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**The Ideological Flexibility of
Established Radical Right Parties in
Western Europe:
A Comparison Between the Italian League and
the French National Rally**

Alessio Scopelliti

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Science and Law School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies 02/2022

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Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Alessio Scopelliti

DATE: 15/02/2022

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all those self-funded PhD students who, alongside their research project, are enrolled in different jobs to chase their dream of writing and living on research.

Abstract

It is argued in the literature on cleavage theory that political parties are not "empty vessels", but they are rather bounded by the societal realm: they have difficulties to be ideologically flexible as there is the implicit assumption that when a political party belongs to a given side of an ideological conflict (or cleavage structure), it is ideologically rigid (inflexible). By contrast, this thesis focuses on how established radical right political parties can be ideologically flexible towards one of the newest emergent conflicts theorized by Hooghe and Marks (2018): the new transnational cleavage. However, the radical right parties are believed, among others, as the most inflexible towards the new transnational cleavage because they are considered as EU issue owners. Alternatively, I theoretically argue that political parties are to be considered as rational actors (votes-oriented) which are capable to be more flexible than we thought. Thus, I deploy and develop a holistic framework that includes both historical and rational choice institutionalist ideas in order to explore flexibility of political parties, taking into account both demand side and supply side factors (contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility). Moreover, based on the idea that complex issues must not be understood as one-dimensional conflicts that parties and citizens approve or oppose, I argue that also the new transnational cleavage must be conceptualised as a combination of three dimensions (institutional, economic and cultural).

Through the deploy of multiple quantitative methods, including secondary data analysis and manual content analysis, I compare the flexibility of the League and the National Rally on the new transnational cleavage from election to election. The key empirical findings of this study demonstrate that the League and the National Rally have indeed been flexible, but in different ways. The League has demonstrated being fully flexible by increasing its EU issue ownership through the economic dimension and shifting position from marginal pro-Europeanism to hard-Euroscepticism thanks to the institutional and economic dimension. Whilst the National Rally is to be considered as partially flexible as it significantly increased its EU issue ownership through its economic dimension, but it kept a Eurosceptic position all over the period observed.

The significance of this thesis is that it highlights the complexity of parties' nature, demonstrating that the classical cleavage model designed by Lipset and Rokkan does not sufficiently depict the ideology of political parties, which require a more dynamic cleavage model. Moreover, this research contributes to the much known and much debated concept of Euroscepticism. It demonstrates that the League and the National Rally have been capable of adopting stance that allows them to employ elements from both Euroscepticism and Europeanism. Thus, this study aims to pave the way for further research within the social and political sciences which should provide a richer understanding of party politics, Euroscepticism and radical right.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context and justification

Since the 2014 European Parliament Elections, the outstanding electoral results of Eurosceptic parties exceeded the expectations of many commentators and for that reason have garnered considerable attention by academics and observers on those political parties that are from the extreme fringes of the classical political spectrum 'left vs. right' (Hobolt, 2015). The political context that characterized those particular European elections had a twofold significance. Firstly, it happened at the culmination of the greatest economic crisis in Europe since the post Second World War period. Secondly, the 2007 Lisbon Treaty had already attributed much more political importance to the European Elections because the successful political groups in the European Parliament (EP) would then be responsible for electing the next Commission president.¹ For these reasons, scholars of party politics and competitive party systems questioned whether the European Parliament Elections could still be considered as second order² and whether they were undergoing a profound transformation. Furthermore, academics also debate whether the electoral changes that characterised the European Parliament Elections were also disseminated to national parliamentary elections across other European countries (Kriesi and Grande, 2015). On the one hand, some scholars argue that the political parties of the 'Great Depression' (mainstream parties) are now challenged by the parties of the 'Great Recession' (radical parties) (Vassallo and Valbruzzi, 2018). On the other hand, some scholars prefer to argue that major party families that were founded on the Rokkian cleavage structures, such as the Christian Democratic, the Social Democratic, the Liberal, and the Conservative parties, will continue to have a prominent role in their national party systems for the foreseeable future (Heinisch, 2008; Luther, 2011).

¹ The Spitzenkandidat was the German term used in the 2014 European Parliament campaign in order to revitalise the enthusiasm for the European elections and as an attempt to fill the democratic gap between citizens and the European Commission.

² The consolidated 'second-order theory' states that European elections are more likely to be an exceptional opportunity to judge (or to protest) against the national government's performance in absence of other local or national elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980).

However, as Wodak (2021: 6) puts it, in the last decade, the unsayable suddenly became sayable leading to a ‘shameless normalization’ of radical right discourses (see also Krzyżanowski, 2020). As such, since the 2014 European Parliament Elections, it is widely recognized in the academic literature that the political parties, which mostly capitalized on an age of electoral turmoil both at national and European levels have been the radical right parties (RRPs) (Grzymala-Busse, 2019). For instance, at national level, there is a notable trend towards RRP finding more space in most European national parliaments, such as the Freedom Party at 26% (Austria, 2017), Freedom and Direct Democracy at 11% (Czech Republic, 2017), National Rally at 13% (France, 2017), Alternative for Germany at 13% (Germany, 2017), Freedom Party at 13% (Netherlands, 2017), League at 17% (Italy, 2018), Sweden Democrats at 17% (Sweden, 2018), Vlaams Belang at 12% (Belgium, 2019), People’s Party at 8,7% (Denmark, 2019), The Finns at 18% (Finland, 2019), Law and Justice at 38% (Poland, 2019), Vox at 10% (Spain, 2019) and Fidesz at 48% (Hungary, 2020).³ In addition, at a European level, the RRP also had a significant increase of seats in the EU Parliament. For instance, the European Parliament groups ‘Identity & Democracy’ and ‘European Conservatives & Reformists’ have risen in the 2019 European Parliament Elections respectively by +33 and +58 new seats from the previous 2014 European Parliament Elections (Politico Europe, 2021). These electoral results show the reasons why the radical right party family has attracted so much attention from many researchers in party politics in the last few years (Mols and Jetten, 2020).

When studying RRP, scholars of party politics have tended to focus on understanding the reasons behind the aforementioned electoral success both at the national and European levels (Mols and Jetten, 2020). There is a significant academic attention, on the one hand, trying to explore the demand side of RRP, which consists of the factors explaining their voting support. Some academics, for example, confirm positive associations between features of individual *malaise* due to the declining of economic position with electoral support for RRP from both working-class and middle-class electors (Norris, 2005; Mudde, 2007). Following this strand of research, more recent studies have considered similar tendencies looking on the relationship between the surge of immigrants and refugees to European countries with the electoral support for RRP. Notably, Rydgren and Van der Meiden (2019) demonstrated in their Swedish case study that it ceased to be an exceptional country with no radical right in its party system. In fact, authors have shown that the electoral success of the Sweden Democrats increased alongside the growing salience of sociocultural factors, especially the

³ Last update, 01/02/2021.

immigration issue. Similarly, Germany ceased to be another exceptional case study in terms of the success of radical right parties in post-war Europe. In fact, in recent years, the Alternative for Germany has been able to intercept most of the discontent of electors disenchanted with “Angela Merkel’s unexpected decision to temporarily suspend the Dublin Regulation, which in turn led to the unorderly arrival of hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers in Germany” (Arzheimer and Berning, 2019: 1).

On the other hand, in other comparative studies, scholars have placed the supply side of RRPs at the centre of their work, which coincides with the analysis of their strategies to appeal new voters. For instance, one of the supply side explanations argued by some scholars is driven by the ability of RRPs to fill the gap (Figueira, 2018; Kitschelt, 2018; Mendes and Dennison, 2021) within the electoral space. This is especially the case in countries where radical right alternatives have been absent for a long period of time (e.g. Spain and Portugal) or when mainstream political parties usually converge on socioeconomic issues, while the RRPs dedicate most of their supply side to sociocultural issues. Alternatively, scholars also claim the capability of RRPs to actually create the gap in the electoral space (Rovny, 2013). This argument is usually linked to the ‘winning formula’ explanation proposed by Kitschelt (1995) where populist RRPs have succeeded in intercepting traditionally left voters by juxtaposing the social values of the extreme right with left-leaning economic policies. This strategy has enabled them to intercept the issue ownership on the defence of workers’ rights by proposing pro-welfare policies (chauvinism) (Mosimann et al., 2018: 68). Another explanation that captured the majority of scholars’ attention is the ‘populist’ strategy usually employed by RRPs (Weyland, 2017). Academics that have focused on this stream of research argue that rising fear (fuelled by both economic and cultural anxieties) can easily be intercepted by populist strategies emphasising the role of the charismatic leader (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2014; Obradović et al., 2020) who solves complex societal issues with ‘simple solutions’ (Glück, 2019; Erisen et la., 2021).

To date, although most research focused on the causes behind the electoral success of RRPs, there is minimal research that has investigated the ideological flexibility of *established*⁴ RRPs with regard to

⁴ In this study, I review the current literature that debated the threshold between new and established parties. My conceptualisation of established party combines two organisational factors (party stability and party age). To sum up, I categorise as established political parties those organisations that do not derive from splits of major parties and that have been in the lives of at least two generations of electors (those who witnessed the rise of these parties and those that have always lived with this electoral alternative). This argumentation is addressed in more detail in Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.2.

the new transnational cleavage. Thus, the capacity of these parties to change how much (salience) and to what extent (position) they ideologically address the conflict on the EU. In fact, although this notion is nothing new in the party politics literature, its flexibility nevertheless remains one of the least explored factors when studying the links between RRP and Euroscepticism/Europeanism⁵ over long periods of time. The reason for this is predominantly because the RRP are assumed to be EU issue owners⁶ who are historically antagonistic towards the European integration process. The aim of this work, however, is to extend our understanding of this topic through a comparative case research study between the League in Italy and the National Rally in France. These two political parties that are recognised by the literature as belonging to the *radical right* party family are conceptualised by this study as being *established* political parties (see section 3.2.2). The knowledge derived from this comparison will be important for the literature in European politics in framing how the established RRP changed their ideology towards the EU. In addition, the understanding of this phenomenon is significant as most of the European party systems include strong RRP, whose involvement in national governments might have an unpredictable long-term impact on the destiny of the European integration project. At the beginning of this doctoral research in September 2017, there was no existing research that explicitly focused on the ideological flexibility of established RRP towards the new transnational cleavage. As such, this dissertation makes a number of key theoretical contributions across three central scholarly discussions: cleavage studies (section 2.4), European studies (section 2.2.4.3) and radical right studies (section 3.2.2).

Having set out the context and the justification for this research, I will introduce in the next section, the research puzzle, and the core question that drives this study.

1.2 The contributions of the research

This thesis focuses specifically on the *ideological flexibility* of *established radical right parties* (eRRP) on the *new transnational cleavage* theorised by Hooghe and Marks (2018). Such flexibility is a variation

⁵ Both concepts of Euroscepticism and Europeanism are based on Leruth et al. (2018) work. By Euroscepticism, I imply all those forms of antagonization towards the European integration process as criticising/blaming the EU or demanding for a withdrawal from the European membership. By contrast, Europeanism refers to all forms of support towards the European integration process including the desirability to remain in the European community or to expand the EU's competences.

⁶ The labelling of RRP as EU issue owners is drawn from the literature that explored the link between the radical right and Euroscepticism (Leruth et al., 2018). This term was also employed in previous studies (see Vasilopoulou 2018a, 2018b).

process which occurs throughout the life of a political party. At the core of this variation process, political party ideologies change on how they stand on issues from election to election (Harmel and Janda, 1994).

The ideological flexibility of political parties is a serious subject in the dynamics of political representation as it poses the problem of trust between voters and political parties (Bouteca and Devos, 2016). A political party that changes too often can be risky for its credibility in the eyes of the electorate. For that reason, historical institutionalist scholars have accepted the assumption of an ideological rigidity within political parties. The ideological rigidity is seen as essential in the genetics of political parties which are determined “by brand reputations embedded in the expectations of voters, and by the interests and values of their social base” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 126). In addition – and connected – to this ideological rigidity, historical institutionalists also argue that political parties might be able to change their programmatic offer towards, for instance, new issues, but this change would happen within the predefined ideological knit and “limits set by their historical position” (Bornschieer, 2009: 5). To this extent, for those who look at political party actions (and formations) from an historical institutionalist perspective, the answer to questions such as ‘are political parties to be considered as passive agents or free actors?’ is often driven by the claim that political parties are a consequence of macro-societal conflicts (or cleavage structures) that determine their behaviour. This interpretation is at the base of the *classical cleavage model* theorised by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). It is an approach that leaves no room for choice to political parties. In fact, the classical cleavage model is structured as a linear process where political parties constitute the fundamental outcome since they are the organisational expression of societal conflicts generated by the cleavage structures (Bartolini and Mair, 2007).

Alternatively, for other scholars, political parties are not mere pawns whose strategies are constrained by the context in which they find themselves. Indeed, for those who look at political parties from a rational choice institutionalist perspective, “parties are conceived as self-interested actors responding to the logic of the situation in which they find themselves - a logic that is dictated by the need to compete for votes” (Ware, 1996: 9). As such, the ideological flexibility of parties reflects parties’ strategies that are driven by the logic of costs vs. benefits (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Yet, one should not risk falling into the reductionist viewpoint that the flexibility of political parties is exclusively driven by utilitarian internal choices. A political party is also bound in its actions (but not entirely constrained) by the socio-political context and its electorate. Therefore, the conundrum

of parties' ideological flexibility encourages us to question the relationship between political parties and the context in which these actors make decisions. Broadly speaking, scholars usually focus on what primarily influences parties' flexibility: structure or choice? Alternatively, as scholars recommend combining both the demand and supply side factors of political parties (see e.g. Rydgren 2007; Mudde 2007), this study proposes an innovative approach to look at the *ideological flexibility* of political parties taking into consideration multiple interrelated factors that include both the demand side (structure) and the supply side (choice) of political parties as two sides of the same coin.⁷ The main claim of this work is that the flexibility of political parties is not devised as a mere process of adaptation, but it implies a learning process of ideological flexibility by political parties that seek to safeguard their ability to accomplish their institutional purpose (in the case of parties, typically, vote maximisation).

On this basis, drawing on Ira Katznelson and Barry R. Weingast's work (2005), the very first contribution of this study is proposing an innovative joint approach between historical and rational choice institutionalism to explore the flexibility of political parties and to propose an innovative new cleavage model that is more dynamic than the classical cleavage model designed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). To this end, the concept of parties' ideological flexibility is based on the idea that political parties are not to be exclusively considered as passive agents, when we consider the constraints of their contexts, free actors, or when we consider their instrumentalist behaviour, but both aspects must be taken into consideration. This is because political parties are complex organisations co-dependant with their environment (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Sartori, 1990).

Moving to the second theoretical contribution of this work, as stated above, the transnational cleavage is a new cleavage structure that divides "those who defend national ways of life from external influence against those who conceive their identities as consistent with international governance" (Marks et al, 2021: 176). And when testing the flexibility of eRRPs, the new transnational cleavage provides good grounds for conducting this type of research for three reasons. Firstly, as I stated in the first section of this chapter, the new transnational cleavage has grown in political relevance in all European countries, turning out to be, *de facto*, the new *zeitgeist* of European and national party competitions (Gougou and Persico, 2017; Natale, 2018; D'Alimonte, 2019; Lachat

⁷ To recall that the demand side of political parties involves the realm of the electorate (public opinion and voting behaviour). The supply side of political parties refers to the domain of what and how political parties express their messages (political offer and political narrative).

and Michel, 2019; Brack, 2020; Cutts et al., 2020). Secondly, the seminal work of Hooghe and Marks (2018) on the new transnational cleavage associates the RRP as political actors as EU issue owners. For that reason, it would be intriguing to explore the ideological flexibility of parties belonging to the radical right party family in respect of this new ideological conflict since it would mean challenging the static nature of the classical cleavage model where parties are bounded by their reputation (Volkens and Klingemann, 2002; Bouteuca and Devos, 2015; Hooghe and Marks, 2018). And, finally, the new transnational cleavage provides a unique opportunity to investigate a cleavage structure from a different viewpoint. Indeed, this study sets out the original idea that the transnational cleavage must not be understood as a one-dimensional conflict that parties and citizens approve or oppose but must be conceptualised as a combination of three dimensions (institutional, economic and cultural) that can generate their own ideological pull (Taggart, 1998; Leupold, 2015; Brunazzo and Gilbert, 2017).

Consequently, this study seeks to extend the current knowledge of three central scholarly discussions that have not received sufficient attention and will be addressed in this research: (1) the importance of employing a holistic approach when studying parties' ideological flexibility over long periods of time (or a diachronic approach) and (2) the multidimensional nature of the new transnational cleavage. The exploration of these two aspects will provide, firstly, a deeper understanding of whether political parties can still be considered as ideologically rigid or flexible. Secondly, by empirically assessing the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage, this study will provide a significant contribution to the understanding of the ambiguous nature of the well-known and much debated concept that antagonises and/or criticises the European integration process: Euroscepticism. As such these research contributions aim to provide new research stimuli in the field of European politics, and West European politics in particular.

1.3 The research question

In taking into consideration all the aforementioned goals of this project, the overarching question informing this research is: *how ideological flexible are established radical right parties with regards to the new transnational cleavage?* In order to answer this question, I will argue that it is necessary and sufficient to explore both the demand side and the supply side of political parties as they jointly shape the ideological flexibility of political parties. This is what I call the *assumption of contingent flexibility*. In fact, I will look at three different points of analysis. Firstly, I will focus on the political

landscape where political parties must adapt in order to correlate with the interests of the people, following the stream of research on public opinion regarding the EU. I will therefore observe to what extent the European integration process⁸ has influenced public opinion in terms of polarisation and societal division on the transnational cleavage and each dimension of the transnational cleavage. Secondly, I will investigate to what extent political parties have addressed their electoral strategy in respect of the new transnational cleavage (and each dimension) from election to election. This means that I will explore not only *whether* they addressed this new ideological conflict, but also *to what extent* in terms of emphasis and position. Thirdly, I will explore whether there have been changes within the eRRPs' electorate. Thus, I will observe whether voters' EU-orientations have been stable or have changed as the time progresses. Essentially, each point of analysis constitutes the three interrelated factors of party ideological flexibility conceptualised in this study: the contextual flexibility (of the latent demand side), the internal flexibility (of the supply side) and the external flexibility (of the manifest demand side).

1.4 The research design

Finally, with regards to exploring the development of the transnational cleavage in the radical right party family, the selection of case studies constitutes the fundamental step for this thesis' research design. This study suggests that eRRPs can tell us more about the nature of Euroscepticism. In this sense, as the political context has changed over the past forty years (from 1980 to 2020), I argue that eRRPs have changed the way they engage with the EU in terms of ideological flexibility. For that reason, although most current research investigates Euroscepticism and RRP from both Western and Eastern European countries in order to provide a cross-European and party-driven analysis (see e.g. Norris, 2005; Mudde, 2007), I will focus on RRP from Western European countries because I am interested in exploring the flexibility of *established* RRP that originated from the countries that voluntarily transferred their sovereignty from the national to the transnational level by signing the Maastricht Treaty in 1992⁹ and are also political parties that have been competing in

⁸ According to Hooghe and Marks (2018), the European integration process is considered as the historical juncture that produced the advent of the new transnational cleavage. Similarly, both Kriesi et al. (2008) and Inglehart and Norris (2016) identify the globalisation as the historical juncture that produced the new transnational cleavages that they have conceptualised (see section 2.2.3 for more details).

⁹ For that reason, from now on, I will mostly refer to the Western European countries in the rest of this thesis as those who signed the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 including: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom.

democratic regimes¹⁰ for the last four decades (since the early 1980s). On this basis, this thesis adopts a comparative most similar research design in order to explore whether and how similar (but not identical) political parties experience different or similar ideological flexibility with regards to the new transnational cleavage. As such, the two case studies of the League (former Northern League) and the National Rally (former National Front) were selected based on a set of very similar characteristics that can be summarised by their political longevity as *established* political parties and their belonging to the *radical right* party family (see section 3.2.2 for more details). Moreover, one should also acknowledge that these two case studies are substantially different in terms of their party systems (e.g. the electoral system) and it is known that institutional constraints play an important role in party strategies (Stefuriuc, 2013). Nevertheless, within the context of Western Europe they also share many similarities. For instance, they are very similar in terms of their *historical* relationship with the EU as their countries played a crucial role in the building process of the European project (Conti, 2014). For example, both Italy and France signed both the Treaty of Paris in 1951 (establishing the European Coal and Steel Community) and the Treaties of Rome in 1957 (establishing the European Economic Community), which were the building blocks of the European integration process (Varsori, 2010). In addition, drawing on Vasilopoulou (2018a), the Italian and the French party rivalries are similar when taking into account their bipolar party system as long as “(a) there are two poles – made up by either parties or coalitions – that get most of the votes [and] (b) one of these wins the absolute majority of the seats and forms the cabinet” (Bartolini et al., 2004: 2). This comparison will therefore help in elucidating how the two case studies with a most similar nature, ideology and history exhibit variation in their ideological flexibility towards the transnational cleavage. Table 1.1 summarises the similarities among the two case studies discussed above.

Table 1.1 Comparability of case selection

	<i>Italian League</i>	<i>French National Rally</i>
Established political party	Yes	Yes
Radical right party	Yes	Yes
Country's role in with the European integration process	High	High

¹⁰ In fact, the RRP's from Eastern European countries were founded after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. Therefore, they are all to be considered as *new* RRP's.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters duly divided up into three parts. Each part of the thesis is structured to serve a specific goal. The first part presents the theoretical framework. It reviews the streams of research linked to the puzzle and explains the methodology employed to answer the research question (Chapters 2 and 3). The second part empirically examines the findings of this study taking into consideration each different factor constituting the ideological flexibility of the eRRPs (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). The third, and final, part concludes this thesis summarising the core findings of this work, elucidating its theoretical and empirical contributions and its limitations (Chapter 7).

Chapter 2 opens the first part of the thesis and presents the theoretical framework of this dissertation drawing from the broad literature on the classical cleavage model, moving to the debates that focus on the freezing hypothesis and finally proposing an alternative cleavage model that would include more dynamicity to the political parties. In this chapter, I argue that a fundamental prerequisite to comprehend how the academic literature has understood parties' ideological flexibility involves reviewing cleavage theory as conceptualised by Lipset and Rokkan in 1967. This step will be important as I review the literature conceptualising the cleavage structure and how this concept influences political parties in terms of their behaviour. Subsequently, I will move my discussion forward to the most recent contributions supporting the advent of new cleavage structures, focussing in particular on the new transnational cleavage theorised by Hooghe and Marks (2018). Ultimately, the transnational cleavage is presented as a complex political issue, whose one-dimensionality proposed by its authors would mean a lesser understanding on the potentials of this new ideological conflict. As such, based on some thirty years of political scientific research on Euroscepticism, I will assess the transnational cleavage as a phenomenon composed of three complementary logics of conflicts that originate from the same historical juncture (the European integration process). Moving from the broad to the specific, in the second part of this chapter, I will then focus on the widely debated freezing hypothesis, which is a crucial component of the classical cleavage model. Firstly, I will review how the literature presents arguments in favour or against the validity of the assertion that focuses on the freezing status between the electoral stability/volatility of parties or the predictive strength/weakness of cleavage structures. Conversely, I will re-examine the freezing hypothesis questioning what *else* is frozen: the political parties. In doing so, the political parties are no longer seen as mere outcomes of the classical cleavage model, but they are rather assumed to be active participants that shape (and are shaped by) their context. Finally, the chapter

introduces the main theoretical argument of this work about the ideological flexibility of political parties. This is presented as a holistic concept that comprises three different factors which will each be reviewed in detail: contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility. The chapter will conclude by presenting the research hypotheses of this study.

Chapter 3 will be dedicated to research methodology. It is divided into two main parts. The first one is more theoretical. It starts by showing the advantages of the comparative approach in order to test the research question. To do this, the study combines two comparative perspectives: across case studies and over time. Both perspectives are necessary because they allow me to obtain maximum analytical potential. Subsequently, I will present the concept of the case selection process through the review of the existing literature which focuses on the two main selection criteria. This means adopting a particular focus on the core ideological feature that defines what is the radical right party family. And, secondly, I will examine the literature on the threshold between established and new political parties. Together, these two streams of research constitute a new literature niche within the scholarship of the radical right: the *established* RRP. This first part concludes by reviewing the current scholarship on the League and the National Rally in order to provide a deeper overview of the case studies that will be compared. The second part of this chapter will be more technical, and will rather focus on the codification of variables and selection of methods to test my hypotheses. Yet, it will, firstly, introduce the rationale to select certain sources of data employed to answer the research question. This section is structured in two main parts. The first one is focused on the sources of data for the demand side of political parties. In the second part, there is the focus on data that depict the supply side of political parties. Subsequently, the remaining sections of Chapter 3 explain the variables and methods employed per each factor constituting parties' ideological flexibility.

Moving to the second part of this thesis, Chapter 4 examines the broader political context of the League and the National Rally, comparing to what extent the Italian and French electorates changed from 1980 to 2020 with regard to the new transnational cleavage with reference to each dimension (institutional, economic and cultural). This analysis is necessary to determine variation of the context as political parties are not exempt from changes within the societal realm. Therefore, the political context will be examined through Eurobarometer data (from 1980 to 2020) in order to observe to what extent the transitional cleavage influenced the Italian and the French electorates in terms of polarisation and societal division.

Chapter 5 examines the electoral strategies employed by the League and the National Rally towards the transnational cleavage (and its dimensions). Furthermore, in this analysis, I will offer an original contribution to the study of the supply side of political parties. Although which source best expresses parties' messages is contentious, I shall rely upon a novel conceptualisation of the supply side as the combination of a political offer (electoral manifestos) and a political narrative (social media/press releases). As such, this chapter will explore to what extent the two political parties address the transnational cleavage in terms of issue salience and position. I highlight that in both measurements these case studies show more variation in some dimensions rather than others, demonstrating that there is every possibility for these parties (despite their reputation) to cross the line of the cleavage structure moving from one dichotomy to another. Ultimately, this chapter will demonstrate that some cleavages are more ideologically flexible (or frozen) than others.

Chapter 6 compares variations within the electorates of the League and the National Rally. This analysis deals with why individual electors vote for these two political parties. In order to answer this question, this chapter examines data from the Eurobarometer to compare four different electorates in France and Italy. The analysis of the electorate reveals that voters do not always support these parties with the same issue-orientations. Indeed, it emerges that the reasons behind voters' support for these two eRRPs have changed between the elections of the early 1990s and the elections of the late 2010s.

Finally, in the last part of this thesis, Chapter 7 synthesises the main findings of this study. It clarifies the most important core findings on the flexibility of the case studies on the new transnational cleavage, drawing a general conclusion that elucidates the nature of the link between the eRRPs and the Euroscepticism and how this link has been developing over the decades. In few words, eRRPs' ideological flexibility towards the new transnational cleavage emerges, confirming that the cleavage model should include more dynamism to reflect these shifts. Moreover, when focusing on the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage, it emerges from this thesis that the eRRPs' flexibility with regard to the EU is not uniform across case studies. The League has demonstrated being fully flexible by increasing its EU issue ownership through the economic dimension and shifting position from marginal pro-Europeanism to hard-Euroscepticism thanks to the institutional and economic dimension. Whilst the National Rally is to be considered as partially flexible as it significantly increased its EU issue ownership through its economic dimension, but it kept a Eurosceptic position all over the period observed. This chapter will also discuss the research's

contributions to the existing literature on the cleavage studies, European studies and radical right studies. Finally, this chapter will expose the limitations that characterised this work. It will thus address these limitations and, subsequently, propose recommendations for future research directions.

PART 1: THEORY AND METHODS

2 Theoretical Framework and Concepts

2.1 Introduction

The rise of radical right parties in Western European countries has received widespread attention from both the media and in academia. Among scholars who explained the electoral success of the radical right, Hooghe and Marks (2018) describe the emergence of the new transnational cleavage structure as the cause of this phenomenon. In this sense, the political consequences of the transnational cleavage have been manifold. Firstly, this new cleavage has fundamentally undermined the long-established left-right party-system, questioning whether a framework of class conflict can still be applied to represent current European politics. Secondly, the new cleavage has reshaped the European political context and has inspired the upsurge of new political parties. Finally, this new conflict is also provoking political ramifications at national levels with an unpredictable long-term impact on the destiny of the European integration project. While the impact of transnational cleavage has been analysed in some depth on how radical right parties influence the political agenda, democratic regimes and party systems, the flexibility of established radical right parties (eRRPs) from the early 1980s to the late 2010s towards the new transnational cleavage remains a lacuna in the literature, which requires urgent attention.

The challenge of this chapter is to construct a holistic theoretical framework which, by taking account of the complex nuances described above, gives a more complete panorama of how party ideological flexibility has been used extensively by the radical right. In order to achieve this, I argue that the understanding of the cleavage theory offered by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) is a prerequisite for study on party ideological flexibility. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter, I will conceptualise what a cleavage structure is and how this notion has developed over the years. Subsequently, I will also illustrate the classical cleavage model, how the classical cleavage structures are conceptualised, and how further new cleavage structures are elaborated from the base of this classical Lipset-Rokkan model: the integration/demarcation cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008), the cultural backlash cleavage (Norris and Inglehart, 2019) and transnational cleavage (Hooghe and Marks, 2018). Further, this chapter will provide much more attention to the new transnational cleavage. In

this section, based on the idea that “complex political issues involve a large amount of dimensions” (Gattinara, 2016: 3), the transnational cleavage is not understood as a one-dimensional conflict that parties approve/reject, but I rather investigate its multidimensional nature (institutional, economic and cultural).

In the second part of this chapter, I will re-examine the freezing hypothesis asserted by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). This notion has fuelled broad debates among scholars over the years of questioning ‘what is frozen?’ (electoral stability/volatility or predictive strength/weakness of cleavage structure). Scholars imply the theoretical assertion that political parties are merely outcomes of the cleavage model and, for that reason, are inflexible entities. By contrast, I argue that political parties can be ideologically flexible. The study on parties’ behaviour by scholars in political science has largely focused on two aspects. Firstly, from a bottom-up approach, political parties tend to respond to the changes in electorate preferences (or the demand side). On the other hand, from a top-down approach, political parties actively design their electoral messages (or supply side) in order to appeal to new voters. However, in this study, I holistically conceptualise the ideological flexibility of parties as being a combination of interrelated multiple factors in order to consider both demand and supply as two sides of the same coin. Building on this, I propose an innovative cleavage model that overcomes the shortcomings of the classical cleavage model. Lastly, I outline the main hypotheses and expectations of this study.

2.2 The genesis of Western European political parties

The Rokkanian idea of *cleavage structure* is a theoretical concept that has been used (and is still used nowadays) by scholars working on competitive party systems, political parties and voting behaviour. This notion is useful as a way of indicating those social fractures and dichotomist political antagonisms that are latent in society and that, subsequently, emerge by becoming institutionalized through the formation of party systems and political parties that embody these societal divisions (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009; Archer, 2010). In this section, I will firstly illustrate the theoretical meaning of *what* a cleavage structure is in order to avoid any misunderstanding or ambiguity vis-à-vis the terms frequently employed in this study. Subsequently, I will review the path-breaking model derived from Lipset and Rokkan’s (1967) cleavage theory that has been applied by political scientists to explain whether national party systems change, how parties adopt their electoral strategy and policy positions on the key issues structuring their social and political context,

and to explore the link between voters and political parties (Bartolini and Mair, 2007). Finally, and most importantly, there will be a critical overview of the most recent cleavage structures that are still based on the classical cleavage model. Eventually, I will dedicate much more emphasis towards the new transnational cleavage theorised by Hooghe and Marks (2018) which is considered, in this study, to be the new *zeitgeist* of our time.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing the cleavage structure

Although cleavage theory had a significant and enduring impact on political science more than five decades ago (1967), there has been a general misunderstanding of *what* a cleavage is and how to define it (see the contributions of Zuckerman, 1975; Bartolini and Mair, 2007; Deegan-Krause, 2007: 538, Franklin, 2010; Kriesi, 2010). Firstly, the difference between ‘cleavage’ and other political concepts such as ‘division’ should be distinguished (Bartolini and Mair, 2007: 198). In this sense, Zuckerman (1975: 231) points out this semantic misunderstanding in the literature of his time by emphasising that, for instance, divisions within society do not necessarily turn into conflicts. In line with Lipset and Rokkan (1967), divided groups are entities in conflict only once they are antithetical towards each other over the same issue and, therefore, they provide opposite solutions. Therefore, the antithetic element of a conflict between groups of people is necessary for a ‘division’ to be identified as a cleavage. Indeed, a cleavage is most importantly a conflict in which you can discern two antithetical sides that clash against each other over the same issue (see Rokkan et al., 1999; Franklin, 2010). For instance, Marks et al. (2017: 5) define the GAL/TAN conflict as being a new cleavage. This conflict is framed as a ‘cultural cleavage’¹¹ with green alternative and libertarian (GAL) values on one side, and on the other side traditional, authoritarian and nativist values (TAN). However, this divide cannot be defined as a cleavage because it does not fulfil the antithetical requirement of “objective distinction between the interests of those on different sides of a cleavage” (Franklin, 2010: 650). Indeed, rather than focusing on one topic (represented by two antithetical sides), this is a divide because it represents different and unilateral sides. For instance, the pro-environment stance is in the GAL side without its counterpart on the TAN side or the pro-traditionalist stance on the TAN side without its counterpart on the GAL side.

Having determined that cleavage structures are conflicts with antithetical sides over the same issue, it is still a matter of discussion as to how these sides can best be identified. In this sense, Bartolini

¹¹ By cultural cleavage is meant by the authors as a conflict generated from opposite beliefs.

and Mair (2007) discussed this in detail. There is ambiguity regarding definitions among scholars, for example, in differentiating between social cleavages from cultural cleavages. On the one hand, contributors to the structural dealignment (Brooks et al., 2006; Lachat, 2007), for instance, imply that cleavage structures are conflicts which are generated by societal stratification (Bartolini and Mair, 2007: 198). To quote Zuckerman (1975: 324): “cleavages *originate* in the social realm [and, eventually] they are politicized” (*my emphasis*). On the other hand, contributors to the post-materialist school (Inglehart, 1977, 1984; Dalton et al., 1984), for instance, argue that cleavages are mostly determined by factors representing opposite beliefs/values rather than any particular societal factors. In line with that, Dalton and Flanagan (1982: 4, cited in Bartolini and Mair, 2007; see also Dalton et al., 1984) also state that “it is a set of beliefs rather any demographic attribute that defines one’s location along the cleavage”. Both interpretations provide useful insights into identifying cleavage structures. Yet, Bartolini and Mair (2007), successfully, provide conceptual clarity to the notion of cleavage structures by combining both these two aspects and adding a third one which links the relationship between cleavage structures and political parties: the organisational aspect of a cleavage.¹²

Bartolini and Mair (2007) propose three aspects that are equally important and are interrelated with each other and, thus, are all necessary to define a divide as a cleavage. First, referring to the above “social realm” argued by Zuckerman (1975: 324), it is necessary to identify the cleavage from its *empirical* aspect. A cleavage is, thus, related to those sociodemographic characteristics which separate individuals into two different antithetical groups¹³. By sociodemographic characteristics, Bartolini and Mair (2007) indicate that all those attributes that denote the individuals’ unchangeable state of being. It means that once an individual belongs to a certain sociodemographic characteristic, it is less likely for them to “socially move” from one category to its antithetical one (Frabini, 2001). This low mobility characteristic is fundamental to the formation of antithetical sociodemographic groups. Indeed, self-containing and non-overlapping groups will reinforce more attitudes of solidarity among its members, and, therefore, will accentuate conflict with their antithetical counterparts (Frabini, 2001: 277; see also Kriesi, 2010).

¹² This last element is fundamental for this study as it also determines how political parties behave.

¹³ Taking into consideration the classical cleavage structures that I will describe in detail in the following section, the sociodemographic differences that scholars have usually assigned to them were, for instance, the people’s church attendance (Religious cleavage), ethnicity or languages spoken (Regional Cleavage), size of the community (Community cleavage) and, finally, type of job or family income (Class cleavage).

Secondly, a cleavage also requires a *normative* aspect, which means that, beyond the existence of sociodemographic characteristics that differentiate individuals in antithetical groups, there must be a common set of values or ideas that provide a sense of collective belonging for these groups¹⁴. Indeed, without a set of common values or ideas that distinguish antithetical groups, beyond the sociodemographic differences, “no objective social division will be transformed into a salient socio-political change” (Gallagher et al., 2011: 280).

Finally, there must be a *behavioural/organisational* aspect which is inextricably linked to the cleavage. It means that “a cleavage must find its organizational expression” (Mair, 2006: 373), for instance, through political parties, trade unions, churches or civil societies and, therefore, must be institutionalised since “through the institutionalization of a conflict, the resulting cleavage leads to stability and social peace” (Goldberg, 2016: 14).

This last aspect is particularly salient in the Rokkanian view of a cleavage, since cleavages are inherently “unorganised” (Bartolini and Mair, 2007: 202). By unorganised Bartolini and Mair (2007) mean, for example, that when only considering the empirical (or normative) aspect of a cleavage, we would not identify a conflict, but we would rather find distinguished sociodemographic groups within society. Nevertheless, the existence of these groups does not necessarily produce cleavage structures. Let us consider, for instance, the ideological or material disagreements between different generational groups. Age stratification was identified in the 1960s and in the early 1970s as a possible measure of conflict that could drive different groups of people to claim different demands from their representatives. Although Lipset (1971: 743-744) had already argued that youth movements were not an expression of cleavage conflict with age as its core ideology, Foner (1974) explored age stratification as the basis of a political cleavage, but he eventually concluded that the temporary status (of younger people) undermined the incentive to organise large scale movements because people are “unwilling to risk future rewards by engaging in activities that could lead to disciplinary measures, even arrest or expulsion from school or job”. Moreover, unlike other sociodemographic groups (such as class, religion, gender or education), aging is the universal and inevitable type of ‘mobility’ between social strata that each person will eventually experience (Foner, 1974: 192-193).

¹⁴ Similar to the first aspect, the classical cleavages are usually measured as people’s personal religious beliefs (Religious cleavage), people’s belonging to any sub-national identity (Regional cleavage), territorial self-belonging (Community cleavage) and socioeconomic class self-belonging (Class cleavage).

Similarly, when looking at the normative element of a cleavage, important societal conflicts may exist, but they do not always necessarily produce cleavages. For instance, there has been a long-term self-consciousness among women, but it has lacked a proper political representation because this conflict has been subordinated by other classical cleavages. For instance, the traditional class cleavage (or left vs. right conflict) intercepted this topic from the left, considering women as one of the minority groups that needs to be defended in order to reduce gender gaps in modern societies (Edlund and Pande, 2002); and from the right, this topic has been intercepted by conservatives and radical rightists as a way to criticise the ‘submissiveness of women’ in Muslim communities (Schwörer and Fernández-García, 2020). Consequently, the empirical element and the normative element are insufficient to produce cleavage structures, which inexorably necessitate an institutional/organisational component (such as political parties) in order for a cleavage to be brought into the political world and, therefore, gain relevance (Mair, 2006: 373; von Schoultz, 2017: 34).

Considering the above widely acknowledged aspects (empirical, normative and organisational), I have adopted the following definition as a core theoretical assertion of cleavages for this study: *a cleavage structure “is a socially and culturally rooted conflict that shapes antithetical positions in societies through political parties”* (Scopelliti, 2021a: 1). In the following section, I describe the classical cleavage model by focusing on the four classical cleavage structures that Lipset and Rokkan claim have shaped Western politics over the previous decades.

2.2.2 *The classical cleavage model*

The Lipset-Rokkan thesis offers a sophisticated explanation of the genesis of party systems and political parties that have been predominant in Western European societies since the 1960s looking back to their historical roots since the Middle Ages (Scopelliti, 2021b). Therefore, the authors elucidate, chronologically, upon a series of major events or *historical junctures* which have affected Western European societies by provoking ideological conflicts which have persisted over the decades. For instance, the first (but transitional) historical juncture which impacted Western European societies were the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation respectively. Although these historical junctures were not identified by the authors as major conflicts that determined the origin of the (nowadays defined) classical cleavage structures, these religious renewals were the main disputes of Modern state governments of that time, pitting State against

Church for the control of ecclesiastical organizations and whether it should be the State, and not the Church, that ultimately should be responsible for the education of its citizens¹⁵ (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 15). Consequently, Lipset and Rokkan identify two series of events which determine the advent of the (classical) cleavage structures: the National Revolutions and the Industrial Revolutions. With regard to the first group of events, including the French Revolution and the American Revolution, they had a significant role in determining the advent of new political identities, which were at the real basis of the nation-building process in the XVIII century. With regard to the Industrial Revolutions, they have been determinant in making significant changes in Western European societies following the advent of new technologies for mass production. Eventually, these new technological progresses caused the advent of new social strata (such as the working class and the bourgeoisie) that determined the origin of new social and political needs and, therefore, new conflicts (Fried, 1968).

Moreover, these historical events are conceptually represented by two orthogonal axes (the territorial axis and the functional axis), which incorporate the four classical cleavages: 'State vs. Church', 'Centre vs. Periphery', 'Urban vs. Rural' and 'Employers vs. Workers' (see figure 2.1). In this cleavage model, the territorial and functional axes are structured as follows: the territorial axis, which is generated from National Revolutions is composed of the religious cleavage (State vs. Church) and the regional cleavage (Centre vs. Periphery). Within the functional axis, which was generated by the Industrial Revolutions, the community cleavage emerges (Urban vs. Rural) along with the class cleavage (Employers vs. Workers).

Beginning with the *religious* cleavage, the secularisation process which involved the Western European States of the XVIII century determined the conflict within each state's elites on what are the goals, policies, and values of the nation. Moreover, this conflict has a twofold nature. Firstly, it concerns an economic sphere on how the ecclesiastical institutions should be independent from the state and how they should be financed. Secondly, but more importantly, it relates to a moral conflict. In a nutshell, Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 15) explain that the religious conflict mostly depends on

¹⁵ The main State vs. Church conflict hinged on whether the ecclesiastical institutions should remain in charge of the education of the people, acting as 'agents of the State'. Nevertheless, the interest of national governments was to transfer educational responsibility from the ecclesiastical institutions to the national ones with the purpose to instruct its citizens that should have been loyal to the State. On the contrary, the education provided by the Church was more focused on the formation of universal believers rather than national citizens (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 15).

indicating which institution, the State or the Church, is responsible for controlling the morality of a nation and which rituals should have been followed in the daily life of the people, such as “the solemnisation of marriage and the granting of divorces, the organisation of charities and the handling of deviants, the functions of medical versus religious officer, and the arrangements of funerals”.

The National Revolutions also increased the need for states to define the identity of the nation and, hence, to decide the dominant culture (to the detriment of minority groups). Indeed, in a nation-building process, the choice of a common culture, bureaucracy and, more importantly, official languages are fundamental for defining the identity of the nation. These processes have thus created the *regional* cleavage where dominant groups would challenge the minority groups¹⁶ enforcing them to assimilate into the dominant culture. However, this cultural homogenisation process is not always to be taken for granted. For instance, if in one nation there are strong minority groups, that have a stable dialogue with the central state, and they are not too economically dependent with the centred economy, it is more likely that they will not assimilate with the dominant culture (e.g. see Catalonian region in Spain or the Northern regions in Italy) and, therefore, the regional conflicts will be more salient (Urwin, 1991: 709; Rokkan, 1999: 322).

As argued by Bartolini (1986: 234), the Industrial Revolutions have generated “from one pole of the axis, [...] conflicts about the internal economic resources and their distribution [(the community cleavage)]; on the other pole, conflicts are over moral principles and visions and interpretations of history [(the class cleavage)]”.¹⁷ Therefore, starting with the *community* cleavage, the conflict with regard to how nations allocate resources between the primary and secondary sectors. Hence, national governments must decide whether to lead the economy giving priority to Landowners (agrarian interests) or towards Industrial owners (urban interests) (Bartolini, 1986: 235). Therefore, since the Landowners have historically benefited from the allocation of resources from the State, the emergence of stronger urban communities revealed “the struggle for the maintenance of acquired

¹⁶ I would like to remind here that Lipset and Rokkan (1967) meant for minority groups all those populations that belong to a bigger country, but their identity is strictly connected with their *local* territory (e.g. Catalonia in Spain, Veneto in Italy, Bretagne in France, and many others in Europe).

¹⁷ Original version from Bartolini (1986: 234): ad un polo di questo asse di conflitto vengono collocati i conflitti interni alle risorse economiche ed alla loro distribuzione; all'altro invece i conflitti su principi morali e su visioni ed interpretazioni della storia”.

status and the recognition of achievement"¹⁸ between the rural communities against the urban communities (Lipset and Rokkan, 19).

