

La France Insoumise Occupied the Political Spectrum of the French Radical Left: Tracing the Social and Political Dynamics of Its Rise

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Abstract: The 2017 French election overturned the traditional 'political pendulum' power operation, and La France Insoumise, as a newborn extreme left-wing force, won the widespread support of voters. Against the backdrop of the decline of the traditional left-wing in La France, the rise of La France Insoumise is an effective exploration of the development of left-wing power in France. By studying the political ideas of La France Insoumise and analysing the political and social environment of France, this paper finds that La France Insoumise has adopted new electoral strategies and means, innovated traditional left-wing political ideas, and joined forces with other left-wing forces. La France Insoumise has not only catered to the voters' psychology, but also seized the opportunity for development, which has provided it with the necessary space for survival and power support for its rise.

1 INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Cold War, the highest political power in France has alternated back and forth between the left and right political parties through the presidential election in the form of a 'political pendulum' movement, with the two parties being constrained by each other and ruling alternately, thus forming a very distinctive 'left-right divide' tradition. Entering the 21st century, France's left-wing parties are declining. Until the 2017 French general election, this power operation was completely broken, 'La République En Marche' leader claimed to represent both the left and right forces, and successfully elected the President of France; France's far-right political parties have also begun to link a wide range of social forces. At the same time, the rapid rise of La France Insoumise has put the spotlight back on the far left. In the first round of the 2017 French presidential election, the leader of La France Insoumise received the support of 19.58 percent of voters, placing it in fourth place (Huanqiu, 2018). In the 2022 presidential election, the political landscape of La France Insoumise showed a more pronounced fragmentation, further deepening the decline of the traditional mainstream parties, while the left-wing populist parties represented by La France Insoumise gained even more ground in this election.

La France Insoumise, as a model for observing the new changes in the political party landscape in France, is rooted in the changing social context of the twenty-first century in France, and as such, it has a number of characteristics that distinguish it from traditional party organisations.

Based on the new changes in the internal and external environment of French politics, this paper will ask the following questions: how the social and political ecology of La France Insoumise has shaped its unique political stance; and how La France Insoumise has changed the French political party system. The background of the rise and development of La France Insoumise is examined in detail through case studies and comparative research methods. At the same time, La France Insoumise is placed in the context of the entire French political party landscape, and the uniqueness of the political environment and the characteristics of the political parties are analysed through comparisons with other political forces, thus further analysing how the traditional political environment and the new changes in modern society have mixed and nurtured La France Insoumise. It also analyses the uniqueness of the French political environment and the characteristics of political parties by comparing them with other political forces, thus further analysing how the traditional political environment of France and the new changes in the modern society have mixed to produce La France Insoumise.

2 LITERATURE RESEARCH

The rise of La France Insoumise as an emerging political force in the French party landscape is a striking phenomenon, which not only breaks the traditional 'political pendulum' type of power swing mechanism, but also represents to a certain extent the repositioning and transformation of the radical left in France and even in Europe. The following section analyses the scholarly views on this issue based on the existing literature in the academic world.

2.1 The Decline of the French Left Front Provides an Opportunity

The rise of the radical left in France took place against the backdrop of global economic turmoil following the 2008 financial crisis. Traditional left-wing parties, particularly the Socialist Party of France, have gradually lost the trust of voters because they failed to respond effectively to the challenges posed by the economic crisis and globalisation. Zhang Li points out that the leaders of La France Insoumise withdrew from the Socialist Party due to its tilt towards neoliberalism, founded the Left Party, and attempted to reshape the landscape of the French Left by forming the Left Front with the French Communist Party as well as other left-wing parties (Zhang, 2017). However, the Left Front's failure to achieve sustained electoral success provided an opportunity for the further rise of La France Insoumise.

