276	0.000
per305_2	0.39	0.00	0.00
per503	7.018	11.878	5.858
per601	3.801	4.972	9.205
per601_2	0.000	0.829	3.766
per602	0.390	0.276	0.000
per603	0.000	0.000	2.092
per604	1.267	0.276	0.418
per605	2.339	6.354	12.971
per605_2	3.411	0.000	0.000
per606	1.072	2.210	0.000
per607	0.195	1.934	0.000
per608	0.390	0.829	3.347
per608_1	0.39	0.00	2.51
per608_2	0.000	0.829	0.837
per705	0.682	0.000	0.000

Note: Data source from CMP Dataset version MPDS2022a. Tidied with R and ManifestoR