Finally, the *class* cleavage represents the conflict between the working class and the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, there is the promotion of "liberalism and the defence of property, and the market against trade unions [and] workers movements"¹⁹ (Bartolini, 1986: 235) whose demands concern the improvement of working conditions and fairer wage contracts. The class cleavage has usually been 'Left vs. Right' dichotomy, which is articulated in its economic dimension, and has mostly been used to represent societal and political conflicts in Western European party systems (Bartolini, 1986; Cotta et al. 2001: 241-242, Emanuele et al., 2020: 4).

To conclude, Lipset and Rokkan argue that once cleavages become deeply rooted in societies, they begin to influence the type of demands that people might ask of their rulers. This constitutes the final step in democratic regimes, the formation of party systems and political parties. The formation of party systems is mostly related to the identification of the rules of the game. Concisely, party systems determine institutionalised rules such as the number of the parties that can electorally compete and the type of governmental coalitions which can be made (Rokkan., 1999: 298-302). With regards to the political parties, the authors argue that they are agents that "develop a rhetoric for the translation of contrasts in the social and cultural structure into demands and pressures for action or inaction" (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 5). Therefore, from each cleavage there has been its direct organisational expression of political party that then compete against each other.

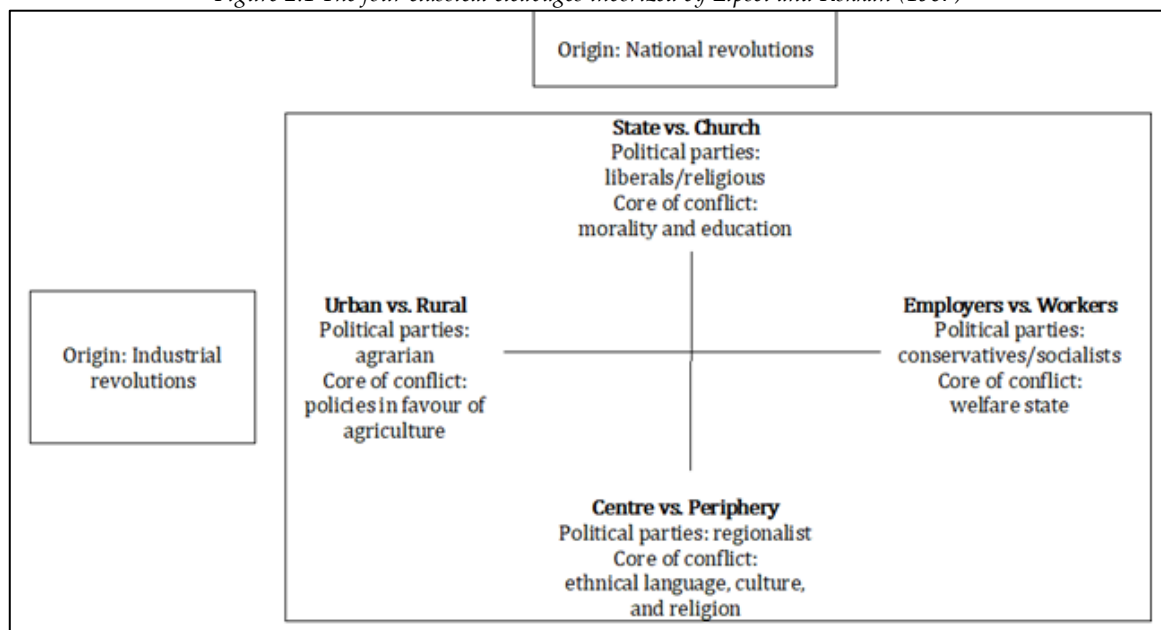
From the National Revolutions, the religious cleavage (State vs. Church) that determined the conflict over the control of morality and social life was represented through the liberal parties and the religious parties. Accordingly, the Christian Democratic Party in Italy (dissolved in 1994) and the Christian Democratic Union of Germany were established around this moral uncertainty. The regional cleavage (Centre vs. Periphery) encouraged the rise of regionalist parties that represented those communities unwilling to accept the standard centralised models of the dominant group (e.g. language, culture or religion). This is the case of Citizens in Spain, mobilised around the secessionist

¹⁸ The Urban vs. Rural conflict can be explored since the Middle Ages with the contraposition between nobles vs. citizens in the major cities. Moreover, following the increased prominence of the global market in XIX century, the contrasts exacerbated within the national parliaments through the rise of agrarian parties vs. liberal parties (see Cotta et al., 2001: 242).

¹⁹ Original version from Bartolini (1986: 235): cioè il liberalismo e la difesa della proprietà e del mercato contro il movimento sindacale [...] i movimenti operai".

threat of the Catalan region from the rest of the country. From the Industrial Revolutions, the community cleavage (Urban vs. Rural) was especially the founding cleavage of the agrarian parties which defended the interests of farmers and landowners that requested special welfare provisions in the agricultural sector from the state. The most fertile breeding ground for the regionalist parties were the Scandinavian countries. For instance, the agrarian Centre Party in Norway was built on the long traditions of independent peasants that were culturally and economically divided by urban communities. The class cleavage (Employers vs. Workers), finally, was the conflict that spurred the advent of two types of parties that led a major role in Western European party systems: the conservative parties and the socialist parties. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the Conservative Party represents industrial owner interests while the Labour Party nominally represents workers' interests.

Figure 2.1 The four classical cleavages theorized by Lipset and Rokkan (1967)



Source: Author's elaboration from Lipset and Rokkan's theory (1967)

2.2.3 The new cleavage structures

In the classic political science text, *Political man: the social bases of politics*, Lipset (1960: 220) argued that “on a world scale, the principal generalisation which can be made is that parties are primarily based in either the lower classes or the middle and the upper classes”. Indeed, from the above model on cleavage structures, class cleavage is the political conflict that has had the most significant impact towards Western European societies (Huber, 1989). The class cleavage is usually generalisable and limiting in a binary left-right schema that facilitates the political communication and positioning of

parties (Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990: 233). For that reason, the class cleavage (or left-right scale) has long been predominant in Western European party systems. Nevertheless, as Lipset and Rokkan confirm, the class cleavage is far from the only type of conflict that mobilises parties' competition (e.g. religious, regional and community cleavages) (Knutsen, 1995). Indeed, in later studies (Bartolini, 1986; Cotta, 2001), scholars have questioned whether the class cleavage can still be meaningfully applied to represent current political conflicts in Western European party systems or whether, in fact, *new cleavage structures* have reshaped the European political context and inspired the upsurge of new political parties (Dalton et al., 1984: 455-456; Franklin et al., 1992: 404; Ersson and Lane, 1997; Mair, 2001; Franklin, 2010). The new cleavage structures embrace the same theoretical assertion²⁰ of the classical cleavages reproducing the same classical cleavage model proposed by Lipset and Rokkan but build upon this, identifying how the new historical junctures have given rise to new cleavage structures, which, subsequently, have inevitably led to the creation of new political parties which better represent society.

As such, this new emerging literature has questioned whether the classical political conflict left vs. right could be crosscut by other ideological conflicts (Emanuele et al., 2020). Therefore, in these studies, the class cleavage has usually been orthogonally crosscut with more recent cleavage structures that can be grouped into three new types of cleavage structures: (a) new economic cleavage structures (Schwartz, 2001; Kriesi et al., 2006; Teney et al., 2014), (b) new values/cultural cleavage structures (Inglehart, 1977; Kitschelt, 1994; Hooghe et al., 2002; Bennett and Livingston, 2018; Inglehart and Norris, 2016), and (c) new institutional/political cleavage structures (Hix and Lord, 1997; Hooghe and Marks, 1999, 2018). I shall present in the following sections, these new cleavage structures and the major propositions that they entail.

2.2.4.1 The new economic cleavage structure

Starting with the new economic cleavage structure, Kriesi et al. (2008); and more recently Hutter and Kriesi, (2019) have explored one of the best-known attempts to conceptualise and empirically demonstrate the rise of a new cleavage structures in the previous decades the conflict between the respective winners vs. losers of globalisation. This new cleavage structure has been explored in six different countries (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United

²⁰ To remind that a cleavage structure "is a socially and culturally rooted conflict that shapes antithetical positions in societies through political parties" (Scopelliti, 2021a: 1).

Kingdom) by examining three elections from the 1990s until the early 2000s (also including one election in the 1970s as a point of reference) (Kriesi et al., 2008). In these studies, the authors employ an original political market approach exploring citizens' attitudes towards globalisation (also called the demand side) and how political parties mobilise around the new cleavage (also called the supply side), which is defined as the conflict between integration and demarcation (Kriesi et al., 2006: 9). This new conflict (integration/demarcation) has been defined as multidimensional because it provoked three societal changes within Western European societies and party systems (Von Schoultz, 2017: 40): (1) an increase in *economic competition*, (2) a new mechanism of *cultural diversity* and (3) concerns for more *political integration* at the European level. From this conceptualisation of a new cleavage structure, Kriesi et al (2008) firmly argue that *globalisation* is the historical juncture that has reshaped Western European societies forming new societal groups (winners and losers) that challenge each other through the abovementioned conflicts.

Nevertheless, although the integration vs. demarcation conflict has been explored from a multidimensional perspective (see e.g. Kriesi et al., 2012), I argue that this new cleavage structure is actually the expression of a unidimensional conflict (the economic one). Indeed, although the conflict integration/demarcation is explored in three different ways (economic, cultural and political), what largely fuelled these conflicts is actually the *economic impact* of globalisation. Starting with the increase of *economic competition*, this conflict is based on economic logics as it evokes decades of deregulation in Western countries that incentivized neo-liberal policies to the detriment of small national companies that became ever more exposed to the free market (Schwartz, 2001: 44). With regard to *cultural diversity*, it has indeed fuelled new nativist and xenophobic sentiment from Western European citizens against immigrants, the outcome of which is the antagonization of 'difference' and of the 'outsider'. Nevertheless, these new sentiments do not necessarily generate a cultural conflict, but rather an economic one: Western European workers fear losing their jobs because they are in competition with a new (foreign) labour force that is less expensive for Western European businesses, and thus it has less demands on job safety or fair wages (Albrow, 1996). In this vein, Soysal (1994) also argues that Western European welfare states provide many benefits for those foreigners who have the permanent status including health care, childcare, social housing and contact jobcentres. All these benefits increase the perception of competition (for the same sources) between the lower classes against immigrants. Finally, the last conflict around more *political integration* among European countries is still perceived to be an economic threat (and not an

institutional one) because it means double-knotting European economies into a neo-liberal project allowing the opening of borders with new challenging markets and new European entrepreneurial competitors (Marks and Wilson 2000: 448-50). Therefore, although the integration/demarcation conflict has expanded beyond an economic dimension, I argue that it still remains in the branch of the new economic cleavage structure because the economic consequences of the free market (headed by the forces of globalisation) are, in essence, the nature and centre of this new conflict.

2.2.4.2 The new cultural cleavage structure

Moving on to the new value/cultural cleavage structure, this type of new cleavage structure finds its roots in the pioneering work of Ronald Inglehart in his book *The Silent Revolution* (1977) and, more recently, from his collaborations with Pippa Norris in the book *Cultural Backlash* (2019; see also Inglehart and Norris, 2016). The common thread that links these two volumes is the intent of the authors to explore how cultural phenomena of post-industrialisation processes in Western European countries have both shaped the values of Western communities and generated a new *cultural* cleavage. Initially, Inglehart (1977, 2008) used data from public opinion surveys throughout the 1960s and the 1970s in Western European countries in order to map the changes in people's values. In this work, the author argues that Western European populations tend to change from materialistic values to post-materialistic values²¹. Eventually, this silent revolution that has characterised the generations of the 1960s and the 1970s has led towards a "rising emphasis on such issues as environmental protection, increased acceptance of gender and racial equality, and equal rights for the LGBT community" in the last two decades (Inglehart and Norris, 2016: 2). However, as was already anticipated by Piero Ignazi (1992), Norris and Inglehart (2019) also argue that a large section of the current Western electorate has reacted against these post-materialistic values. More specifically, old, traditional and less educated white males "feel threatened by the erosion of the values and worldview with which they grew up" and, for that reason, are now attracted by a mythologised past of the 1960s which in reality never existed²² (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018: 1676). In summary, this *cultural backlash* is the practical embodiment of the new cleavage structure theorised by Norris and Inglehart (2019) where a large section of the electorate finds its greatest

²¹ Inglehart identified as post-materialistic values "giving the people more of a say in important political decisions and protecting their freedom of speech" and as materialistic values "maintaining order in the nation and fighting rising prices" (Inglehart, 1971: 65).

²² A mythical past where white males are dominant, there was no crime, and everyone was well behaved.

expression through “discourses blending nationalism, anti-globalism, racism, welfare nationalism, anti-immigrant and refugee themes, and the need for strong leadership and order” (Bennett and Livingston, 2018: 131). From this perspective, the new cleavage proposed by Inglehart and Norris (2016, 2019) is presented as being a reaction against modernity that gave rise to the new conflict: namely authoritarian populist values vs. cosmopolitan liberalist values.

Nevertheless, the core shortcoming I address here is related to conceptualisation concerns. Narrowing on one of the dichotomies of the new cultural cleavage, the *populist* label looks to be unfitting to distinguish political parties. Inglehart and Norris (2016: 8) identify as populist political parties those parties that can be found at the extreme poles of the classic cleavage structure – left vs. right. However, Hawkins and Kaltwasser (2017) point out that the populist label is not a valid definition that can be applied for a smaller group of political parties, since it has been used to identify both extreme/radical and mainstream political parties²³ (Manucci and Weber, 2017; Betz, 2017). In fact, the populist label can be associated with the ‘moderate’ political parties (Cedroni, 2014: 40). For instance, Revelli, in his pamphlet *Populismo 2.0*, states that populism is “a catch-all word, which gathers inside, as if they belonged to the same nature, old things and new things [...] everything that is outside – but not always – and against the so-called establishment”²⁴(2017: 5-6) – my critique to the literature that automatically lumps the word ‘populist’ together with radical parties is addressed in more detail in the section 3.2.2.1.

2.2.4.3 The new institutional cleavage structure²⁵

Finally, with regard to the new institutional/political cleavage structure, the most important contributors to this new ideological conflict are Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2017) in their co-authored paper named *Cleavage theory meets Europe’s crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage*. The authors argue that this new cleavage structure has globally widened since the early

²³ For instance, Manucci and Weber (2017) argue that, from the 1970s to the 2010s, the populist pattern started to be also expressed in mainstream political manifestos and elite newspapers of Western European countries. Similarly, Betz (2017) demonstrates that the populist label can be found back in the liberal democracies of the nineteenth century by stating that the study of populism is not recent or exclusive for new political parties.

²⁴ Original text: ‘Una parola piglia tutto, che si porta dentro, come se appartenessero alla stessa natura, cose vecchie e cose nuove [...] tutto ciò che è al di fuori - ma non sempre - e contro il cosiddetto establishment’ (Revelli, 2017: 5-6).

²⁵ This section has already been published on the CARR website in the Final Year Report of the Ideology Research Unit 2020 while I was writing my dissertation (Scopelliti, 2020b).

1990s, in the wake of a series of major reforms²⁶. These changes have undermined national governments which have voluntarily delegated their authority from the national to the international level, in order to facilitate international trade regimes and the free movement of people (Hooghe et al., 2017; Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 113-116). More specifically, in the European countries, Hooghe and Marks argue that the European integration process is the historical juncture that generated this new ideological conflict, since this process has “extended EU authority over wide ranges of [European citizens’] public life” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 113). Moreover, the project of European political integration has been sustained by established political parties from both the left and the right of the political spectrum, with the underlying assumption that moving national competencies to transnational institutions would facilitate engagement with global issues such as the environment, terrorism, economic or migration crises, or the geopolitical balance with the USA, Russia, and China.

However, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Eurozone crisis (2010) and the migration crisis (2015) exacerbated the debate on European integration and fuelled a counter-narrative for the reclaim of national sovereignty (Scipioni, 2018; Anderson, 2021). The origin of this counter-narrative has its roots in the Canadian ideology of *souverainisme* (sovereignty) of the 1980s linked to the independent movements of Quebec (Thériault, 1994). The term ‘sovereignty’ can also be traced back to the French politician Jean-Pierre Chevènement who argued that the European integration process was founded on the necessity of destroying nations, since nations lead to nationalism and nationalism to war (Chevènement, 1997). Thus, sovereignty became a stigmatised notion in Europe and in that way European political elites looked to the future through the building process of the United States of Europe (Dujardin, 2019; Varsori, 2020). With this in mind, supporters of the Maastricht Treaty welcomed this agreement as a premise of economic prosperity and friendship among European peoples, and eventually, as the decline of unemployment, deprivation, and the end of wars on European soil. Nevertheless, after almost 30 years, European societies are still suffering from these issues²⁷ because the mainstream parties have not been able to reach collective compromises at the supranational level (Vassallo and Valbruzzi, 2018: 99-100). Therefore,

²⁶ It could be argued that these series of major reforms can be compared with the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. As such, globalisation has also been a transitional event that has prepared the foundations of the new transnational cleavage structure.

²⁷ One could argue that also the wars in the Balkans from 1991 to 2001 was a promise not kept by the European federalist dreamers.

this impasse shows the weaknesses of European institutions, and it establishes the basis for new conflicts between pro-EU and anti-EU.

2.2.4.4. Similarities between new cleavage structures: empirical and organisational aspects

The above contributions share two aspects identified by Bartolini and Mair (2007): the new cleavage structures originating from the same social realm (empirical aspect); and the finding of similar political expression (organisational aspect) (see section 2.2.1). Regarding the empirical aspects, all three new cleavages find the level of education as the sociodemographic characteristic that classifies people into two different antithetical groups. Indeed, all the above contributors on new cleavage structures argue that the level of education plays a key role in individuals' lives (Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 115-116; Kriesi, 2008: 7; Inglehart and Norris, 2016: 2-3). For instance, a person who is uneducated or less educated must compete with other mobilised workers who are better accustomed to working in poorer working conditions in terms of salaries and employment rights. This competition, thus, threatens the Western European workers' ability to sustain their income and lifestyle (Dalton et al., 1984; Franklin et al., 1992; Kriesi, 1993; Kriesi et al., 2008). Educational levels are also crucial for cultural reasons. Education allows a person to understand and embrace different types of lifestyles: it is the key to creating empathy for others who do not belong to the same identarian group (Inglehart, 1990; Bornschieer and Kriesi, 2012; Kuhn et al., 2016). Moreover, the recent literature on Euroscepticism usually associates a high level of education with pro-European individuals' attitudes (Kuhn, 2015). Indeed, thanks to the European integration process, the most educated people are more likely to perceive in their daily lives the benefits of the EU in terms of jobs and educational opportunities and, therefore, they "conceive their identities as being consistent with international governance" (Marks et al., 2020). For instance, the recognition of diplomas at the European level gives more working opportunities for graduates to change or improve their living condition looking for a job in other European countries. Culturally speaking, the Erasmus+ programme is another European initiative that encourages young undergraduate and postgraduate students to live for a short period of time in other European countries and reinforces their European identity by learning the local language and customs (Bascelli, 2018; Samuk et al., 2021).

Concerning organisational aspects, all three new cleavages predicted that new political parties would be founded in the late 1980s and early 1990s. These political parties are identified with Green parties, radical left parties and radical right parties respectively. However, "just as the religious cleavage and the class cleavage were raised by Catholic and socialist parties on one side of the

divide” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 111), among the new political parties, the new cleavage structures are mostly mobilised by the radical right parties. The reason is that, for each contribution, the core ideology of the radical right party family has been developed by the dichotomies of demarcation, authoritarian populism or anti-EU attitudes. Instead, the green parties and the radical left parties tend to disapprove more the technocratic austerity of the EU and the neoliberal economic model caused by the globalisation, but they also tend to be more in favour of the political European integration project and a multicultural society (Brack, 2020). To this end, independently on which new cleavage structure researchers, observers or electorates refer to, the radical right parties are those organisations that stand a clear position on these new conflicts.

2.2.4.5 The transnational cleavage structure: the new zeitgeist?

The literature that has employed the cleavage model to demonstrate the advent of new cleavage structures is now well established. Each new cleavage structure provides its own strengths and insights. Nonetheless, I decided to focus on the flexibility of the established radical right parties towards the *new transnational cleavage* for two main reasons. The transnational cleavage (1) offers the unique opportunity to examine *where* both political parties and European citizens stand in light of these new ideological conflict thanks to its multidimensional nature. Moreover, (2) it is widely accepted by the recent literature that the new transnational cleavage is recognised as the *zeitgeist* of future European politics (Hooghe and Marks, 2018; but also, Leruth et al., 2017; Rydgren, 2018).

Focusing on the first point, the transnational cleavage is unique when compared to the other new cleavage structures (economic and cultural) because of its multidimensional nature. Unlike the new economic cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008), I argue that the transnational cleavage ought to be explored using a multidimensional approach. In this vein, Hooghe and Marks (2018) have already explored the transnational cleavage looking at parties’ position²⁸ on European integration and immigration. Nevertheless, when Hooghe and Marks refer to parties’ positions towards European integration, it is not clear whether they are considering the political aspect, the economic aspect or both aspects of this integration. I shall state that this point is a mild criticism. I am not referring to errors of commission but rather of omission. Indeed, Hooghe and Marks (2018: 119) usually refer to a general and not specific “concern about European integration”. The authors explain that the Eurozone crisis (2010) is one of the external shocks –along with the migration crisis (2015) – that sharply raised the

²⁸ Hooghe and Marks (2018) used data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2006-2014) for this analysis.

salience of the transnational cleavage within Western European party systems. Yet, exclusively referring to the European integration process as a whole, the authors' analysis has the shortcoming of neglecting the ideological pull that each dimension (institutional, economic and cultural) can have when scholars wish to frame political parties' position towards the EU.

Moreover, another advantage to reframing the transnational cleavage under the lens of multidimensionality is to understand in more depth the different nuances and shades that Euroscepticism and Europeanism can take. Indeed, when scholars explore parties' attitudes or public opinion towards the EU, the literature on European politics has produced a plethora of studies that have explored all different shades of Euroscepticism or Europeanism during the previous two decades (Héraud, 1959; Morgan, 1991; Shore, 1993; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002; Kopecký and Mudde, 2002; Schmitter, 2004; Spiering, 2004; Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Boussaguet and Dehousse, 2008; Leruth et al., 2017; Leruth and Startin, 2017; Visone, 2018; Heinisch et al., 2021). Firstly, one of the reasons why the term Euroscepticism holds an ambiguous meaning is due to its terminological origin (Leruth et al., 2017). Indeed, Euroscepticism is a term that was firstly coined by British journalists to identify Conservative MPs who were concerned about the consequences of the Single European Act for the UK (Spiering, 2004). Consequently, this term was used in the academic literature to refer to antagonism towards the EU and the European integration process, but the object of such scepticism was never clarified. To overcome this issue, for instance, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002) and Szczerbiak and Taggart, (2008) conceptualise the notion of Euroscepticism by developing a distinction between "hard" and "soft" Euroscepticism. On the one hand, hard-Euroscepticism is understood as "a principled opposition to the EU and European integration", which might lead towards a withdrawal from EU membership – as it was the Brexit referendum in 2016 and it used to be demanded by the National Rally in 2017 (Frexit); whilst soft-Euroscepticism is defined as "the expression of qualified opposition to the EU" (Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2002: 7) in relation to one (or more than one) European policy. Nevertheless, some criticism has been made regarding these definitions as they are considered too broad (the soft one) or narrow (the hard one).²⁹ Further research has come to conceptualise, for instance, "equivocal

²⁹ Even Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (2016) have revised their definitions as they soft-Euroscepticism does not provide an explicit identification on which policies and to what extent parties or public opinion are sceptical. As regard the hard-Euroscepticism, the condition of withdrawal from the EU membership is seen to be too restricted as it is really unlikely that a political party will deliver such a political offer (see LSE website: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/08/05/hard-choices-and-few-soft-options-the-implications-of-brexit-for-euroscepticism-across-europe/>).

Euroscepticism” (Heinisch et al., 2021) labelling the Northern League and Austrian Freedom Party (in the 2014 European Parliament elections) as such. This conceptualisation combines both elements of soft-Euroscepticism and hard-Euroscepticism in order to legitimise parties’ reputation against the EU, but yet keeping a flexible position that allows them to make potential alliances (in both the national and European parliaments) and gather voters’ preferences.

The literature, thus far, has dedicated less space to the notion of Europeanism. However, like Euroscepticism, Europeanism can also be defined in multiple ways. Some authors have underlined the notion of Euro-Federalism by which the pro-EU position is aimed at achieving an advanced stage of the political European integration process by expanding the EU’s competencies to the detriment of national governments (Morgan, 1991; Schmitter, 2003; Leruth and Startin, 2017). Other scholars have also defined a pro-EU position in a more contingent style named as ‘Euro-Pragmatism’ or ‘Utilitarian Europeanism’. The latter notion is usually applied to identify a pro-EU position if it is still deemed to be economically beneficial to the national interests (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 303; Leruth and Startin, 2017: 156). Finally, one of the reactions to the European integration process to forge a supranational European identity was the conceptualisation of the ‘people’s Europe’ or ‘ethno-federalism’ (Héraud, 1959; Shore, 1993; Boussaguet and Dehousse, 2008; Visone, 2018). This notion does not see European integration in a negative way (either politically and economically). Nevertheless, there is much reluctance to renounce national identities and to accept a new identity that is an amalgam European identity (Héraud, 1959). For that reason, some pro-EU positions are in favour of the European integration process whilst keeping the ethnic and cultural differences perceived to characterise each European nation (Visone, 2018).

Based on the above literature, unlike the integration/demarcation cleavage and the cultural backlash cleavage, the transnational cleavage is indeed essentially a multidimensional conflict. It can be explored in multiple ways because each dimension is different in its nature/logics of conflict, which are institutional logics (Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970; Feld and Wildgen, 1976; Handley, 1981; Eichenberg and Dalton 2007), economic logics (Tsebelis and Garrett, 2000; Leupold, 2015) and cultural logics (Taggart, 1998; McLaren, 2002). Therefore, in line with these three strands of research, I argue that the transnational cleavage can be split along these three dimensions: (a) the institutional dimension (Federalism vs. Souverainisme), the economic dimension (Marketism vs. Welfare Chauvinism) and the cultural dimension (Multiculturalism vs. Nativism) respectively. Within the institutional dimension, a Federalist stand means a favourable stand for the political integration

process (that would eventually lead to the United States of Europe). By contrast, a Souverainist stand would mean a negative stand for such type of integration. Within the economic dimension, a Marketist stand means being in favour of a deeper economic integration of the Eurozone, while the Welfare chauvinist stand would be against this economic goal. Finally, within the cultural dimension, the Multicultural stand means supporting the building of a cosmopolitan society that encourage the mixing of multiple cultures. Thus, by contrast, a nativist stand would mean objecting to recognise minority identities/cultures and to let prevail a dominant (native) culture. Accordingly, a political party (or individual) will be defined as Anti-EU (Euroscepticism) when it holds at least two negative stands out of three towards the EU; and it will be defined as Pro-EU (Europeanism) when it holds at least two positive stands out of three towards the EU (see also Emanuele et al., 2020).

Table 2.1 Overview of all new cleavage structures

<i>New cleavage structure</i>	<i>Origin of the conflict</i>	<i>Nature/logic of the conflict</i>	<i>Outcome of the conflict</i>
Integration/demarcation cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008)	Economic	Economic	Economic Competition
			Cultural Diversity
			Political Integration
Cultural backlash cleavage (Norris and Inglehart, 2019)	Cultural	Cultural	Authoritarian Populism vs. Cosmopolitan Liberalism
Transnational cleavage (Hooghe and Marks, 2018)	Institutional	Institutional	Federalism vs. Souverainisme
		Economic	Marketism vs. Welfare Chauvinism
		Cultural	Multiculturalism vs. Nativism

Source: Author's elaboration.

Finally³⁰, as I stated earlier, the second reason to focus on the transnational cleavage is that it has become the new *zeitgeist* [of Western] European countries. In fact, in recent years, this new cleavage structure played a significant role in both national and European electoral campaigns in a conflict

³⁰ This last paragraph has already been published on the CARR website while I was writing my dissertation in two pieces: an interview (Scopelliti, 2021a) and an academic blog post (Scopelliti, 2019).

between those that support the European institutions and those that reclaim national sovereignty. For instance, the voter turnout in European parliamentary elections from 1979 to 2014 has steadily but constantly decreased. Yet, in 2019, for the first time an increase in voter turnout in European elections occurred from 42.6% in 2014 to 51% in 2019. Moreover, the political alliances in the European Parliament are currently articulated in a conflict of pro-EU parties (European People's Party, Socialists & Democrats, Renew Europe) vs. anti-EU parties (European Conservatives and Reformists Group, Identity & Democracy) (Brack, 2020). At the national level, parties also compete on domestic issues as well as European issues. For instance, the French presidential election in 2017 was fought over a Frexit³¹ proposal from Marine Le Pen (Gougou and Persico, 2017; D'Alimonte, 2019), the Italian legislative election in 2018 produced the first hard-Eurosceptic³² Italian government (Natale, 2018; Lachat and Michel, 2019), or during the British general elections in 2019 the slogan of the Conservative Party to win the election was to 'get Brexit done' (Cutts et al., 2020).

2.3 Examining the freezing hypothesis

Having satisfied the aim to conceptualise what is a cleavage structure, introduced the classical cleavage model and reviewed the most recent contributions on the new cleavage structures, this section shall focus on the freezing hypothesis asserted by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). It will first review the literature that debated on the matter and, secondly, it will elucidate the main implications of the neo-institutionalist theory (historical institutionalism) that builds the Lipset-Rokkan classical model.

2.3.1 Reviewing the debate on the freezing hypothesis

Following the above widely acknowledged literature, scholars that have investigated old and new cleavage structures have always employed Bartolini and Mair's three-parts definition of cleavages. This definition is indeed commonly accepted by scholars on cleavage studies (e.g. Bornschier, 2009; von Schoultz, 2017; Emanuele et al., 2020). Nonetheless, some other scholars (e.g. Dahl, 1966; Zuckerman, 1975; Franklin, 2010) point out another aspect which is not included in Bartolini-Mair's definition: the *durability* aspect of a cleavage. This aspect is one of the assertions that has most served

³¹ Frexit was the Referendum proposed by Marine Le Pen during the 2017 Presidential Elections in France in order to withdrawal the French European membership (similar to the Brexit referendum).

³² I am using Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008) definition because during the formation of the government forged with the alliance between the League and the Five Stars Movement, there was a strong intent to eventually exit from the EU-membership.

as fuel for broad debates among scholars over the years (see Sartori, 1969, 1976; Dalton et al, 2000; Bischoff, 2013; Dassonneville and Hooghe, 2017). Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 50) conclude in the last section of their chapter on the cleavage theory mentioning that:

“The party systems of the 1960s reflect, with few but significant exceptions, the cleavage structures of the 1920s [...] the party alternatives, and in remarkably many cases the party organisations, are older than the majorities of the national electorates. [...] This continuity is often taken as a matter of course”.

The phenomenon quoted above is the so-called *freezing hypothesis* whereby political parties and party systems, once founded on major conflicts (cleavages), persist over the decades. To sum up, once these established political parties have aligned within established party systems, they are finally tied with their reference part of the electorate (especially, in proportional party systems) and they tend to encourage durable conflicts within society in order to refuel their bonds with their voters consolidating a fidelity link between the party and voters (Bartolini, 1986). The freezing hypothesis is usually addressed as a singular assertion, but it rather addresses three³³ different theses (see also Lijphart, 1990; Lane and Ersson, 1997). Firstly, Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 50) state that (1) “the party systems of the 1960s reflect [...] the cleavage structures of the 1920s”. What the authors assert here is that Western politics did not significantly change over the years. Rather, the four classical cleavages survived, and remain decisive in dividing political parties albeit the social, economic and political changes that Western European countries have experienced from the 1920s to 1960s (such as the World War II). The second thesis relates to political parties (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 50): (2) “the party alternatives [...] are older than the majorities of the national electorates”. In this thesis, the authors confirm that not only the cleavage structures have endured over the years, but also their institutional expressions (the political parties) have survived over the years, questioning, then, how it is possible that after such a long period of time, established political parties founded on classical cleavages are able to “renew their core clientele from generation to generation” (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 51). Finally, the last thesis proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 50) is that (3) this continuity over the years of cleavages and political parties is “taken as a matter of course”. I agree with Lijphart’s (1990) claim that this last assertion implies the static aspect of the Lipset-Rokkan model in not being “dynamic and it does not contain a mechanism for change. [...] It predicts things to

³³ Lijphart (1990: 146) identifies two out of three ‘theses’. Similarly, Lane and Ersson (1997: 181) also define these two theses as ‘two separate model assumptions’.

remain static and frozen" (Lijphart, 1990: 149-150). Nevertheless, as I have said, scholars have widely debated the validity of the freezing hypothesis, especially about the strength of cleavage structures and the stability of political parties to be supported by their usual electorate.

On the one hand, one of the strongest arguments of those who sustained the validity of the freezing hypothesis relied on decades of barely significant levels of electoral volatility³⁴ after the most recent post war. At first, Peter Mair (1998: 3) disagreed (especially with Pedersen, 1979) on the defreezing interpretation by arguing that "this image of electoral change is largely mythical", and that political parties and party systems are indeed frozen (see also Rose and Urwin, 1970; Mair, 1997; Erlingsson, 2009). In 1970, a few years after Lipset and Rokkan's contribution, Rose and Urwin even compared the aggregate vote of political parties from nineteen countries confirming the frozen nature of the party system and political parties between 1945 and 1969. Rose and Urwin (1970: 295) confirmed that the electoral strength of established political parties founded on classical cleavages "had changed very little from election to election, from decade to decade, or within the lifespan of a generation". Further studies on electoral volatility in Western European party systems have also confirmed this trend by arguing that although there has been electoral volatility within right-wing parties and left-wing parties, there is little evidence of electors shifting from the right-wing to the left-wing or vice versa until 1989 (Mair, 1997: 80). Moreover, although contemporary researchers accepted the validity of the freezing hypothesis, there were not many contributions on *why* party systems and political parties were frozen. Erlingsson (2009) addresses this question by questioning why it has been so difficult for new political parties to be formed and to challenge established political parties since the second world war. The author posits his analysis within the context of three rational choice models: in the first one, he emphasises the challenge of collective action; the second one identifies the problem of attracting votes for the new party; and the third one relates to the difficulty of competing against established competitors. For all these reasons, Erlingsson (2009) convincingly explains why new political parties have had more difficulty in gathering votes than established parties and, why, therefore, it was not unusual for Lipset and Rokkan to observe the stability they saw in Western European party systems until the late 1960s. Overall, the above

³⁴ The electoral volatility is conceptualised as the net change in vote shares of political parties from one election to another. This notion has widely applied in political science in order to verify stabilisation/destabilisation of European party systems. This notion has firstly been introduced by Pedersen (1979).

literature is quite persuasive, since it mostly builds on data that depict a large variety of countries and a significantly long timeframe that can trace the long-term effects of parties' electoral volatility. That said, further studies have also criticised the validity of the freezing hypothesis or, at least, its utility in contemporary politics for both theoretical and empirical reasons. From a theoretical point of view, some argue that the electoral volatility test does not seem to effectively measure party systems' stability (Mair, 1983; Smith, 1989) because "not all electoral changes matter equally, and since some changes may have more systemic implications than others" (Mair, 2001: 32). Empirically speaking, ever since the 1970s, many scholars have pointed out the inconsistency of the freezing hypothesis by producing a bulk of studies that have empirically implied new alignment processes in contemporary European politics. For instance, Western European party systems have experienced significant increases in electoral volatility since the fall of the Berlin Wall (Dalton et al, 2000; Bischoff, 2013; Dassonneville and Hooghe, 2017), Western European elections have also been undergoing substantial declines in electoral turnouts (Delwit, 2012; Mair, 2013), European citizens clearly feel less attached to political parties (Abedi, 2003; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016) and new political parties are fragmenting political representation, which is the cause of spreading discontent and instability (Abedi, 2003; Meguid, 2008; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016).

Having traced back arguments in support and against the validity of the freezing hypothesis, the first and the second theses (that cleavages and political parties endure over the years) were particularly under debate. Yet, the third thesis derived from the freezing hypothesis (the *static* aspect of the model) remains relatively unchallenged. The reason is because, to a certain extent, scholars that have explored classical or new cleavage structures have always employed the classical Lipset-Rokkan cleavage model that is *based* on the assumptions of *historical institutionalism* (Thelen, 1999: 388). The following section will illustrate how this study conceptualises the notion of historical institutionalism and the theoretical implications this approach has had on the classical cleavage model.

2.3.2 *The static nature of the classical cleavage model: implications of the historical institutionalism*

The historical institutionalism is a theoretical approach that helps to understand the design of institutions, which will have an impact in actors making choices in the future (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013: 31). Hall and Taylor (1996: 10) clearly elucidate that

“Institutions affect behaviour primarily by providing actors with greater or lesser degrees of certainty about the present and future behaviour of other actors. [...] The key point is that they affect individual action by altering the expectations an actor has about the actions that others are likely to take in response to or simultaneously with his own action”.

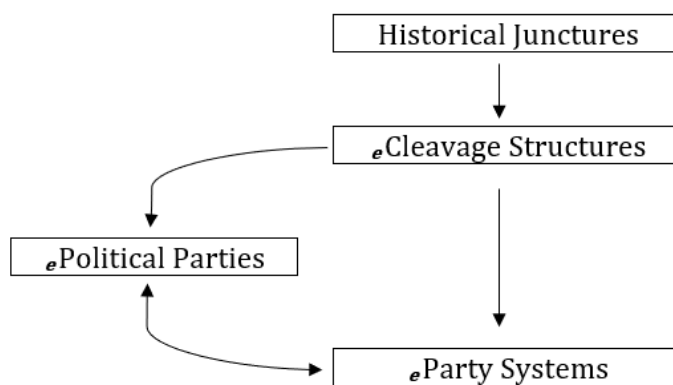
Therefore, Hall and Taylor (1996: 10-11) do not deny that individuals make rational choices that will determine their behaviours, but they propose an insightful idea that actors tend to follow “routines or familiar patterns of behaviour” and these habits are thus determined by institutions. Having said that, the way institutions impact upon actors’ behaviour is determined by two fundamental concepts: critical (or historical) junctures and path dependency. For example, Capoccia and Kelemen (2007: 341) explain that the historical junctures can more generally be defined as “brief phases of institutional flux” which can be identified as the causal origin of large-scale changes. In this sense, Capoccia and Kelemen (2007: 344) also confirm that “Lipset and Rokkan, too, were pioneers [in historical institutionalism], tracing the roots of the origins of West European party systems to ‘three crucial junctures’ in the history of each nation”. While the second concept of path dependency, is the main driving force to determine actors’ behaviour. Indeed, once critical junctures have generated specific paths or trajectories (such as ideas, values or rules), the likelihood is that actors will follow those particular paths increases over the years because the cost to change rises (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013: 113).

Accordingly, the theoretical implications of these two concepts (historical juncture and path dependency) to the classical cleavage model imply its *static* nature. In the Lipset-Rokkan model, political parties (the actors of the model) are typically portrayed as the outcome of cleavage structures. Political parties do not make ‘choices’, or they are not in control of the societal transformations which produce cleavages, but rather political parties are co-determined by processes of critical junctures and path dependency (Katznelson, 1997; Thelen, 1999; Aspinwall and Schneider, 2000: 5). For that reason, the classical cleavage model proposes a fairly linear process whereby political parties are enduring actors set by linear paths, which were generated by macro-historical events. To sum up, the following bullet points and figures show how the classical cleavage model has been employed for both (a) classical cleavages and (b) new cleavages.

a) First of all, historical junctures lead to cleavage structures to the extent that they become socially rooted and politically relevant. Political parties and party systems originate from these cleavages. As such, once they are institutionalised, cleavage

structures, political parties and party systems are, finally, to be considered as established (*e*). From this model, the single arrow means causality from one factor to another; while the double-arrow means that factors are co-dependant on each other. For instance, the co-dependence between political parties and party systems is explained as political parties who are the constituent agents that designed the ‘rules of the game’. Moreover, if necessary, they can change these rules (e.g. referendums, constitutional reforms and so on). Yet, once party systems are defined, political parties are also influenced by institutional thresholds that determine which parties can compete and how government alliances can be formed (Rokkan, 1999).

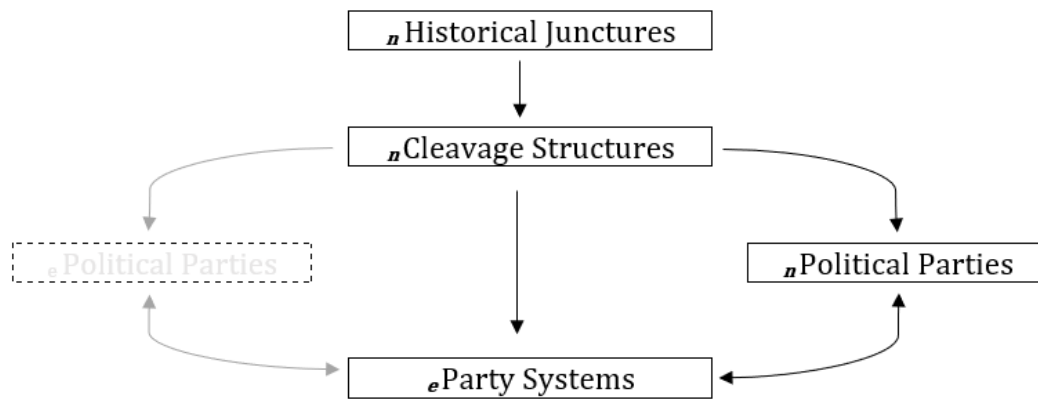
Figure 2.2 The classical Lipset-Rokkan cleavage model



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: *e* = established.

b₁) With regards to the new cleavage structures (see section 2.2.4), these new cleavages (*n*) emerge in pre-existing competitive party systems and political parties. The main “party-political response comes chiefly in the form of new political parties” that emerge from new cleavages and shape (and are shaped by) the pre-existing party systems (Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Marks et al., 2020: 176). In this new context, “established parties will seek to avert the entry of new parties by responding to new potential within the electorate, within the limits set by their historical position” (Bornschieer, 2009: 5). Eventually, combined phenomena of dealignment and realignment will determine the decline of established political parties, while new political parties will endure (Hooghe and Marks, 2018).

Figure 2.3 The classical Lipset-Rokkan cleavage model applied to new cleavage structures



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: e = established, n = new.

As can be observed from figures 2.2 and 2.3, the classical cleavage model is built on historical institutionalist ideas. Political parties do not actively make choices as they are the direct representation (or institutionalisation) of large-scale conflicts that are rooted in society (cleavages) (see Enyedi, 2008). As Peter Mair argues:

“if there are divides in the society, it is these which are seen to explain the presence of parties and politics; and if these divides then change, such that old lines of stratification fade away and new ones emerge to take their place, this inevitably leads to the eclipse of one set of parties and to the emergence and growth of others” (Mair, 2006: 372).

Therefore, the classical cleavage model does not consider political parties as entities (or actors) that can be *flexible*, but they are rather defined as *inflexible*. However, in this study, I want to make the classical cleavage model more *dynamic* by juxtaposing ideas of historical institutionalism with the notions of the *rational choice institutionalism*.

2.4 Re-examining the freezing hypothesis: what else is frozen?

This thesis analyses the *flexibility* of established RRP from the early 1980s to the late 2010s in Western Europe. Whilst this notion is not new in party politics, party ideological flexibility nevertheless remains one of the least explored factors when studying classical cleavage structures and new cleavage structures. Lipset and Rokkan, and their followers, share the assumption that political parties are constrained by specific trajectories or paths (March and Olsen, 2008). Putting it in Hooghe and Marks' (2018: 112) words: “change comes from voters, not established parties [...] political parties are programmatically *inflexible*” (*my emphasis*) (see also Bartolini and Mair, 2007; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Emanuele et al., 2020: 7; Marks et al., 2020). For that reason, scholars who

focused on cleavage structures have rather preferred to focus on other aspects³⁵ of the freezing hypothesis. Peter Mair (2001: 27-33), who has extensively written about this, identifies two lines of research which problematise the freezing hypothesis. On the one hand, some scholars argue that “what appeared frozen [...] were the parties and the systems that they constituted” (Mair, 2001: 27). On the other hand, others claim that “what appears to have been frozen was the cleavage system” (Mair, 2001: 27). In both scenarios, the political parties are the main outcome of the classical cleavage model since electoral volatility is the main approach employed to test whether electoral performance of political parties or the predictive strength of cleavages were more or less frozen.