2.2 Personal Charisma and Emerging Media Broaden The Audience

By analysing the 2017 France presidential election, Feng Yang argues that its leaders appealed to voters disillusioned with the Socialist Party with their personal charisma and innovative strategies, but that La France Insoumise's idealisation of its platform limited its wider electoral success. (Feng, 2018) Guo Guoshi points out that the convergence of traditional political parties and corruption has prompted voters to seek new political forces, and it is through the internet and new media that La France Insoumise has quickly gained popular support and become a platform for voters to express their dissatisfaction and demand for reform (Guo, 2018).

2.3 Innovations in Political Strategy Have Energised

The rise of La France Insoumise reflects a broader realignment of the European radical left and the rise of populism. Political parties of the European radical left have undergone a significant ideological and organisational restructuring, particularly in the aftermath of the debt crisis, and many have incorporated populist elements to appeal to voters. This trend is reflected in La France Insoumise, which is notably characterised by its confrontation of traditional political elites as a populist (Wang, 2019). This view echoes the analyses of Shuyi Peng, who argues that the rise of populism, especially left-wing populism, partially fills the gaps of traditional left-wing parties on issues of economic equality and social justice, but also risks simplifying complex issues (Peng, 2020). Qiu Bing further analyses that La France Insoumise has not only found a foothold in the left-wing camp, but has also forced traditional political parties to start reinventing themselves to meet the challenges (Qiu, 2018).

2.4 The Capture of Social Needs Caters to Voters

Through historical analysis and data investigation methods, Feng Yang analyses voter behaviour in the 2017 French presidential election, revealing the voter psychology and the influence of social media behind the success of La France Insoumise (Feng, 2018). Zhang Li, on the other hand, depicts the leader's political journey from his withdrawal from the Socialist Party to the creation of La France Insoumise, revealing how his political strategy and ideology adapted to the changing political ecology and voter demands (Zhang, 2017).

2.5 Future Developments and Challenges

Despite La France Insoumise's strong performance in recent elections, it still faces considerable challenges for its future development. Wu Yunxi pointed out that the fragility of the left-wing coalition and the internal structural contradictions in La France Insoumise is one of the problems that must be solved. In addition, how to put forward feasible programmes at the policy level and effectively respond to the actual needs of voters are the key challenges that La France Insoumise must face (Wu, 2022).

In summary, the rise of La France Insoumise represents an important turning point in the politics of

the radical left in France and Europe. However, its longevity in the face of fierce political competition depends on its ability to implement its policies and respond to social change.

From the previous section, studies on the French left-wing movement and La France Insoumise have mainly focused on its role in the party landscape, and studies on La France Insoumise have also mainly been limited to this perspective. Few studies have examined the social dynamics of the rise, and few scholars have analysed party politics, economic development, social psychology and other factors in an integrated manner. At the same time, many studies have focused only on the political ideas and programmes of La France Insoumise, ignoring the ambiguous political attitudes in which it operated.

3 MAIN POLITICAL POSITIONS AND IDEAS OF LA FRANCE INSOUMISE

The main leader of La Insoumise, a typical representative of radical left-wing parties, first founded the French Left Party to break with the neo-liberalised Socialist Party, and then formed a left-wing front with the French Communist Party and other parties, achieving a breakthrough of radical left-wing forces against the odds. In 2017, he founded and led the La France Insoumise campaign, drawing on the Spanish 'Podemos' party, which used social media to great success.

La France Insoumise is both a movement and a political party; it is a movement before a political party, and it retains the movement's form of activity even after it becomes a political party (Qiu, 2018). Specifically, it is characterised by three main aspects.

3.1 The Development of a Consistent Tendency Toward Leftist Unity and Continuous Renewal

The leader of La France Insoumise has been a committed leftist since the beginning of his political career. While he was still working for the French Socialist Party, he endeavoured to promote a coalition between the PSF and the French Communist Party, and he did so with great success. After the establishment of the 'Left Party', he cooperated with the French Communist Party again to establish the French Left Front, showing a firm tendency towards the leftist alliance.

At the same time, the leader of La France Insoumise did not confine himself to his leftist position in political practice. On the basis of his adherence to the leftist position, he blended ecology with leftist welfarism, emphasising the concern for the common future of human beings. This sound and advanced political idea compensated for the shortcomings of the traditional left in terms of the concept of national governance, and injected new vigour into La France Insoumise and the French left.