However, in the following sections, I shall shift the focus onto political parties as the focus of analysis to determine whether they are frozen or not using the lens of rational choice theory, which will help me to conceptualise the notion of party ideological flexibility. Subsequently, I will illustrate how historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism can be complementary approaches by presenting a *new cleavage model*. In the last part, I will summarise all different types of party change when considering *something less*³⁶ than flexible.

2.4.1 Conceptualising party ideological flexibility

Drawing from Harmel and Janda (1994: 275), party ideological flexibility coincides with their definition of party change which occurs as “*any variation, alteration or modification in how parties are organised, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for and what they do*” (*my emphasis*). In its broadest sense, this definition encompasses a variety of elements that can determine party ideological flexibility, stretching beyond the scope of this research (e.g. parties organisational theory). Yet, this definition provides useful insights to implement rational choice theory when exploring party ideological flexibility. Indeed, the key point proposed by Harmel and Janda is that of including not only external factors (e.g. societal changes) as the driving force that shape parties’ behaviour, but there are also internal factors (from the change of leadership to the party’s ideological shift) which also play an important role in exploring party’s behaviour (Hornig, 2010: 26-27).

³⁵ Review the first two theses we can derive from the freezing hypothesis in section 2.3.1.

³⁶ By something less than flexible, I mean the condition that does not entirely depict all elements that constitute flexibility according to this thesis – see the definition in section 2.4.1.

In this sense, rational choice institutionalism has come a long way since the contributions of Downs (1957), Przeworski and Sprague (1986), and Cox (1997). Among these, I mostly draw on Downs' work (1957) in proposing political parties as rational actors. Downs argues that parties' major interest is not the public good, but rather "income, prestige and power", which could be reached through the maximisation of votes. Indeed, "parties formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections in order to formulate policies" (Downs, 1957: 28). Therefore, political parties can be defined as actors that behave instrumentally (being flexible) according to their goal, which is to win electoral competitions (Erikson, 2011: 24-27).

Drawing from rational choice approaches to institutions, the literature on party politics has certainly contributed to a large number of studies dealing with the phenomenon of party ideological flexibility (Fagerholm, 2016). According to this literature, there are two main explanations for political parties being flexible. Firstly, flexibility may be driven by internal factors such as a change of leadership or a dominant faction (Harmel et al., 2008: 101; Boucek, 2009: 456-460; Budge et al., 2010). For instance, Boucek (2009) investigates how factionalism within mass parties played a significant role in party ideological flexibility, such as the Christian Democratic party (DC) in Italy. Indeed, the presence of senior politicians representing different factions within the DC allowed the party to be more flexible over the years because factions constitute distinct preferences and, therefore, allowing the party to be more flexible according to which faction held power in the party. Another internal factor could be the change of a party's internal organisational structure (Meyer, 2013: 152-155; Schumacher et al., 2013: 472-474). For instance, Schumacher et al. (2013), when comparing fifty-five parties in ten European countries, empirically demonstrate that parties dominated by the pivotal role of the leader are more likely to change according to the party's electoral performance, while those parties that are more activists-oriented will rather follow how its internal electorate.

Secondly, other studies state that party ideological flexibility may be influenced by external factors. For instance, Somer-Topcu (2009) demonstrates that parties are incentivized to be more flexible when they have lost votes in the previous election, rather than when they have won more votes. This flexibility is motivated by the author because parties are often willing to take strategic risks in order to re-engage with their electorate or to regain the fidelity link between voters and the party. Alternatively, Adams et al. (2009) find evidence that party ideological flexibility could have been influenced by shifts in public opinion (see also Ezrow et al., 2011). More specifically, Adams et al.

(2009) argue that right wing parties and centre parties are more responsive to public opinion changes than left wing parties. Finally, some other authors demonstrate that party ideological flexibility might have been influenced by changes in global economic conditions. For instance, Ward et al. (2011: 541) show that globalization affects more left-wing parties than right-wing parties.

Whilst clearly the above studies have done important ground-breaking work in the research of party ideological flexibility, I agree with Fagerholm (2014: 508) that the research agenda needs to go beyond this type of short-term analyses. Indeed, all the studies mentioned above have mostly focused on party ideological flexibility over short periods of time.³⁷ They usually analyse party ideological flexibility from one election to another (from el to $el + 1$)³⁸, demonstrating that political parties often change in two consecutive elections – for instance, party ideological flexibility from the election el to election $el + 1$ and even to election $el + 2$. However, as Fagerholm (2014: 508) has pointed out, we need to go beyond studies “on parties’ short-lived reactions to explore the extent to which, and the conditions under which, political parties undertake more lasting policy changes”. In line with that, the cleavage model is, per its nature, theoretically ideal for this purpose since it especially contemplates long timeframe analyses (a diachronic approach).

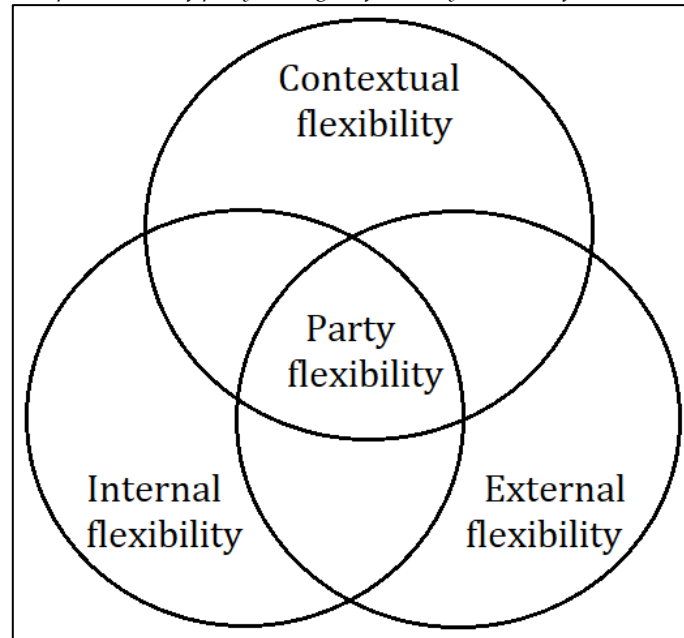
Considering the widely acknowledged literature above, the main problem now is in conceptualising party flexibility with regard to cleavage structures. My *contribution* is to formulate a theoretical holistic definition, which takes into consideration multiple factors (external and internal) and time. In this perspective, the concept of party ideological flexibility incorporates three levels which are equally important and interrelated: a *contextual flexibility*, which coincides with the latent dimension of the demand-side, and which can be observed through the development of the cleavage structure; an *internal flexibility*, that coincides with the dimension of the supply-side, which reflects changes in party’s behaviour about the party stands for and what the party does; and an *external flexibility*, which determines the manifest dimension of demand-side, pointing out whether voters’ issue-orientations to support the same party changed. Essentially, the core idea of party flexibility (based on the framework of the cleavage theory and the neo-institutionalist theories) is that parties’

³⁷ I need to specify what I mean by short periods of time when analyzing electoral strategies from one election to another. Indeed, it should be recalled that from one election to another, at least five years could pass (unless there is an election that interrupts the natural end of the legislature). Therefore, including a timeframe of fifteen years or twenty years, can be considered a short-term analysis because (on average) it can include no more than three or four elections. By long-term analysis, I refer to the inclusion of at least nine or ten electoral campaigns, which include at least forty years of analysis.

³⁸ el stands for *election*. Therefore, $el + 1$ refers to the next election.

ideological transformation is observed whether variations occur in all factors constituting party ideological flexibility (see figure 2.4). Otherwise, if at least one of the aforementioned factors is not met, we would be observing into ‘something less’ than flexible – a point I will return to later (see section 2.4.3).

Figure 2.4 Conceptualisation of party ideological flexibility as result of three interrelated factors



Source: Author's elaboration.

Moreover, I suggest that the term party ideological flexibility should be restricted only to long-term analyses (diachronic approach), because party ideological flexibility from one election to another does not have the same implication that party ideological flexibility has over long periods of time (such as decades). Party ideological flexibility in shorter timeframes informs us how the party has reacted to contingent conditions. Party ideological flexibility in longer timeframes, rather, informs us how the party has developed its identity. For that reason, per long timeframe, ideally researchers should undertake analyses that show a party ideological flexibility from its first electoral appearance to the most recent election – or at least as far as data are available.

2.4.2 A new cleavage model: combining historical and rational choice institutionalism

Having discussed party ideological flexibility and explored the main assumptions of historical and rational choice institutionalism as relevant to the topic of ideological flexibility, in this section, I will illustrate how the aforementioned neo-institutionalist theories complement each other in order to provide a more *dynamic* cleavage model. Firstly, I shall integrate how historical institutionalism

addresses party ideological flexibility within the classical cleavage model. Then, I will integrate to the cleavage model the notion of rational choice institutionalism.

As I stated above, the classical cleavage model is built on historical institutionalist ideas. Therefore, political parties are portrayed as ideologically inflexible by nature. This inflexibility is mainly assumed from a tactical point of view. The ideological flexibility of parties can be very harmful for party reputation and, thus voters would not trust a party that changes position too many times (Bouteca and Devos, 2015: 4-5). In fact, some authors argue that established political parties are constrained by their history and societal backgrounds, and they cannot ignore it (Meyer, 2013; Dalton and McAllister, 2015). In line with this explanation, Dalton and McAllister (2015: 777) demonstrate that established political parties are “embedded in a political history and support network that limits their opportunities and motivations to dramatically change their broad orientation between elections”. Further, theorists that applied the classical cleavage model argue that political parties fail to be flexible to new political contexts and hence are unable to adequately address new emergent conflicts in contemporary societies. In this sense, there is the implicit assumption that when a political party belongs “to a given side of the cleavage [, it] does not change over time by definition” (Emanuele et al., 2020: 7). Accordingly, if political parties are inexorably inflexible, it could be argued that this inflexibility can also be extended to second order³⁹ cleavages (classical and new). Indeed, when examining the new transnational cleavage structure, Hooghe and Marks (2018: 4-5, 11; see also Marks et al., 2020) forcefully argue that the established political parties, from the centre-left and centre-right, tend “to be sticky” on the new transnational cleavage; therefore, the main party-response to the advent of new cleavages – including processes of dealignment and realignment – “comes chiefly in the form of new political parties” (Marks et al., 2020: 176) and the decline of established parties *in the long run* (see figure 2.3).

However, drawing on Ira Katznelson and Barry R. Weingast’s contribution (2005), I argue that it is possible to combine elements from historical institutionalism – e.g. notions of path dependency and historical junctures – with processes of rational choice institutionalism – e.g. the agency factor of political parties – in order to explore party ideological flexibility (Weingast, 2005). As such, when looking at parties through rational choice institutionalist eyes, parties have goals, and they want to accomplish them. These goals can vary among parties (e.g. for voting maximisation, access to offices

³⁹ By second order cleavages, I refer to those cleavages that did not found a political party.

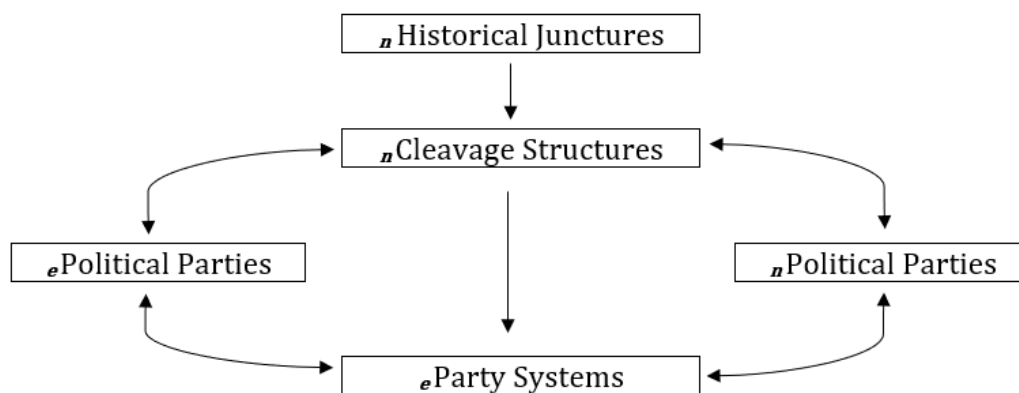
or ideological advocacy) and they might vary over the time (Harmel and Janda, 1994: 265). Nevertheless, each political party competes with its competitors *to win elections*, and for that reason, it seeks to meet the needs of the electorate in order to gather *the maximum number of votes* (Downs, 1957). To this end

“parties must be able to absorb new demands and recognize the need to devise new strategies when old ones are no longer satisfactory. Those parties with institutional structures capable of recognizing new challenges quickly and reacting to them efficiently are more likely to perform well in difficult and changing environment” (Berman, 1997: 111).

Accordingly, when combining elements of both historical and rational choice institutionalism, the following bullet point is an alternative interpretation on how political parties can be flexible towards cleavage structures.

b2) In the new cleavage model⁴⁰, I argue that established political parties can actively realign within the new political context. Moreover, once they do it, these parties will not necessarily forever stand on one side of a cleavage, but (if necessary) they can shift from one side to the other. To quote Berman (1997: 118): “parties recognize both the opportunities and constraints offered by the prevailing political environment and design their actions accordingly”. Therefore, I argue that there is also a co-dependence between political parties (established and new) and cleavage structures.

Figure 2.5 A new cleavage model with historical and rational choice institutionalist approaches



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: e = established, n = new.

This alternative mechanism (Figure 2.5) is framed by combining two theories which explain the organisational expression of cleavage structures. According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967), cleavage

⁴⁰ This bullet point is meant to be an alternative interpretation of b1 (Figure 2.3, p. 40).

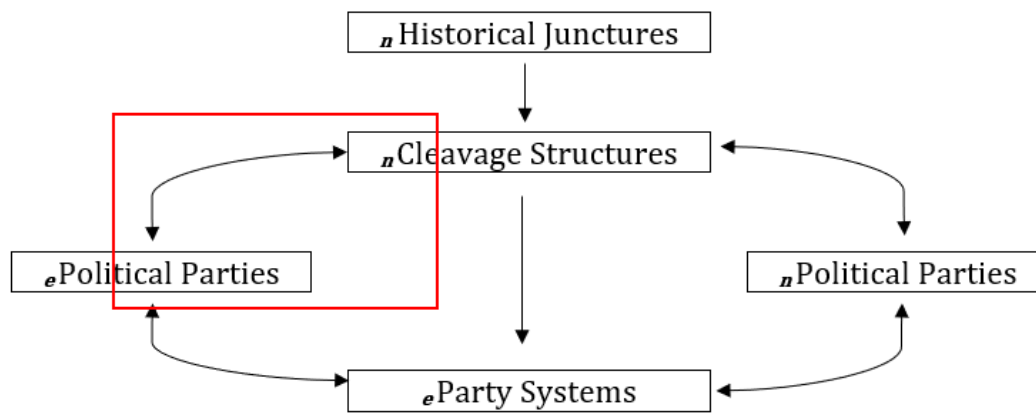
structures originate and are politicised within society – from the demand space. Once these conflicts have a large-scale impact, they are tied into political parties – the supply side (see also Zuckerman, 1975: 234). By contrast, Sartori (1990) shifts attention from the demand space as origin of cleavages to the ‘persuader’ of such conflicts (the political parties). In his words, using as an example the Italian Communist Party, Sartori (1990: 169) argues that

“Far from being the efficient cause, class conditions are only a facilitating condition. To put it bluntly, it is not the ‘objective’ class (class conditions) that creates the party, but the party that creates the ‘subjective’ class (class consciousness). More carefully put, whenever parties reflect social classes, this signifies *more* about the party end than about the class end of interaction. The party is not a ‘consequence’ of the class. Rather, and before, it is the class that receives its identity from the party”.

At first glance, these two views seem to reflect antithetical approaches in explaining the link between cleavages and political parties. On the one hand, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) propose a bottom-up perspective from the demand side to the supply side. On the other hand, Sartori (1990) argues a top-down viewpoint, therefore a reverse process where the initiative is taken by the political parties. Nevertheless, for this study, I argue that a holistic understanding is needed to acknowledge that both theoretical views provide useful insights in explaining how cleavages and political parties are interrelated (see the three-part definition of party ideological flexibility in section 2.4.1).

It is clear that political parties would not exist if there were not societal and ideological divides within society; in the same way, if there are not organised groups of people that intercept and address these divides (e.g. political parties but including also social movements, churches, unions and so on), cleavages would not be institutionalised and would not survive over the years. This is what I call the *assumption of contingent flexibility*: the claim that both demand side and supply side contribute to important aspects, and they should be equally considered when exploring the flexibility of political parties on new cleavage structures. In a nutshell, since I am interested on the flexibility of established (radical right) parties, this study focuses on the highlighted section by the red box in the new cleavage model repropounded below.

Figure 2.6 Focus of this study on the new cleavage model with historical and rational choice institutionalist approaches



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: e = established, n = new.

To this end, the above new cleavage model aims to not consider political parties only as mere pawns. Phenomena of alignment and realignment do not occur only from the side of voters, but they can also occur from the side of political parties. In this way, established political parties do not decline, but they rather coexist with new political parties because they are co-dependent actors who shape and are shaped by new cleavage structures.

2.4.3 Conceptualising 'something less' than flexible

Thus far, I have satisfied the quest to conceptualise what this study intends for party ideological flexibility. In this section, attempting to bring further conceptual clarity on party ideological flexibility, I shall propose a conceptual framework for all those circumstances when the party ideological flexibility is not achieved because it is not flexible in each constitutive factor. Therefore, drawing from Von Schoultz (2017) showing different types of divides, Table 2.2, below, proposes a framework that makes clear distinctions between different types⁴¹ of inflexibility that can exist.

Table 2.2 A conceptual framework for 'something less' than flexible

	Frozen		Adaptation			Dealignment		Flexible
Contextual flexibility	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	+
Internal flexibility	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	+
External flexibility	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	+
	No change	Census change	Instrumental change	Perceptive change	Behavioural change	Responsive change	Structural change	Full change

Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: + = flexible, - = not flexible.

⁴¹ The same type of conceptual strategy has been employed by the literature on cleavage studies in order to distinguish different forms of cleavages (see e.g. Bartolini, 2005; Deegan-Krause, 2007).

Starting from the first columns, a 'Frozen' circumstance can result in two cases. In the first one, 'no change', none of the three factors – contextual, internal and external flexibility – has altered. In this case, the historical juncture has not provoked a new ideological conflict, and the supply side and manifest demand side of the political party have not changed. Alternatively, the frame 'census change' is employed to describe a circumstance when only the contextual flexibility demonstrates that there has been a change within the population through an intensification of conflicts and/or the formation of new societal demarcations. This notion captures flexibility within the societal realm, but without its organisational expression from the political world (Zuckerman, 1975) both from the manifest demand side and the supply side of the political party. These first conditions would, therefore, describe a frozen status of the political party (which exemplifies the Lipset-Rokkan classical cleavage model).

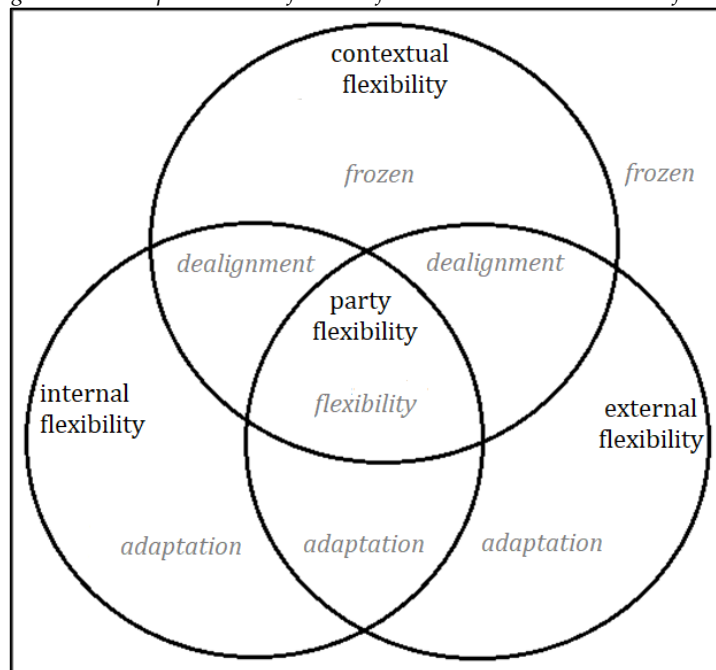
Moving to the columns under the label 'Adaptation', this circumstance can result in three cases. Firstly, the 'instrumental change' is a concept that regularly emerge in the scholarship on party politics that focuses on the willingness of parties to change according to their goals. For instance, the policy-oriented coalition theory was employed to explore how political parties instrumentally change their policy pursuit in order to achieve control over political office in larger coalitions (see Elklit, 1999). Secondly, the 'perceptive change' specifically relates with the manifest part of the demand-side when voters' issue-orientations towards a political party change although the party did not change its supply side and new divides of the latent demand side did not occur. For instance, from the US literature, Lawrence (1978) pointed out as voters' issue-orientations should not be enlisted as the primary cause of voting behaviour. He rather proposes the explanation that "there may be reason to vote on the basis of candidates rather than issue orientation", such as the type of candidate (Lawrence, 1978: 234). Thirdly, 'behavioural change' is a term that evoke the adaptation (but not flexibility) of a political party and its voters in a context that was not influenced by new societal divides. Yet, they are readapting in a pre-existed conflict based on predefined ideological knit and already established structural roots (Bornschieer, 2010).

Focusing on the columns under the label 'Dealignment', this circumstance can result in two cases. Firstly, the 'responsive change' delineates a specific condition where both the latent demand side and the supply side of a political parties have demonstrated flexibility. Nevertheless, although the conflict has intensified and/or generated new societal division and, accordingly, the political party has modified the way it addresses the new policy issue, its electorate is still inclined to endorse the

party by the same voters-issue orientations. Secondly, the ‘structural change’ happens when solely the demand space (both latent and manifest) experience processes of flexibility. This circumstance, indeed, was usually employed to explain the structural dealignment (Brooks et al., 2006; Lachat, 2007) or the behavioural dealignment (Lachat, 2007; Goldberg, 2020).

Finally, the last column that depicts the label ‘Flexible’ represents a condition of ‘full change’ since each factor of party ideological flexibility result different. In line with my argumentation on party ideological flexibility, I prompt that among all the aforementioned conditions, only the ‘full change’ condition shall be interpreted as flexible. All the other conditions are under the framework of ‘something less’ than flexible. Thus, they are inflexible. The following figure 2.7 combines the conceptualisation of what is flexible and what is ‘less than’ flexible.

Figure 2.7 Conceptualisation of what is flexible and what is ‘less than’ flexible



Source: Author's elaboration.

2.5 Exploring political party ideological flexibility: hypotheses and expectations

The majority of the attention in the literature on party competition has focused on how political parties compete against each other. This research often questioned the crisis of political parties and the challenges that they have to face in order to adapt in the contemporary political landscape and, broadly speaking, researchers focus on single factors examining either the demand side or the supply side of party politics (Golder, 2016). Yet this approach will only ever represent a partial picture of party ideological flexibility with regard to cleavage structures (Mols and Jetten, 2020).

Therefore, having proposed a new cleavage model involving a theoretical holistic definition of party ideological flexibility, I propose in this study an analytical framework that incorporates both the demand side and supply-side factors of political parties. In the final part of this chapter, I will illustrate the main expectations for each of the three interrelated dimensions of party ideological flexibility (contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility).

2.5.1 Contextual flexibility: a latent demand side analysis

Although most studies focus on how political parties address cleavages when they are competing against each other, electoral competitions are also entrenched by the political context. For that reason, public opinion shall be analysed in order to explore the latent demand side of a political party. Indeed, tracing back to what was once called policy responsiveness (Stimson et al., 1995), this mechanism has a central part in party competition. It occurs when political actors respond to shifts in the political context (or public opinion) as a result of the shaping of new political opportunities during electoral campaigns (Adams et al, 2009). Therefore, based on the assumption that characteristics of the political landscape influence the way political parties address cleavage structures, I will explore contextual flexibility taking into account two elements that are both necessary in order to assess changes within the latent demand side: the polarisation and the societal divisions produced by the European integration process (the historical juncture). More specifically, I argue that the historical juncture identified by Hooghe and Marks (2018) can be ‘unpacked’ when drawing on Soifer’s (2012) theoretical framework on critical junctures. In fact, Soifer (2012: 1575) identifies two elements which “combination is necessary and sufficient for [creating] divergence”: the permission conditions and the productive conditions. Soifer (2012: 1574-1575) defines the permission conditions “as those factors or conditions that change the underlying context to increase the causal power of agency or contingency and thus the prospects for divergence”; while the productive conditions are those “aspects of a critical juncture that shape the initial outcomes that diverge across cases”. Accordingly, I consider the ‘permissive consensus’ period of time (between the early 1980s and early 1990s), when the European political elites would negotiate on insulated deals without asking an explicit mandate from their national electors (Hooghe and Marks, 2009), as the permission conditions. While I consider the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 as the productive condition. In fact, the literature on the European integration process agrees that the Maastricht Treaty has been a turning point for the building of an ever-stronger political integration. For instance, FitzGibbon et al. (2017) straightforwardly point out the symbolic importance to change

the name of the European transnational institution from 'Community' to 'Union'. A change that "marked the moment when divisions between European and domestic policy within the member states began to become blurred" (FitzGibbon et al., 2016: 1). As such, I shall take into account the signing of the Maastricht Treaty as a point of reference when looking at changes in terms of polarisation and societal divisions.

Starting with the polarisation produced by the transnational cleavage, polarisation is primarily interpreted as "the intensification of opinion discrepancy dividing substantive parts of the society into opposing camps" (Kleiner, 2018: 943). Therefore, public opinion's polarisation will be measured using the normative aspect of a cleavage (see section 2.2.1). Broadly speaking, the normative aspect denotes the self-consciousness of a group based on shared values and ideas. In this vein, Goldberg (2016: 13) argues that "each cleavage can consist of only one normative dimension, but there can also be several values/beliefs that separate the involved groups". Accordingly, the normative aspect implies that a cleavage structure can be addressed by antithetical values/beliefs which denote the polarised nature of a cleavage. As societal conflicts become cleavage structures once society is also divided (but not exclusively) by its normative aspect, it could be argued that a conflict is a cleavage insofar as there is "an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values' within society (de Wilde, 2011: 560). Hence, the more society becomes polarised in terms of the antithetical values of the transnational cleavage, the more likely political parties will compete against each other on this new ideological conflict (Sass, 2020; Brändle et al., 2021). By contrast, if the polarisation within public opinion does not vary or decrease, it means that the cleavage has been stabilised (thus, frozen) within the latent demand side.

The literature on public opinion regarding the European integration process assumes that the general public's attitudes towards European integration is an important factor for its development and, based on survey data, many studies have demonstrated that citizens' attitude towards the EU has drastically changed over the years (see Anderson and Kaltenthaler, 1996; Gabel, 1998; Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007). Most scholars argue that the European integration is an economic phenomenon and that attitudes of the general public usually change because of economic factors such as the response to the liberalisation of the European common market (Hooghe and Marks, 2004: 418). However, further research explores the growing Euroscepticism among citizens investigating other causal factors (De Vries, 2018). Taggart and Szczerbiak (2018), for instance, argue that the causes behind the rising of Euroscepticism in the EU member states' public opinion is not exclusively

determined by only economic factors, but also by immigration and national sovereignty. Similarly, I expect that the electorate has been more polarised on the new transnational cleavage and in each dimension especially after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, because it was the peak of the European integration process. On that basis, I will test the following hypothesis:

H1: The polarisation hypothesis

- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, public opinion is more polarised on the transnational cleavage (H1a) and the trend in public opinion is that pro-EU attitudes will decrease more than the anti-EU attitude (H1b).*
- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, public opinion is more polarised on the institutional dimension of the transnational cleavage (H1c) and the trend in public opinion is that the federalist attitude will decrease more than the souverainist attitude (H1d).*
- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, public opinion is more polarised on the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage (H1e) and the trend in public opinion is that marketism attitude will decrease more than welfare chauvinism attitude (H1f).*
- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, public opinion is more polarised on the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage (H1g) and the trend in public is that multiculturalism attitude will decrease more than nativism attitude (H1h).*

Moving on to the societal divisions produced by the transnational cleavage, this will be measured through empirical aspects. As I stated in section 2.1.1, the empirical aspect of a cleavage implies those sociodemographic characteristics that differentiate individuals into separated groups. These sociodemographic characteristics also coincide with the antithetical values and ideas that form the normative aspect of a cleavage (Frabini, 2001). In this sense, social and attitudinal elements of a cleavage are interrelated insofar as: the stronger the social, political and cultural solidarity among members of the same group “the greater the likelihood that the similarity of social positions and interests will give birth to strong and cohesive normative visions of the group’s role in society” (Frabini, 2001: 277). For instance, in studies on classical cleavages, Willits and Crider (1989) confirmed that an individual who goes to religious ceremonies weekly is more likely to believe that religious morality should be oriented by the Church rather than the State. This mechanism takes place also within the new cleavages. For instance, Stubager (2009: 205) also argues that different educational levels can determine individuals’ value-orientations on authoritarian or libertarian

positions, “just as the ideological opposition between the socialist left and the conservative right have their roots in social classes”. Accordingly, a similar argument can be made about the transnational cleavage’s capacity to associate a low level of education with attitudes linked to Eurosceptic values (Souverainisme, Welfare Chauvinism and Nativism). As such, I expect that societal divisions will take place within the public opinion as a consequence of the European integration process (especially after the Maastricht Treaty), while those people with a low level of education will be also more Eurosceptic than people with a higher level of education. By contrast, if societal divisions are not produced or are pre-existed, the impact of the cleavage must be considered as already established within society (thus, frozen).

H2: The societal division hypothesis

- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the transnational cleavage provokes societal demarcations (H2a) and the lower the level of respondents’ education, the more likely they hold anti-EU attitudes (H2b).*
- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the institutional dimension of the transnational cleavage provokes societal demarcations (H2c) and the lower the level of respondents’ education, the more likely they hold souverainist attitudes (H2d).*
- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage provokes societal demarcations (H2e) and the lower the level of respondents’ education, the more likely they hold welfare chauvinist attitudes (H2f).*
- *After the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage provokes societal demarcations (H2g) and the lower the level of respondents’ education, the more likely they hold nativist attitudes (H2h).*

2.5.2 Internal flexibility: a supply side analysis

In addition to these contextual factors, I also account for how political parties actively design their electoral campaigns in order to observe party internal flexibility. Unlike the previous factors, the internal flexibility follows from the top-down approach (Sartori, 1990) that political parties take initiatives and are capable of determining the nature of societal and political conflicts, as political parties are agents who employ strategies in order to appeal to voters regardless of their nature or reputation. Therefore, I define this factor as internal flexibility because parties directly control their supply side by employing the salience and position that they prefer. In this respect, salience theory and spatial theory are the main approaches to study the supply side of political parties.

Firstly, researchers explore what *saliency* (or emphasis) parties afford to issues and policies in order to express to what extent a certain topic mattered to them or should be prioritised in the political agenda of a country. This factor is at the core of saliency theory by which parties tend to emphasise certain issues in order to perform successfully in times of elections (Downes and Loveless, 2018). Saliency theory originates from Budge and Farlie (1983) (see also Petrocik, 1996; Petrocik et al., 2003) who argue that political parties selectively emphasise certain topics rather than others in order to inform the 'ownership' of the party of these topics and to inform the electorate as to what should be the priorities of the country. For instance, if political party A dedicates more space to increasing military expenditure within its supply side and less emphasis on environmental protection – which is, for instance, offered by party B –, it is more likely that party A will prioritise delivering policies in favour of militarism and it will probably consider environmental issues to be on a secondary plain. Moreover, voters would know that party A would be considered the genuine owner of militarism, while party B would own issues that involve environmental matters (Bouteca and Devos, 2015).

Secondly, other researchers focus on parties' *position* on each topic a party addresses regardless of how much emphasis it employs. This second element is linked to spatial theory (or positional theory), which goes back to the Downs' proximity voting model (1957). This theory underlines the importance of proximity between parties' positions and individuals' positions, which will determine voting behaviour (Hinich and Munger, 1992). For that reason, the understanding of parties' positions is fundamental because it elucidates to the electorate on which side a political party position itself on the political scale – independently of how much emphasis parties put on issues. As such, if a political party declares during an electoral campaign that it defends 'traditional family values', it is less likely that the party will deliver progressive policies in favour of marriage or adoption by same-sex couples.

Looking at the transnational cleavage, the main expectations challenge the traditional comparative research on Euroscepticism. Radical right parties are typically expected to emphasise their supply side on the transnational cleavage in order to demonstrate party issue ownership and to stand negatively on the European integration project. Yet, I instead expect that established radical right parties can be flexible with regard to the EU in at least one indicator between emphasis and position. On that basis, I will test the following hypothesis.

H3: The emphasis/position hypothesis

- *Within the supply side of established radical right parties, the transnational cleavage is flexible in terms of emphasis (H3a) and/or position (H3b) from election to election.*

Taking into consideration the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage (see Table 2.1), this new cleavage structure has accessed Western European political debates as a bundle of multiple aspects (institutional, economic and cultural). Recent studies on radical right parties and the multiple dimensions of the transnational cleavage have demonstrated that these parties emphasise dimensions of the transitional cleavage and they negatively stand towards the goal to build a European community that reinforces a transnational political unification, a co-dependent European market and a multicultural society. I yet challenge these assumptions as I expect that eRRPs had more freedom on each of these dimensions in terms of salience or position. Therefore, I will replicate the previous hypothesis for each dimension of the transnational cleavage.

- *Within the supply side of established radical right parties, the institutional dimension of transnational cleavage is flexible in terms of emphasis (H3c) and/or position (H3d) from election to election.*
- *Within the supply side of established radical right parties, the economic dimension of transnational cleavage is flexible in terms of emphasis (H3e) and/or position (H3f) from election to election.*
- *Within the supply side of established radical right parties, the cultural dimension of transnational cleavage is flexible in terms of emphasis (H3g) and/or position (H3h) from election to election.*

2.5.3 External flexibility: a manifest demand side analysis

Due to the interrelated relationship between cleavages and political parties, studies of party competition have also focused on the impact of cleavages on voting behaviour (or manifest demand side analysis). Research on voting behaviour confirms Lipset and Rokkan's model in which cleavages influence how people vote because they belong to different groups (Rose and Urwin, 1970; Brooks et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the next generation of researchers could observe a change in voting behaviour which was caused by the transition of Western European societies into post-industrial societies (Inglehart, 1977; von Schoultz, 2017: 36; Evans and Northmore-Ball, 2017: 126). Indeed, these researchers demonstrate that classical cleavages were deteriorating and were, therefore, no longer reliable as a way to predict voting behaviour, because the societal groups traditionally linked to them were changing in *size* and *behaviour* (von Schoultz, 2017). This phenomenon is usually associated with electoral volatility. There are two main theses that have focused on the weakening

of classical cleavages as a way to predict individuals' voting behaviour: dealignment theory and realignment theory.

The first group of studies on dealignment theory presents empirical evidence of a decrease in strength between classical socio-structural groups and their respective political parties (Mair 1989). One of the main contributions of this thesis is that of Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck (1984); Dalton, (2000) who labelled *cognitive mobilisations* as one of the most impactful effects of modern societies thanks to the increase of mass education. This phenomenon diminishes the classical socio-structural ties that used to influence individuals' voting behaviour in supporting the same parties that embodied their sociodemographic category. For that reason, more access to higher education has enhanced individual choice and, therefore, voters tend to support political parties following their individual expectations rather than aligning with their social background (Marks et al, 2020: 174).

Following the dealignment theory, realignment theory goes beyond exploring the weakening of classical cleavages in impacting voting behaviour, but it also contributes to explore whether, and to what extent, new conflicts have substituted older ones, building the foundations of new cleavages (von Schoultz, 2017: 39-42). Realignment is also defined as "a time during which the composition of party coalitions underwent significant change, with many people who earlier would have been unaffiliated, or loyalists of one party, now affiliated with another" (Dalton et al., 1984: 13). Therefore, realignment theory focuses more on the flexibility of the demand side by which voters tend to abandon their previous party's affiliation and, then, support new political parties because focused on new conflicts that are politically and socially relevant (Kriesi et al., 2006; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 2018).

Dealignment theory and realignment theory both provide theoretical contributions for understanding the predictive strength of cleavage structures. Nevertheless, further studies have pointed out how these theories suffer from the shortcoming that (classical) cleavages are no longer reliable predictors on voting behaviour – e.g. class and religion (Manza et a., 1995; Leonardi and Carrieri, 2020). For instance, the causal power of classical cleavages for predicting voting behaviour has usually been explored by looking at the structural dealignment (Brooks et al., 2006; Lachat, 2007) or behavioural dealignment (Lachat, 2007; Goldberg, 2020). Structural dealignment is mostly determined by the decrease in group size of the social group that represents its correspondent cleavage. This approach implies that the decrease or 'extinction' of a certain social group will have a significant impact on the political party representing it. Ultimately, the party might change its

supply side in order to survive and appeal to new voters. Indeed, following the process of secularisation and the decrease of the number of people being active churchgoers, structural dealignment has usually been applied to demonstrate the decline of the religious cleavage (Goldberg, 2020). Nevertheless, although there has been a decline of religious identity in determining voting behaviour (e.g. the differences between Protestants and Catholics), there is still enough space to determine the impact of the religious cleavage as the conflict between Secularism vs. Religion gains prominence (Olson and Green, 2006; Van der Brug et al., 2009). For instance, Olson and Green (2006) examine the 2004 US presidential election and point out the ‘religion gap’ between the Republican party and the Democratic party, where the main tendency of most religious Americans was to support the Republican party. Furthermore, other scholars such as Van der Brug et al (2009: 1280) agree that, claiming “religion is an important predictor of the vote” and that “Catholics are generally more likely to vote for the centre-right whereas secular citizens are more likely to vote for the centre-left”.

Behavioural dealignment is more related to the voter-party link. This approach is more about the economic stabilisation of Western modern societies (e.g. the extension of the welfare state) that have reduced the utilitarian reasons that drove voters to support left-wing or right-wing parties and that place greater emphasis on cultural issues (Inglehart, 1977; Van Deth, 1995; Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Elff, 2007). This approach is mostly used to explain the identarian crisis that social democratic and labour parties are experiencing with their traditional social bases (the working class). For instance, Evans and Northmore-Ball (2017: 152) demonstrate a change in the workers-Labour party link in the 2015 UK general elections where among those who voted for the Labour party, 20% came from the working class, while almost 30% came from the new middle class.⁴² Yet again, Evans and Mellon (2016) already point out how a consistent portion of working class people that have been disillusioned by the Labour party are more recently endorsing radical right parties (e.g. UKIP). Similarly, Benedetto et al. (2020: 939), proposing a cross-country panel analysis, explore “the rise and fall of Social Democracy” in Europe. In a nutshell, this study confirms that industrial workers are more likely to support populist radical right parties. Does it mean that classes are therefore extinguished since traditional left-wing voters are more recently voting for right-wing parties? Quite the opposite. The social strata that represent the working class coherently behave by supporting political parties that promise to defend the interests of their category. Instead, it is the mainstream

⁴² These results are from the British Election Study 2015 (Evans and Northmore-Ball, 2017: 152).

parties from the left that have tended to converge over the years towards the interests of the middle class, especially from the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s. (Evans and De Graaf, 2013; Spoon and Klüver, 2019). In fact, populist radical right parties have succeeded in intercepting traditionally left voters thanks to their 'winning formula' in proposing values from the extreme right and economic proposals from the left (Kitschelt, 1995; de Lange, 2007). The radical right parties have been able to intercept the issue ownership on the defence of workers' rights by proposing policies towards pro-welfare (chauvinism) (Mosimann et al., 2018: 68).

Consequently, although electoral volatility is a phenomenon that still endures in current Western European societies, the above literature demonstrates that (classical) cleavages have not lost their causal power. For instance, the previous idea of the 'winning formula' shows that current Western societies' economic developments did not substitute the traditional economic conflict workers vs. employers with new values or cultural conflicts (such as multiculturalism vs. nativism). By contrast, the classical cleavages persist, influencing voting behaviour, whilst *coexisting* with the new cleavages (Marks et al., 2020).

The main focus in studying the external flexibility of parties is, therefore, to evaluate to what extent voters' issue-orientations linked to (classical and new) cleavages impact voting behaviour and to test whether this impact has changed across elections. According to Peter Mair (2006: 374) "as more than a century of mass politics has shown, voters are much more willing to cross the boundaries separating individual political parties than they are to cross the line of cleavage". However, following the theoretical arguments of the organisational aspect of a cleavage (see section 2.2.1), the last condition for a political party to be flexible is conditioned by shifts in its electorate. This is a flexibility that is out of a party's control. In summary, the external flexibility varies whether voters' issue-orientations have changed in at least one indicator between magnitude and direction.

Studies on Euroscepticism demonstrate that radical right parties have constructed support from their voters mostly relying on negative values towards the European integration process ('Souverainisme', 'Welfare Chauvinism' and 'Nativism') (see Guth and Nelsen, 2021; Siegers and Jedinger, 2021; Carrieri and Vittori, 2021). Nevertheless, in this study, my expectation is that their voters' orientation on the EU was not always constant over the decades. In this respect, I will test to what extent voters' orientations evolved between the early 1990s and the late 2010s. I will therefore compare voters' orientations on the EU at the Maastricht Treaty (1992) with voters' orientation on the EU on the eve of the most recent European election (2019) where studies on the European vote

reveal that supporters of the radical right are mostly driven by Eurosceptic logics. For this part, I identify the following hypothesis, which concerns both the predictive impact of the transnational cleavage as a whole and the impact of each dimension in specific.

H4: The magnitude/direction hypothesis

- *The impact of transnational cleavage on voting behaviour for established radical right parties does not remain stable in terms of magnitude (H4a) and/or direction (H4b) from election to election.*
- *The impact of the institutional dimension of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour for established radical right parties does not remain stable in terms of magnitude (H4c) and/or direction (H4d) from election to election.*
- *The impact of the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour for established radical right parties does not remain stable in terms of magnitude (H4e) and/or direction (H4f) from election to election.*
- *The impact of the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour for established radical right parties does not remain stable in terms of magnitude (H4g) and/or direction (H4h) from election to election.*

2.6 Conclusion

Researchers working on cleavage theory have discussed at length the nature of the cleavage structures, exposing the shortcomings of the Lipset and Rokkan (1967) model, primarily but not exclusively for its lack of a clear definition. Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus in the literature that Bartolini and Mair's (2007) clarification of cleavage structures' components (empirical, normative and organisational) has paved the way for further research in cleavage studies and party politics (including this study).

It follows logically from this review that the classical cleavage model is built on historical institutionalist ideas (such as historical junctures and path dependency) and, therefore, political parties are considered as inherently inflexible by scholars who explored the advent of these new cleavages. At this time, there is also consensus that current Western European societies have experienced long processes of profound change fuelled by new historical junctures (e.g. globalisation, the silent revolution and the European integration process). These events have dramatically initiated processes of dealignment and realignment in Western European party systems. In this sense, I have examined the most insightful contributions on new cleavage structures

including their origins, the conflictual nature/logic and what type of dichotomies they have produced. Eventually, I distinguish the transnational cleavage, from the other new cleavage structures, as the current *zeitgeist* of Western European politics. Thanks to its unique multidimensional nature, the transnational cleavage accesses the political debate as a bundle of multiple aspects (institutional, economic and cultural). As I will illustrate in this dissertation, this innovative interpretation of the transnational cleavage can offer an opportunity to refine scholarly understandings of the concepts of Euroscepticism.

In this chapter, I also point out that scholars on new cleavage structures still employ the classical cleavage model designed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) arguing that parties are “sticky” and “inflexible” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018). However, in this chapter, I am proposing a new cleavage model combining both historical and rational choice institutionalism as complementary approaches in exploring party ideological flexibility. In this new model, political parties are no longer perceived as the outcome of cleavage structures, but rather as co-dependent actors which shape and are shaped by (new) cleavage structures. Accordingly, I propose a theoretical holistic definition of party ideological flexibility that includes multiple interrelated factors (contextual flexibility, internal flexibility, and external flexibility).

This holistic approach provides valuable insights. Individually, each factor would provide only a partial understanding of party ideological flexibility. Indeed, it follows logically that political parties would not change if the societal and ideological divides within society were unaltered; in the same way, if political parties did not actively decide to intercept and internalise recent fundamental societal and political divides, new cleavage structures would not have found space to have become institutionalised within political competition. This innovative interpretation does not only address the research question in its entirety, but also suggests that scholarly understanding of the nature of parties must be refined accordingly. Finally, I concluded this theoretical chapter describing a conceptual framework that aims to make clarity of all types of inflexibility that can exist.

3 The Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Most research on radical right parties has focused on either the demand side or the supply side of party competition (Mols and Jetten, 2020) focusing on short periods of time (Fagerholm, 2015). Teney and colleagues' (2014) work, for instance, is a pure demand side explanation, which mostly referred to data from the Eurobarometer in 2009. Similarly, Yeung (2021) investigates whether immigration caused an increase of Euroscepticism in European member states from 2009 to 2017. Other authors tried to overcome the "short-lived shifts" (Fagerholm, 2015: 508) by expanding their timeframes. For instance, Kriesi et al. (2006; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019) partially solved this shortcoming by examining three elections from the 1990s and the early 2000s (also including one election in the 1970s as a point of reference). However, they tend to concentrate the analysis exclusively on the 'either-or' thinking focusing mostly on the supply side (Mols and Jetten, 2020). Similarly, Emanuele et al. (2020) explore whether the new demarcation vs. integration cleavage is frozen in the European countries from 1979 to 2019. Nevertheless, the authors also focus solely on the supply side of political parties.

By contrast, in this comparative study, I will cover each national election in the last forty years (from 1980 to 2020) and procedurally analyse both the demand side and the supply side of the two case studies. The research design is built on the analysis of secondary and primary data in order to holistically analyse established radical right parties' (eRRPs) ideological flexibility from 1980 to 2020, relying on the Eurobarometer datasets and various types of partisan literature.

This chapter sets out the conceptual, theoretical and practical foundations which enable the reader to deepen the understanding on the flexibility of political parties. In doing so, the chapter is structured in two main parts. The first consists in elucidating the research design of this study exposing the theoretical considerations that drove me to develop this type of analysis. The second part is more practical as it contains detailed information on how I controlled the variables. It explains the analytical techniques employed to test the research hypotheses. In sum, this research can be classified as a comparative case study based on quantitative data and quantitative methods.

3.2 Research design

The first part of this chapter comprises three main sections. The first focuses on the design of the study pointing out the operationalisation of the three empirical chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), which analyse each one of the factors constituting ideological flexibility of parties and the rationale to employ a comparative case study analysis. The second section reviews the methodological rationale for the selection procedure of the case studies. Finally, the last part will dedicate much more space to the selected case studies providing a detailed overview of their history and nature.

3.2.1 *The design of the study*

This section provides a more precise understanding on the mechanism of flexibility of parties. It starts by elucidating what I mean when I speak of observing whether variation occurs in the form of shifting from one status to another in all factors constituting party ideological flexibility. Moreover, the second part of this section provides a more detailed justification in employing a comparative case study analysis to answer the research question.

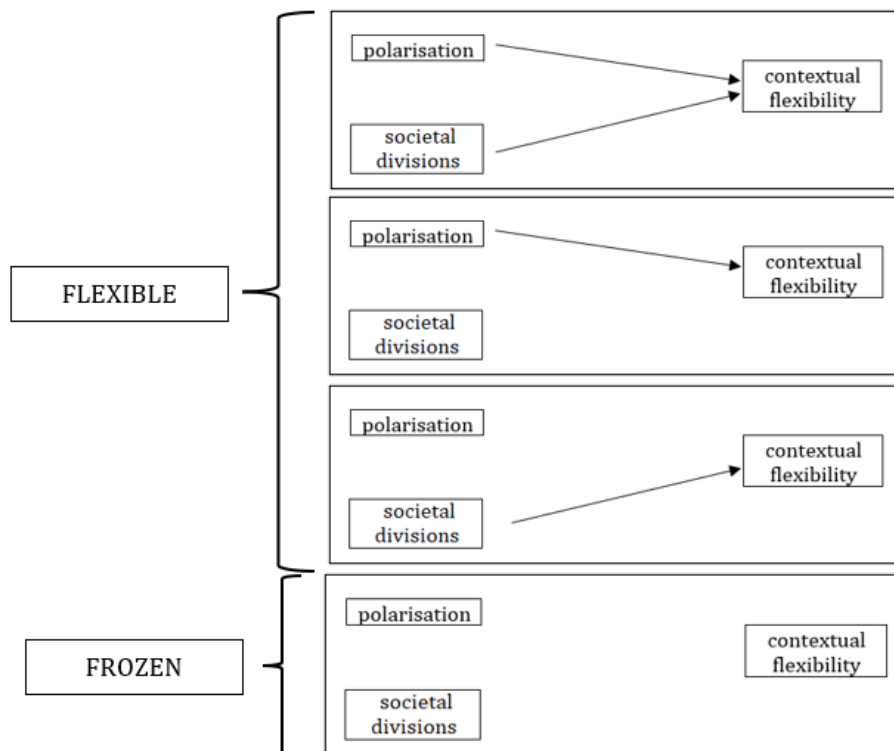
3.2.1.1 Operationalisation on the flexibility of political parties

This study asks the following research question: *how ideological flexible are established radical right parties with regards to the new transnational cleavage?* Drawing from the literature on the complementarity of historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism, this thesis differs from previous research that focuses on single factors examining either the demand side or the supply side of party politics (Golder, 2016). Alternatively, the conceptualisation of ideological flexibility in this thesis is holistically depicted as the combination of three factors which are equally important and interrelated: contextual flexibility (latent demand side), internal flexibility (supply side) and external flexibility (manifest demand side). In line with my argumentation in Chapter 2 (see section 2.5), variations within each factor are necessary and sufficient in order to observe the ideological flexibility of political parties.

Therefore, the empirical chapters of this study will each focus on one of the three interrelated factors constituting ideological flexibility. Chapter 4 addresses the first factor on the contextual flexibility. This factor is strictly interrelated with the nature of cleavage structures. In fact, drawing from the three-parts definition of cleavages provided by Bartolini and Mair (2007), contextual flexibility is based on the variation in at least the normative or the empirical aspects of a cleavage. Following my

argumentation in Chapter 2 (see section 2.5.1), variations of the normative aspect is observed through the level of polarisation within public opinion, while variations of the empirical aspect is observed whether the impact of the historical juncture produces societal divisions (or whether they are already pre-existed). Therefore, the focus of Chapter 4 lies on the changes that are underpinned within the latent dimension of the demand side, which coincides with the spontaneous process of individuals to divide into antithetical groups within society.

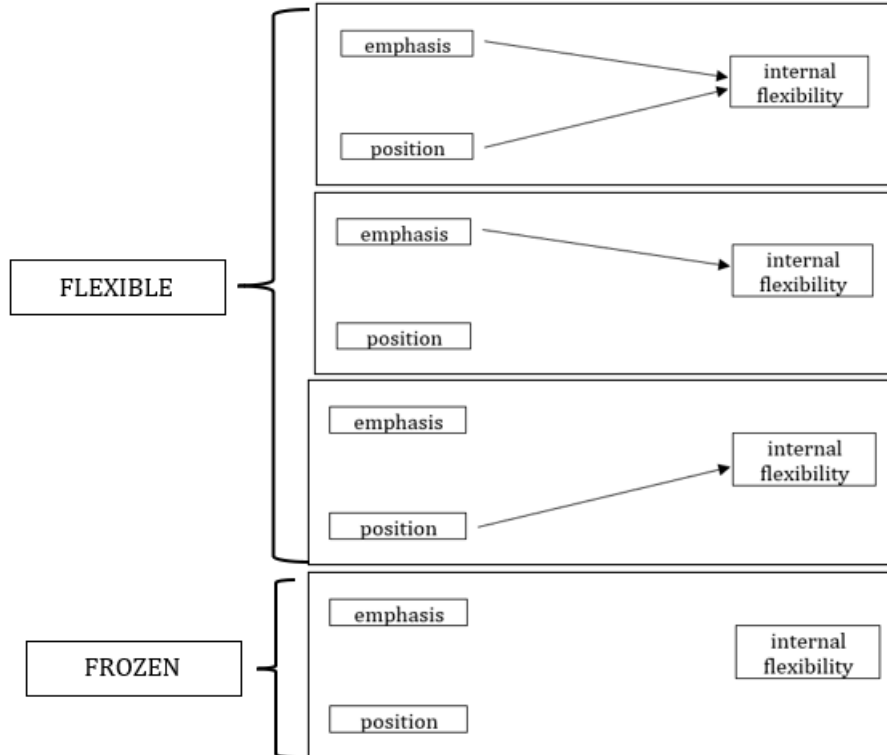
Figure 3.1 Chapter 4: contextual flexibility



Source: Author's elaboration.

Chapter 5 looks at the factor that belongs to the supply side of a political party: its internal flexibility. The focus of this chapter lies on the extent to which an eRRP has changed its emphasis and position towards the transnational cleavage from its first electoral experience to the most recent one. In line with the reasoning developed in section 2.5.2, the internal flexibility occurs whether the supply side of eRRPs tend to provide different amounts of emphasis on the new transnational cleavage as this assign to what extent a party owns the European issue. Similarly, the variation within the supply side of eRRPs in terms of position on this new ideological conflict depicts changes on how the party addresses the European issue. As such, if at least one of these two indicators varies over long periods of time, the eRRP can be considered as internally flexible.

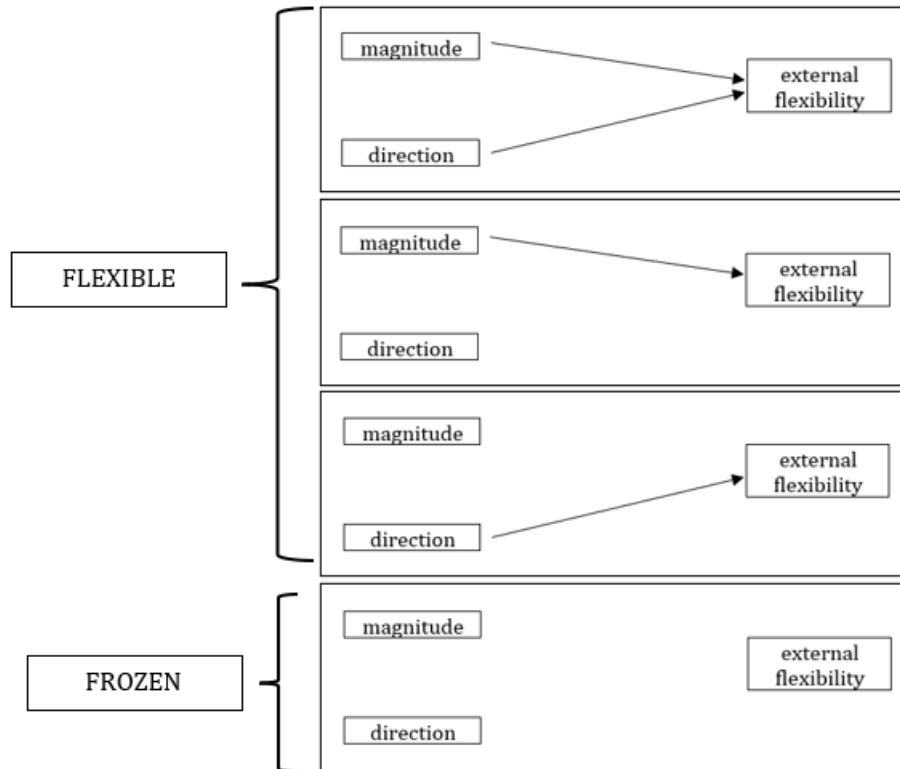
Figure 3.2 Chapter 5: internal flexibility



Source: Author's elaboration.

Finally, Chapter 6 analyses the last factor constituting the flexibility of parties: the external flexibility. This last factor coincides with the manifest dimension of the demand side of political parties. It is described as manifest because it represents the explicit political expression of social needs under the form of the endorsement for political parties. Similar to the contextual flexibility, external flexibility is also strictly interrelated with the nature of cleavage structures drawing from the third aspect described by Bartolini and Mair's (2007) definition: the organisational aspect. From the previous chapter (see section 2.5.3), the variation of the organisational aspect is observed if voters' EU-orientations change over the years in at least one indicator between the magnitude and the direction. In fact, drawing from the cleavage theory, political parties are the organisational expression of cleavage structures (Mair, 2005: 373). Therefore, the reason to also include this factor to explore flexibility of parties is because political parties cannot be considered fully flexible unless its electorate does change accordingly.

Figure 3.3 Chapter 6: external flexibility



Source: Author's elaboration.

Once variation is observed in each factor constituting ideological flexibility, drawing from both the salience theory and the spatial theory of past research (Budge and Farliel, 1983; Hinich and Munger, 1992), the ideological flexibility of political parties is understood to the extent which a party coherently changed its issue ownership and position on the same topic in both its supply side and manifest demand side. As such, it would be defined as *fully flexible*, if a party coherently change in both terms of issue ownership and position; while it would be defined as *partially flexible* if a party coherently changes either ownership or position; finally, if a party change in neither issue ownership nor position, the party would be defined as *frozen*.

Having illustrated the main operationalisation for each factor constituting ideological flexibility of parties, the next section will explore the rationale to employ a comparative case study analysis to answer the main research question.

3.2.1.2 A comparative case study analysis

In line with earlier studies on RRP's (Ignazi, 2003; Art, 2006; Coffé, 2008; de Jonge, 2021), the research design of this study is based on a comparative case study analysis. The reason to employ a comparative case study design is to answer the main research question in a way that produces a more generalizable knowledge about the research phenomenon it aims to explore: the ideological

flexibility of eRRPs. Moreover, in line with the nature of this research design, I am combining two comparative perspectives in order to answer the research question (Braun and Grande, 2021). First of all, the comparison will be employed across time. As this project involves the development of the flexibility of parties over long periods of time, it is essential for this study to undertake a deep investigation on the changes of the same case study in different contexts. The variations across time are, therefore, insightful to confirm the implicit expectation that political parties might change (or remain stable) with regards to the way they address the new transnational cleavage over the years (Goodrick, 2020). The second comparative perspective that I am taking into consideration for this study is the comparison across case studies. This second aspect is equally important to the previous one since it allows me to explore whether there exists coherence across political parties belonging to the same party family on how they address the new transnational cleavage (Goodrick, 2020). In fact, as this study will compare the similarities and differences within each case study from the early 1980s to the late 2010s, it is also fundamental to compare the similarities and differences among the case studies involved to the analysis in order to both extrapolate the generable patterns that characterise the party family and to identify specific patterns that differentiate the single political parties (Braun and Grande, 2021). Moreover, this study is based upon the *most similar systems design* (MSSD), which allows the researcher to answer the main question by selecting similar cases as much as possible. In this study, the cases that will be chosen must share similar ideological characteristics. Moreover, it is also important to choose cases that have been electorally active during the time frame of this study (from 1980 to 2020). In the next section, I will explore in more details the case selection process focusing on the selection criteria that will be determinant for the comparison of the case studies.

3.2.2 *The case selection process*

As I stated in Chapter 1, the case studies designated for this research are *established* political parties from the *radical right* party family. Most studies on radical right parties overwhelmingly tend to focus on the changes or developments of radical right parties in the most recent years (e.g. Teney et al., 2014; Muis and Immerzeel, 2017; Fenger, 2018; Steenvoorden and Hartevelt, 2018; Mols and Jetten, 2020; Bergmann et al., 2021). For that reason, most of these studies focused on new RRP such as Danish People's Party, Alternative for Germany, Golden Dawn, Brothers of Italy, Vox or UKIP (which is now renamed as Reform UK) in the last two decades (from 2000 to 2020). The originality

of this study is rather to compare RRP that have a long-term electoral experience and, for that reason, are to be considered as established – a point I will return to later (see section 3.2.2.2).

The selection criteria, as mentioned in the previous section, is controlled by two basic common features: the *radical right* ideology and the condition of *established* parties. This section proceeds as follows. First, I will introduce the core ideological features of the radical right party family. This step is essential to provide a clear overview of what I mean by RRP and avoid any other misunderstandings. Afterwards, I will conceptualise the term of established parties by reviewing the existing literature that discusses the thresholds of new and old parties. This will also enable me to identify the research niche on the radical right in which this research positions itself.

3.2.2.1 What exactly is the Radical Right?

To define RRP the recent literature offers a plethora of definitions. For instance, scholars have used terms like “nationalist, extremist, neo-fascist or neo-Nazi, nativist or anti-immigrant, chauvinist, Eurosceptic, anti-European, xenophobic, anti-establishment, and populist [as] some of the most used connotations” when defining these political parties (Scopelliti, 2019: 1; Eger and Valdez, 2019). However, in this study, by radical right, I refer to a specific understanding of a particular side of the right-wing politics that falls beyond the right side of the centre-right, but it does not exceed into its extreme edge (Gattinara and Pirro, 2019; Mudde, 2019). The main constitutive features of contemporary radical right ideology can be defined in three different strands: nativism, authoritarianism and hostility toward liberal democracy.

The first, and core, feature of RRP’s ideology is nativism. In this study nativism is in line with its dominant definition that is shared by different disciplines. In sociology, Jens Rydgren (2018) argues that RRP have firstly in common the mythization of a familiar past where population is ethnically homogeneous. In politics, Cas Mudde (2007: 22) also claims that RRP reject cosmopolitan sentiments and believe that “states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the nation-state’s homogeneity”. Therefore, nativism is referred to as an ideology that establishes the ‘membership’ of citizens to their nation by ethnic terms (Betz, 1994). As RRP argue that multiculturalism should be considered as a threat to the national heritage and cultural traditions (Triandafyllidou, 1998), their primary concern is to impede access to minorities who ethnically differ

from the majoritarian ethnic group; or, alternatively, to enforce them a full assimilation of the national culture (Rovny, 2013).

The second feature of RRP is authoritarianism, which is also identified as an ideological feature, rather than a political style. This feature finds its theoretical roots from Adorno and his colleagues (1950) who intended to identify the potential traits of fascist individuals, like: obedience, conformity, and violence. Subsequently, Ignazi (1992, 2003) associates authoritarianism with the RRP because of the veiled fascist themes that can be found when analysing their ideology. Indeed, RRP believe that society should be strictly controlled by the state in order to maintain security and order within the borders of the country (Mudde, 2007: 22-23). Yet, I would like to underline that RRP are not to be considered fascist or extreme right-wing parties – a point I will address later in this section. Finally, Flanagan and Lee (2003: 238) speak of authoritarianism (in relation to RRP) as a self-denial value where the loyalty to the group and the unchecked leaders is to be granted by everyone in the country. Thus, there is no limit for RRP to impose law and order “not only against external threats (immigrants and asylum seekers) and criminal elements, but also against its critics and political opponents” (Heinisch, 2003: 95). This was the case, for instance, during the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests when the Trump administration responded to these protests with a more rigid support of ‘law and order’ and ‘tough on crime’ policies (McManus et al., 2019: 1053).

Finally, the last feature is the hostility of RRP towards liberal democracy. Betz and Johnson (2016) argue that this hostility does not need to be explicit. Notwithstanding, they usually have an opportunistic approach towards the possibilities provided by democratic regimes. Indeed, once RRP consolidate their power (winning the elections), they “express extreme forms of majoritarianism that allow them to strengthen the majoritarian institutions at the expense of opposing forces” (Scopelliti, 2020a: 1; see also Mudde, 2013, 2014; Castillo-Ortiz, 2019; Urbinati, 2019). For instance, governing RRP, such as Fidesz in Hungary or Law and Justice in Poland, have demonstrated that, once in government, they do not respect no longer “the rule of law, or democracy in the sense that competitive elections are held, but the economic or political rights or the rights of certain minorities are repressed” (Wintrobe, 2018: 218). In this sense, in Hungary and Poland there is an excessive control of the relative majority over the relative minority which can be political, cultural and ethnic (Scopelliti, 2020a).

This last feature is probably the most intricate one, as it causes so much confusion when scholars try to distinguish radical from extreme right-wing parties or movements (Carter, 2018). It is correct to

mention that they both display nativist and authoritarian traits – albeit in various degrees (cultural and historical) –, but it is how these ideologies are hostile toward liberal democracy that characterises them. On the one hand, the radical right is seen as pro-democracy and anti-violence. Hence, scholars have defined as RRP, for instance, the National Rally in France, the AfD in Germany, and, also, the League in Italy. On the other hand, there is the extreme right, which is that of anti-democracy and pro-violence. This is often used for groups like Golden Dawn in Greece and *Les identitaires* in France, which are mostly anti-Muslim minorities and they have been recently banned.

Finally, some scholars might argue that there is one more missing feature that should be mentioned: populism. The scientific material often refers to *populist* radical right parties (PRRPs) (see e.g. Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007; Betz and Meret, 2012). Nevertheless, I argue that this ‘missing’ feature is not exclusive of RRP. If one takes the definition of Cas Mudde, one of the foremost experts in the world on populism, he considers it as a “thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: ‘the pure people’ and ‘the corrupt elite,’ and argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004: 543). Although this ‘ideational’ approach has become most dominant in the political science literature (Hawkins and Kaltwasser, 2017), it still remains very ambiguous. The identification of ‘the pure people’ and the ‘corrupted elite’ can mean different things for different types of populist parties that can vary along the left vs. right political spectrum. For instance, Bugaric (2019) speaks of populist radical left parties (PRLPs) as those political forces that change the current status quo through the reduction of income inequality and slightly retreating from the economic consequences of globalization (see also Huber and Schimpf, 2017; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). On the other hand, PRRPs are more focused to overcome the corrupted elite in the defence of the interests of the ‘pure (native) people’, which purity is, therefore, determined by one’s ethnic belonging to the majority group in the country (Rydgren, 2007). For the latter, the fight against the establishment is meant to keep untouched the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the population.

One could argue that although PRLPs and PRRPs can both be defined as populist, they differ in their core ideologies (Scopelliti, 2020a). The PRLPs propose change of the current status-quo through a socio-economic dimension (or emancipatory populism). In contrast, the PRRPs propose the same change through a socio-cultural dimension (or authoritarian populism).

Finally, more recent studies confirm that the feature populism is not unique of fringe parties. For instance, the populist label has also been associated with moderate (or mainstream) political parties (see e.g. Cedroni, 2014: 40), such as La République En Marche! in France (Norris and Inglehart, 2019; Perottino, and Guasti, 2020) or the Democratic Party in Italy between 2016 and 2018 (Salvati, 2016; Castaldo and Verzichelli, 2020). These examples have been defined as centrist populism or technocratic populism, which is thus strengthened by technocrat competences, in response to the ‘incompetence’ of populist radical parties, as legitimisation mechanism in order to appeal the support from both left-wing and right-wing voters. The most recent case that I think will be further analysed is the nominee of Mario Draghi as the new prime minister in Italy since February 2020. He is the former President of the European Central Bank, and his new government has ostentatiously been announced as ‘the rule of the best’ (The Economist, 2021).

On this basis, I draw from the above argument that populism is recognized as a strategy or style that political parties (usually radical movements) employ to gather voting support (see e.g. Jagers and Walgrave, 2007) and it is not understood as a specific ideological feature of RRP. In fact, in Jagers and Walgrave’s words:

“Populism, thinly defined, has no political colour; it is colourless and can be of the left and of the right. It is a normal political style adopted by all kinds of politicians from all times. Populism is simply a strategy to mobilise support, it is a standard communication technique to reach out to the constituency” (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007: 323).

To conclude, the operationalisation to identify case studies according to their ideology will be drawn from Mair and Mudde’s (1998) advice when categorising party families. The authors suggest four main approaches that researchers employ when categorising to which party family a political party belongs. The first aims to group parties that have been founded by the same historical circumstances or representing the same social needs (origin). The second one relies on which international federation a political party is affiliated to (transnational federation). The third one classifies parties according to what values they seek to deliver (ideology). The fourth one depends on the self-identification of parties (name). Among these four approaches, Mair and Mudde (1998) encourage researchers to combine both the first and the third methods when classifying political parties. Normally, most researchers follow this recommendation (e.g. Niebylski, 2020: 66; see also Gallagher et al., 2011). Yet, it is not also unusual to find studies that prefer to prioritise the third method to the first one. For instance, in Belgium, *Vlaams Belang* is recognised by some authors as a regionalist party

because its initial *raison d'être* was to claim the independence of the Flemish community (Mazzoleni and Mueller, 2016; Van Haute et al., 2018; Massetti and Schakel, 2020). Nevertheless, this party is commonly categorised by major databases as radical right party – see for instance the Chapel Hill Expert Surveys (CHES) – or nationalist party – see for instance the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) –, prioritising then the ideology of a party rather than focusing on its origin. Similarly, drawing from previous research, this thesis primarily relies on the third method proposed by Mair and Mudde's (1998) work, when selecting RRPs, using as source the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2019 (see a similar approach e.g. Norris, 2005).

3.2.2.2 The threshold between established and new political parties⁴³

Having satisfied the quest to define the core features of what radical right exactly is and how to operationalise it, I will now focus, in this section, on the literature niche in which this study sits in the scholarship on RRPs. Often, the radical right party family has traditionally been categorised as one of the new political party families (including the green parties) that have risen in the 1970s and in the 1980s (Emanuele and Sikk, 2020: 2).

Chronologically speaking, the radical-right party family was developed and shaped by a group of intellectuals in the 1970s who criticised and rejected both communist and Western European social democratic values (Taguieff, 1993). This group of intellectuals founded GRECE (*Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne* or "Group of research and studies for European civilization"), which became a fountainhead developing and spreading the ideals of the New Right (*Nouvelle droite*): nativism, authoritarianism and illiberalism. In the 1980s, scholars would define the New Right as neo-Nazis or neo-Fascist, recalling the not-so-distant European dictatorships in Germany and Italy (Kaplan et al., 1998). Since the early 1990s, however, the radical-right parties (RRPs) have been distinguished from extreme right-wing parties and they are now identified as the *new* cleavage parties because they belong to a *new* party family (see Kriesi et al., 2008; Hooghe and Marks, 2018, Inglehart and Norris, 2016).

However, the definition of 'new party' is highly contested in the literature. When establishing the threshold between new parties and established parties, some authors do not consider the origin (or founding cleavage) of a party because "all parties experience frequent changes, though often to a

⁴³ This section has already been published on the CARR website in the Final Year Report of the Organisation Research Unit 2021 while I was writing my dissertation (Scopelliti, 2021b).

very limited extent, in their ideological positions and platforms, but this does not make them necessarily new even to their habitual voters” (Emanuele and Chiaramonte, 2018: 476). Accordingly, although the RRP are founded on a new cleavage structure, it is still a matter of debate whether all RRP should automatically be defined as new. Following from this logic, in this study, the *novelty* of a party will be evaluated on whether it is organisationally new. Thus, by reviewing the existing literature on the organisational aspect of a party to establish its level of novelty (Sikk, 2005; Chiaramonte and Emanuele, 2017; Dassonneville and Hooghe, 2017; Emanuele and Sikk, 2020), I will propose two complementary factors to categorise political parties as new or established: *stability* and *age*.

Starting from party stability, some authors suggest a broad definition of new parties (Emanuele and Sikk, 2020): they can be naturally formed after the establishment of previous parties or formed from other circumstances such as by merger, split, or reorganisation of former parties (Harmel and Robertson, 1985: 509). Since then, however, other research applies a narrower definition: for instance, Simon Hug (2001: 13-14) agrees with Peter Mair (1990) that there is a substantial difference between new parties created from the merger of separate entities and new parties that are founded as consequence of a split. In the first case, the party should not be considered new because established parties have merely reorganised in order to survive. In the second scenario, by contrast, the party should be considered new as it usually arises as challenger of its former party, the aim of which is ultimately to influence or, eventually, replace it. Still, other researchers impose stricter parameters for ‘new parties’. Bartolini and Mair (2007: 282-283), for instance, claim that new parties that are generated from splits or mergers of previous parties should not be considered new. Similarly, Sikk (2005) defines new parties as “not successors to any previous parliamentary parties, having a novel name and structure, and not having any important figures from past democratic politics among their major members”.

Moving to party age, scholars also identify established parties according to how long these organisational forces have been readily known by the voters. For instance, when examining Lipset and Rokkan’s work, the authors defined parties founded on the classical cleavage structures as *old* because “to most of the citizens of the West the currently active parties have been part of the political landscape since their childhood or at least since they were first faced with the choice between alternative ‘packages’ on election day” (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967: 50). As such, one can argue that a party is to be considered as old because it has existed in the lifetime of at least two generations of

voters, including those who witnessed the rise of the party and those that have always lived with the presence of this electoral choice. Therefore, the old status, that some parties rather than others have, should not be determined by the founding cleavage of the party (see e.g. Gallagher et al., 2011) (whether it is a classical or a new cleavage), but it should instead be determined by how long a party has existed in the life of voters.

Accordingly, the novelty of parties is considered, in this study, in line with both Lipset and Rokkan (1967) and Hug's (2001) argumentations with the interplay of two factors: stability and age. Below, in table 3.1, are displayed RRP's from Western⁴⁴ European countries that were elected in the 2019⁴⁵ European Parliament Elections, grouped the novelty of parties (rows). Since this study is interested to explore the ideological flexibility of eRRPs on the new transnational cleavage, I have decided to select political parties that are similar in terms of their political and cultural environments on the EU. To do so, I have included RRP's from Western European countries that have originally participated to the building of the European integration process signing the Treaties of Paris in 1951 and the Treaties of Rome in 1957 (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands).

Therefore, it follows from the above streams of research that the operational definition of novelty of parties can be qualified by the interplay of the two factors discussed above (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Hug, 2001). More specifically, with regards to the party stability, I will follow Hug's (2001) argumentation on new parties created as consequence of a fission. With regards to the party age, I re-propose Lipset and Rokkan's observation on parties' age. I thus make a clear distinction between established parties, being those founded before the early 1980s, and new parties founded from the early 1980s onwards. Table 3.1 shows the RRP's that coincide with the above selecting operationalisations.

⁴⁴ The reason to focus on RRP's from Western European countries is also due to the party age aspect. Since I conceptualised as new political parties all those parties founded from the early 1980s onwards, the RRP's from Eastern European countries were founded after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Therefore, they are all to be considered as young parties.

⁴⁵ The reason to select only those parties that were elected in the 2019 European Parliament elections is due by my intent to consider only those political parties that are still electorally active in the most recent elections, rather than including RRP's that are disappeared.

Table 3.1 Distribution of RRP in Western European countries elected at the 2019 European Parliament elections

<i>Type of parties</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Radical Right Parties</i>
<i>Established parties</i>	<i>Belgium</i>	Flemish Interest
	<i>France</i>	National Rally
	<i>Germany</i>	-
	<i>Italy</i>	League
	<i>Luxembourg</i>	-
	<i>Netherlands</i>	Reformed Political Party
<i>New parties</i>	<i>Belgium</i>	New Flemish Alliance
	<i>France</i>	-
	<i>Germany</i>	Alternative for Germany
	<i>Italy</i>	Brothers of Italy
	<i>Luxembourg</i>	-
	<i>Netherlands</i>	Forum for Democracy

Source: Author's elaboration of parties belonging to the radical right party family according to the Chapel Hill Expert Survey 2019 (Jolly et al., 2019)

The following section is built from the argumentations of the above section. Its purpose is to introduce Italian League and the French National Rally as my two case studies and, eventually, to provide more detailed information on the story of these political parties.

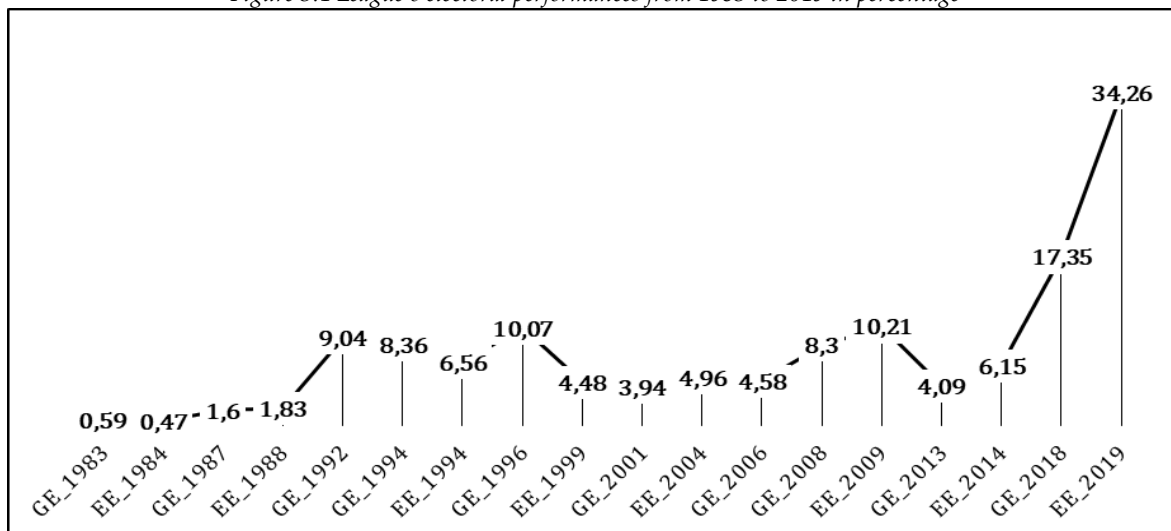
3.2.3 The case studies

In the above section, I have clarified the selection procedure of my case studies by reviewing the literature and clarifying the operationalisations based on the parties' ideology and parties' established status. Therefore, it follows from the above streams of research that there are four established RRP that match the two case selection criteria: the Flemish Interest (Belgium), the National Rally (France), the League (Italy) and the Reformed Political Party (the Netherlands). For this study, I have included for analysis the League and the National Rally in order to allow for an in-depth study. Moreover, there are also pragmatic arguments that guide the case selection from Italy and France. The heavy workload of the content analysis (as you will see in the second part of this chapter), and because of the language skills of the author in order to unpack the latent meaning of texts written by the parties. Once I selected the case studies for this project, a deeper knowledge and understanding of each case study is necessary in "establishing the foundation for the analytic framework that will be used in the cross-case comparison" (Goodrick, 2020: 1).

3.2.3.1 The League

The League is a political party that has always captured much attention from researchers from its foundation onwards. Figure 3.4 shows the electoral performances of the League from 1983 to 2019 in national and European elections. From this figure, we can observe that the League did not experience significant electoral successes in the 1980s. Nevertheless, from 1992 to 2014, the League was a relevant political competitor in Italy experiencing constant ups and downs. Over the years, the League has been able to access several governmental coalitions and to hold numerous ministries. The League supported the Berlusconi governments four times (1994, 2001, 2005 and 2011), the first Conte government (2018) and the more recent Draghi government (2020). Finally, in both most recent national (2018) and European (2019) elections, the League experienced impressive electoral performances. Indeed, thanks to the 2018 national election, the League succeeded in winning the leadership within the right-wing coalition against the Brothers of Italy (FdI) and Italy Forward (FI). More recently, in the 2019 European election, the League was also the most electorally successful party in Italy and the most successful radical right party at the European level (when considering the Western European countries).

Figure 3.4 League's electoral performances from 1983 to 2019 in percentage



Source: Author's elaboration from Ministero dell'Interno data (2021). Notes: GE: General Election, EE: European Election

Over the years, scholars have debated the various interpretations they would attribute to the League, such as: federalist party (Mannheimer, 1991; Diamanti, 1995), regional-populist party (Biorcio, 1991), ethno-regionalist party (Diamanti and Donaldson, 1997; De Winter, 1998), radical right party (Gold, 2003; Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, 2004; Zaslove, 2011) or soft/hard-Eurosceptic party (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008; Quaglia, 2008; Ivaldi et al., 2017). Nevertheless, all these authors agree that the raison

d'être (or founding ideology) of the Italian case is based on the classical cleavage 'centre vs. periphery' (regional cleavage) with the main goal to reclaim independence of the Northern regions from the Italian state. Moreover, although the League has currently tried to shift towards a more 'national' identity, the claim for independence (or autonomy) of the Northern regions is still topical at the regional and local levels.

The League's political roots originate from a series of smaller pro-independent parties of the late 1970s/early 1980s (the most important parties were Lega Lombarda, Liga Veneta and Piemont Autonomista). Consequently, these parties merged into a political coalition named Northern League in 1989 whose main political ideology was to propose regional belonging as the new dominant conflict that would substitute the 'obsolete' conflict of the left vs. right and, therefore, to propose to the Northern Italians a political alternative against the mainstream political forces that were invested by the judicial inquiry on corruption in the early 1990s (the 'mani pulite' inquiry) (Mannheimer, 1991; Diamanti, 1995).

Moreover, the Northern League has often been associated with studies investigating 'populist' radical right parties (see e.g. Biorcio, 1997; Kitschelt and McGann, 1997; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010). In this sense, the term populist does not refer to the well-established definition conceptualised by Mudde (2004), as a thin ideology between people vs. elites, but rather it is understood as a communication strategy employed by the Northern League being able to deliver its message under the form of a conflict between 'Northern people' versus any type of 'external' enemy. Understandably, for the Northern League's narrative, the central government in Rome that rules the country to the detriment of the Northern Italians (and to the advantage of the Southern Italians) has always been identified as the main 'external' enemy (Biorcio, 1991). In this sense, the League recalls a 'new conflict', but which in fact retraces old political and social clashes that have characterized the history of Italy since its foundation (the Italian Risorgimento⁴⁶). In this sense, although based on a classical cleavage, the Northern League has been able to offer its own 'new' collective identity, which appeals to voters from both the left-wing and the right-wing. The party, therefore, challenges the

⁴⁶ The Italian Risorgimento was an historical phenomenon that contributed to the unification of the Italian Kingdom in the XIX century. The building process of this nation has been led by a 'top-down' approach where political elites of the Northern regions (Kingdom of Sardinia) shaped the unification of all Italian regions through military expansions towards the Southern regions (Kingdom of the Two Sicilies). Since then, Italy was characterised by a wide north-south divide where on the one hand, the Southern regions claimed to be exploited by the Northern regions and, on the other hand, the Northern regions blamed the Southern regions for their backward economy (Barsotti, 2021).

central government for its inadequacy to solve several issues (such as housing, taxation, health, pensions, services and crime) and claims to initiate new deregulation processes (similar to the UK). Ultimately, the main propositions of the Northern League were, thus, to obtain a relative 'privilege' for the people of the North in the redistribution of resources, and a greater autonomy for the Northern regions (Mannheimer, 1991).

The election in 1996 was a decisive moment to the extent that the Northern League addressed its core ideology on federalism. Although the party has always been characterized by a strong rhetoric against Southern Italians, the driving force behind the federalist project was always justified using an economic rationale. Indeed, the Northern League's claim for the federalist project was driven by the argument that the Southern regions exploited the prosperity of the Northern regions, holding them back from industrial development and economic prosperity (Bull and Gilbert, 2001: 58). Nevertheless, since the late 1990s, the Northern League has decided to focus on the federalist claim over cultural and ethnic reasons delivering the message that Northern Italians are a minority ethnic group discriminated by the rest of the country (Diamanti and Donaldson, 1997; De Winter, 1998).

Consequently, since the early 2000s, the Northern League has fuelled its regional identity by driving a new "strategy of politicizing the issue of immigration as a threat to Padanian society⁴⁷ and the values of Western society" (Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, 2004: 140). In this sense, proponents of the radical right interpretation of the Northern League argued that this party strategically "panders to the reactionary and xenophobic instincts" of the electorate (Bull and Gilbert, 2001: 46). Indeed, according to Zaslove (2011: 118), the Northern League employs "what is often referred to as 'differentialist racism', support for ethnic federalism, and opposition to multiculturalism". In line with this point, Gold (2003) put forward the view that the nativist feature of the Northern League has actually been constant since its origin. The only change was by initially addressing the xenophobic discourse against Southern Italian people and, subsequently, shifting the same xenophobic discourse against immigrants and minority communities (especially the Muslim communities).

Finally, in 2018, the Northern League changed its name to League. For some authors, this change is the indication that it decided "to abandon its original mission and to de-politicise conflict within the

⁴⁷ The Padanian society is often attributed to the citizens living in the Northern regions of Italy including Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. This attribute was often narrated by the League since its foundation.

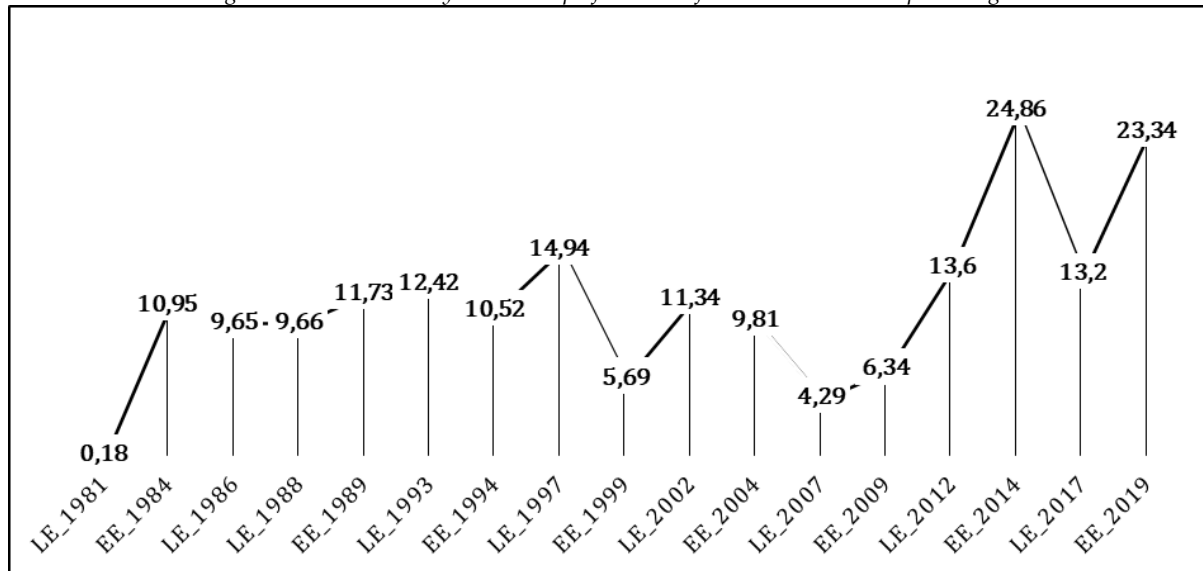
Italian state and to empower the state against the EU” (Caiani and Conti, 2014: 194). Indeed, scholars that vastly investigated the different degrees of Euroscepticism tend to define the League as a soft-Eurosceptic party (see e.g. Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008: 134; Quaglia, 2008) or, even, as a hard-Eurosceptic party (Ivaldi et al., 2017). However, as the League has been able to survive in the last forty years (it is, currently, the oldest party in the Italian party system), there is still enough analytical space to explore how this party adapted to the new transnational cleavage from its foundation to the most recent general election in 2018.

3.2.3.2 The National Rally

The National Rally has a long history and a well-established political reputation at both the national and the European levels. Figure 3.5, below, shows the National Rally’s electoral performances from the early 1980s until the late 2010s in both legislative and European elections. From this figure, one could observe that the National Rally shows a steady electoral performance over the years, with significantly increases since the 2012 legislative election. Nevertheless, these electoral results had different impacts in terms of opportunities for the party to access in office (Filimon, 2015; Vasilopoulou, 2018a). At the domestic level, the National Rally has always suffered from both the “two-round system and the *cordon sanitaire* employed by the centre-right and centre-left mainstream parties” (Morini, 2018: 15). Therefore, the National Rally was always under-represented in the *Assemblée Nationale*. Notwithstanding, this party has been seen by its competitors and the electorate as the third political pole in France – as has already been observed by Kriesi et al. (2006; and also confirmed by Vasilopoulou, 2018a). This French tripolar landscape was especially legitimised by two factors. The first was determined by National Rally’s presidential electoral performances in 2002 and 2017. Starting with the 2002 presidential election, this election shocked French observers of that time as Jean-Marie Le Pen overtook Lionel Jospin (the socialist candidate) at the first round and accessed the second round challenging Jacques Chirac (the republican candidate). Similarly, in the 2017 presidential election, Marine Le Pen accessed the second round against Emanuel Macron, and she also doubled the votes (10,638,475 votes) of her father’s 2002 result (5,525,032 votes), consolidating National Rally’s role as the first opposition force in the French party system against the mainstream parties. Finally, the second factor that confirmed the tripolar French party system was the National Rally’s electoral performances at the European level. Indeed, thanks to the less restrictive European electoral system, the National Rally had more chances to confirm its electoral representativeness in the European Parliament (Filimon, 2015; Vasilopoulou, 2018a). It is therefore

argued that the National Rally’s steady electoral performance in the EU has normalised the party in the eyes of the electorate, which began to familiarise with National Rally and perceive it as a ‘respectable’ competitor among the other established mainstream parties (Akkerman, 2016; Stockemer, 2017; Ivănescu and Filimon, 2020).