3.2 Adherence to the 'Common Future' Action Plan, Which Integrates Ecology and Welfarism

La France Insoumise's main 10 signature action plans are: the establishment of the Sixth French Republic through a constitutional referendum, the reform of the electoral bill, environmental protection, sustainable development, the promotion of social equality, the reform of the banking sector, the rejection of the FTA between the EU and the United States, and the negotiation of changes to the EU's agreements on ecology, economy, democracy and social agreements, among others (Qiu, 2017). These 10 landmark programmes all landed on focus on the overall future development of French nationals, emphasising the harmonisation of popular sovereignty with international sovereignty.

La France Insoumise draws heavily on the political ideas of the Left Front's 2012 election platform, 'Humanity First,' but puts a stronger emphasis on ecological transformation, with alternative targets such as 100% renewable energy by 2050. At the same time, its leaders have incorporated leftist welfarism, calling for progressive reforms in response to the crisis and socio-economic inequalities, and defending the welfare state, labour rights and the redistribution of wealth, winning the support of a wide range of labour groups.

3.3 Free Forms of Organisation

La France Insoumise has the characteristics of both a political party and a movement, and is more relaxed in terms of organisational management. The organisation breaks away from the traditional framework of political parties in that its members are only required to express their agreement with the organisation's views and ideals on an online platform and to register as members. La France Insoumise imposes fewer restrictions on its members, and is more like a movement of citizens who share a common vision for change than a traditional political

party. It compiles its own action plan and carefully distils its core ideas into campaign materials, connecting directly with the general public through continuous campaigning.

4 THE SOCIAL DYNAMICS OF THE RISE OF LA FRANCE INSOUMISE

The fundamental reason for the growth of populism in La France Insoumise is the dramatic changes in the social and economic environment in France as a result of globalisation and European integration. As globalisation and economic integration continue and deepen, and in the face of increasingly open domestic markets and brutal international competition, more and more social groups have been drawn into the fray and have been marginalised or relatively marginalised, widening the gap between them and the social elite, a process undoubtedly exacerbated by the sub-prime crisis in 2008, which has intensified the discontent of the ever-expanding marginalised groups with the elites and the social system. In France's 2017 elections, the fallout from the financial crisis remained significant, with the country's economic situation gradually casting doubt on the economic claims appealed to by traditional political parties. In particular, the right-wing government that came to power in the wake of the crisis, the traditional left-wing Socialist government, and the Forward Republican government that came to power in 2017 have all implemented neoliberal economic policies that have not fundamentally reformed the system, but rather deepened the entrenchment of class. The antagonism between the French underclass and the elite has intensified, social conflicts have continued to fester, and the economic and social crisis has gradually turned into a political crisis. The leaders of La France Insoumise made redistribution of wealth and resolution of the social division between the rich and the poor the theme of their election campaign. By declaring the seizure of political power from the financial oligarchy as the means of implementation, they succeeded in winning the votes of those disillusioned with dogmatic communism or social democracy.

The political situation and political culture in today's world are undergoing unprecedented and profound changes as a result of the technological iteration brought about by the Fourth Technological Revolution. The ability to quickly respond to social issues, widely incorporate citizens' opinions, and

coordinate and integrate different policy initiatives has become an important measure of the legitimacy and effectiveness of political institutions (Fan, 2015). Emerging media have gradually replaced traditional media in promoting political ideas and competing for electoral discourse, while political parties that first started to discover and utilise social media and online platforms for propaganda have gained a huge advantage in party elections. For example, Spain's 'Podemos' party has grown to 370,000 members online through the creation of a space called 'PLaza Podemos' and the use of Loomio as a platform for decision-making through Facebook, Twitter, popular social networks and the news site Reddit. It has grown to 370,000 members online. La France Insoumise drew on the experience of the 'Podemos' party in launching a 'citizen's revolution' through the internet and social media, transforming traditional campaigning into a new type of campaign. La France Insoumise has created a platform called Discord insoumis, which uses new media and the internet to organise events, collect opinions, and formulate resolutions and policies. It has maximised democratic participation while bringing together other left-wing forces in France, achieving a historic fusion of socialism, communism, ecology and republicanism. La France Insoumise's effective use of social media has, on the one hand, provided French voters opposed to right-wing forces with an outlet for their protests and emotions, and, on the other hand, it has succeeded in expanding its voter base by capturing the attention of voters and promoting itself.