Figure 3.5 National Rally’s electoral performances from 1981 to 2019 in percentage



Source: Author’s elaboration from Ministère de l’Intérieur data (2021). Notes: LE: Legislative Election, EE: European Election.

Over the years, scholars have much studied the aspects that characterise the National Rally and it is widely accepted that the cultural dimension of the new transnational cleavage (the conflict between multiculturalism and nativism) is the founding ideology of the party (Mudde, 1999; Shields, 2011; Frigoli and Ivaldi, 2018). As reported by House and Thompson (2016), the process of decolonisation of France’s former colonies rapidly increased flows of ‘French Muslims’ towards the French territory between the 1960s and the 1970s. Accordingly, “the growing presence of a non-European population has evoked anxiety and resentment” in France (Betz, 1993: 416). Subsequently, throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, the National Rally intercepted these sentiments establishing its *raison d’être* around the xenophobic rhetoric. The party claims that the decline of Western civilization is often attributed to the ever-widening influx of non-European immigrants who shatters the unity of the continent, corrupting both the culture of Europeans and that of immigrants (Fennema, 1997). At the same time, the National Rally rejects accusations of racism, but rather demands *differentialism*: a cultural pluralism ideal that rejects the values of multiculturalism, but rather requires the respect of the peculiarities and traditions of each ‘race’ (Spektorowski, 2000; McCulloch, 2006). In this regard, Jean-Marie Le Pen proposes the expulsion of all irregular immigrants and prioritises the allocation of resources to the French citizens. In this context, the National Rally has been presented by scholars

as an example of the new radical right party family constructed on ethnic grounds' conflict of 'us versus them' (Stockemer, 2017). Shields (2018) emphasises that National Rally's strategy is employed not only to occupy the electoral space of the right-wing, but the party also addresses its rhetoric to the working class, who have started to flow away from the *gauche*. Burgoon et al. (2018) put even forward the view that the identification of immigrants as the new enemy allows the National Rally to protest about social inequalities, but without falling into the debate of the classical cleavage of employers vs. workers.

Finally, there is wide consensus in the radical right literature on the ideological 'coherence' of the National Rally over the years. However, it was also observed that the National Rally has actively employed a process of *dédiabolisation* (or normalisation). This process started with the nomination of Marine Le Pen as the new president of the National Rally in 2011. Le Pen's arguments are like those of her father. Yet, the nomination of a young woman as president of a predominantly male organisation was already perceived as a strong sign of renovation (Almeida, 2013). Furthermore, Le Pen's strategy to appeal to new voters has not been based on attracting more subscribers to the party, but rather to increase the numbers of those that 'sympathise' with the values/ideas of the leader (Stockemer, and Barisione, 2017). As such, the normalisation of the party has also been driven by insisting on the doctrines of the secular state and republican values to revive the 'us versus them' conflict. In this sense, alongside the *mondialisation* [globalisation] and the EU (the National Rally has always been defined as a hard-Eurosceptic party (see e.g. Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008), the foreign enemy is mostly framed through the antagonization of 'Islamism' or 'radical Islam' (Almeida, 2013; Stockemer, and Barisione, 2017).

3.2 Data and methods

Having explain the case selection criteria and the two cases, this chapter now turns to the data and methods employed for this study. In this second part of the chapter, I shall start by reviewing the debate concerning how to depict the demand and the supply side of political parties using Eurobarometer surveys and partisan literature discussing the potential opportunities and challenges in using these data. Subsequence, I will focus on technical aspects of the empirical chapters. The present study is based on three empirical chapters (3, 4 and 5) and each chapter focuses on one of the three factors that constitute the flexibility of a party: contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility. Therefore, I will address in detail each component of flexibility by elucidating

which variables will be used, how they have been manipulated and, finally, which methods I utilized in order to test the research hypotheses.

3.2.1 Sources of data

The first task of this section is to explain the sources of data employed to answer the research question: *how ideological flexible are established radical right parties with regards to the new transnational cleavage?* This section is structured in two main parts. The first part is focused on the sources of data for the demand side of political parties. In this part I explain which surveys best fit to answer the main research question depicting the demand space of Italy and France from 1980 to 2020. I review the literature on the rationale behind selecting certain variables available to these surveys. Finally, I will justify which type of variables I am looking for this study. In the second part, there is a focus on data that depict the supply side of political parties. In such section, I will illustrate various scholarly debates in several fields that have explored supply side of political parties. This section makes a contribution by reviewing how best to analyse supply side of the political parties. It also discusses the shortcomings of these past studies. And thirdly, it proposes an alternative way to explore the supply side of the political parties guaranteeing both *objectivity* of the sources and considering the *multidimensionality nature* of the supply side.

3.2.1.1 Demand side of political parties

The main data source for this study which is used to measure public opinion trend lines (contextual flexibility) and the impact of issue-orientations on voting behaviour (external flexibility) is the standard versions of the Eurobarometer (EB), which has been published twice a year (spring and autumn) since 1973. I opted for the EB database because, unlike other secondary data sources (e.g. European Social Survey or the European Value Survey), it is particularly well suited for the analysis of the demand side as it contains information (variables) on voting behaviour, classical cleavages

and the new transnational cleavage over the period observed (from 1980 to 2020). The data⁴⁸ is freely available from the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences⁴⁹ (GESIS).

Another reason to employ the Eurobarometer as data source for the demand side of political parties is due to the types of variables available in this dataset that best fit the nature of cleavage structures. Lane and Ersson (1999) clearly point out that cleavages are conflicts that can be described by *manifest* and *latent* patterns. As I illustrated in Chapter 2, Bartolini and Mair (2007) refer to these same patterns as empirical and normative aspects of cleavages, stating that there is an ongoing debate on which variables best measure the conflictual nature of cleavages. Studies that explore structural dealignment argue that cleavages should be measured with variables that focus on their empirical (or manifest) aspect, as cleavages are conflicts that originate in people's needs that are unavoidably structured around unchangeable societal characteristics (Knutsen and Scarbrough, 1995; Brooks et al., 2006; Lachat, 2007). The class cleavage, for instance, is usually measured by picking variables that measure types of occupations or the household income of the respondents (Brooks et al., 2006; Lachat, 2007). For the religious cleavage, measurement of the church attendance or the religious denomination have usually been used to represent the empirical aspect of this conflict (Knutsen and Scarbrough, 1995). Other researchers argue that it is necessary to find variables that measure the normative (or latent) aspect of cleavages, therefore, concentrating on the ideas or values related to these conflicts. For instance, after exploring the impact of cleavage structures in party choice, Knutsen and Scarbrough (1995) argue that "whereas the cleavage model suggests that political conflicts are rooted in socio-structural conflicts with normative implications, the primacy of value voting suggests that value conflicts are the real stuff of mass politics". Enyedi (2008: 293) also points out that due to the steady erosion of socio-structural constraints, instead of social categories, "values

⁴⁸ In order to explore data from the early 1980s to the late 2010s, I integrated the following EBs: EB13, EB14, EB 15, EB16, EB17, EB18, EB21, EB22, EB23, EB24, EB25, EB26, EB27, EB28, EB29, EB30, EB31, EB31A, EB32, EB33, EB34.2, EB35.0, EB35.1, EB36, EB37.0, EB38.0, EB38.1, EB40, EB41.1, EB42, EB 43.0, EB43.1, EB44.1, EB45.1, EB46.0, EB46.1, EB47.0, EB47.1, EB47.2, EB48.0, EB49, EB50.0, EB51.0, EB52.0, EB53.0, EB54.1, EB55.1, EB56.2, EB57.1, EB58.1, EB59.1, EB60.1, EB61, EB62.0, EB62.2, EB63.4, EB64.2, EB65.1, EB65.2, EB66.1, EB67.2, EB68.1, EB69.2, EB70.1, EB71.1, EB71.3, EB72.4, EB73.4, EB75.3, EB77.4, EB79.5, EB82.4, EB84.1, EB86.1, EB88.1, EB89.2, EB90.1, EB91.1 and EB91.5.

⁴⁹ The Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS) is a German research institution whose purpose is to promote research in political and social sciences. This institute provides an online version of the Eurobarometer for exploratory research of the type of variables are available in the Eurobarometer. The online database is freely available on [GESIS:ZACAT](https://www.gesis.org/en/gesis-zacat).

and attitudes should be considered not simply as integral elements of cleavages but also as their potential base”.

Clearly, both arguments have their individual strengths. Yet, in this study, I rely on the normative/latent aspect of cleavage structures. Indeed, part of the demand side analysis of this study is focused on the impact of the empirical aspect of the new transnational cleavage (level of education) on the normative aspects of the transnational cleavage. Moreover, I focus on the latent part of a cleavage, rather than its manifest part, because realignment theory has presented empirical evidence that new emerging cleavages have deconstructed traditional Western European socio-structural groups. Therefore, individuals’ behaviour is no longer tied sociostructurally, but is rather driven by individual needs and personal values (here some milestone works, such as Mair, 1989; Dalton et al., 1984, 2000; but see also more recently Marks et al, 2021: 174).

3.2.1.2 Supply side of political parties

Although political supply side of the political parties has been at the core of much research on party competition, it is still a matter of debate as to what political parties say and which source best expresses parties’ messages. The supply side of the political parties is indeed a complex phenomenon which has been thoroughly analysed from various sources in the last two decades. Since the 2000s, scholars have explored this ‘side’ of party competition in different ways. It has mostly been measured using (a) parliamentary surveys or interviews (Odmalm, 2011; McGraw, 2016), (b) electoral manifestos (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006), (c) press releases or social media releases (Kriesi et al, 2008; Kalsnes, 2016; De Sio et al., 2018), and (d) expert surveys (Bakker et al., 2014, 2015). All these studies have done important ground-breaking work in researching supply side of the political parties. Clearly, the sources stated above have their individual strengths. Yet, I argue that these approaches suffer from several shortcomings.

Starting with the first stream of research (parliamentary surveys and interviews), these studies usually rely on MPs’ self-categorisation as the best means to evaluate parties’ ideological identity over general and specific issues. At first sight, this strategy seems to effectively portray how political parties emphasise and position on topics. Indeed, one could assume that MPs are the best judges to evaluate their own party’s supply side. For instance, Odmalm (2011) based his analysis on MPs’ interviews from Swedish parliament from 1991 to 2010 in order to portray how the immigration issue was closely interlinked with other themes ‘owned’ by the right-wing parties (market liberalism

vs. value conservatism) and the left-wing parties (international solidarity vs. welfare state/labour market protectionism). McGraw (2016) designed two parliamentary surveys (2007 and 2011) to further challenge results from both the CMP and the CHES. According to these well-established databases, the Irish parties are considered to be programmatically similar. Yet, McGraw demonstrated that, within Irish parties, TDs (members of the Teachtaí Dála) are rather quite flexible and ideologically independent from each other. However, problems arise whether we assume that MPs will portray an 'objective' view of their parties. It is widely accepted, for instance, that RRP in Western Europe have tried, since the end of the World War II, to overcome the stigma of being associated with totalitarian regimes such as Nazism and Fascism (Schwörer and Fernández-García, 2021). In this sense, it would be hard to find MPs or parties' leaders willing to self-categorise themselves as far-right parties. By contrast, they would rather be perceived as 'normal' or mainstream in the eyes of their electorate.

Moving on to the second and third streams of research (electoral manifestos and press releases or social media releases), scholars try to frame parties' issue salience and/or parties' position with 'objective' sources. For instance, Budge et al. (2001) argue that electoral manifestos can be used as 'direct' source of supply side of the political parties as they actually represent *what* political parties offer to their electorate and *how* they are actually perceived by the electorate. However, some other authors do not consider electoral manifestos as 'direct' sources, as people do not usually read manifestos (see Weßels and Schmitt 2014). Still, according to Van der Eijk and Schmitt (2010:48)

“manifestos are important indirectly as their main messages are spread via the media, the commentariat and the political behaviour of party elites which itself is informed by and based upon the political direction that has been commonly defined in the election manifesto of their party”.

Alternatively, in more recent years, other authors have pointed out that, rather than electoral manifestos, parties' media coverage is the main debating arena where political parties have the chance to be more visible and promote what is actually their issues' ownership and issues' position (Kriesi et al, 2008; Helbling and Tresch, 2011). These two sources clearly have their individual strengths in 'objectively' representing supply side of the political parties. Yet, I argue that both streams of research fail to comprehend the *multidimensional nature* of the supply side.

By contrast, the last stream of research (expert surveys) successfully depicts the multidimensional nature of the supply side. This approach is based on the idea that voters tend to generalise their perception of parties' identity. Such identity is, indeed, the result of the interaction of multiple communicative tools employed by parties during an electoral campaign. In this sense, the CHES project successfully frames this multidimensional nature of the supply side as once experts are "asked to place a party on an issue or ideological dimension, [they] will tap various sources of information, such as a party's manifesto, campaigning and parliamentary behaviour" (Bakker et al., 2015: 148). Unfortunately, the CHES database analysed a timeframe from 1999 to 2019 and, thus, it does not provide enough data coverage for the purpose of this study which covers the period 1980 to 2020.

Accordingly, to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings, I employed a manual content analysis of more than one 'objective' source. In this way, I can ensure both an objective analysis of supply side of the political parties, taking also in account its multidimensional nature. Therefore, in this study, the supply side of the political parties is conceptualised as the combination of both a *political offer* (electoral manifestos) and a *political narrative* (press/social media releases). The political offer is fundamental for a party because it informs the electorate of the party's main goals and values (Weingast, 2005: 161-166). This dimension is usually delivered through electoral manifestos, which indicate where to place the political party among competitors, and, in a more practical way, it informs the electorate of the party's budgetary plan for those policies that it wants to implement once it joins the government. For instance, political parties usually explain in their manifesto which resources they will use in order to realize their electoral promises (Sloman, 2020).

On the other hand, the political narrative, which is usually delivered through parties' official press organs – or through parties' official twitter accounts, in more recent years (Enli and Skogerbø, 2013; McGregor et al., 2017) – does not have the same function as manifestos. The political narrative has the role of reinforcing voters' support from previous elections or appealing to new voters (Patterson and Monroe, 1998: 316). Therefore, the parties' official press organ will never address all potential topics related to party competition, but instead it will be more focused on topical arguments that are more debated during the electoral campaign or those topics that are at the very core of parties' values. In short, each communication tool of political parties targets specific electoral objectives, they identify a certain type of audience, and they deliver those messages that can be most favourable for them during the electoral campaign (Norris et al., 1999: 54).

To this end, the measurement of the supply side of established RRP is based on the exploration and analysis of both electoral manifestos (political offer) and press/social media releases (political narrative). The data sources have been coded with the same analytical techniques and categories applied by the CMP team using a manual content analysis approach (see Appendix B for the coding procedure and Appendix A from where I collected data). In this way, I could ensure comparability when analysing these data. Manual content analysis is a research method that was developed by Holsti (1969) to explore mass communicative texts, but it was later applied to explore various fields of social science and political science. For instance, the CMP team used this methodology to explore the messages of political parties within their electoral manifestos. This methodology is commonly used in studies of both newspapers and manifestos (see e.g. Kriesi et al., 2008; Budge et al., 2001) through the application of strict procedures to make valid inferences from texts. According to the research question, these inferences might analyse the sender of the message, the message itself or the audience of the message (Alonso et al., 2012). In this study, I will focus my attention on the message itself.

Moreover, in order to ensure reliability (stability and reproducibility), I have also measured the Krippendorff's alpha index. This coefficient is a statistical measure of the agreement between two coders (or the same coder in two different periods of time). The values range is from 0 to 1, with 0 when there is perfect disagreement and with 1 when there is perfect agreement. The minimum estimate requested to ensure reliability is 0.8 (Louwerse, 2011). In this study, the Krippendorff's alpha is reasonably good as it lies at 0.8.

At this stage, having chosen the case studies (the League and the National Rally) and having explained which data sources are necessary to answer the research question, in this section I shall explain in more detail how I identified data that represented the political offer and the political narrative of the League and the National Rally.

3.2.1.3.1 Primary data collection to depict offer and narrative of political parties

The analysis of the supply side of both the League and the National Rally focuses on electoral manifestos and press/social media releases on national electoral campaigns. I decided to primarily focus on national elections, since these are the most important political arenas for parties to express their supply side to the electorate. I thus analysed the supply side of the League and the National Rally in all general elections in which they have participated since the early 1980s until the late 2010s.

Hence, the third and the fourth research hypotheses (H3&H4) are tested with the use of archival documents produced by the political parties (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.2). The aim was to build a corpus of documents in which the League and the National Rally expressed their political offer and political narrative during electoral campaigns. Hence, drawing from the above argumentation, there are two main data sources: the parties' electoral manifestos for the political offer and the parties' official press organs⁵⁰ for the political narrative. Data were collected through a mix of secondary (CMP database) and primary sources (archival research⁵¹ carried out in Italy and France).

The League has been reasonably successful political party over the years.. It had its own official press organ (from Lombardia Autonomista and Piemont Autonomista, through Lega Nord: Italia federale and, eventually, to La Padania). However, La Padania was eventually closed in 2014. I, therefore, collected tweets⁵² from the official Twitter account of the League during the 2018 electoral campaign. Most of League's electoral programs were available directly online and could be retrieved from the CMP database. In this way, secondary data on all programs published between 1992 and 2018 have been collected. Nevertheless, older manifestos were available only from League's press releases (1983 and 1987).

With regards to the corpus for the National Rally, it was mostly built collecting secondary data from the CMP database and primary data at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris. The National Rally also had its own official press organ (National Hebdo), which has been collected from 1982 to 2007. For the last two domestic elections (2012 and 2017), I have collected the most liked tweets from the official Twitter account of the National Rally. Similar to the oldest electoral manifestos of the League, the first electoral manifesto of the National Rally (1981) was collected online and manually coded.

Having concluded the first section (3.2.1), the following parts will focus on data and methods employed to study each factor constituting the flexibility of parties.

⁵⁰ Since the press organs is a data source that is not always available to depict the political narrative of parties, I will alternate it with the official Twitter account of parties as alternative tool. This choice is justified for practical, but also for theoretical reasons as social media is recognised to have substituted the traditional media in the last decade (McGregor et al., 2017; Woolley and Howard, 2018).

⁵¹ See Appendix A for more details on how the corpus was built and where to find these sources.

⁵² I have included those tweets that have received at least 15 likes in the last month of the 2018 electoral campaign. This strategy helped me to optimize the amount of resources and time for the analysis.

3.2.2 Contextual flexibility: variables and method

This part is divided in two sections. The first will be employed to discuss and describe both the dependent and independent variables, and what type of data manipulations have been applied in order to adapt the dichotomist nature of the cleavage strictures explored in this study. The second part will introduce and explain the analysis techniques used within the empirical Chapter 4.

3.2.2.1 Dependent and independent variables

Chapter 4, which empirically explores the changes within the latent demand side of the case studies relies on four *dependent variables*. Three of them represent each dimension of the transnational cleavage, with the fourth constructed by combining the other three variables. In this section I shall start describing, and explaining how I controlled, each variable and, then, I will explain how I constructed the variable that represents the transnational cleavage as a whole. The rationale behind the manipulation of the following variables is driven by the intent of this study to represent the dichotomist nature of each conflict. Therefore, they will be recoded as dummy variables⁵³.

Starting with the *institutional dimension*, this conflict has already been used in earlier research that explored factors behind the support of the European integration project (Handley, 1981; Feld and Wildgen, 1976; Lindberg and Scheingold, 1970). Indeed, one of the key questions in Eurobarometer polls since the early 1970s was the Membership good/bad question. This trend question is widely used in studies of Euroscepticism since the validity of this question is that “membership in the European Union represents the existential fact of the integration process — endorsing membership is therefore endorsing the process of integration itself” (Eichenberg and Dalton, 2007: 133). In fact, such question has often been employed to explore how much the European public opinion agree or disagree with the political agenda to merge the political systems of multiple nations in one unified overall institution where Europeans “participate in a common structure and set of processes” (Easton, 1965: 117) that represent and rule the European general interest. For that reason, I am using this trend question to capture the respondents’ attitudes towards the institutional dimension. The question is “Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Community (common market) is ...?”. This variable assumes the value of 1 when the respondents answer, “a good thing”, 2 for “neither good nor bad” and 3 for “a bad thing”. I merged the last two

⁵³ Moreover, for every variable used in this study, all “DK” and “NA” categories have been excluded.

categories in order to observe, on the one hand, all those respondents that are clearly in support of the EU membership, and on the other hand, those that are not totally convinced of the EU integration project. I, therefore, relabelled these categories as 0 for 'federalism' and as 1 for 'souverainisme'.

Moving to the *economic dimension*, this can be assumed as the result of economic calculations between costs and benefits (McLaren, 2002: 522). Indeed, a number of different studies have used this variable to measure the utilitarian (or economic) aspect of the European membership within public opinion (Gabel, 1998; Anderson and Reichert, 1996; Gabel and Palmer, 1995). These studies have used the *membership country benefit* question to capture respondents' attitudes towards the economic dimension of Euroscepticism. For instance, Gabel (1998; and also Gabel and Palmer, 1995) thanks to this question demonstrates that respondents' attitude towards the economic benefit of the EU membership is determined by their occupational or socioeconomic backgrounds. As such, Gabel (1998) demonstrates that individuals that belong to higher societal levels of class or hold a managerial or highly professional occupation perceive the European integration process as an opportunity to improve their quality of life thanks to the access to multiple job markets that require competitive skills. On the other hand, individuals belonging to a lower level of class or holding a non-skilled job, perceive the European membership as a threat (therefore not a benefit) for their jobs by competing against a larger pool of workers. In short, as Koehn and Rosenau (2002) argue in order to benefit from an integrated market economy citizens need to dispose of transnational competences. For these reasons, I am using the *membership country benefit* question to capture respondents' attitudes towards the economic dimension. The question is "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European community (common Market)?" This variable assumes the value of 1 when the respondents answer "Benefited" or 2 for "Not benefited" (I respectively relabelled these categories as 0 for 'marketism' and as 1 for 'welfare chauvinism').

With regards to the last dimension of the transnational cleavage, the *cultural dimension* is meant to explore the extent to which European integration might be hindered not only for political or utilitarian reasons, but also because of peoples' concerns about the dissolution of their national identity (McLaren, 2002: 554). For instance, Taggart (1998) has already claimed that one of the most important factors behind (hard- and soft-) Euroscepticism is the threat of a multicultural identity that can eradicate the national cultural heritage of European peoples. As he claims, this is a line of conflict "between those who see the nation as the appropriate focus for identity and those who

identify themselves more globally” (Taggart, 1998: 379). Accordingly, when focusing on the European political landscape, Inglehart (1977: 330-331) already reported that “feelings of belonging to some unit greater than the nation-state are most widespread among the publics of the original Six. The pattern leaves little room for doubt that membership in Europe has contributed to the emergence of a supra-national identity”. Therefore, I am using the National vs. European identity questions to capture respondents’ attitudes towards the cultural dimension. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the time series extends for as long as possible over the cultural dimension, I have used two questions. From 1983 to 1991, I used the question “Do you ever think of yourself as not only (nationality) but also European? “. This variable assumes the value of 1 when the respondents answer “often”, 2 for “sometimes” and 3 for “never”. From 1992 to 2019, I used the question “In the near future do you see yourself as?”. This variable assumes the value of 1 when the respondents answer “<nationality> only”, 2 for “<nationality> and European”, 3 for “European and <nationality>” and 4 for “European only”. Finally, in order to have a consistent representation of this dimension over the years, I have recoded the variables as follows: The first question was recoded as 0 for ‘often’ and ‘sometimes’ and as 1 for ‘never’. While the second question was recoded as 0 for ‘<nationality> and European’, ‘European and <nationality>’ and ‘European only’ and as 1 for ‘<nationality> only’. In this way, I relabelled these two categories as 0 for ‘multiculturalism’ and as 1 for ‘nativism’.

Finally, moving to the new *transnational cleavage*, this dependent variable was constructed by combining the three dependent variables that I just described above. To accomplish this, I used the ‘count values’ command in SPSS in order to count how many times the value 1 occurs. I would like to recall that the value 1 in each dimension correspond as ‘sovereinisme’, ‘welfare chauvinism’ and ‘nativism’. In this way, I could measure how many times an individual had a negative attitude towards the European integration process. Subsequently, the variable would become an ordinal variable from ‘0 times’ to ‘3 times’. Ultimately, it was recoded as a dummy variable from 0 to 1 as pro-EU (0) and from 2 to 3 as anti-EU (1). The threshold to define as pro-EU and anti-EU is drawn from the work of Emanuele and his colleagues (2020: 320) when defying the threshold of parties’ position on the integration/demarcation cleavage (Kriesi et al., 2008).

With regards to the only *independent variable* that will be used in the empirical Chapter 4, I selected the level of education of respondents as the empirical aspect of the new transnational cleavage. In order to ensure the cross-sectional analysis among countries, I drew from previous research that

used the *Age when finished education* question to capture respondents' level of education (see Bølstad, 2015; Hakhverdian et al., 2013). The question is "How old were you when you stopped full-time education?". The EB coded the level of education with 11 different categories (from "up to 14" to "22 or older", 'still studying' and "DK, NA"). I recoded this variable with three ordinal categories as 1 for 'low level of education' (those who finished their studies up to 15 years old), 2 for 'medium level of education' (those who finished their studies between 16 and 19 years old) and 3 for 'high level of education' (those who finished their studies 20 or older). Nevertheless, I am excluding from this analysis those people who are still studying as it is not possible to know at what age these respondents have finished their education. The rationale behind the manipulation of the above independent variable in three ordinal categories is driven by the intent to ensure a more coherent sociodemographic distribution of respondents rather than be too polarised towards one category or another.

Table 3.2 *Dependent and independent variables employed for the Chapter 4*

Questions from the EBs	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
NA	Transnational cleavage	
"Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership of the European Community (common market) is ...?"	Institutional dimension	
"Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European community (common Market)?"	Economic dimension	
"Do you ever think of yourself as not only (nationality) but also European?". AND "In the near future do you see yourself as" "<nationality> only", "<nationality> and European", "European and <nationality>" or "European only".	Cultural dimension	
is "How old were you when you stopped full-time education?"		Level of education

Source: Author's elaboration from the Eurobarometer questionnaires.

Having explained the dependent and independent variables that will be applied in Chapter 4, the second part of this section will explain which analytical techniques I have employed in order to explore parties' contextual flexibility.

3.2.2.2 Analysis techniques

Chapter 4 is divided into two main sections that elucidate to what extent the latent demand side has changed over the years. The first part relates to the level of polarisation of the new transnational cleavage and its each dimension, while the second part is more focused on the impact of these ideological conflicts in producing societal divisions within the latent demand side.

Starting with the polarisation score, this study employs the polarisation score proposed by Evans (2003) as it was adopted in previous works for similar purposes (see e.g. Lee, 2016; Iannelli et al., 2021). This polarisation score is usually measured using the extreme positions of a scale (E1 and E2). In this study, the extreme positions correspond to the only two dichotomies of a cleavage. For that reason, the polarisation score will present significant high scores (on average above 50% with a scale from 0% to 100%). This is therefore explained by the nature of the type of conflict I am investigating in Chapter 4 (a cleavage structure). Yet, this score has the advantage to provide insights on the public opinion polarisation trend. The formula is the following.

$$\sqrt{(E1 + E2) \times ((E1 + E2) - |E1 - E2|)}$$

Combining the polarisation score with the opinion trend lines for the transnational cleavage and each dimension explain us how public opinion has changed over the years and whether this new transnational cleavage (and dimensions) have ever been polarising in society, and if yes for how long. Moreover, these results will also facilitate further analysis exploring which milestones of the European integration process have impacted citizens' opinion on the multiple aspects of the EU (institutional, economic and cultural).

In the second part of analysis, I use trend lines on the transnational cleavage and dimensions of the transnational cleavage across education group (cross-tabulation analysis) in order to establish (1) whether the empirical aspect of the transnational cleavage impacted its normative aspect and to observe (2) when societal divisions have started in the time frame. This second analysis will determine how impactful the transnational cleavage has been within societies and, most importantly, when this impact started.

3.2.3 *Internal flexibility: variables and method*

This section elucidates the variables and methods employed in Chapter 5 on the internal flexibility of the League and the National Rally. Similar to the previous section on the contextual flexibility, this is also divided in two parts. The first one will be employed to discuss and describe the variables that I identified from the CMP codebook that can be employed to represent both the classical and new cleavage structures, including the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, while the second part will introduce and explain the analysis techniques used within Chapter 5.

3.2.3.1 Variables

To identify variables that capture classical cleavages and the new transnational cleavage, this study follows the theoretical insight of a deductive approach based on the Detlef Jahn's (2010; who draws also from Bobbio, 1996) conceptualisation of the Left and Right in comparative politics. The main approach in order to assign the categories conceptualised by the CMP team to ideological conflicts (e.g. Left vs. Right) is in deducing the fitness of the CMP categories towards the dichotomies that constitute cleavage structures following the CMP's explanatory definition for each category (see Appendix C to find definitions conceptualised by the CMP team). As such, I used categories from the CMP that deductively coincide with cleavage structures. This reworking was deemed necessary because multiple categories identified by the CMP can be considered specific aspects of the same more general cleavage structure. These categories are therefore traced back to the more general cleavage, based on their logical and thematic coherence (for a similar approach, see the previous works from Elff, 2009: 301-302; Lacewell, 2013: 9-11; Krause and Giebler, 2019: 8-9).

Starting with the classical cleavages, the *religious cleavage* was constructed combining the only two categories conceptualised by the CMP that relate to this conflict: *Traditional Morality: Positive* and *Traditional Morality: Negative*. The first category reflects all those statements that encourage the values of the traditional families that support the moral role of the religious institutions and condemn behaviours such as abortion, euthanasia and marriage between same-sex couples. On the other hand, the second category represents antithetical stances towards abortion, euthanasia and marriages, calling, therefore, for secularist values with the separation of church and state. These categories added up together represent the religious cleavage and they respectively coincide with the dichotomy 'Church' and the dichotomy 'State'.

The *regional cleavage*, similar to the religious one, is composed of only two categories: *Centralisation* and *Federalism*. The first category encourages the unification of the country and, therefore, the monopolisation of power towards one central government. The second category supports deregulation processes of both political and economic powers. The regional cleavage is composed of the sum of these categories, and they respectively coincide with the dichotomy 'Centre' and the dichotomy 'Periphery'.

As regards the *community cleavage*, the CMP shows four categories related to this cleavage. For instance, both *Labour Groups: Positive* and *Middle Class and Professional Groups* are categories that

mention positive stances in favour of urban citizens. On the other hand, both *Labour Groups: Negative* and *Agriculture and Farmers: Positive* are categories in favour of rural citizens. The community cleavage is composed of the sum of these four categories, and the first pair of categories coincides with the dichotomy 'Urban', while the second pair of categories coincide with the dichotomy 'Rural'.

The *class cleavage* is the last classical cleavage under study. The CMP provides more categories on this conflict. Starting with *Free-Market Economy, Incentives: Positive, Protectionism: Negative* and *Welfare State Limitation*, these categories include favourable mentions towards the supply side of economic policies (helping entrepreneurs) and reducing state expenditures on health care, childcare, elder care, and social housing. On the other hand, the categories *Corporatism, Controlled Economy, Marxist Analysis: Positive* and *Welfare State Expansion* are categories that favourably mention stances on expanding public services and social security schemes, also including favourable mentions to ideologies and policies in favour of workers' interests. Therefore, all together, these categories represent the class cleavage. More specifically, the first pair of categories coincide with the dichotomy 'Employers', while the following bulk of categories coincide with the dichotomy 'Workers'.

To conclude, the *transnational cleavage* is constructed through the combination of three different dimensions. Each dimension is constituted by CMP categories. Starting with the *institutional dimension*, this is associated with the categories *European Community/Integration: Positive* and *European Community/Integration: Negative*. These categories added up together represent the institutional dimension and they respectively coincide to the dichotomy 'Federalism' and the dichotomy 'Souverainisme'. Second, the *economic dimension* is constructed, on the one hand, by the CMP categories *Free Market Economy* and *Protectionism: Negative*. Both categories favourably mention the free movement of goods and capital, defending processes at the basis of globalisation. On the other hand, the CMP categories such as *Market Regulation, Protectionism: Positive, Keynesian Demand Management* and *Nationalisation* favourably mention stances on government ownership of industries, economic stimulus by the government in periods of economic crisis (against austerity) and the extension of protectionist measure to disincentive the movement of capital and goods across countries. All together, these categories represent the economic dimension, and they respectively coincide to the dichotomy 'Marketism' and the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism'. Finally, the *cultural dimension* is associated with CMP categories *National Way of Life: Negative* and *Multiculturalism: Positive*, which represent favourable mentions towards cultural diversity, favourable mentions to

immigration and opposition to nationalism. Instead, CMP categories *National Way of Life: Positive* and *Multiculturalism: Negative* are stances appealing to nationalism, patriotism and antagonization with cultural diversity or immigration. These categories, when added up together, represent the cultural dimension; while the first pair of categories coincide with the dichotomy ‘Multiculturalism’ and the second pair of categories coincide to the dichotomy ‘Nativism’. To conclude, the transnational cleavage is the sum of all statements related to its dimensions (institutional, economic and cultural). Moreover, the dichotomy ‘Pro-EU’ is measured through all categories linked to the dichotomies ‘Federalism’, ‘Marketism’ and ‘Multiculturalism’; while the dichotomy ‘Anti-EU’ is measured with all categories linked to the dichotomies ‘Souverainisme’, ‘Welfare chauvinism’ and ‘Nativism’. Table 3.3 below shows the CMP categories associated with the classical and new cleavages.

Table 3.3 Classical and new cleavage structures associated to CMP categories for the Chapter 5

Ideological conflict	Dichotomy 1 (CMP categories)	Dichotomy 2 (CMP categories)
Religious cleavage (State vs. Church)	604 Traditional Morality: Negative	603 Traditional Morality: Positive
Regional cleavage (Centre vs. Periphery)	302 Centralisation: Positive	301 Decentralisation: Positive
Community cleavage (Urban vs. Rural)	701 Labour Groups: Positive 704 Middle Class and Professional Groups	702 Labour Groups: Negative 703 Agriculture and Farmers: Positive
Class cleavage (Employers vs. Workers)	401 Free-Market Economy 402 Incentives 407 Protectionism: Negative 505 Welfare State Limitation	405 Corporatism 412 Controlled Economy 415 Marxist Analysis: Positive 504 Welfare State Expansion
Transnational cleavage (pro-EU vs. anti-EU)	108 European Community/Union: Positive 401 Free-Market Economy 407 Protectionism: Negative 602 National Way of Life: Negative 607 Multiculturalism: Positive	110 European Community/Union: Negative 403 Market Regulation 406 Protectionism: Positive 409 Keynesian Demand Management 413 Nationalisation 601 National Way of Life: Positive 608 Multiculturalism: Negative
- Institutional dimension (Federalism vs. Souverainisme)	108 European Community/Union: Positive	110 European Community/Union: Negative
- Economic dimension (Marketism vs. Welfare chauvinism)	401 Free-Market Economy 407 Protectionism: Negative	403 Market Regulation 406 Protectionism: Positive 409 Keynesian Demand Management 413 Nationalisation
- Cultural dimension (Multiculturalism vs. Nativism)	602 National Way of Life: Negative 607 Multiculturalism: Positive	601 National Way of Life: Positive 608 Multiculturalism: Negative

Source: Author’s elaboration of CMP’s categories (Werner et al., 2011: 15-23).

One notices that the class cleavage and the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage have two CMP categories in common (*Free-Market Economy* and *Protectionism: Negative*). This circumstance can be explained when considering the building process of new cleavages that arise in pre-existed institutionalised conflicts and, potentially, crosscut pre-existed societal groups. Hooghe and Marks (2018) already argued that the transnational cleavage has the potential to crosscut the European electorate. Accordingly, it is not surprising to see that some categories that are linked to the classical dichotomy 'Employers' can also be traced to the new dichotomy 'Marketism', because both dichotomies evoke similar economic conflicts and similar societal groups (e.g. entrepreneurs). As such, cleavage structures should not be seen as separate airlocks. Indeed, when new cleavage structures arise, it is more likely that similar cleavages might have constitutive similar patterns, but different meaning on the nature of the conflict.

Having concluded the first of this section elucidating how the variables have been constructed using the CMP categories, the second part of this section will focus on the analytical techniques used to explore parties' internal flexibility.

3.2.3.2 Analysis technique

Chapter 5 is composed by two main stages of analysis in order to explore parties' internal flexibility from election to election: parties' issue emphasis and parties' position. Starting with *parties' issue emphasis*, this is measured in percentages of quasi-sentences coded in categories that are linked to both dichotomies of the cleavage structures. A quasi-sentence is the coding unit that represents only one message (hence only one category). The higher the number, the higher the political party emphasises the cleavage structure in its supply side. The level of emphasis is theoretically bounded by 0 (if the party never mentions categories that are related to a certain cleavage structure) and 100 (if the party mentions only categories related to a certain cleavage structure). The formula is the following:

$$\text{EMPHASIS} = \text{DICHOTOMY 1} + \text{DICHOTOMY 2}$$

Parties' position is measured with the well-known technique proposed by Kim and Fording (2002) usually applied to measure parties' left-right position with the CMP data set. This technique is simply based on the subtraction of all CMP categories added for one pole of a cleavage structure with all CMP categories added with the dichotomist pole of the same cleavage. Moreover, in order

to measure the position of parties independent of the emphasis of the cleavage structure, the subtraction is divided by the total of all quasi-sentences referred to the same cleavage. Therefore, the scale would be bounded from -1 (full positioning of the party over the negative dichotomy) to +1 (full positioning of the party over the positive dichotomy). This is the formula:

$$\text{POSITION} = \frac{\text{DICHOTOMY 1} - \text{DICHOTOMY 2}}{\text{DICHOTOMY 1} + \text{DICHOTOMY 2}}$$

Moreover, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between political offer and political narrative, I will operationalise the parties' *internal coherence* between electoral manifestos and official press organs. I will use the Pearson correlation coefficient for this purpose. The Pearson correlation is an index that measures linear correlations between two sets of data. In a nutshell, it measures whether the distance between two sets of data are constant or not. The reasons for selecting this index as the best way for capturing parties' internal coherence is twofold. Firstly, this index has the advantage of having been already used in previous studies to compare congruency between two different agendas or coherence of parties' campaign messages (Dalton et al., 1998; Norris et al., 1999; Brandenburg, 2005; Braun and Schmitt, 2018). Secondly, this index allows me to establish whether the changes towards cleavage structures that happen in one dimension of the supply side are also applied to the other one.

However, the Pearson correlation coefficient presents a limitation. In order to compute the level of internal coherence between the variables 'political offer' and 'political narrative', it is necessary to have a value for each observation (which coincides with the electoral campaigns). As I previously stated, the CMP makes use of the saliency theory to explore political supply side of the political parties. This theory argues that political parties compete in terms of the emphasis that they apply to certain issues rather than focusing on their party-position. That is to say that if a party never mentions a quasi-sentence over a certain cleavage, the emphasis is not impacted by this operationalisation, because the value 0 (no mentions towards a cleavage) is quantified by the emphasis scale (from 0 to 100). On the other hand, the level of position is impacted whether the party does not address any quasi-sentence towards a certain cleavage structure during an electoral campaign. Indeed, the value 0 does not mean 'no mentions' towards a dichotomy, but it means that the party is self-placed in a neutral position. For that reason and in line with the concept of parties' reputation in the cleavage theory literature (e.g. Bouteuca and Devos, 2015), rather than arbitrarily

evaluating these observations as neutral – therefore 0 – or excluding them from the next operationalisation (see e.g. Braun and Schmitt, 2018), I argue that it is more appropriate to apply the party-position value of the previous year in order to measure parties' internal coherence over all electoral campaigns examined by this study. Moreover, there is no agreement among researchers on how to evaluate the strength of Pearson coefficient's values. Therefore, drawing from Bryman and Cramer (1997: 168), a coefficient between +0.1 and +0.2 is poorly coherent. Between +0.3 and +0.4, the coefficient is defined as weakly coherent. Between +0.5 and +0.6, the coefficient is defined as moderately correlated. Finally, if the coefficient is higher than +0.7, it is defined as strongly correlated – above +0.9 means that it is perfectly coherent (see also Cohen and Holliday, 1982). For clarification, this index is not explanatory in regard to the flexibility of cleavages, but it provides descriptive information on how the political parties addressed the same topics differently through different communicative tools (electoral manifestos and official press organs).

Finally, to construct the parties' *internal flexibility*, I compute the average between the political offer and the political narrative for each cleavage structure (classical and new) and the dimensions of the transnational cleavage. Subsequently, I combine two measures in order to plot how the cleavages (and transnational cleavage's dimensions) have changed over the years. I firstly use the standard deviation in order to measure the extent to which the emphasis or position of parties (in each electoral campaign) tend to be close to each other. Therefore, the closer the standard deviation is to zero, the less flexible it is. This measure is thus named as *deviation*. Moreover, since it is almost impossible that political parties address in the same ways issues from one election to another, I also integrate the measurement of trend lines coefficient for each cleavage over the national elections occurred. The rationale to use this coefficient is the following: if I applied only the standard deviation as measurement of programmatic flexibility, it would inform me about the fluctuation in emphasis and position rather than informing me about the *direction* of the party about the cleavage. Indeed, as the literature on party change has already demonstrated, parties can change the emphasis they put on topics from one election to another. Nevertheless, this is not to say that I assume parties are flexible because they suddenly change emphasis or position from one election to another. I conceptualise their internal flexibility as a substantial change in supply side of the political parties that occurred after long periods of time. Therefore, the closer the trend line coefficient will be to zero, the less flexible it is. The following are the conditions for a cleavage structure to be considered as flexible.

$$\text{INTERNAL FLEXIBILITY} = \begin{matrix} \text{DEVIATION} > 0 \\ \text{DIRECTION} \neq 0 \end{matrix}$$

The novelty of the above analytical technique to explore the internal flexibility of political parties is twofold. Firstly, for the first time, the supply side of political parties is conceptualised as the combination of multiple electoral tools (political offer and political narrative) which results will provide novel findings in exploring what political parties actually say. Secondly, the combination of the standard deviation and the measurement of trends' line coefficients will ensure a clear overview on how the ideological conflicts have developed within the supply side of political parties over long periods of time.

Ultimately, although the internal flexibility of parties will be explored with the above indicators (deviation and direction) in both terms of emphasis and position, they will be interpreted in different ways because of their nature. The indicator of emphasis does not provide 'objective' values in order to suggest to what extent an issue has been addressed by a party. Therefore, the level of flexibility will mostly rely on visual validation comparing how are located the different ideological conflicts in the graph. By contrast, the indicator of position provides 'objective' values in order to interpret the internal flexibility of the parties on the ideological conflicts examined. In fact, alongside a visual validation of the results, it will also be considered that the extent the party changed in terms of position. For instance, if a party fluctuated or did not change substantially position, it will be considered as frozen. If a party changed over the years, but only within the same dichotomy, it will be considered as weakly flexible. If a party changed from a dichotomy to a neutral position (or vice versa), it will be considered as moderately flexible. Finally, if a party changed from one dichotomy to another, it will be considered as strongly flexible.

3.2.4 External flexibility: variables and method

In this section, I shall elucidate the last set of variables and method employed in the third empirical chapter of this thesis. Indeed, Chapter 6 focuses on the last factor constituting the flexibility of a party which is the external flexibility. Similar to the previous parts, this section is also divided in two parts. The first one will focus on the dependent, independent and control variables. The second part will be dedicated in explain the analytical technique employed to explore the manifest demand side.

3.2.4.1 Dependent, independent and control variables

Chapter 6 relies on one *dependent variable*, which is constructed with the *Last vote (nat. elections)* question. The question is “Which party did you vote for at the (last) ‘General Election’ of [year of last general election in respective country]”. This variable was originally a nominal one, but the focus of this analysis is on the strength of voters’ issue-orientations towards established RRP. Therefore, I recoded this variable as a dichotomous one as ‘not voting for an established RRP’ (0) and ‘voting for an established RRP’ (1). Before moving to describe the other predictor variables, I need to devote a few words to the implications behind selecting voting choice as dependent variable and the possible limitations that this variable may have on evaluating parties with a small share of the vote.

First of all, one could argue that voting preference has more advantages than voting choice because it provides a larger sample of observations, including those who are not eligible to vote and those who did not vote (Van Der Eijk, 2018). Moreover, studies on voting behaviour demonstrate that voting preference usually has a strong correlation with voting behaviour (Van der Eijk et al., 2006; Lachat, 2010; Sciarini, 2010). Nevertheless, I had to measure my dependent variable with the voting choice in the last general election rather than voting preference mostly for practical reasons rather than theoretical ones. The EB dataset does not provide the voting preference question over the period I am observing in this study. So, while it is unfortunate that I cannot test the set of research hypotheses (H4) on this variable, the EB still provides the actual voting behaviour at elections. However, there might be limitations for the analysis because of the reduced sample size, which can negatively impact the conventional level of standard significance of 95% (Thiese et al., 2016) – see Appendix D for more details.

Moving on to the *independent variables*, for the *religious cleavage*, I selected from the EBs the question asking how important religion (personally) is for the respondents. The reason for selecting this type of question was to include characteristics of religion that can be beyond its institutionalised characteristic, such as the denomination of respondents’ religion or the respondents’ frequency of church attendance. By contrast, similar to Wilkins-Laflamme (2017: 173), I preferred to use questions that included more personal and spiritual beliefs in respondents’ lives in order to capture the normative aspect of the religious cleavage. For that reason, I selected the following question: “How important would you say God is in your life? Please choose between the two ends of the scale. If God is not important at all in your life, you give a score of 1. If God is very important in your life,

you give a score of 10. The scores between 1 and 10 allow you to say how close to either side you are". I eventually recoded it in a dummy variable from 7 to 10 as Church (1) and from 1 to 4 as State (0). For the second political context, there is a question that addresses what is personally important but is asked differently as "In the following list, which are the three most important values for you personally?". I then recoded it as Church if religion was mentioned (1) and as State if religion was not mentioned (0).

The religious cleavage is the only classical cleavage that needed to be constructed using two differently worded questions that are similar in the content and meaning (see also the construction of the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage section 3.3.2). On the other hand, the other three classical cleavages were recoded from questions that were asked over the years. In fact, continuing with the *regional cleavage*, this was represented with the question "Please tell me how attached you feel to [your city \ town \ village]" (see also Treib, 2021). This question was coded as 1 for "Very attached", 2 for "Fairly attached", 3 for "Not very attached" and 4 "Not at all attached". I recoded this variable in a dummy variable from 1 to 2 as 'Periphery' (1) and from 3 to 4 as 'Centre' (0).

With regards to the *community cleavage*, this is the only cleavage that needed to be coded with a question that refers to the empirical aspect of the cleavage: the size of respondents' community (see also Enyedi, 2005). The reason behind this choice is that there is no question referring to the normative aspect in either dataset. The question for this variable is simply asked to the respondents as 'Size of locality'. Therefore, for the Italian case, this variable was coded as 1 for "less than 10.000", 2 as "10.000 - less than 100.000", 3 as "100.000 - less than 250.000" and 4 as "250.000 and more inhabitants". I then recoded it keeping 1 as 'Rural' and from 2 to 4 as 'Urban' (0). For the French case, I this variable was coded as 1 for "less than 2.000", 2 as "2.000 - less than 20.000", 3 as "20.000 - less than 100.000", 4 as "100.000 and more inhabitants" and 5 as "Paris". I eventually recoded it from 1 to 2 as 'Rural' (1) and from 3 to 5 as 'Urban' (0).

The *class cleavage* was recoded using respondents' subjectivity on social class belonging with the following question: "If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to?" (see also Freire, 2006). It was an ordinal variable from "Working class" to "Upper class" and I merged "Working class" with "Lower middle class" as 'Workers' (1) and I also merged "Middle class", "Upper middle class" and "Upper class" as 'Employers' (0).

With regards to the *transnational cleavage* and each dimension of the transnational cleavage (*institutional, economic and cultural*), I employed the same variables and coding procedures that I have explained in the above section on the contextual flexibility (see section 3.3.1.1). Moreover, in addition to the cleavage structures and the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, the models in Chapter 6 also include *control variables* used by the literature to influence voting behaviour for RRP's (see Coffé and van den Berg, 2017: 883). *Age* variable is a continuous variable. *Gender* is a dichotomous variable with 'Male' (0) as reference category, while 'Female' is coded as 1. Finally, *education* is the same ordinal variable that I described in the previous section (see section 3.3.1.1).

Table 3.4 *Dependent, independent and control variables employed for the Chapter 6*

Questions from the EBs	Controlling variable	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
"How old are you?"	Age		
"Gender"	Gender		
is "How old were you when you stopped full-time education?"	Level of education		
"How important would you say God is in your life? Please choose between the two ends of the scale. If God is not important at all in your life, you give a score of 1. If God is very important in your life, you give a score of 10. The scores between 1 and 10 allow you to say how close to either side you are". AND "In the following list, which are the three most important values for you personally?"		Religious cleavage	
"Please tell me how attached you feel to [your city\ town\ village]"		Regional cleavage	
"Size of locality"		Community cleavage	
"If you were asked to choose one of these five names for your social class, which would you say you belong to?"		Class cleavage	
NA		Transnational cleavage	
"Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership of the European Community (common market) is...?"		Institutional dimension	
"Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European community (common Market)?"		Economic dimension	
"Do you ever think of yourself as not only (nationality) but also European?". AND "In the near future do you see yourself as" "<nationality> only", "<nationality> and European", "European and <nationality>" or "European only".		Cultural dimension	
" Which party did you vote for at the (last) "General Election" of [year of last general election in respective country]".			Last vote (nat. elections)

Source: Author's elaboration from the Eurobarometer questionnaires.

3.2.4.2 Analysis technique

Having satisfied the quest to explain which are the variables and how they have been recoded, I will briefly explain, in this section, the method employed to explore the manifest demand side of political parties in Chapter 6.

In order to test external flexibility, I will run binary logistic regression coefficients (or log odds ratios) to assess the impact of voters' issue-orientations linked to cleavage structures and dimensions of the transnational cleavage (independent variables) on voting behaviour (dependent variable). Briefly, when looking at the relationship between voters' issue-orientations and voting behaviour, one can estimate the change in the log of the odds of voting behaviour for each unit change in voters' issue-orientations. Put simply, each change in the independent variable produces a correspondent percentage increase or decrease in the odds of the dependent variable.

In the ideal scenario to analyse parties' external flexibility, it would have been beneficial to test the cleavages' impact in each national election from the early 1980s to the late 2010s. Nevertheless, in this analysis, I had to face a trade-off between the depth of the analysis and the availability of data. In fact, the main issue was identifying consistent or similar questions across time for each cleavage structure and respondents' voting behaviour using the EBs surveys. In the end I was able to find three EB datasets that contain both the dependent and independent variables necessary for the analysis in two periods of time that showed different political contexts. Indicatively, I selected the EB36 and EB42 to represent the first political context (late 1980s/early 1990s) and the EB91.5 to represent the more recent political context (late 2010s). More specifically (to this study), the EB36 corresponds to the 1987 national elections in Italy and the 1988 legislative election in France. The EB42 matches with 1994 national election in Italy and the 1993 legislative election in France. Finally, the EB91.5 relates to the 2018 national election in Italy and the 2017 legislative election in France. This strategy, albeit not ideal, will allow a comparison of the case studies' electorates across time.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the methodological framework of this research. Overall, this chapter was developed in two main pillars. The first focused on the research design of this project. In sum, this chapter depicts the operationalisation of the flexibility of parties offering an analytical template to observe changes within the dependent variable, which is determined by the variation in at least one between polarisation/societal divisions, emphasis/position and magnitude/direction. This chapter also explains how the comparative case study analysis is viable to answer the research question. Further, this part reviewed core concepts such as radical right and established parties. Both notions have been deeply reviewed in the literature in order to clarify what elements are included or excluded from this selection procedure. In sum, the radical right ideology is conceptualised by this

study as the combination of nativism, authoritarianism and hostility toward liberal democracy. With regards to the notion to determine the threshold between new and established parties, this study puts emphasis on the organisational aspect of political parties. Moreover, once the selection criteria have been justified in detail, this chapter introduced in more detail characteristics of the League and the National Rally.

The second pillar of this chapter is rather more technical than theoretical. In this second part, the chapter starts by elucidating how the EBs best fit to represent the demand side (manifest and latent) and how the supply side of political parties is jointly composed by a political offer and a political narrative. The EBs fit with the purpose of this study because of their long-term temporality and the types of variables available for the analysis. Manifestos and newspapers (and alternatively twitter) are also argued as the best sources for this project because they jointly constitute offer and narrative of political parties. This part concludes dealing with the aspects of data collection making use of archival research (online and in person). Subsequently, this chapter illustrated characteristics of data and methods employed for this study in each factors constituting the flexibility of parties (contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility). In brief, this chapter discussed the operationalisation of variables that will be employed to test the research hypotheses. Furthermore, each factor constituting the flexibility of parties is explored with different techniques in order to establish variation over the time. In Chapter 4, the analysis will be delivered using public opinion trend lines to depict the impact of the European integration process in terms of polarisation and societal divisions to depict the latent demand side of political parties. In Chapter 5, the main method employed is manual content analysis in order to portray how it has changed the supply side of political parties. Finally, in Chapter 6, the analysis will be employed using logistic regressions in order to observe whether it has changed the manifest demand side of political parties.

PART 2: EMPIRICAL ANALYSES

4 Transformations in the Italian and French Public Opinion

4.1 Introduction: the end of ‘permissive consensus’?

What underpins research on radical right parties (RRPs) is the aim to understand what kind of voters support them – a manifest demand side approach – or how these parties deliver their message in order to be appealing to the voters – a supply side approach (Mols and Jetten, 2020). In this chapter, I will empirically explore the *latent* demand sides of the League and the National Rally in order to verify to what extent the political context has changed after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (see section 2.5.1). This chapter, thus, underpins the stream of research on public opinion regarding the European integration process (De Vries and Van Kersbergen, 2007). This stream of research usually emphasises the role that economic factors play in determining citizens’ attitudes towards the EU. In this chapter, on the other hand, I will rather explore changes of the public opinion in all dimensions of the transnational cleavage: institutional, economic and cultural. Indeed, in this study, I claim that characteristics of each dimension of the transnational cleavage influence the way political parties design their electoral communication. To this end, the political context (or latent demand side) remains an important factor to analyse since it determines the political opportunities.

As I illustrated in chapter 2 (section 2.5.1), the idea that party competition is also entrenched by the political context derives from the literature on political parties’ responsiveness, which find strong evidence that the changes of what parties do vary along the changes of public opinion’s preferences (Page and Shapiro, 1983; Mattila and Raunio, 2006; Adams et al., 2009; Ezrow et al., 2011; Spoon and Williams, 2017; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Conti et al., 2020). The literature on political parties’ responsiveness has come a long way from the US literature of the 1980s. For instance, Page and Shapiro (1983) unveil the causal relationship between public opinion on salient issues and policy outputs. Indeed, examining a considerably long timeframe from 1935 to 1979, they demonstrate that changes in public opinion is “at least a proximate or intervening factor leading to government action, if not the ultimate cause”, while policy outputs have an inconsistent effect on public opinion (Page and Shapiro, 1983: 186; see also Erikson et al., 1993). This stream of research also expanded towards the European democracies. Comparing fifteen European countries, Ezrow et al. (2011) demonstrate

that party responsiveness depends on the type of the party and from which electorate is originating the public opinion change. For instance, mainstream parties, both from the centre-left and centre-right, would be more reactive to change their programmes in accordance with the changes of the mean voter position. Alternatively, political parties such as the Communist parties, the Green parties and the Nationalist parties would be more reactive towards the changes from their closest supporters.

Moving even further, a growing recent literature has also focused on parties' responsiveness on the EU dimension. Initially, Mattila and Raunio (2006), relying on the 2004 European Election Study, demonstrate that Western European political parties would be more responsive with their voters on the classical left-right dimension rather than the new EU dimension. They also prove that Western European political parties are more supportive towards the European integration than their supporters. These results on a low level of parties' responsiveness on the EU dimension has largely been explained by the unwillingness of mainstream parties to politicise the European integration project (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020). Yet, more recent studies subsequently showed that Western European parties also tend to be more responsive on the EU dimension alongside to the significant increase of a Eurosceptic attitude from the public opinion. For instance, Conti et al. (2020) show that Italian political elites tend to be more responsive towards the dramatic rise of public opinion's stance against the EU. Indeed, since the 2018 domestic election, the Italian Democratic Party is, among the Italian major parties, the only pro-European party, while all the other major parties (5SM, Lega, FI, FdI) are "in tune with" the increased discontent towards the EU (Conti et al., 2020: 20). Similarly, Spoon and Williams' (2017) findings (including Italy and France) also demonstrate that political parties tend to respond to the Eurosceptic wave when public opinion is highly Eurosceptic and when there is high level of discordance within the party on the European integration process. In sum, the above widely acknowledged literature reinforces the assumption that the contextual conditions and characteristics are to be considered as intervening factors influencing both the supply side and the demand side of political parties.

To this end, the study of the contextual flexibility is also crucial to explore the flexibility of parties towards the transnational cleavage. However, as suggested in Chapter 2, in order to account changes in the demand side, the transnational cleavage needs to be addressed as a whole and disentangled along its three dimensions (institutional, economic and cultural). Therefore, not only the

transnational cleavage, but also each dimension is expected to influence the demand side after its historical juncture, because they have the potential to produce their own ideological pull.

This chapter shall, therefore, look at the political context of the League and the National Rally from 1980 to 2020 on the transnational cleavage and for each dimension. More in detail, this analysis concerns two main steps: (1) observing whether and how the level of polarisation has changed in the public opinion and (2) observing whether this new cleavage (and each dimension) produces societal demarcations. Polarisation is interpreted in this study as the building of two antithetical groups of people that oppose each other in normative terms (see Kleiner, 2018) while societal divisions is interpreted as the widening of demarcations within society according to sociodemographic aspects (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009; Archer, 2010).

The logics explaining variation in the polarisation of a cleavage implies that the distribution of voters vary along an ideological dimension. This ideological dimension is represented by the normative aspect of a cleavage that consists of “values/beliefs that separate the involved groups” (Goldberg; 2016: 13; Bartolini and Mair, 2007). In this sense, a significant concentration of citizens towards one dichotomy of a cleavage would reflect a depolarised context (this is expected before the Maastricht Treaty). Conversely, a public opinion that is equally distributed on both dichotomies of a cleavage would represent a polarised context (this is expected after the Maastricht Treaty). As concerns the societal divisions produced by the transnational cleavage, the logics explaining these variations is determined by the extent to which the empirical aspect of a cleavage influences its normative aspect (Bartolini and Mair, 2007). This logic is drawn from the Social Identity Theory (SIT) in which individuals’ identity is determined by “an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978: 63; see also Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Accordingly, individual’s belonging to a certain group will determine the individual’s own beliefs. To put it simple, one must expect to find the lines, representing the different groups of people (divided by level of education), to experience similar attitudes before the historical juncture (the lines should overlap), when the transnational cleavage did not produce societal demarcations within society. By contrast, after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, these groups would spread out in regards of these dimensions (thus, the lines should be separated), because the transnational cleavage is then impacting the demand space producing societal demarcations.

I will, thus, proceed in two steps. First, I explore the polarisation of the transnational cleavage as a whole and each dimension (institutional, economic and cultural). My primary interest, here, lies in (1) observing whether public opinion polarisation increases after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, (2) observing whether the general public's attitudes towards dichotomies of the transnational cleavage ('pro-EU', 'federalism', 'marketism' and 'multiculturalism') decrease more than the negative dichotomies ('anti-EU', 'souverainism', 'welfare chauvinism' and 'nativism'). Next, I deepen the analysis of the latent demand spaces by (3) exploring whether societal demarcations originate after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and (4) observing whether people with a lower level of education are more likely to hold antagonist attitudes towards the dimensions of the transnational cleavage. To this end, I will test the polarisation hypothesis (H1) and the societal division hypothesis (H2) (see section 2.5.1) with the following measurements:

- Polarisation hypothesis (H1) will be measured through trend lines analysis;
- Societal division hypothesis (H2) will be measured through cross-tabulation analysis.

4.2 Results: parties contextual flexibility

As concerns the analytic strategy in the next sections of this chapter, I examined the contextual flexibility through the following procedural steps for both Italy and France. First of all, I used opinion trend lines on the transnational cleavage (and each dimension) to establish how polarised public opinion is on these dimensions from 1980 to 2020. This step was necessary in order to test the first hypotheses of this study (H1) establishing to what extent Italian and French public opinions are polarised after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. To test public opinion polarisation, I rely on both trends in percentage of the frequencies (see also Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008; Adams et al., 2012) and the polarisation score⁵⁴ proposed by Evans (2003) (see also Lee, 2016; Iannelli et al., 2021). This procedure allows me to ascertain when and how the level of polarisation, within the new cleavage (and dimensions), have experienced the most relevant changes. Finally, to test the second groups of hypotheses (H2), I used trend lines on the transnational cleavage (and dimensions) across education group (cross-tabulation analysis). The reason is twofold. This strategy allows me, firstly, to observe

⁵⁴ The polarisation score is usually measured using the extreme position of a scale. In this study, the extreme positions correspond to the only two dichotomies of a cleavage. For that reason, the polarisation score will present significant high scores (in average above 50% with a scale from 0% to 100%). This is therefore explained by the nature of the type of conflict I am investigating in this chapter (a cleavage). Yet, this score has the advantage to provide insights on the public opinion polarisation trend.

whether the transnational cleavage (and dimensions) does produce societal demarcations. Secondly, it is possible to observe whether this impact took place after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

4.2.1 The latent demand side of the League

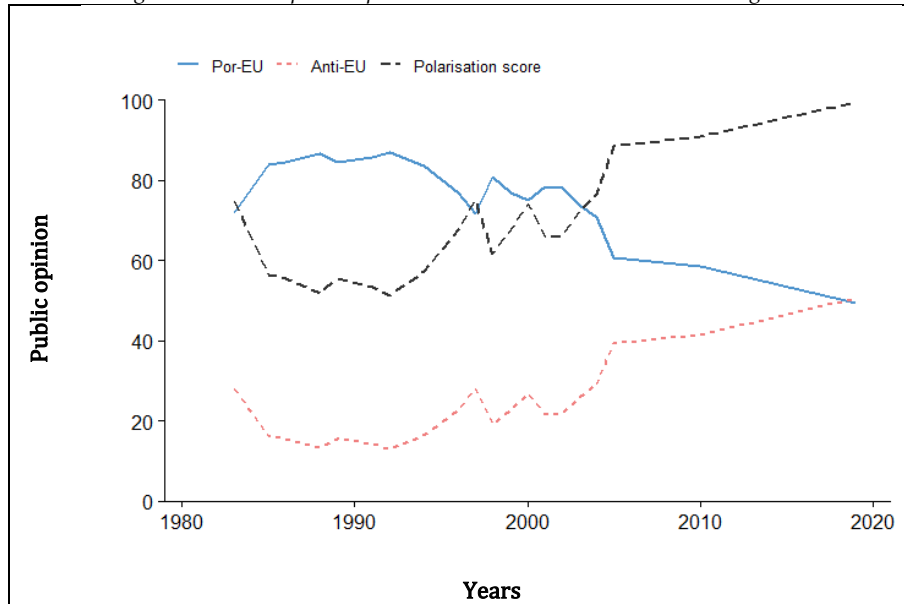
In this section, I will observe the latent demand side of my Italian case study: the League. It is structured to address two indicators which are polarisation and societal divisions of the new transnational cleavage (and dimensions) within the Italian public opinion.

4.2.1.1 Polarisation

Starting with the overall transnational cleavage, figure 4.1 shows the degree of the Italian public opinion polarisation. This figure shows that the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 has been a turning point within the Italian public opinion on the transnational cleavage. Indeed, the level of polarisation significantly rose (in average) from 59 in the 1980s to 73 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. This result, therefore, confirms H1a. Furthermore, the overall trend of the Italian public opinion shows that the positive attitude towards this new cleavage (pro-EU) tends to decrease over the years. As figure 4.1 shows, the Italian public seems to be largely in favour of the EU in the 1980s and in the 1990s. However, from the early 2000s to the late 2010s, there is a significant decrease of the 'pro-EU' attitude. By 2019, Italian public opinion is perfectly polarised on two balanced equally groups on the new transnational cleavage.

Following Hooghe and Marks' work in identifying the Maastricht Treaty as historical juncture affecting European party systems, there is not a significant decrease in positive attitudes towards the EU between 1991 and 1993 – it just decreases by 3%. However, between 2002 and 2010, there is the most significant decrease of the pro-EU attitude. It drastically dropped by 19%. Finally, in 2019, the 'pro-EU' attitude reaches its bottom at 49%, while for the first time the 'anti-EU' attitude reaches its peak at 51%. These results are consistent with my expectations, confirming H1b.

Figure 4.1 Italian public opinion towards the transnational cleavage



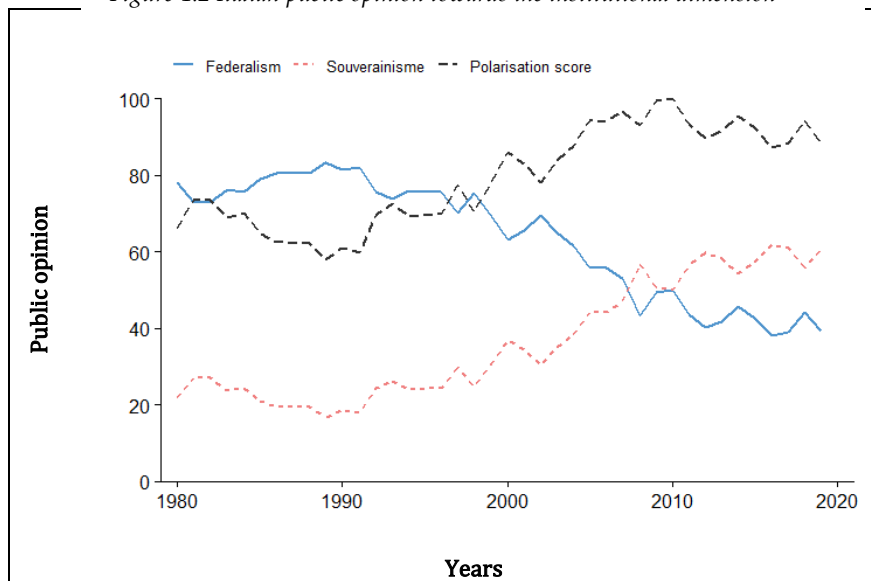
Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 show the degree of public opinion polarisation towards the institutional and the economic dimensions of the transnational cleavage. In both figures, there is a clear pre- and post-difference around the Maastricht Treaty (1992) within Italian public opinion. Indeed, the level of polarisation tends to increase from the 1980s onwards. For instance, in the institutional dimension (see figure 4.2), the level of polarisation rose (in average) from 65.3 in the 1980s to 85.4 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. Similarly, in the economic dimension (see figure 4.2), the level of polarisation rose (in average) from 63.7 in the 1980s to 86.6 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. These results are consistent with H1c and H1e.

Moreover, the trends of the Italian public opinion on the institutional and economic dimensions provide further insights on the nature of this polarisation. The overall tendency of positive attitudes towards the EU in these two figures – ‘federalism’ and ‘marketism’ – is to decrease. As figures 4.2 and 4.3 show, since the 1980s, Italy largely demonstrates itself to be a strong pro-European member state. However, although it was one of the founding members of the EEC, these figures also show that the Italian electorate is characterised by a constant decrease of positive attitudes towards European integration processes in the 2000s and, then, by a dramatic rise of antagonistic attitudes towards EU since 2010. In 2019, the lines representing ‘federalism’ and ‘marketism’ are no longer the (relatively) dominant group of Italians. Moving more in detail, there is indeed a significant decrease in positive attitudes towards EU between 1991 and 1993 of about 7% in the institutional dimension (see figure 4.2) and 13% in the economic dimension (see figure 4.3). Nevertheless, the

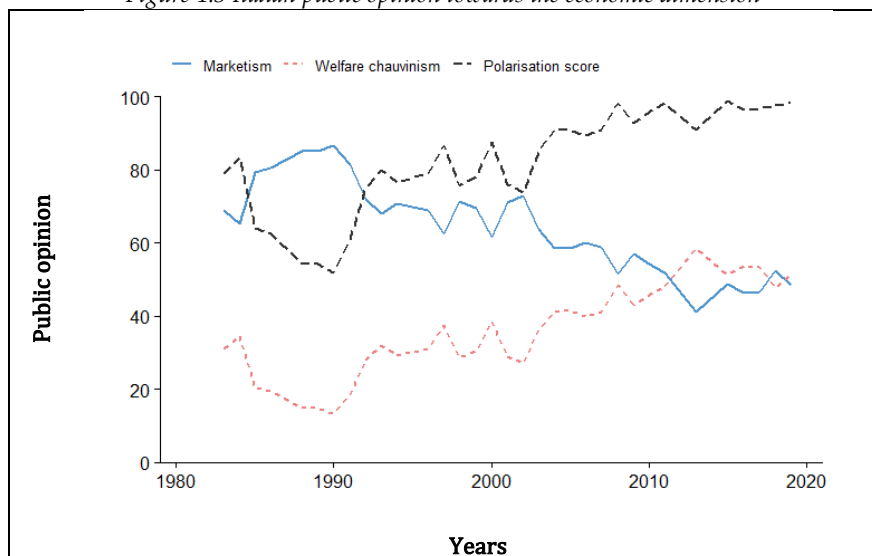
majority of Italian public opinion still tends to express a positive attitude towards the European Union (above 70% in both dimensions). However, between 2002 and 2008, there is another marked decrease of about 30% in the institutional dimension (figure 4.2) and 25% in the economic dimension (figure 4.3). Finally, between the late 2000s and mid-2010s, the 'souverainisme' line reaches its peak at 25% in 2013. In figure 4.2, the 'marketism' line reaches the bottom at 41% in 2013. It is also the first time that it is lower than 'welfare chauvinism'. Therefore, we can see that since 2011, positive attitudes towards the EU ('federalism' and 'marketism') cease to be higher than negative (or uncertain) attitudes towards these dimensions of the transnational cleavage. Therefore, these results are consistent with H1d and H1f.

Figure 4.2 Italian public opinion towards the institutional dimension



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figure 4.3 Italian public opinion towards the economic dimension

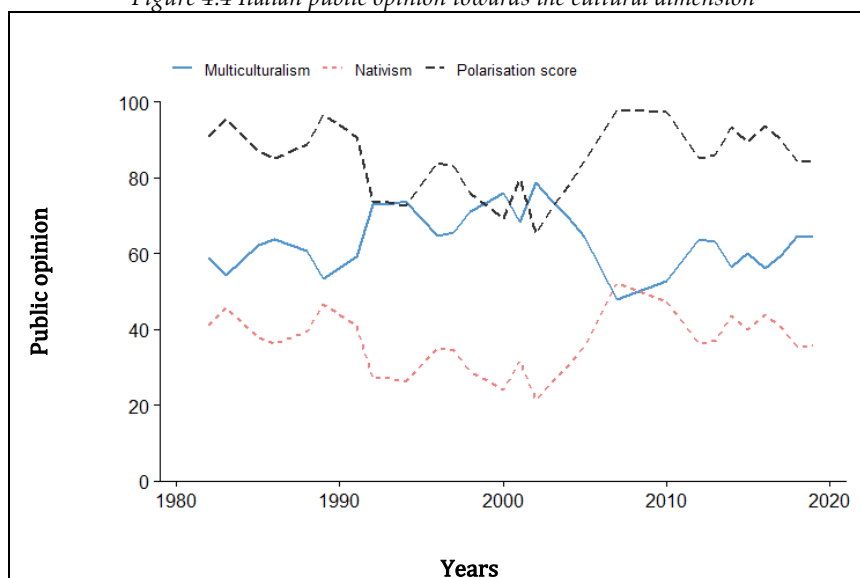


Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figure 4.4 plots the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage. The cultural dimension is different when compared to the other two dimensions of the transnational cleavage. Firstly, in terms of public opinion polarisation, the trend of the public opinion is to be less polarised after the Maastricht Treaty (1992). Indeed, the level of polarisation tends to decrease since the 1980s onwards. Figure 4.3 shows that the level of polarisation decreased (in average) from 92 in the 1980s to 81.9 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. Therefore, this result does not corroborate H1g.

Secondly, the nature of the conflict of the cultural dimension is different from the other two dimensions (institutional and economic). The people that lie in 'nativism' group is always lower than those that lie in 'multiculturalism' group (except in 2007). One can observe that after the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the 'multiculturalism' line reaches its first peak at 73% and the 'nativism' line drops the bottom at 27% in the same year. Consequently, throughout the 1990s, the cultural dimension is characterised by the dominance of the dichotomy 'multiculturalism'. Nevertheless, the early 2000s marks a change in the trend. A large proportion of people turned towards the 'nativism' line, which reached its new peak at 52.1% in 2007 overtaking the 'multiculturalism' line for the first time. Yet, the 'multiculturalism' line surpassed the 'nativism' line again at the same level it used to be in the 1980s. Most people lie on the 'multiculturalism' line (65%-55%), but a consistent part of the Italian electorate also lies in the 'nativism' line (35%-45%).

Figure 4.4 Italian public opinion towards the cultural dimension

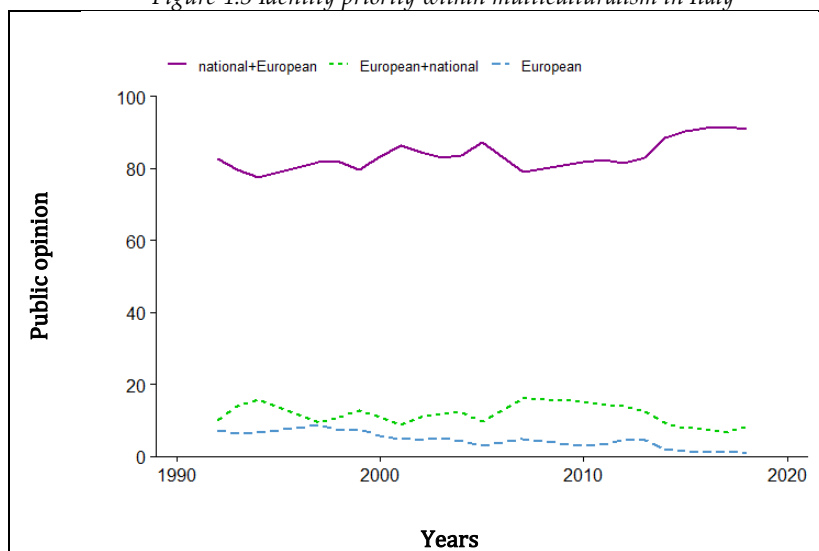


Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Trends shown in figure 4.4 have already largely been explored by Inglehart (1977), who stated that a silent revolution was in underway in most Western European societies, provoking a shift from

materialist to post-materialist values. Western European societies experienced this value change in public opinion in support of progressive values over traditional values, such as multiculturalism over nationalism. These attitudes reached their maximum expression in the late-twentieth century. This is also evident in figure 4.4 since the early 1990s (Inglehart and Norris, 2016: 13). Nevertheless, although figure 4.4 shows that the 'multiculturalism' line is tendentially bigger than the 'nationalism' line, it is necessary to investigate further the analysis of the 'multiculturalism' line in order to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural dimension. From 1992 to 2019, the 'multiculturalism' line is the aggregation of several categories: "<nationality> and European" and 3 for "European and <nationality>" and 4 for "European only". When looking closer, however, among these three categories, "<nationality> and European" is usually dominant. Although the Italian electorate is not exclusively moving towards a nativist identity, there is evidence (figure 4.5.) that Italians tend to prioritise to a greater extent their national identity over their European identity. One can observe that the prioritisation of the national identity over European identity increases over the course of the decades. Therefore, results from figure 4.5 corroborate H1h.

Figure 4.5 Identity priority within multiculturalism in Italy



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

The analysis, so far, has shown the extent to which the level of polarisation has changed over the years within the Italian demand space. From these results (figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4), it is possible to ascertain the years where the level of polarisation within the transnational cleavage and the three dimensions have experienced the most relevant changes. For instance, I could assess those events such as the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the introduction of the Euro (2002), the first EU enlargement to

Eastern European countries (2004), the Eurozone crisis (2010) and the refugee crisis (2015) occurred with changes of the level of polarisation towards the transnational cleavage and each dimension.

From the figures described above (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4), the period between the late 1980s and the early 1990s was marked by a strong positive attitude towards the institutional and economic dimensions. Among others, Daniels (1998: 107) used the term *permissive consensus* to describe this period of time, which allowed the Italian political elite of the 1980s and the early 1990s to sustain policies in pursuit of more economic and political unification of the EEC countries, without suffering from political blame in implementing significant institutional reforms and delegating national authority to transnational institutions. To this end, until the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, Italy was “long regarded as the most pro-European of the continent’s citizens” (Serricchio, 2012: 115).

However, after the Maastricht Treaty, subsequent events linked to the European integration process made the EU more visible in the eyes of Italian citizens, who started to recognize the extent to which the EU can impact their daily lifestyles. For instance, on January 1st, 2002, the European currency replaced the European member states’ national currencies, including the *Lira*. At first, the replacement of Italian national currency was perceived by Italian public opinion as a benefit for the country. Indeed, according to the 2002 Eurobarometer, Italians had the greatest Europeanism for the implementation of the Euro within the EU15 (Risse, 2003: 495). However, although Italy was historically a Euro-enthusiastic country, the decrease of positive attitude towards the EU seem to widen, especially after 2002. Undeniably, the EU enlargement process towards the Eastern European countries played a significant role in shaping the Italian public’s attitudes in both economic and cultural dimensions. Indeed, the 2004 enlargement of the EU was perceived by Italian public opinion as a threat both from an economic and a cultural point of view. From the economic point of view, enlargement towards poorer regions of Eastern Europe meant an impact on structural spending from the EU budget. It was believed that this enlargement would jeopardise the distribution of community financial assistance, which had traditionally been prioritised for the Mediterranean regions, especially the southern regions of Italy (Serricchio, 2012: 131-132). From a cultural point of view, Italians did not consider populations from Eastern Europe as Europeans (Risse, 2003). They were perceived as a threat to their cultural heritage and traditions and, moreover, enlargement towards Eastern European cultures undermined what was until then defined as ‘European identity’ (Serricchio, 2012: 131-132). Hence, the more different the candidate country is, the less likely public opinion would support enlargement because this would “depend on the degree of community and

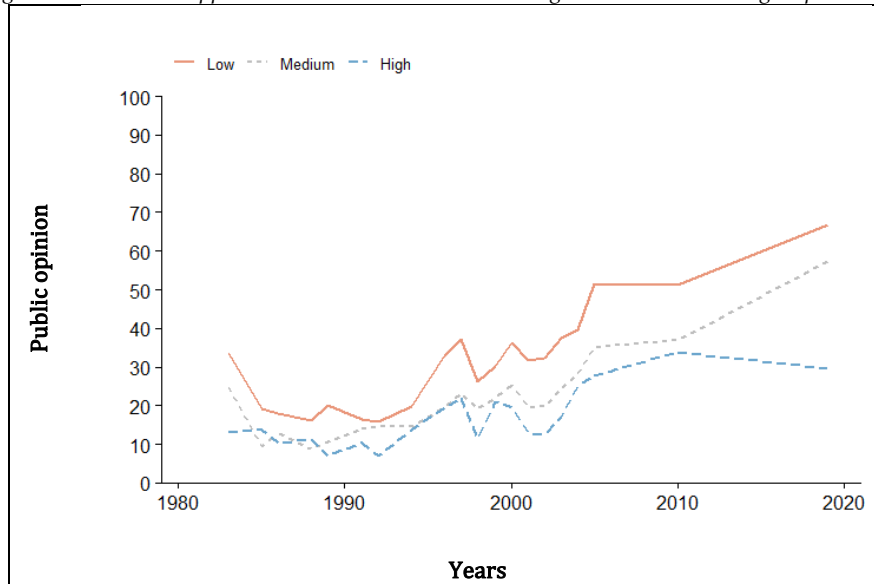
cultural or normative match” between old and new Europeans (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2002: 515).

Finally, the 2010 Eurozone crisis and the 2015 refugee crisis have both showed the limitations of the EU to handle crises at the transactional level contributing to “the most recent negative peaks in EU support” (especially) in the institutional and economic dimensions (Conti et al., 2020: 7). As regards the Eurozone crisis, this impacted the Italian political landscape once Silvio Berlusconi resigned as Prime Minister on 12th November 2011 and was substituted by the technical government led by Mario Monti, a former EU commissioner. According to Bellucci (2014), the EU issue became a significantly divisive topic in Italy at that time (also demonstrated in figures 4.2 and 4.3). Although this technical government was sustained by all established parties from the right-wing to the left-wing of the political spectrum, the Italian electorate has seen in “Mr Monti’s policies [...] the implementation of EU/ ECB initiatives” and, for that reason, “voters perceive the EU as responsible for national policy, and ruling parties are held less accountable for economic performance” (Bellucci, 2014: 248). Similarly, the institutional dimension was also affected by the refugee crisis in 2015. Italian electorate blamed the EU for abandoning Italy in the management of the migration crisis, especially when the migration flow reached its peak in 2015 and the peripheral countries of the EU found themselves managing the crisis alone (Barbulescu and Beaudonnet, 2014; Conti et al., 2020).

4.2.1.2 Societal demarcations

Figure 4.6 shows three main stages on the impact of the transnational cleavage to the Italian general public: the 1980s (no conflict), the 1990s (transition) and since 2000s (conflict). In the 1980s, societal division is almost inexistent: in the first stage, all three education groups are not significantly spaced and tend to overlap. In the 1990s, the three educational groups tend to slightly separate and, eventually, since 2000s the three educational groups space out. Secondly, opposing attitudes towards the transnational increases for all education groups over the timeframe – which is in line with the previous results (Figure 4.1). However, it is worth noting that opposing attitude mostly increase in the least educated group.

Figure 4.6 Trends in opposition to the transnational cleavage across educational groups in Italy

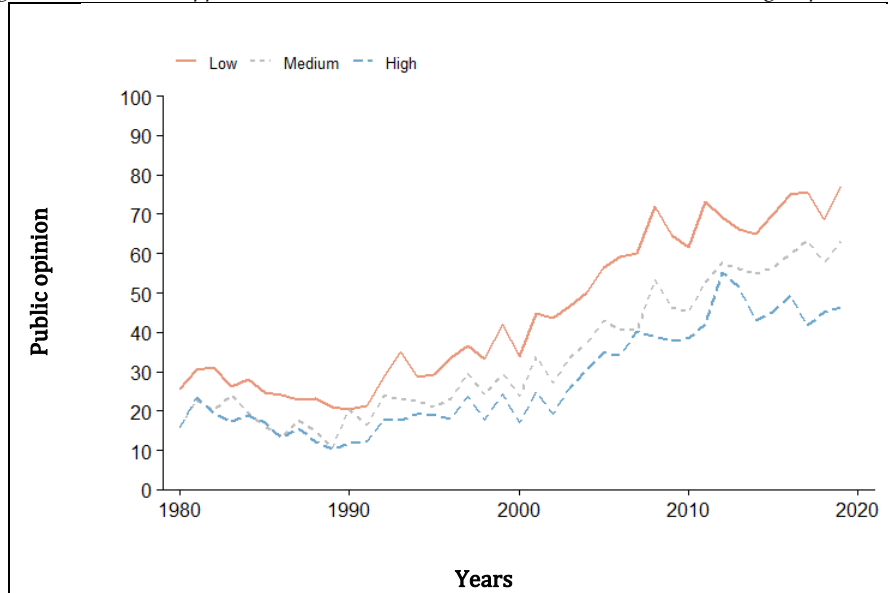


Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Moving to the dimensions of the transitional cleavage, figures 4.7 and 4.8 support my initial expectations. Disaggregating Italian public opinion by educational group reveals that in the 1980s there is no division between societal groups, but in the subsequent years, after the Maastricht Treaty, the three educational groups tend to separate. Moreover, what is worth noticing is that the educational groups widely separate after the early 2000s rather than after the Maastricht Treaty (1992). This is very much in line with the previous findings demonstrating that the 1990s can be defined as a *transition phase* because of the *permissive consensus* attitude that characterised the Italian electorate in that period of time (Daniels, 1998). Since 2002, after the introduction of the Euro in Italy, all three educational groups tend to demonstrate antagonistic attitudes towards the EU, but to a different extent (in both figures 4.7 and 4.8). Moreover, in figure 4.7, the group of people with the lowest level of education expressed the highest level of antagonistic attitudes towards the institutional dimension between 2013 and 2015, which coincided with the peak of migration flows coming from the central Mediterranean route (Libya) and the Eastern Mediterranean route (Turkey). In figure 4.8, the same group reaches its peak in 2010, which coincided with the Eurozone crisis; and between 2013 and 2015, which was defined by the (Italian) National Council for Economics and Labour (CNEL) the worst period⁵⁵ of the Italian economic history since the Second World War (La Repubblica, 2013).

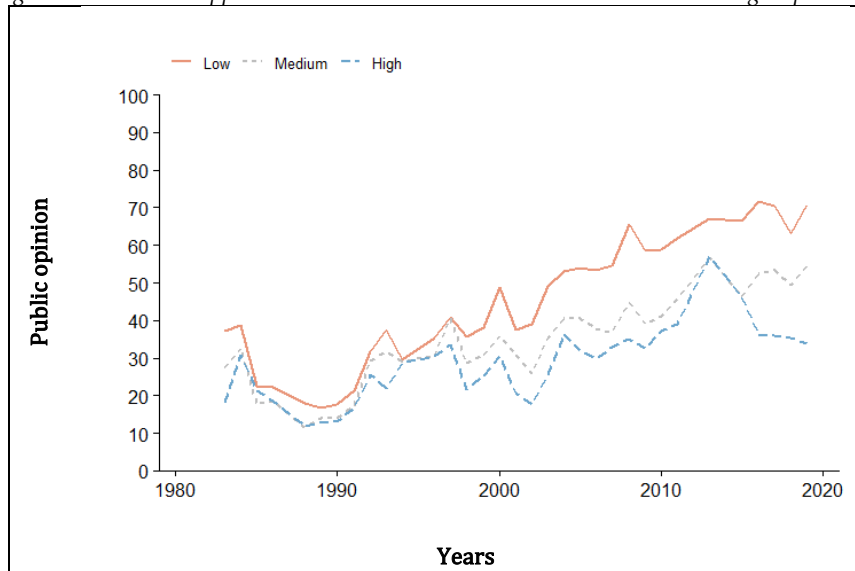
⁵⁵ CNEL has declared that the official unemployed have increased by over one million and the Italian economic system has lost 750,000 jobs (La Repubblica, 2013).

Figure 4.7 Trends in opposition to the institutional dimension across educational groups in Italy



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figure 4.8 Trends in opposition to the economic dimension across educational groups in Italy

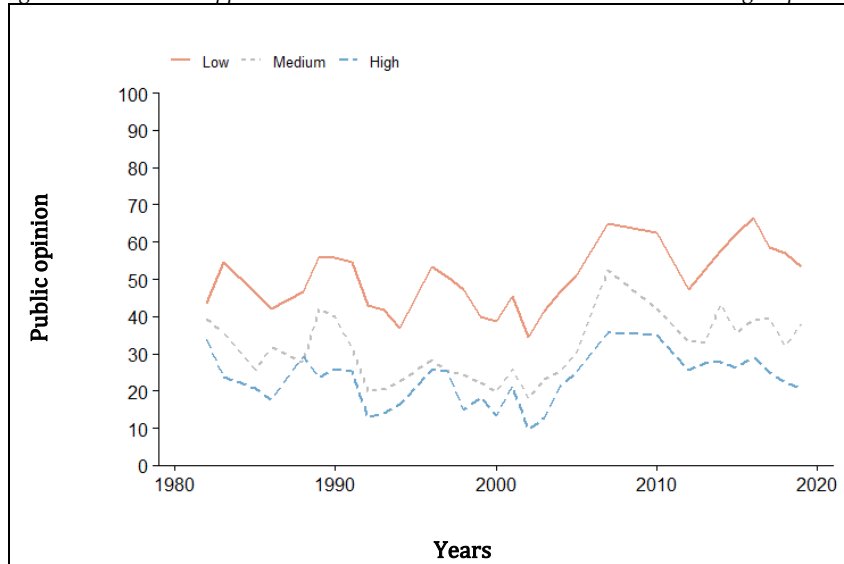


Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figure 4.9 shows trends in opposition to the cultural dimension across educational groups. This figure plots unexpected outcomes in comparison with figures 4.7 and 4.8. Firstly, it shows that all educational groups are significantly divided over the period observed. This divide is even more accentuated between the group of people with the lowest level of education as compared to the other two groups (which are considerably close). This result is very much in line with other findings that demonstrated how low levels of education tend to have a significant role in deepening nativist values (Van de Werfhorst and de Graaf, 2004; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). The most important finding from this figure is that the societal division did not originate within the period observed.