5 POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS FOR THE RISE OF LA FRANCE INSOUMISE

The glory days of the French Socialist Party in the history of the Fifth Republic were the 14 years of government by its leaders in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, the French Socialist Party's successive losses in the 1995, 2002 and 2007 elections signalled the party's descent into a downward trend. The re-election of the Socialists to the presidency in the 2012 general elections did represent a 'change of direction' from the downward trend that the Socialist Party had been on since the 1995 elections, but this proved to be no more than a short-term rebound. The president was rated by French public opinion as the 'least popular president' during his time in office, with a popularity rating of only 4 percent, meaning that the French Socialist Party is still following the downward

trend that has developed since the 1995 election (Berdah, 2016). The Republican Party, the main party of the traditional French right-wing conservatives, was formed in 2015 as the Rassemblement du Peuple Mouvement, which changed its name after losing the 2012 elections. In the 2017 election, the Republican candidate was eliminated after the first round of voting. Two consecutive election defeats have left the Republican Party on the fringes of the French party landscape. The rapid decline of traditional political parties has led to a search for new political forces, and the political ideas of La France Insoumise fit well with the political mentality and tendencies of the traditional working class, providing the ground for its further development. In the 2017 election, according to the data of the research company Opinionway, among the voters who supported La France Insoumise, excluding the supporters of the extreme left-wing forces, those who supported the Socialist Party of France were in first place. In other words, Socialist voters constitute the largest share of the non-far-left population in favour of La France Insoumise (Opinion way, 2017). This shows that a part of the voters who were disappointed with the performance of the Socialist Party in power switched their votes to La France Insoumise, which is also a left-wing party, and became the biggest external force for La France Insoumise in this election.

Similarly, internal changes within the French left provided the conditions for the rise of La France Insoumise. Radical left-wing political forces such as the French Communist Party and the Left Party (Parti de la République) created the Left Front in 2009, which made electoral calls for progressive reforms in response to the crisis and socio-economic inequalities, in defence of the welfare state, labour rights and the redistribution of wealth, and in support of a renewed European treaty and an eco-socialist economic programme. Despite the political controversy between the different parties in subsequent developments, in the end, the Left Front remained united and continued to preserve and defend left-wing unity in order to achieve a broader left-wing coalition. In the 2017 elections, the radical left in France rallied around the leaders of La France Insoumise, providing strength and support for further development.

6 CONCLUSION

La France Insoumise is not only a new sample for observing the change of the political party landscape in France, but also an effective case for studying the

development of left-wing forces in Europe. By exploring La France Insoumise's development history and political ideas, this paper comes to the following conclusion: the increase in the support rate of the left-wing political force represented by La France Insoumise in recent years is the result of a combination of internal and external factors, its own political ideas and electoral methods have been adapted to the current situation in France. In other words, their own political ideas and electoral methods have been reformed and adapted to the new changes in the current French social and political environment. However, La France Insoumise, despite its strong influence, has not yet become a fully-fledged party. In the face of its competitors, who are also innovating and integrating, La France Insoumise still needs to maintain its position while constantly adjusting to win the struggle for political power and resources.

This article analyses the reasons for the rise of La France Insoumise from the perspective of the social and political environment in France, thus bridging the gap between existing studies on La France Insoumise and the single perspective on it. However, given the novelty of this research topic, there are not many direct research results on this topic, and there may still be perspectives that the author has omitted. Therefore, in future research, the social and political environment of France can be further refined to analyse the deep-rooted reasons for the rise of La France Insoumise.

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