Since the early 1980s, the three lines are separated and they never close or overlap during the period observed (except for the groups with medium and high level of education, which sometimes have similar attitudes). Finally, all three educational groups tend to increase their opposition to the cultural dimension after 2010.

Figure 4.9 Trends in opposition to the cultural dimension across educational groups in Italy



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

By disaggregating Italian public opinion by educational group, the analysis reveals that there is societal division in Italy over the transnational cleavage and in all three dimensions of the transnational cleavage, especially since the early 1990s. This societal demarcation originates in the period after the Maastricht treaty (1992) in the transnational cleavage, but also in the institutional and economic dimensions (confirming H2a, H2c and H2e). However, this process does not occur in the cultural dimension. All three educational groups are divided all over the period observed from the 1980s until the 2010s. Therefore, H2g is not confirmed. Finally, results in figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9 provide a clear picture that all educational groups tend to increase, but most importantly, people holding a low level of education are more likely to hold antagonistic attitudes ('souverainisme', 'welfare chauvinism' and 'nativism') towards the dimensions of transnational cleavage than people with a higher level of education (medium and high). For that reason, H2b, H2d, H2f and H2h are confirmed. Having concluded this analysis on the latent demand side of the League, the next section will repeat the same procedure in order to explore the latent demand side of the National Rally.

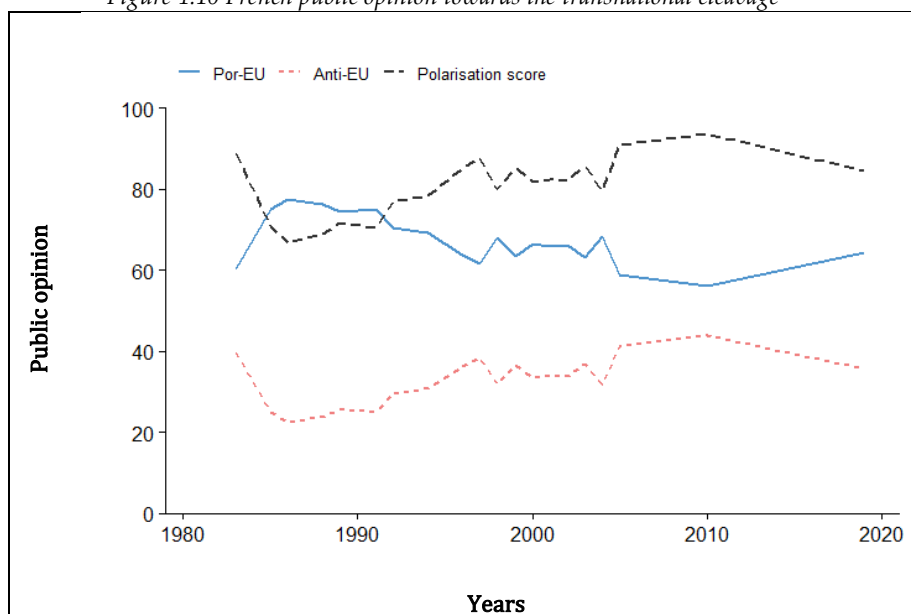
4.2.2 The latent demand side of the National Rally

As I stated above, this section will be dedicated on the latent demand side of the National Rally. It is structured to address both the polarisation and the societal divisions within the new transnational cleavage (and dimensions) on the French public opinion.

4.2.1.1 Polarisation

In what follows, I analyse the French demand space, exploring the extent to which the transnational cleavage (and each dimension) is addressed by French public opinion from the 1980s until the 2010s. Starting with the transnational cleavage, figure 4.10 shows the degree of the French public opinion polarisation. This figure shows that since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 there has been a significant increase of the polarisation on the transnational cleavage. In fact, the level of polarisation rose (in average) from 71 in the 1980s to 84 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. This result confirms H1a. Furthermore, the overall trend of the French public opinion shows that the positive attitude towards this new cleavage (pro-EU) tends to decrease over the years. As figure 4.10 shows, the French public seems to be largely in favour towards the EU in the 1980s. However, after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, there has been an important decrease of the 'pro-EU' attitude of about 22% from 1992 to 1997. Subsequently, the balance between 'pro-EU' attitudes and 'anti-EU' attitudes remained almost constant in the next decades from 1998 to 2004. Finally, from 2005 to 2010, the 'pro-EU' attitudes decreased again of about 12%, reaching its bottom at 56%. Yet, it must be pointed out that French with 'anti-EU' attitudes never reached the same amount of French with 'pro-EU' attitudes. Indeed, in 2019, there is a countertrend where the 'pro-EU' attitudes increase of about 8%. These results confirm H1b.

Figure 4.10 French public opinion towards the transnational cleavage

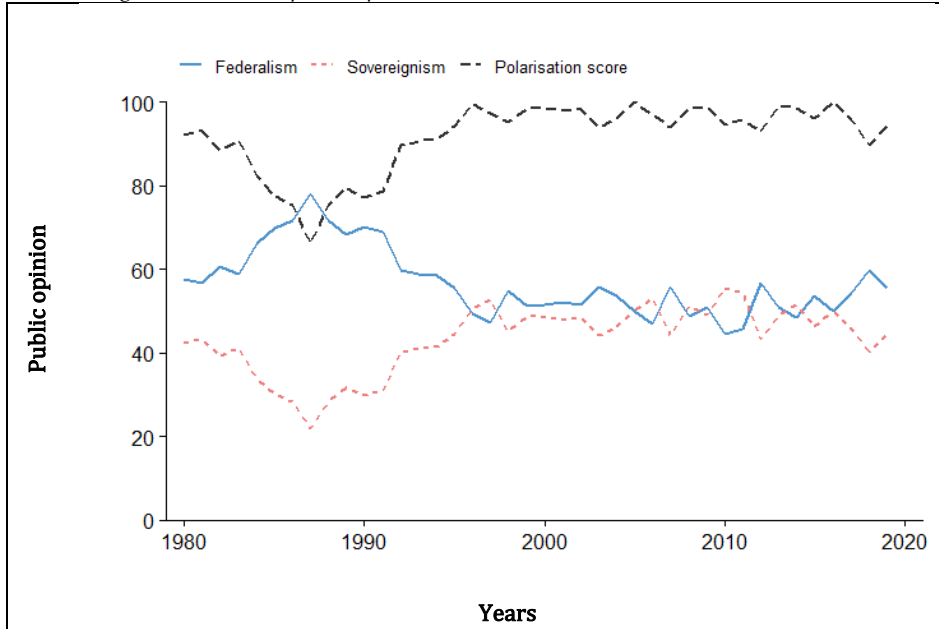


Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figures 4.11 and 4.12 show the degree of public opinion polarisation towards the institutional and the economic dimensions of the transnational cleavage in France. From the 1980s onwards, the level of public opinion polarisation changes before and after the Maastricht Treaty (1992). For instance, in the institutional dimension (see figure 4.11), the level of polarisation rose (in average) from 82 in the 1980s to 95.3 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. Similarly, in the economic dimension (see figure 4.12), the level of polarisation rose (in average) from 79.8 in the 1980s to 89.1 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. These results are thus consistent with H1c and H1e.

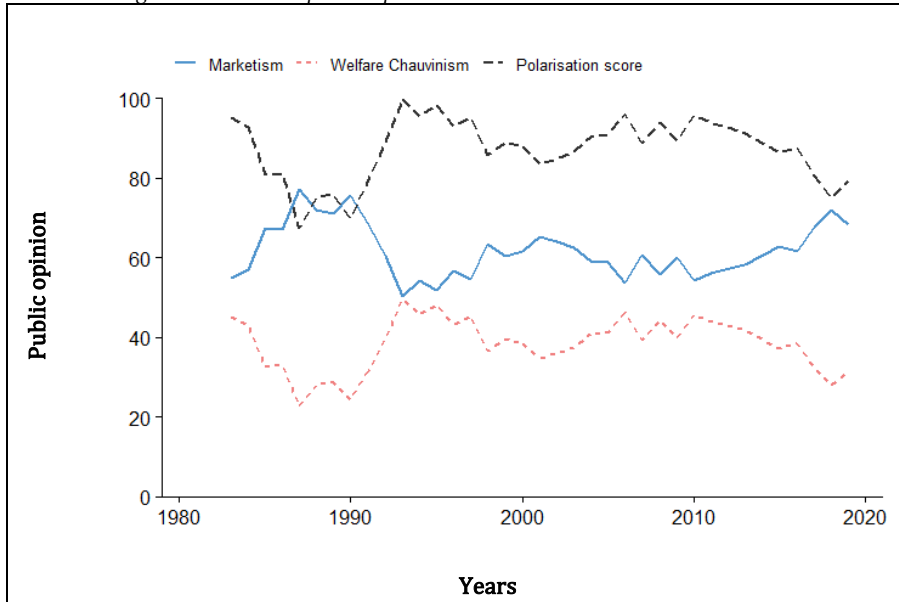
Moreover, the lines representing positive attitudes towards these two dimensions have similar tendencies when compared to each other in the period of time between the 1980s and 1992. Nevertheless, after the signing of Maastricht Treaty in 1992, these two lines – ‘federalism’ and ‘marketism’ –develop differently until 2019. As figures 4.11 and 4.12 show, since the 1980s, France largely demonstrates itself to be a relatively strong pro-European member state. However, although France was also one of the founding members of the EEC, these figures show that the French public opinion is characterised by a decrease of positive attitudes towards European integration processes in the early 1990s and, subsequently, the balance between ‘federalism’ vs. ‘souverainisme’ and ‘marketism’ vs. ‘welfare chauvinism’ remain substantially steady in the following decades.

Figure 4.11 French public opinion towards the institutional dimension



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Figure 4.12 French public opinion towards the economic dimension



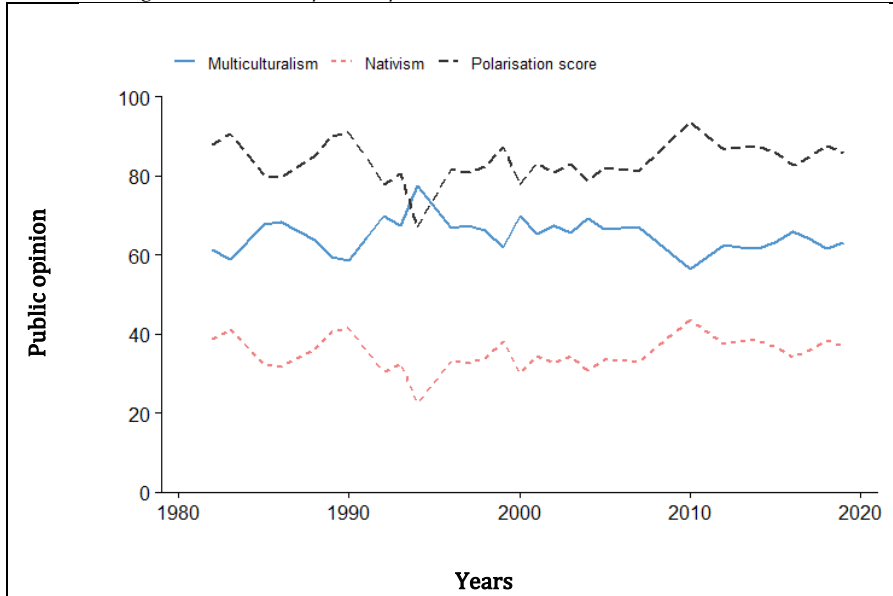
Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Observing figures 4.11 and 4.12, positive attitudes towards institutional and economic dimensions significantly increased in the mid-1980s. French citizens in favour of the EU membership reached its peak at 78% in 1987 (see figure 4.11). Similarly, the proportion of French citizens that perceived the liberalisation of the EU market as benefit for their country reached 77% in 1987 (see figure 4.12). However, in both figures, the positive lines tend to decline abruptly until 1992. In the institutional dimension (see figure 4.11), the federalism line declined by 18% from 1987 to 1992; similar, in the economic dimension (see figure 4.12), the marketism line declined by 17% in the same period of

time. Subsequently, from the mid-1990s, the institutional and economic dimensions have changed in different ways. In the institutional dimension, the 'federalism' line keeps decreasing and, for the first time, it crosses the threshold of 50% by reaching its first bottom at 47% in 1997; meanwhile, in the economic dimension, from 1992 to 1997, the 'marketism' and 'welfare chauvinism' lines reached the closest gap in all the time frame observed – almost 5% of difference –, but the 'marketism' line is never lower than the 'welfare chauvinism' line. In the following years, from 1998 to 2016, both the institutional and the economic dimensions differently changed over the years. On the one hand, in the institutional dimension, the 'federalism' and the 'souverainisme' lines alternate from 1998 to 2016. For instance, in 2010, at the end of the worst phase of the Eurozone crisis starting in 2010, the 'federalism' line reaches its lowest point at 44% and, in the same year, the 'souverainisme' line reaches its peak for the first time at 56%. On the other hand, in figure 4.12, we see that the 'marketism' line revives joining a new peak at 65% in 2001. Here, the 'marketism' line never experienced drastic decreases. From the early 2000s to the mid-2010s, a consistent proportion of French citizens has always perceived the EU market as a benefit for their country: French public opinion who considered EU membership as a benefit for French's interests, never decreased below the 54%. Ultimately, in both figures 4.11 and 4.12, after the Brexit referendum (in 2016), the 'marketism' line increased by 22% (see figure 4.12); while the 'federalism' line increased by 10% (see figure 4.11). Therefore, these results of the institutional and economic dimensions are consistent with H1d and H1f.

Figure 4.13 shows how French citizens address the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage. As for the Italian case, the third dimension differs from the institutional and economic dimensions. In terms of public opinion polarisation, the trend of public opinion is to be less polarised after the Maastricht Treaty (1992). Indeed, the level of polarisation tends to decrease from the 1980s onwards. Figure 4.13 shows that the level of polarisation decreased (on average) from 87.5 in the 1980s to 82.6 along the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s. Therefore, this result does not corroborate H1g. Moreover, in the cultural dimension, the overall tendency is that the 'multiculturalism' line dominates the 'nativism' line all through the period observed. This status is immutable. The 'multiculturalism' line fluctuated from a minimum of 55% in 1987 to a maximum of 77% in 1994, but it did not experience drastic changes over the period observed, except for the period of time around the Maastricht Treaty. From 1990 to 1994, the 'nativism' line drastically decreased by about 19%.

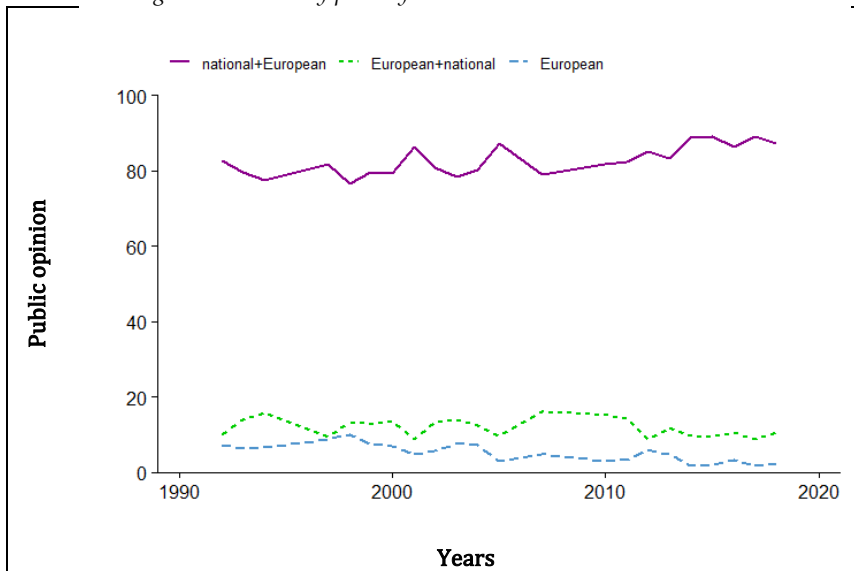
Figure 4.13 French public opinion towards the cultural dimension



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

These results are in line with the previous literature on value analysis (Inglehart, 1977; Inglehart and Norris, 2019). Inglehart (1977) argued that citizens from industrialised countries would experience a shift of values from materialist to post-materialist values. Nevertheless, when looking closer at the 'multiculturalism' line, among the three categories, there is a large majority of people who identify as "<nationality> and European". Similar to the Italian electorate, a majority of French citizens do not hold an exclusive French identity (nativist), but they rather hold a multicultural identity, while prioritizing their national identity (see figure 4.14). This prioritisation of the national identity over the European identity increases over the years. Thus, results from figure 4.14 corroborate H1h.

Figure 4.14 Identity priority within multiculturalism in France



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

The analysis of public opinion trends on the transnational cleavage and each dimension (institutional, economic and cultural) reveal that that, on the one hand, the transnational cleavage, the institutional dimension and economic dimension have experienced episodes of drastic change. On the other hand, the cultural dimension did not significantly change. Accordingly, from the above figures (4.10, 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13), it is possible to identify the years where the level of polarisation within the transnational cleavage and the three dimensions have experienced the most relevant changes, for instance: the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the introduction of the Euro (2002), the first EU enlargement to Eastern European countries (2004) and the Brexit Referendum (2016).

At the most general level, the positive attitudes towards the transnational cleavage and its dimensions (institutional, economic and cultural) are in line with previous literature on French attitudes towards EU in the 1980s (Milner, 2000). The French general public has always been a strong supporter of the European integration process, as long this would have also benefited the French's interests – in a *Gaullist* vision of a united Europe (Bahut-Leyse, 1980; Hainsworth et al., 2004). The level of polarisation is considerably low in the years around the Maastricht Treaty, yet this period was also characterised by a domestic political debate on the French's interest in ratifying the Maastricht Treaty that probably explain why after 1992 the level of polarisation starts to increase in both the institutional and economic dimensions. According to Lewis-Beck and Morey (2007), the most decisive issues in the Maastricht debate were the compromised French foreign policy that would have been delegated from national authority to transnational authorities and the economic conditions of the monetary union, which was perceived by the French public opinion as a “leap into the dark” (Milner, 2000: 39). Eventually the debate reached its climax with the *Petit Oui* [little yes] that passed the referendum to ratify the treaty on September 20th, 1992. Although French political elite and polls expected an overwhelmed consensus towards the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, this referendumpassed with a small majority of 51%. The outcome of the referendum campaign revealed the latent sentiment about *souverainisme* in France, the roots of which can be found in the Gaullist's vision of Europe (Mayer and Tiberj, 2004; Scopelliti, 2019). This is not surprising, as the utilitarian pro-European attitudes of the French right wing used to coexist with significant Eurosceptic feelings because of ‘de Gaulle's intergovernmental “France First” interpretation of the European project’ (Leruth and Startin: 2017: 154; Hainsworth et al., 2004).

In the mid-1990s, although *Euro-scepticism* (especially towards the transnational currency) has grown in France, the economic dimension of the European integration process remains generally

positive for the French electorate thanks to the “national pride that the French economy had satisfied the convergence criteria” (Milner, 2000: 40). Subsequently, the enlargement of the EU towards the Eastern European countries (2004) was one of the most significant events linked to the European integration process that dampened Europeanism in the French electorate (Marthaler, 2005: 229; Toshkov et al., 2014: 12). As figure 4.11 shows, the most significant decrease in the ‘federalism’ line happened from 2004 to 2006 (it decreased about 8%). Indeed, these two years coincided with a strong domestic debate that involved the European integration process considering mostly the institutional dimension. With regards to the economic dimension, in line with Serricchio’s interpretation of Italian public opinion towards EU enlargement 2004, Timus (2006: 338) proposes a similar explanation for this increase of negative net support from the French electorate. From an individualist approach, French citizens would balance costs and benefits in the event that new member states in the EU might impact the dissemination of EU subsidies. As this analysis shows, from the early 1990s to the mid-2010s, French public opinion experiences a considerably long period of time where the institutional and economic dimensions of transnational cleavage were topics that polarised the electorate, dividing it into two almost balanced parts (see figures 4.11 and 4.12).

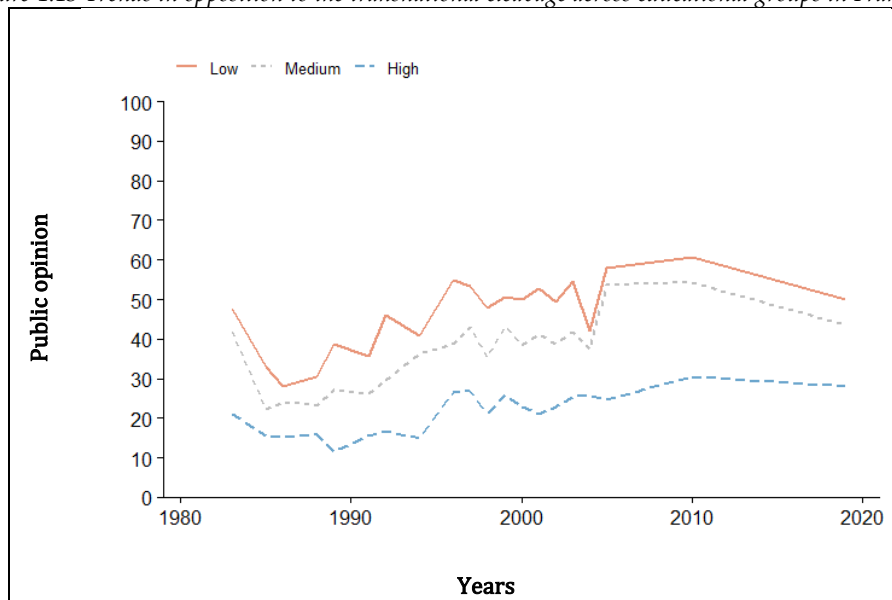
Ultimately, since mid-2010s, there has been a significant U-turn effect in terms of polarisation when considering the transnational cleavage as a whole (figure 4.10), the institutional dimension (figure 4.11) and the economic dimension (figure 4.12). These results are in line with recent literature on Brexit’s impact on French public opinion. For instance, De Vries (2020: 3) recently argues that one of the most important outcomes produced by Brexit result is that “a possible alternative to EU membership—an exit—is highly uncertain, potentially economically damaging, politically difficult to achieve”. As such, Brexit demonstrated that it is possible to leave the European Union in order *to reclaim national sovereignty*. However, the author also provided evidence that the negotiations to withdraw from the EU can also provoke significant conflicts within society, and it can also provoke negative impacts both to the economy (because of the extremely connected economies between UK and European countries) and the political reputation for the government that is at that moment ruling the country. This interpretation is also in line with previous research on measuring the propensities of European countries to leave the EU (Gastinger, 2019). Therefore, in the 2017 French Presidential and Legislative elections, Frexit (French exit) was one of the most important topics of that campaign (see Chapter 5 in regards to National Rally’s supply side); in both elections the French electorate expressed strong support for the most Euro-enthusiast political party led by Emmanuel

Macron (*La République En Marche!*) confirming that the French electorate ‘seems guaranteed to see its interests better served by shaping the European project rather than abandoning it altogether’ (Gastinger, 2019: 13).

4.2.1.2 Societal demarcations

Figure 4.15, which represent French citizens’ antagonistic attitudes towards the transnational cleavage, shows that societal divisions did not originate within the period observed (from 1980 to 2019). However, the line representing French citizens with a higher level of education tends to widen the gap with the other two lines (representing low and medium level of education) after the ratification of Maastricht Treaty in 1992. As such, it is possible to identify two different stages: a pre-Maastricht Treaty phase and a post-Maastricht Treaty phase. Moreover, although groups representing low and medium level of education have similar trends in opposing the EU, the lowest educational group still tends to be more sceptical towards the European integration project.

Figure 4.15 Trends in opposition to the transnational cleavage across educational groups in France

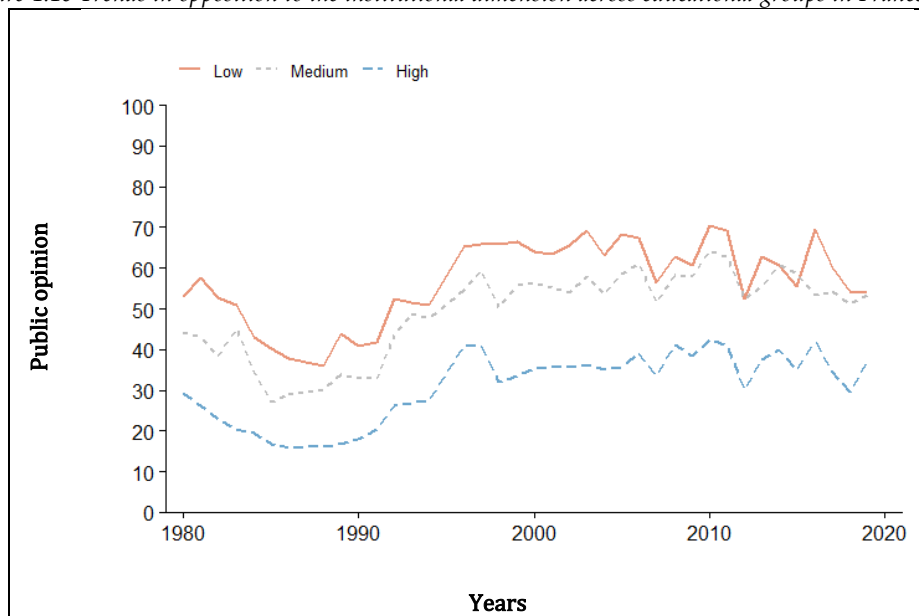


Source: Author’s elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

When focusing on the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, within figures 4.16, which corresponds to the institutional dimension, the three educational groups are also separated in the 1980s. However, in this case, the gap among these three lines remains constant over the period observed. In fact, when comparing the periods of time before and after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, both the low and medium lines tend to keep a constant gap with the high line.

Therefore, figure 4.16 does not support my expectation. By disaggregating French demand space by educational groups, it is possible to observe that all three lines are distinctly separated. Thus, the institutional dimension did impact the French demand side over the timeframe, but the Maastricht Treaty does not seem to significantly impact the demand side. On the other hand, it is confirmed that the French citizens with a low level of education tend to be the most antagonistic towards the institutional dimension of the transnational cleavage. In Figure 4.16, the group of people with a low level of education reached the last peak at 67% in 2016.

Figure 4.16 Trends in opposition to the institutional dimension across educational groups in France



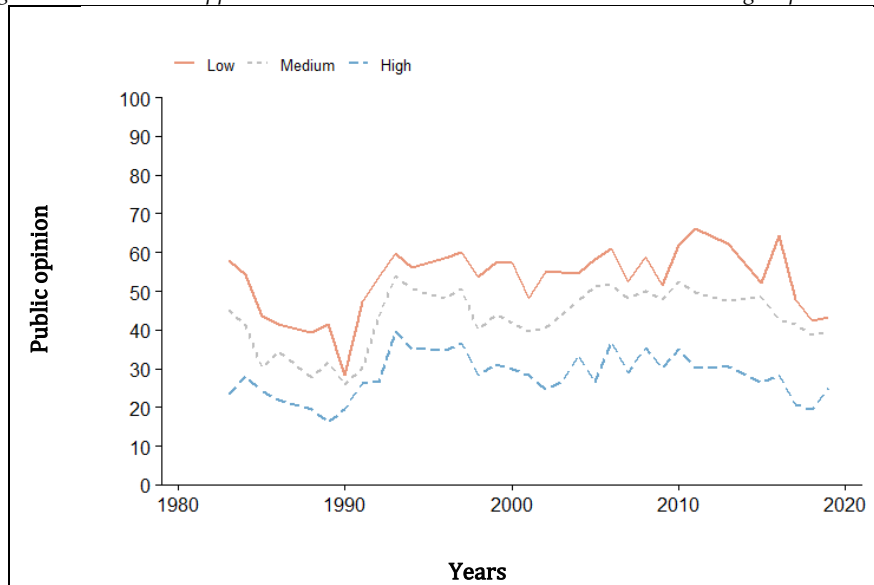
Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

By contrast, in Figure 4.17, which corresponds to the economic dimension, the three educational groups are also separated in the 1980s. The gap among these three lines is very close and in certain years they even overlap. This period can thus be identified as a pre-Maastricht Treaty phase: there does exist societal demarcation in French society in the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage in correlation to French citizens' level of education, but the gap among the three lines is considerably close. Nevertheless, after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (1992), the groups of people with a low and medium level of education tend to increase and to become closer to each other after 1991/1992, while the group of people with a high level of education tends to decrease and become more distant from the other two groups. This is the period that can be identified as the post-Maastricht Treaty phase (see also Bølstad, 2015; Hakhverdian et al., 2013).

Thus, figure 4.17 supports my expectations. By disaggregating French demand space by educational groups, it is possible to observe that all three lines are distinctly separated, and this societal

demarcation deepens after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. Finally, French citizens with a low level of education usually tend to be the most critical towards the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage. In fact, in figure 4.17, the most vulnerable citizens, who have mostly suffered the consequences of the Eurozone crisis (Kriesi et al., 2006), coincides with the group of people with a low level of education. In fact, the French citizens with a low level of education reached the peak at 66% in 2011 (a few years after the Eurozone crisis of 2010).

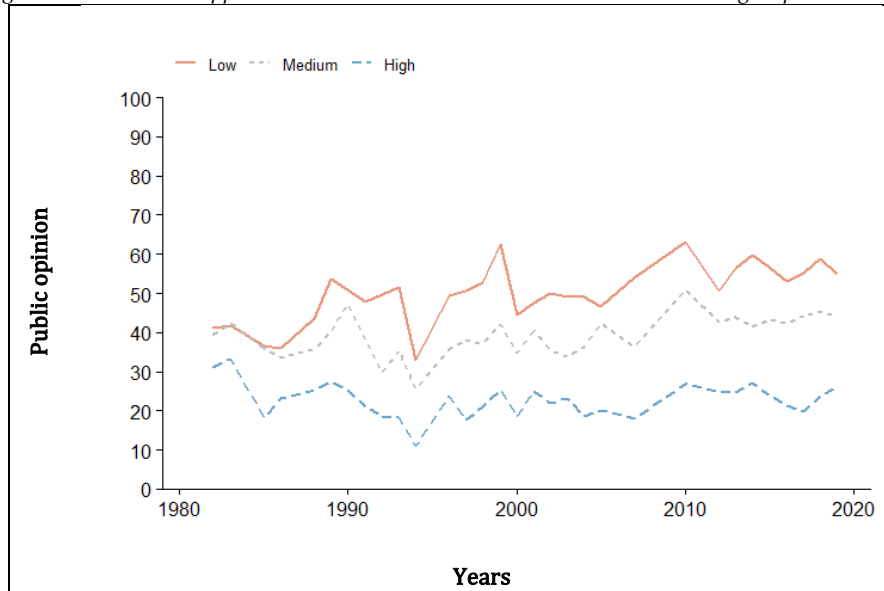
Figure 4.17 Trends in opposition to the economic dimension across educational groups in France



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

Finally, figure 4.18 shows trends in opposition to the cultural dimension across educational groups in France. This figure shows some similarities with previous findings on trends in opposition to the institutional and economic dimensions in France. The cultural dimension is, firstly, in line with the previous dimensions within the French demand space showing that the groups holding a low and medium level of education have more similar attitudes throughout the period observed (the lines are close to each other). On the other hand, although figure 4.18 confirms that a societal division does exist within the French electorate, it does not show when this line of conflict originated. Indeed, the three lines are already separated since the early 1980s.

Figure 4.18 Trends in opposition to the cultural dimension across educational groups in France



Source: Author's elaboration from Eurobarometer data available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>

All in all, disaggregating the French public opinion shows that there is no evidence that the three dimensions of transnational cleavage originated in the period observed. In the figures above (4.15, 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18), the three lines representing educational groups have already been divided since the 1980s. Yet, the transnational cleavage, the institutional dimension and the economic dimension (figures 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17) do show a pre- and post- Maastricht Treaty impact on the French demand space. Indeed, these two figures demonstrate that the gap between educational groups has significantly widened since 1992, and especially for people holding a high level of education, which widened compared to the other two groups with a low and medium level of education. Hence, although the Maastricht Treaty did not create the societal demarcations within French society, it has increased divisions that had already existed before the 1980s. Thus, I can argue that the transnational cleavage the institutional dimension and economic dimension confirm H2a, H2c, H2e, but not H2g. Finally, results in figures 4.15, 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18 provide empirical evidence that all educational groups tend to increase, but most importantly, people holding a low level of education are more likely to hold antagonistic attitudes ('anti-EU', 'souverainisme', 'welfare chauvinism' and 'nativism') more than people with a higher level of education (medium and high). For that reason, H2b, H2d, H2f and H2h are confirmed.

4.3 Conclusion: the restructuring of national political contexts

The academic literature on the radical right parties has usually focused on understanding the reasons why they are sustained by voters, or the main topics that radical right parties deliver to their

electorate. The aim of this chapter has been to examine the development of the political landscape where political parties must adapt in order match the interests of the voters (Wessels, 1999: 137). I, thus, follow the stream of research on public opinion regarding the European integration (De Vries and Van Kersbergen), while underpinning how public opinion change with regard to the new transnational cleavage and in all its dimensions. The prior analysis of this chapter concerns two main steps: (1) observing whether and how the level of polarisation of the public opinion has changed in the transnational cleavage and in each dimension and (2) observing whether the transnational cleavages and its dimensions have produced societal demarcations. This empirical analysis is part of a broader framework which aims to study the flexibility of established RRP's on the new transnational cleavage. I thus examined the latent demand side from the early 1980s to the late 2010s testing two sets of research hypotheses (H1 and H2). Below, table 4.1 outlines how the League and the National Rally have changed in terms of contextual flexibility in the transnational cleavage and dimensions of the transnational cleavage. The categories 'different' and 'same' inform whether the transnational cleavage and dimensions of the transnational cleavage have changed over the years.

Table 4.1 Findings from the analysis of Chapter 4

League	Polarisation	Impact	Overall internal flexibility
Transnational cleavage	Different	Different	2
- <i>Institutional dimension</i>	Different	Different	2
- <i>Economic dimension</i>	Different	Different	2
- <i>Cultural dimension</i>	Same	Same	0
National Rally			
Transnational cleavage	Different	Different	2
- <i>Institutional dimension</i>	Different	Same	1
- <i>Economic dimension</i>	Different	Different	2
- <i>Cultural dimension</i>	Same	Same	0

Notes: The cells show how many indicators are flexible: 0 = Frozen, 1 = Partially flexible, 2 = Fully flexible. Source: Author's elaboration.

Overall, there are four main findings standing out from this chapter. Firstly, when observing the overall level of polarisation, one could observe that the Italian latent demand space and French latent demand space demonstrate some similarities. In both Italy and France, the latent demand space demonstrated a low level of polarisation within the transnational cleavage, the institutional dimensions and economic dimension in the early 1980s, but this gradually increased, showing that both Italian and French's citizens are divided in substantive equal parts between positive and negative (or neutral) positions towards this new cleavage, including both the institutional and economic dimensions. The cultural dimension, however, differs from the others (in both cases studies). The level of polarisation is higher in the 1980s (before the Maastricht Treaty), but then it

decreased since the early 1990s. To this end, the level of polarisation is confirmed to increase after the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 on the transnational cleavage and within the institutional and the economic dimensions, but not in the cultural dimension. Moreover, although Italian and French's demand spaces are similar in terms of level of polarisation along the three dimensions of the transnational cleavage, there are still some differences within the cultural dimension. Within the Italian demand space, the trend's line occurs to represent a U-curve. From 1982 to 1991, the level of polarisation averaged at 92, from 1992 to 2005, it averaged at 76, and from 2007 to 2019, it averaged at 90. This result suggests that the cultural dimension has become a dividing topic in the Italian electorate, which can partly explain the recent growing popularity of radical right parties (Clark and Rohrschneider, 2021). Within the French demand space, on the other hand, the trend's line representing the level of polarisation is substantially flat. Overall, the same number of French citizens tend to hold a multicultural identity or an exclusive national identity over the course of the years.

Secondly, all in all, both Italian and French demand spaces demonstrate pro-Europeanism in the 1980s (excluding the cultural dimension). Therefore, public opinion is mostly moving towards positive attitudes such as 'pro-EU', 'federalism' and 'marketism'. Nevertheless, this pro-Europeanism is dampened in the years after the signing of Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which was a dividing debate within demand side. People that hold positive attitudes towards these three conflicts tend to decrease after the historical juncture, while people holding negative attitudes towards the same dimensions tend to increase. Yet, the cultural dimension shows different results in both Italy and France. Most public opinion hold multicultural attitudes and this depolarised condition tend to remain constant in both demand sides. Nevertheless, results on the identity priority within the dichotomy 'multiculturalism' (see figures 4.5 and 4.14) confirm that most people internalised a European identity, but these people still prioritise their national identity. That is to say that in both Italy and France, citizens do not hold strong European identities since their national identity is still more important. For that reason, not only in Italy, but also in France, the cultural dimension within the demand spaces can still play a significant role in shaping the supply side of the League and the National Rally. These results are in line with recent studies about a silent revolution in reverse argued by Inglehart and Norris (2017). Indeed, the authors argue that long periods of economic recession (declining of income and job security) combined with an increasing perception of insecurity influenced by large flows of immigrants and refugees from the Global South

have fuelled the shift of Western societies towards a cultural backlash that produced an increasing number of people in support of nativist interests, including Italian and French citizens (Inglehart and Norris, 2017).

Moving on to the second analytical part of this chapter, the third finding is that both Italy and France show similar developments in terms of the societal divisions in the latent demand space. When disaggregating Italian public opinions by educational group (low, medium and high), societal divisions occur after the Maastricht Treaty in the transnational cleavage, institutional dimension and economic dimension, but it does not occur in the cultural dimension. With regards to the French electorate, the societal divisions originate after the Maastricht Treaty in the transnational cleavage and economic dimension, but they do not occur in the institutional dimension and cultural dimension. Indeed, the analysis does not confirm whether these conflicts originated within the period observed (from 1980 to 2020) in the French latent demand spaces.

Finally, the last major finding from this analysis is that in the transnational cleavage (and each dimension), the lower the level of education of (Italian and French) respondents, the more likely it is that voters hold negative attitudes towards the transnational cleavage ('anti-EU', 'souverainism', 'welfare chauvinism' and 'nativism'). The implication of this result is twofold. Firstly, it confirms the assumption provided by Tajfel and Turner (1979) that individuals belonging to a certain group will also determine one's beliefs/values. Secondly, this analysis confirms that the level of education is the sociodemographic category that has, indeed, a significant impact in determining respondents' attitude towards dimensions of the transnational cleavage (Hooghe and Marks, 2018).

The aim of this chapter has been to examine the demand side of the League and the National Rally through the analysis of EBs' secondary data. Thus far, when comparing how demand spaces have changed in Italy and France on the new transnational cleavage (and dimensions), one could observe that both Italian and French citizens have similarly changed attitudes towards the EU. Indeed, this analysis confirms that aside from the cultural dimension, the transnational cleavage as a whole and, more specifically, both the institutional and economic dimensions have indeed provoked attitudinal changes within the latent demand sides of the League and the National Rally. The Maastricht Treaty is confirmed to be the shifting point when these conflicts have started to highly polarise and socially divide the public opinion in Italy and France. By contrast, another main point to take away from this chapter is that the cultural dimension does not seem to substantially change public opinion after the Maastricht Treaty in terms of polarisation or societal divisions (in both Italy and France). To this

end, the transnational cleavage is demonstrated to be an ideological conflict that accentuated disunity within Italian and French public opinion. More specifically, in Italy, both the institutional and economic dimensions fully impacted public opinion. In France, among the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, the economic dimension particularly impacted the public opinion. As it ends this first empirical chapter on the latent demand side, the following chapter will deepen the analysis with regards to the *supply side* of League and National Rally.

5 Changes in the Established Radical Right Agenda

5.1 Introduction: restructuring of the European issue in the radical right agenda

In this chapter, I will empirically explore how the League and the National Rally have organised around classical cleavages and the new transnational cleavage. More specifically, this chapter looks at the case studies' *internal flexibility* (see section 2.5.2) both in terms of emphasis and position (see section 3.2.3.2). I, therefore, rely on both literatures of salience theory (issue ownership) and spatial theory (issues positions) as the main approaches to measure the supply side of political parties. Literatures on salience theory and spatial theory have come a long way in answering some of the most pressing questions on the supply side of political parties: what do political parties say? where do political parties stand for? what types of policies are political parties proposing? what is the ideology of political parties? how can scholars categorise political parties?

Starting with salience theory (Budge and Farlie, 1983), this theoretical framework is at the basis of the well-established Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), which is among the most used data sets available for comparative research on party competition and cleavage studies (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al, 2006). The main core assumption of this theory is that political parties, when they are competing, tend to selectively emphasise certain issues rather than others in order to inform the electorate about what the parties 'own'. Petrocik (1996), for instance, explains that political parties tend to emphasise most of their supply side on issues that they claim to be able to handle, since they argue to be the truly 'expression' of the interests of those people linked to the claimed issues. The analysis of the issues political parties emphasise the most can be insightful because it can inform us (electorate, observers and scholars) about the priorities of the party and what is its reputation is, since it usually addresses the same issues and, therefore, what the ideology of the party or the values/ideas it intends to preserve are (Bélanger and Meguid, 2008).

Moving to the spatial theory (Downs, 1957), unlike emphasis, studies on parties' positions are more focused on which side political parties stand for on both major and minor issues, regardless of the emphasis they employ on them (Elias et al., 2015). In this case, the distinguished assumption of this notion is that political parties challenge each other because they address same topics but propose

different policy positions. Ultimately, these different policy positions are what determine a party's ideology and inform how the party will handle problems that concern voters (Braun and Schmitt, 2018). These two theories clearly have their individual strengths. Yet, following Steenbergen and Scott's (2004: 167) observation, "party competition involves strategic choices on *both* issue salience and issue positions" [*my emphasis*]. To this end, more recent studies have considered both accounts when exploring the supply side of political parties (see e.g. Vasilopoulou, 2018c).

Following these streams of research, further relevant studies have debated how radical right parties address (in terms of emphasis and position) the transnational cleavage. Hooghe and Marks (2018), for instance, used data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2006-2014) in order to explore how mainstream parties and new cleavage parties⁵⁶ address the European integration project and immigration. From this analysis, the authors demonstrate that mainstream parties, from the centre-left to the centre-right, tend to support European integration and seek to de-emphasise this topic. Among the new cleavage parties, Hooghe and Marks (2008) underline that the radical right parties have grown after the 2010 Eurozone crisis and the 2015 migration crisis and that these parties have mostly put much emphasis on European integration and immigration, taking a strong antagonist position on these topics. Similarly, Vasilopoulou (2018b) confirms the core role that the EU has played in the radical right party agenda. In her study, Vasilopoulou demonstrates that although radical right parties frame their disapproval of the EU under different logics of conflict, the common denominator is predominantly based on the reclaiming of national sovereignty, which is justified on ethnic grounds. Moreover, beyond adopting a strong antagonistic position towards the EU, Vasilopoulou (2018b) also shows that the issue salience of the EU has significantly increased over the years in the radical right party agenda, demonstrating that this topic is playing a core role in radical right ideology.

Given empirical evidence confirming that radical right parties are, among the other parties, those that emphasise and criticise the EU the most, it is a matter of interest, in this chapter, to explore whether and to what extent the supply side of *established* radical right parties (eRRPs) can be internally flexible on the transnational cleavage from election to election.

⁵⁶ By mainstream parties, Hooghe and Marks (2018) refer to those parties that belong to party families founded from the religious and class classical cleavage structures theorised by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). By new cleavage parties, the authors mostly refer to three party families: green parties, radical left parties and radical right parties.

Firstly, I shall look at the coverage of cleavage structures and dimensions of the new transnational cleavage across all electoral campaigns, in order to see whether and to what extent the League and the National Rally changed their level of ownership of cleavages. Then, beyond aggregate data, a closer look at changes in position is necessary, since the emphasis expressed in all electoral campaigns is not sufficient to deeply understand to what extent political parties change their communication towards the electorate over the years.

Similar to the previous chapter, I look to what extent the change in parties' internal flexibility has taken place in the long run. Moreover, as I stated in Chapter 2, theorists on classical cleavages and new cleavages (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Kriesi et al., 2006; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 2017; Emanuele et al., 2020: 7; Marks et al., 2020) argue that the supply side of political parties do not change because parties are constrained by their strategy (reputation). However, relying on the new cleavage model that I am proposing with this study, political parties' instrumental behaviour is a factor that must be taken into consideration (Downs, 1957; Erikson, 2011). I will, thus, proceed in two steps. My primary interest is in (1) comparing the internal flexibility of classical and new cleavage structures in order to observe whether the transnational cleavage has been flexible or not (in both terms of emphasis and position). Next, I deepen the analysis on the transnational cleavage in (2) exploring whether there are changes on how the League and the National Rally addressed each dimension of the transnational cleavage. I shall recall that the internal flexibility is primarily interpreted as the ability of political parties to behave instrumentally from their foundation to their most recent electoral participation (Erikson, 2011: 24-27). Moreover, considering literatures on salience theory and spatial theory as complementary and not antithetical (Steenbergen and Scott, 2004), I will consider the research case studies as internally flexible on cleavage structures if at least one between emphasis and position demonstrates flexibility. Based on the above literature, I will test the emphasis/position hypothesis (H3) (see section 2.5.2) through the combination of the following measurements:

- The standard deviation greater than zero and the trend line coefficient different from zero derived from the combination of both political offer and political narrative after performing content analysis.

5.2 Results: parties internal flexibility

Talking about the analytic strategy of this chapter, I examine League's and National Rally's internal flexibility by looking at changes in emphasis and position in all classical and new cleavage structures to allow for comparison. The comparison between classical and new cleavage structures (including the dimensions of the transnational cleavage) is necessary as it will provide information on the extent to which the League and National Rally have been ideologically flexible or not. In order to achieve this, I firstly compare how the political offer and the political narrative⁵⁷ address these cleavages in order to portray a clear understanding of how different communicative electoral tools are employed by the research case studies (party's internal coherence⁵⁸). Subsequently, in order to reinforce my argumentation on the importance of including as many sources as possible in order to examine the supply side of political parties, I will measure the political party's internal coherence between the party's offer and the party's narrative. Finally, as I illustrated in section 3.2.3.2, I use two measures in order to observe to what extent parties have been ideologically flexible on cleavage structures: the standard deviation and the trend line coefficient. The comparison among cleavage structures is always preferable as it allows to take into consideration the coexistence of distinct issues within single political campaigns. Moreover, this final procedure will be crucial to allows me to ascertain the third hypotheses of this study (H3). With regards to the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, I will follow the same procedures described above in order to test the fourth research hypothesis. Therefore, for each dimension of the transnational cleavage, I will observe how the research case studies address these topics in both their offer and narrative. Consequently, after having ascertained the party's internal coherence on each dimension of the transnational cleavage, I will evaluate to what extent the League and the National Rally have been flexible on these dimensions over the course of domestic campaigns.

5.2.1 *The internal flexibility of the League*

This section will focus on the internal flexibility of the League of the last ten domestic electoral campaigns in Italy. The first part shall start with the changes in terms of emphasis, while the second one will be dedicated to the changes in terms of position.

⁵⁷ Both political offer and political narrative have been discussed and conceptualised in section 3.2.1.2.

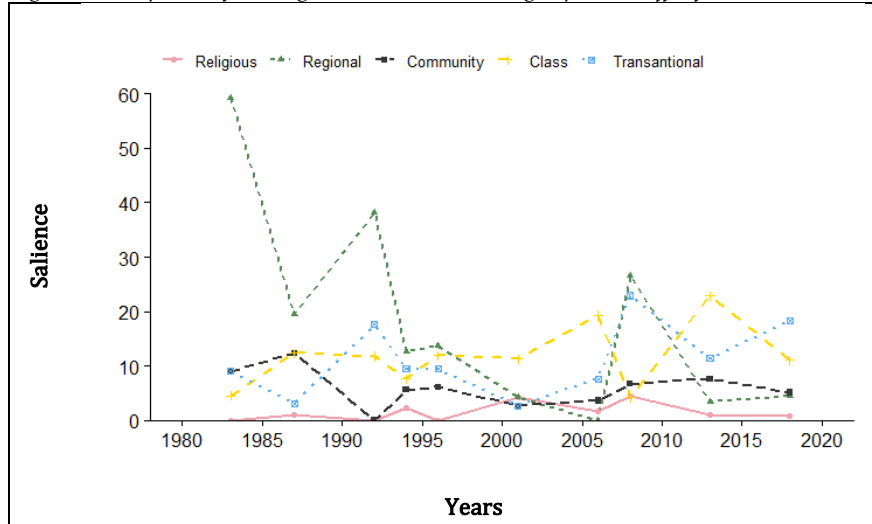
⁵⁸ Refer to section 3.2.3.2 for the conceptualisation of party's internal coherence and the application of the Pearson correlation as index to measure it.

5.2.1.1 Emphasis

In this section, figures 5.1 and 5.2 plot the level of emphasis of all cleavage structures in both manifestos and official press organs (see section 3.2.1.2). Figures 5.3 and 5.4 plot the level of emphasis of transnational cleavage's dimensions from the same data sources. Figure 5.1 shows that, within the territorial axis, the regional cleavage seems to be more salient than the religious cleavage, except for 2001 and 2006, which coincided with the joint manifestos of House of Freedoms⁵⁹. When considering the functional axis, the League dedicates considerably more space to the class cleavage than the community cleavage. Overall, the regional cleavage is usually in balance with the class cleavage, especially since 1996, but it inevitably decreased over the years. The League seems to turn back towards its origins by emphasising the regional cleavage in 2008. Indeed, after the centre-right coalition won the 2008 national election, Umberto Bossi (Northern League's leader and founder) was appointed Minister of Reforms for Federalism. However, since 2013, the class cleavage dominates over all the classical cleavages and the regional cleavage ultimately decreased. Finally, the transnational cleavage usually falls somewhere in the middle of the other classical cleavages. However, it reached three distinctive peaks. The first one at 18% in 1992, the second time at 23% in 2008 and, finally, at 18% in 2018. This last year was also the first time the transnational cleavage dominated over the other cleavages. Looking at the emphasis of classical cleavages in the official press organs of the League (figure 5.2), it becomes clear that the regional cleavage appears to be the most salient issue, except for 2006 and since 2013. In 2006, the official press organ of the League dedicated more space to the religious cleavage where it reached the peak at 13%. Since 2013, among all classical cleavages, the League's narrative focused more on the class cleavage. However, from these data, it is worth noting that although the regional cleavage maintains its dominance over the other classical cleavage structures, it drastically decreased in terms of emphasis since the early 2000s. Moreover, when looking to the transnational cleavage, this played a significant role in League's narrative since 2006 dominating all the other cleavages at 16%. Eventually, in the last national election 2018, the transnational cleavage reached a dominant role in League's political narrative at 45%.

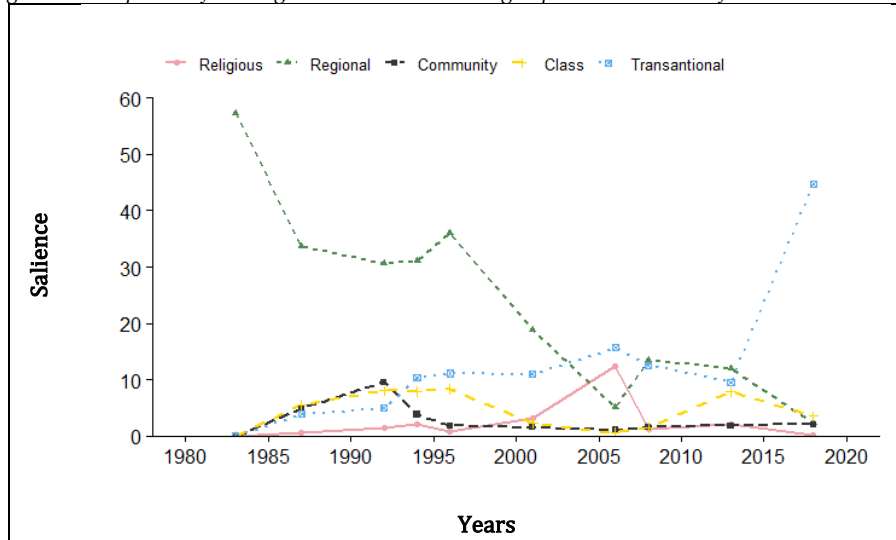
⁵⁹ In 2001 and 2006, the League presented a joint programme with the centre-right coalition lead by Silvio Berlusconi. For that reason, the CMP coded this joint programme as manifesto of the League.

Figure 5.1 Emphasis of cleavage structures in the League political offer from 1983 to 2018



Source: Author's elaboration.

Figure 5.2 Emphasis of cleavage structures in the League political narrative from 1983 to 2018

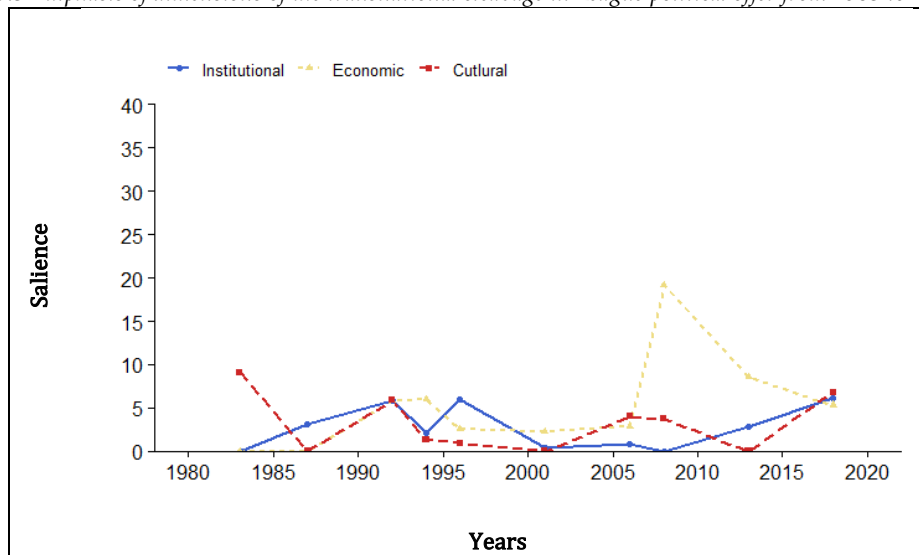


Source: Author's elaboration.

Moving one step further in the analysis and looking at the multidimensional nature of the new transnational cleavage, figure 5.3 shows that there is not a consistent dominance of one dimension over the others within League's electoral manifestos. Indeed, these three dimensions alternatively dominate the others over the period observed. For instance, the institutional dimension was relatively high from 1987 to 1996. It dropped in the subsequent three elections (2001, 2006 and 2008), but it increased again since 2013. The economic dimension, after some years of balance with the other dimensions, significantly peaked at 19% in 2008 and remained the dominant dimension also in 2013. Finally, the cultural dimension was dominant only in the first and last elections (1983 and 2018). On the other hand, within League's political narrative, figure 5.4 shows that the three dimensions have periods of balance and periods of clear dominance of one dimension over the others. For instance, from 1983 to 1992, all three dimensions are relatively balanced at the same rate.

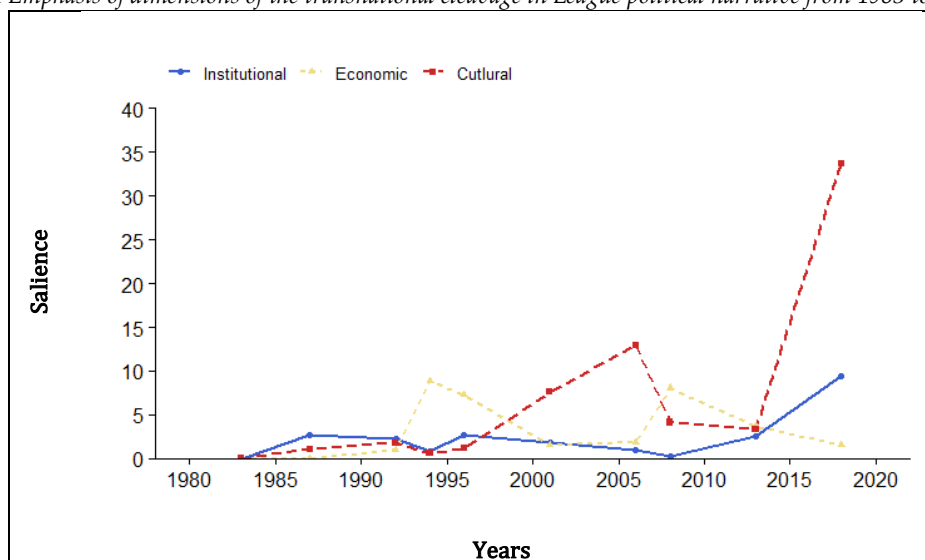
However, the economic dimension was the dominant one in 1994, 1996 and 2008. The cultural dimension dominates the others in 2001, 2006 and it eventually peaked at 34% in 2018. Finally, the institutional dimension never dominated over the others (although it was relatively dominant from 1983 to 1992). However, what is worth noting is that it reached its peak at 9% in the last domestic election 2018.

Figure 5.3 Emphasis of dimensions of the transnational cleavage in League political offer from 1983 to 2018



Source: Author's elaboration.

Figure 5.4 Emphasis of dimensions of the transnational cleavage in League political narrative from 1983 to 2018



Source: Author's elaboration.

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show that all cleavages differently changed from election to election. Among classical cleavages, the regional cleavage and the class cleavage have been very salient for the League's supply side. This result is in line with previous studies on the League, which underlined how the (once called) Northern League dedicated its supply side mostly to federalism, and, within

the class cleavage, usually standing for the entrepreneurs of small and medium industry (Albertazzi and McDonnel, 2005: 964). Nevertheless, these have been addressed differently if we consider the twofold dimensionality of the supply side. By measuring the level of internal coherence between the political offer and the political narrative, the results show that there is a strong positive correlation for the regional cleavage ($r = 0.8$) and a weak positive correlation for the class cleavage ($r = 0.3$). Although both classical cleavages appear to be vital for the League's supply side, the correlation coefficients do demonstrate that the regional cleavage is not only one of the most salient among classical cleavages, but it was also coherently proposed by the League to its electorate over the last ten national electoral campaigns. On the other hand, the class cleavage did not receive the same amount of attention from the party over the years. Although the political offer and the political narrative dedicated similar levels of emphasis from 1983 to 1996, the electoral manifestos almost kept the same level of emphasis (except in 2008), while the political narrative decreased the amount of space to dedicate to the class cleavage. The reason behind this change in League's narrative, according to Gold (2003: 103-104), is that the League changed its propaganda about federalism as a means to fight class inequalities between northern regions (representing mostly the entrepreneurs) and southern regions (against people who relied heavily on state subsidies) to a new ethno-regionalist conflict. Therefore, the League's offer still prioritises the class cleavage by supporting policies in favour of businesses such as tax breaks and incentives to start new enterprises; but the League's narrative dropped this topic because it was used to highlight other ideological conflicts.

Concerning the remaining classical cleavages, the religious cleavage, and the community cleavage, do not seem to show a consistent level of internal coherence between offer and narrative. They have respectively $r = 0.2$ (religious cleavage) and $r = -0.3$ (community cleavage). However, they are inconsistent in different ways. Within the religious cleavage, offer and narrative used to have same levels of emphasis, but in 2006 the electoral campaign has been significantly polarised over the religious cleavage and most of the League's narrative has pressed over the defence of traditional values. The community cleavage is similar to the class cleavage. The electoral manifestos dedicated more space to this political conflict than the political narrative. Finally, as concerns the new transnational cleavage, as a whole, it is weakly correlated ($r = 0.4$). Although the transnational cleavage is a new cleavage, the League demonstrates a sufficient level of coherence in both dimensions of the supply side. The transnational cleavage tends to be coherently approached by the

League and, in contrast with the other classical cleavages, the main tendency of this new cleavage is to increase over the years.

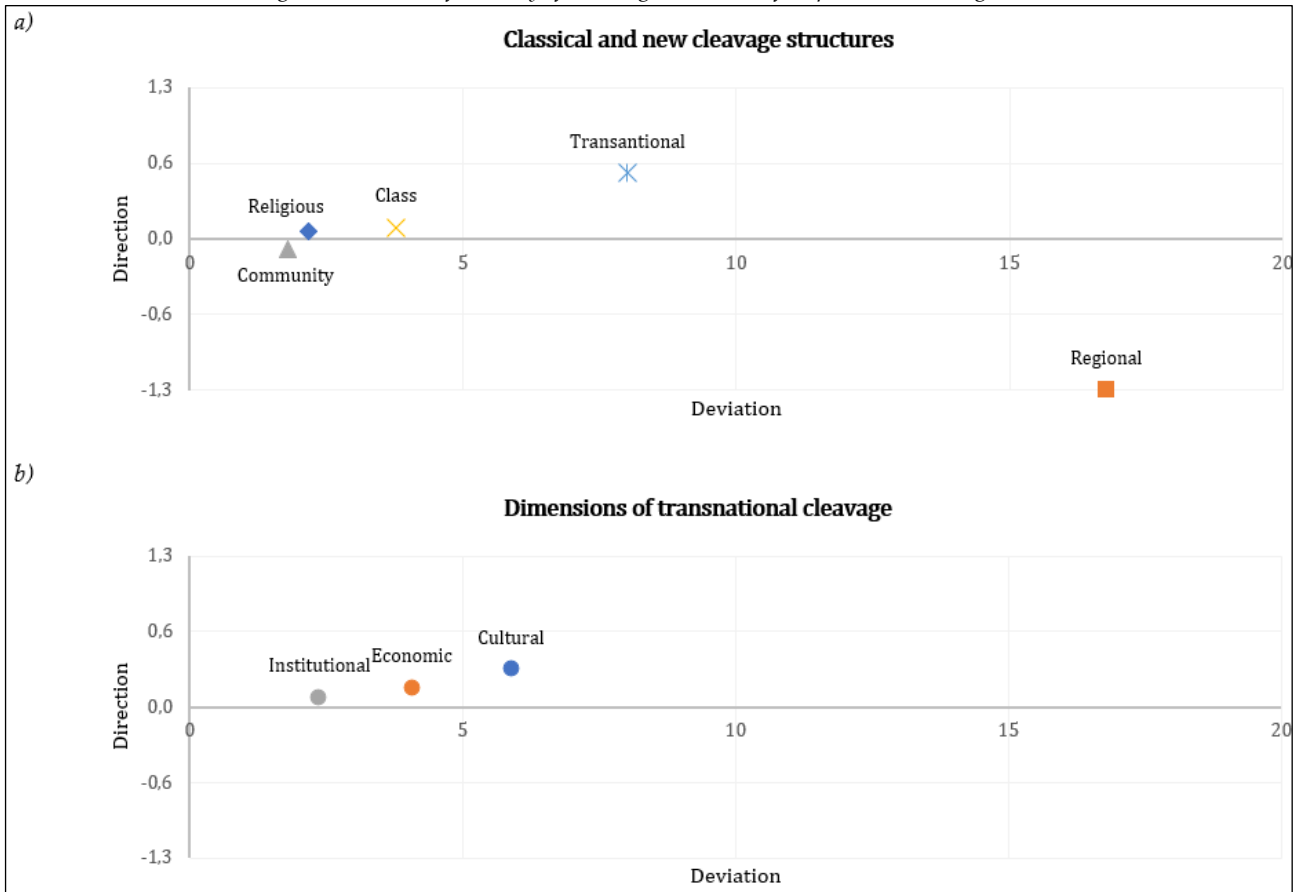
When looking at the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage, figures 5.3 and 5.4 show that political offer and political narrative treated these issues differently. Indeed, by measuring the level of internal coherence, the institutional dimension is strongly correlated ($r = 0.7$), the economic dimension is moderately correlated ($r = 0.6$), while the cultural dimension is weakly correlated ($r = 0.3$). Both the economic and institutional dimensions demonstrate consistent levels of internal coherence. In these dimensions, the political offer and the political narrative tend to decrease and increase in tandem over the years, dedicating almost the same amount of emphasis. The more surprising result from this analysis is the low level of coherence between political offer and political narrative for the cultural dimension. According to recent literature on radical right parties (Ivaldi et al., 2017; Guia, 2016), the League is usually labelled as a nativist party that puts at the core of its supply side the protection of nationalists' interests. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the choice from the leaders of the League to accentuate the topic on regional ethnicity came out no earlier than spring 1996. During the League's annual meeting in 1996, the leader Umberto Bossi announced that the party needed to put more emphasis on the ethnic issues among regions in Italy rather than exclusively focusing on economic or social issues in order to call for more independence of 'Padania' from the rest of the country (Gold, 2003, 103). Nevertheless, the ethnic 're-awakening' of Northern Italians was mostly expressed in the League's political narrative than its political offer. The reason behind that is that the rise of 'ethno-federalism' was especially functional in terms of League's propaganda rather than being proposed by its electoral manifestos in forms of policies to advantage Northern Italians at the expense of other Italians or other minority groups (which would eventually be considered as unconstitutional).

To deepen the analysis, finally, figure 5.5 plots the League's flexibility in terms of emphasis in all (a) classical cleavages and (b) dimensions of transnational cleavage. As you can see in the first part, some cleavages are less flexible than others. In particular, the community cleavage, the religious cleavage and the class cleavage did not significantly change when compared with the other two cleavages (transnational and regional). Accordingly, one could argue that independently of the amount of space they have been dedicated within the supply side (see figures 5.1 and 5.2), the League did not change the priority it wanted to dedicate to them in the long run. As such, the community cleavage and the religious cleavage are to be considered as frozen. While the class

cleavage fluctuated from 2006 to 2018, it slightly tends to increase over the years. It is thus weakly flexible (when compared to the previous cleavages). On the other hand, the transnational cleavage is moderately flexible. Since 1983, the League has constantly increased the level of emphasis of this new cleavage in every national election. This result suggests that, over the years, the transnational cleavage has become an issue that has increased in terms of priority within League's supply side and that the League is slowly increasing its level of 'ownership' towards this cleavage. Yet, the regional cleavage is the one that demonstrates significant levels of flexibility both in terms of deviation from one election to another (it is the largest one) and direction. This result demonstrates that the League attempted to change how voters perceive the party by changing its ownership on the regional cleavage within its supply side. This result is also in line with the recent history of the party. In the last national election (2018), the leader Matteo Salvini has changed the name of the party from Northern League to just League in order to provide a more national political profile in the eyes of the full Italian electorate rather than exclusively representing the interests of the Northern citizens.

When looking at the second part (b) of figure 5.5, you can see the flexibility of dimensions of transnational cleavage. The second part shows that within the transnational cleavage, the institutional and economic dimensions are less flexible when compared to the cultural dimension. These results suggest that the institutional dimension and economic dimension did not experience processes of substantial internal flexibility in the long run. Indeed, when looking back to the results about emphasis (figures 5.3 and 5.4), the institutional dimension has increased and decreased over short periods of time, but it did not experience a lasting change in terms of emphasis. While the economic dimension has also fluctuated over the years, the tendency is to weakly increase. On the other hand, the cultural cleavage is moderately flexible. This result suggests that within the transnational cleavage, the League has effected more changes with the cultural dimension aiming to increase its ownership of this dimension in the eyes of the voters.

Figure 5.5 Internal flexibility of the League in terms of emphasis in the long run



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: this table shows the overall supply side (political offer and political narrative) of the case study. The internal flexibility is determined by the combination of the standard deviation > 0 and the trend line direction $\neq 0$ of such supply side compared with the other ideological conflicts.

From this section, I can demonstrate that looking at the distribution of attention dedicated by the League's supply side across cleavage structures and dimensions of transnational cleavage, it is already evident that political offer and political narrative address cleavage structures differently. Measuring the level of internal coherence, I have demonstrated empirically how similar and different political offer and political narrative are in prioritising cleavage structures. Indeed, there are some cleavages where political offer and political narrative are similarly addressed (e.g. the regional cleavage and the institutional dimension), while others are less coherently addressed (e.g. the religious cleavage and the cultural cleavage). Therefore, I can demonstrate that it is limiting to explore the supply side of the League from only one source (such as party agenda and media agenda). Some issues are emphasised by the narrative (e.g. cultural dimension and the religion cleavage), while others are more highlighted by the offer (e.g. class cleavage and community cleavage). Moreover, the last part of this section shows that League's internal flexibility (in terms of emphasis) does not happen only over short periods of time (from e to $e + 1$), but there are also lasting

changes that persist in the long run. This result contradicts the assumption of the classical cleavage model that political parties do not change.

In conclusion, on the one hand, the community cleavage, the religious cleavage, and the institutional dimension are frozen, while the class cleavage and the economic dimension are weakly flexible. Moreover, the cultural dimension and the transnational cleavage are moderately flexible, while the regional cleavage demonstrates strong flexibility. Therefore, comparing the internal flexibility in terms of emphasis among all classical and new cleavage structures, including all dimensions of the transnational cleavage, I can demonstrate that the research hypotheses H3a, H3e and H3g are confirmed, while the research hypothesis H3c is rejected.

5.2.1.2 Position

As illustrated in the previous section, the League can demonstrate internal flexibility in terms of emphasis, not only over short periods of time, but also in the long run. In this section, I am going beyond emphasis, to investigate whether and how the League has changed its position on cleavage structures and dimensions of the transnational cleavage.

As table 5.1 shows, within the political offer, cleavages on the territorial axis are completely polarised. Although, there are some electoral campaigns where the League did not address topics related to these cleavages, the League has clearly favoured 'Church' and 'Periphery' in its electoral manifestos. The League's position never increases more than -1, which demonstrates a strong ideological position of the League towards conservative and federalist values. Concerning the cleavages of the functional axis, data are less consistent over the period observed. In both cleavages, the League does not have a consistent position over these two classical cleavages from one election to another. Within the community cleavage, the League did not align one dichotomy or another in the 1980s and 1990s. The League used to fluctuate between the two dichotomies in a moderate position. However, in 2001 and 2006, the League's electoral manifestos drastically moved towards the dichotomy 'Rural' (these were joint manifestos of the centre-right coalition), but since 2008 the League U-turned towards the dichotomy 'Urban'. On the other hand, the League clearly addressed the class cleavage standing over the dichotomy 'Employers' from 1983 to 2013. However, in the last electoral campaign in 2018, the League moderately supported the dichotomy 'Workers' reaching the position -0.4. As regards the new transnational cleavage, this is characterised by two periods of time. In the first stage, from 1983 to 2001, the League fluctuates within a moderate positioning towards

the new transnational cleavage, but in the second stage, from 2006 to 2018, it drastically shifts from a moderate position towards ‘pro-EU’ to a strong position towards ‘anti-EU’.

As regards the political narrative shown in table 5.1, as for the political offer, the League’s political narrative similarly addressed the cleavages of the territorial axis. In the League’s official press organs, ‘Church’ and ‘Periphery’ are again the dominant dichotomies in their cleavage structures since the early 1980s and they never cease to be the dominant dichotomy in their cleavages. In this case, the League’s position never increased more than -0.7 (in both dichotomies), except for an episodic electoral campaign in 2001 for the dichotomy ‘Church’ (-0.2). On the other hand, the cleavages of the functional axis have shifted their political narrative from one pole to another and, occasionally, back again. As regards the community cleavage, the League favoured the dichotomy ‘Rural’ from 1987 to 1996 when the League used to individually compete during the domestic elections. Since 2001, the League experienced a U-shaped turn towards the dichotomy ‘Urban’. On the other hand, within the class cleavage, the League tends to be more flexible. For instance, over the 1980s and the 1990s, the League support the dichotomy ‘Employers’, but then the League keeps a neutral position occasionally moving from moderate position towards both dichotomies. As regards the transnational cleavage, the political narrative behaves like the political offer. It was neutral (and slightly positive) in the 1980s and in the 1990s, but it has dramatically turned towards the dichotomy ‘anti-EU’ since the early 2000s.

Table 5.1 Position of cleavage structures in the League political offer and political narrative from 1983 to 2018

	State (+1) vs. Church (-1)		Centre (+1) vs. Periphery (-1)		Urban (+1) vs. Rural (-1)		Employers (+1) vs. Workers (-1)		Pro-EU (+1) vs. Anti-EU (-1)	
	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN
1983	NA	NA	-1	-1	0	NA	1	NA	-1	NA
1987	-1	-1	-1	-1	-0.3	-0.6	0.3	0.6	1	-0.1
1992	NA	-1	-1	-1	NA	-0.8	1	0.6	-0.3	-0.3
1994	-1	-1	-1	-1	0.1	-0.7	0.7	0.8	-0.2	0.0
1996	NA	-0.8	-1	-1	0.0	-0.7	0.8	0.7	0.3	-0.4
2001	-1	-0.2	-1	-0.8	-0.4	0.3	0.4	-0.5	0.6	-0.6
2006	-1	-1.0	NA	-1	-0.8	0.8	0.0	0.5	-0.4	-0.8
2008	-1	-0.8	-1	-1	1.0	0.3	0.4	-0.2	-1	-0.8
2013	-1	-0.7	-1	-0.7	0.3	0.5	0.4	-0.3	-0.1	-0.6
2018	-1	-1	-0.9	-0.1	0.2	0.8	-0.4	0.2	-1	-1

Notes: PO = Political Offer, PN = Political Narrative, NA = Not Available. Source: Author’s elaboration.

Table 5.2 below shows changes of the League’s position on dimensions of transnational cleavage in in both political offer and political narrative. As concerns the political offer, the League takes clearer stands within the institutional, the economic dimensions and the cultural dimension. Within the

institutional dimension, the political offer takes clear positioning towards the dichotomy 'Federalism' in almost each electoral campaign (except for 2018). Within the economic dimension, the League's political offer never mentioned this topic in the first years (1983 and 1987), but the League usually stands towards the dichotomy 'Welfare Chauvinism', except for the years 2001 and 2006 which both coincided with the joint programme with House of Freedoms of the centre-right coalition in a neoliberal mould. In sum, the League's political offer has been characterised by a strong positioning towards the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism' since 2008 when the League has shifted from the "reassuring liberalism of its past" [within the centre-right coalition] to a more protectionist attitude towards Northern small and medium sized industry (Albertazzi and McDonnel, 2005: 964; Campani and Sauer, 2016: 43). Finally, the cultural dimension is similar to the institutional one. Within its political offer, the League stands towards the dichotomy 'Nativism'. League's values on position are always negative. Nevertheless, the difference between these two dimensions is that the League always keeps its position towards the dichotomy 'Nativism', on the other hand, within the institutional dimension, the League shifted its position from the dichotomy 'Federalism' to the dichotomy 'Souverainisme' in the last electoral campaign in 2018.

As regards the political narrative in table 5.2, the results are similar to the offer section, but with some slightly differences. Within the institutional dimension, the dichotomy 'Federalism' is the dominant one. However, by contrast to its political offer, the League was more moderate in its political narrative when addressing the dichotomy 'Federalism'. However, there are some electoral campaigns where the League expressed strong level of alignment towards the dichotomy 'Federalism' in 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008 (between +0.5 and +0.8). In other electoral campaigns, the League was more moderate, like in 1987 (+0.2) and 2006 (+0.1). On the other hand, the dichotomy 'Souverainisme' had also been addressed by the League's political offer. The League strongly shifted towards this dichotomy in 1994 (-1), in 2013 (-0.7) and in 2018 (-1). Within the economic dimension, League's political narrative similarly behaves as the political offer. It is moderate in the 1980s and early 1990s (except for 1992), but since 1996 the League strongly stands towards the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism'. Nevertheless, the main difference with the political offer is that the League's narrative also supports the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism' in 2001 and 2006 (during the centre-right coalition). This result underlines how the League tended to be distinguished from the other allies, which held a more neoliberal position towards the economic dimension of transnational

cleavage. Finally, within the cultural dimension, the League’s political narrative strongly favours the dichotomy ‘Nativism’.

Table 5.2 Position of dimensions of the transnational cleavage in League political offer and political narrative from 1983 to 2018

	Federalism (+1) vs. Souverainisme (-1)		Marketiers (+1) vs. Welfare chauvinists (-1)		Multiculturalism (+1) vs. Nativism (-1)	
	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN
1983	NA	NA	NA	NA	-1	NA
1987	1	0.2	NA	NA	NA	-1
1992	1	0.6	-1	-1	-1	-1
1994	1	-1	-0.5	0.2	-1	-1
1996	1	0.7	-1	-0.8	-0.2	-0.8
2001	1	0.5	0.6	-0.5	NA	-0.9
2006	1	0.1	0.1	-0.6	-1	-0.9
2008	NA	0.7	-1	-0.9	-1	-0.8
2013	1	-0.7	-0.4	-0.8	NA	-0.5
2018	-1	-1	-0.9	-1	-1	-1

Notes: PO = Political Offer, PN = Political Narrative, NA = Not Available. Source: Author’s elaboration.

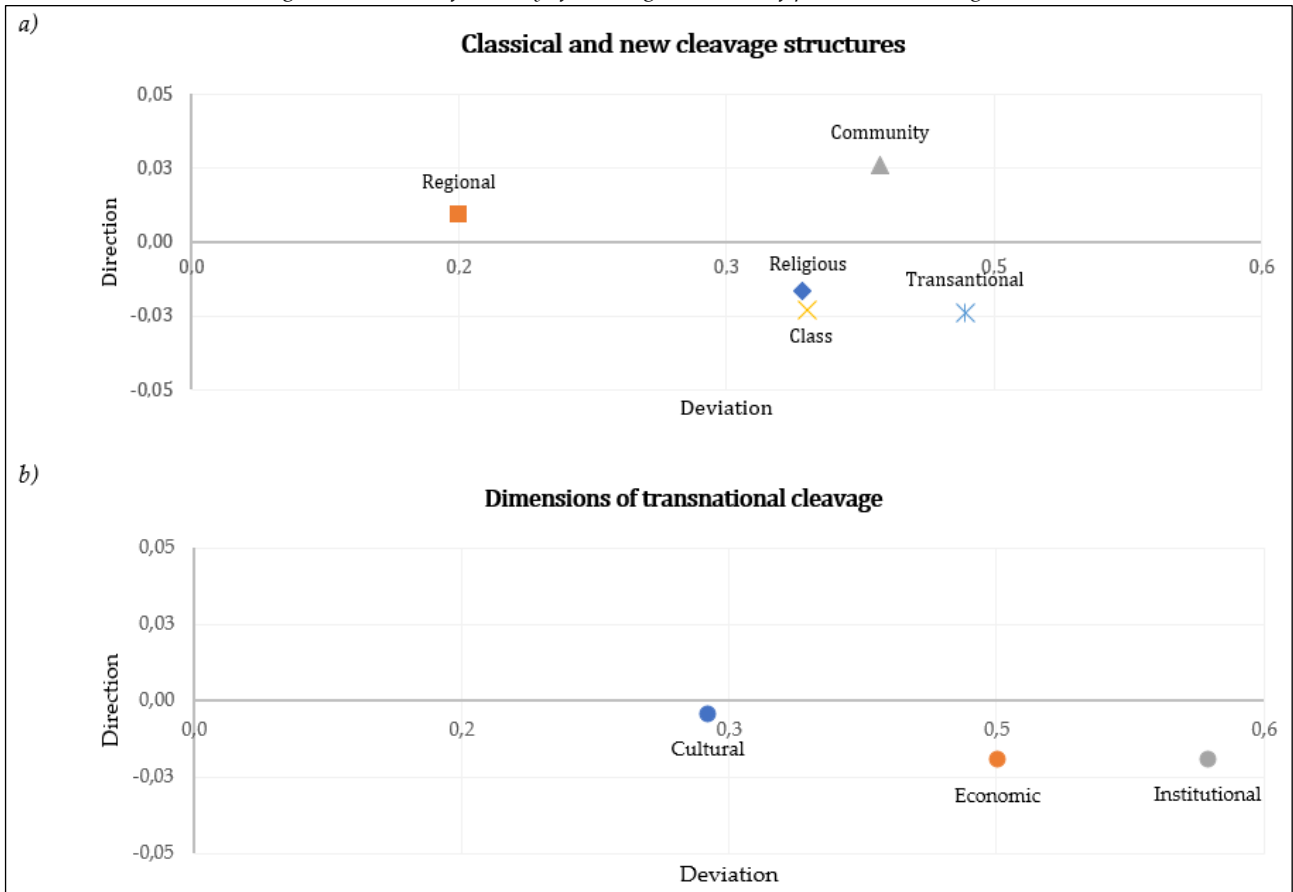
Based on data from table 5.1 and 5.2, there is evidence that some cleavages and dimensions have been coherently addressed by the League over the years. Table 5.1 documents the dominance of ‘Periphery’ and ‘Church’ in both political offer and political narrative, while the dichotomies of cleavages in the functional axis do not prevail over their antithetical dichotomies. Most notably, there is evidence that these conflicts have been addressed by the League differently in the twofold dimensions of League’s supply side, when comparing the level of internal coherence between the political offer and the political narrative. Within the territorial axis, both dichotomies, ‘Periphery’ and ‘Church’ have been coherently addressed by the League. The correlation coefficient is respectively 0.9 for the regional cleavage and 0.7 for the religious cleavage. On the other hand, the other classical cleavages do not show significant levels of correlation ($r_{\text{Community}} = 0.1$; $r_{\text{Class}} = 0.2$). Indeed, within the community cleavage, the main discrepancy between offer and narrative happened during the electoral campaigns of 2001 and 2006 with the centre-right coalition. In both electoral campaigns, the offer stands towards the dichotomy ‘Rural’, while the political narrative of the League stands towards the dichotomy ‘Urban’. Meanwhile, within the class cleavage, offer and narrative are more coherent from 1987 to 1996, but since 2001 offer and narrative are antithetical in each electoral campaign. Finally, among cleavage structures, the transnational cleavage demonstrated a weak level of coherence between the political offer and the political narrative (0.3). However, when deepening the analysis of the transnational cleavage, two dimensions out of three have moderate level of internal coherence between political offer and political narrative ($r_{\text{Institutional}} = 0.5$; $r_{\text{Economic}} = 0.6$). Within the institutional dimension, the narrative has a lower tone in support of the

dichotomy 'Federalism'. Within the economic dimension, the dimensions of League's supply side processed three different stages. At first, the narrative happens to be more moderate than the offer from 1994 to 1996; then, in 2001 and 2006 they are antithetical. Finally, since 2013, the tone of the narrative is more polarised while the offer is more moderate. To conclude, the cultural dimension is poorly coherent ($r = -0.1$), because from 1996 to 2001, the League expressed a political narrative more polarised towards the dichotomy 'Nativism' than the political offer, which was more moderate.

Below, figure 5.6 plots the level of League's internal flexibility in terms of position. The first part (a) is dedicated to the flexibility of both classical and new cleavages. This part shows that in terms of position the cleavages of the territorial axis (regional and religious) are the least flexible when compared with the other cleavages. In both ideological conflicts, the League remained frozen on strongly polarised position with both the dichotomies 'Church' and 'Periphery'. The cleavages of the functional axis (community and class) are more flexible than the other classical cleavages. The class cleavage experienced a weak flexibility moving from a polarised position towards the dichotomy 'Employers' to a more moderate position; while the community cleavage experienced a strong level of flexibility moving from the dichotomy 'Rural' to the dichotomy 'Urban'. Finally, the transnational cleavage looks to be the most flexible cleavage, but only in terms of deviation. In fact, based on the previous results (table 5.1), it can be considered as moderately flexible because the transnational cleavage has moved from a neutral position (yet tending more towards the dichotomy 'pro-EU') towards a strong polarisation on the dichotomy 'anti-EU'.

The second part (b) of figure 5.6 shows flexibility of dimensions of the transnational cleavage. At first glance, one can notice that among these dimensions, the cultural dimension is the least flexible. It is almost frozen (in terms of direction). Indeed, from table 5.2, you can notice that the League is frozen on a strong polarised position to the dichotomy 'Nativism'. On the other hand, the economic dimension and the institutional dimension are more flexible. The economic dimension is moderately flexible, because it shifted from a neutral position of the dichotomy towards a more polarised position towards the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism'. While the institutional dimension is the most flexible because the League has shifted its position, in the long run, from a moderate position towards the dichotomy 'federalism' to a strong polarised position towards the dichotomy Souverainisme.

Figure 5.6 Internal flexibility of the League in terms of position in the long run



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: this table shows the overall supply side (political offer and political narrative) of the case study. The internal flexibility is determined by the combination of the standard deviation > 0 and the trend line direction $\neq 0$ of such supply side compared with the other ideological conflicts.

These results demonstrate that also in terms of position, political offer and political narrative are not always homogeneous. There are some cleavages where both dimensions of supply side showed the same level of position (e.g. religion cleavage and regional cleavage), but in other cases the level of coherence was weakly or poorly (e.g. the community cleavage and the class cleavage). This confirms that the League seems to approach issues in both political offer and political narrative with quite different tones, demonstrating how important it is to consider the multidimensional nature of the supply side of political parties.

Finally, when examining the League's internal flexibility in terms of position, the League has been steady over the years. However, there are some cleavages where the League shows more flexibility. For instance, the religious cleavage, the regional cleavage and the cultural dimension are frozen. The League never changed position, but it stuck with the dichotomies 'Church', 'Periphery' and 'Nativism'. The class cleavage has been weakly flexible because the League has changed position within the same dichotomy 'Employers'. The transnational cleavage and the economic dimension are to be considered as moderately flexible because the League changed position in both conflicts

from a neutral one to the more polarised dichotomies 'anti-EU' and 'Welfare chauvinism'. Finally, the community cleavage and the institutional dimension are the ideological conflicts where the League has been strongly flexible, because it has shifted from one dichotomy to another. Therefore, comparing the internal flexibility in terms of position, firstly among cleavage structures, and then including the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, I can demonstrate that the above results corroborate the research hypotheses H3b, H3d, H3f, while the research hypothesis H3h is not confirmed.

5.2.2 The internal flexibility of the National Rally

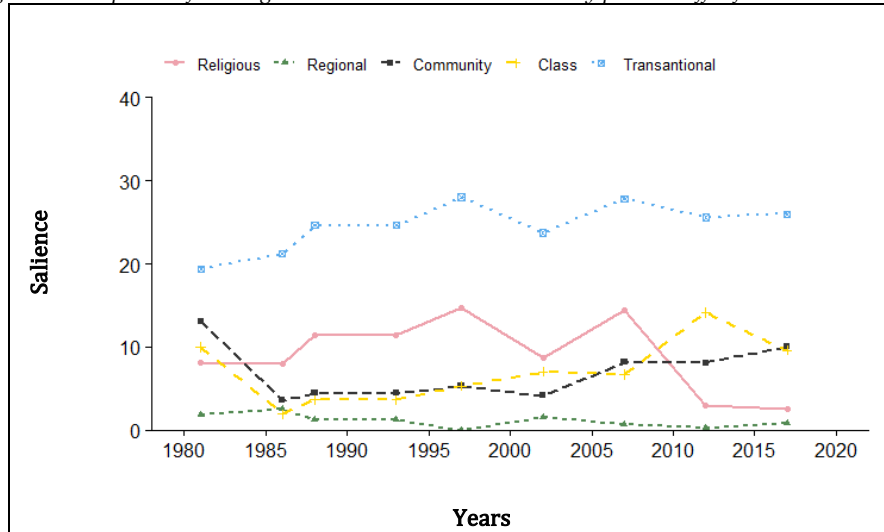
This second part of Chapter 5 shall deal with the internal flexibility of the National Rally of the last nine domestic electoral campaigns in France. The first part focuses on the changes in terms of emphasis, while the second part will be dedicated to the changes in terms of position.

5.2.2.1 Emphasis

I shall start with the emphasis on cleavages within National Rally's electoral manifestos. In figure 5.7, within the territorial axis, the National Rally dedicates much more emphasis to the religious cleavage than to the regional cleavage. Indeed, in most of the electoral campaigns, the National Rally dedicates most of its space in its political offer to the religious cleavage beyond the threshold of 10%, which demonstrates how the National Rally has claimed its ownership on traditional values over the years (especially from 1986 to 2007). Meanwhile, the regional cleavage is less emphasised in the period observed, demonstrating that the party is not really committed to being recognised as the political force that would like to lead on this topic. Subsequently, overall, the territorial axis drastically decreased since 2012 and the cleavages of the functional axis significantly increased. Moreover, the National Rally usually balanced its ownership around both the community cleavage and the class cleavage since the early 1980s. However, the transnational cleavage dominates on the other cleavage structures all over the period observed and it never decreased below the threshold of 20%. When looking at the emphasis of cleavages in the National Rally's political narrative (figure 5.8), the religious cleavage still dominates within the territorial axis (the regional cleavage is not even addressed by the National Rally in most of the years). Moreover, the religious cleavage is still the most dominant cleavage among the other classical cleavages in the period observed (from 1986 to 2002). Subsequently, the community cleavage clearly dominates over the other classical cleavages reaching its second peak at 7% in 2007 (the first one was in 1981 at 12%). As concerns the class

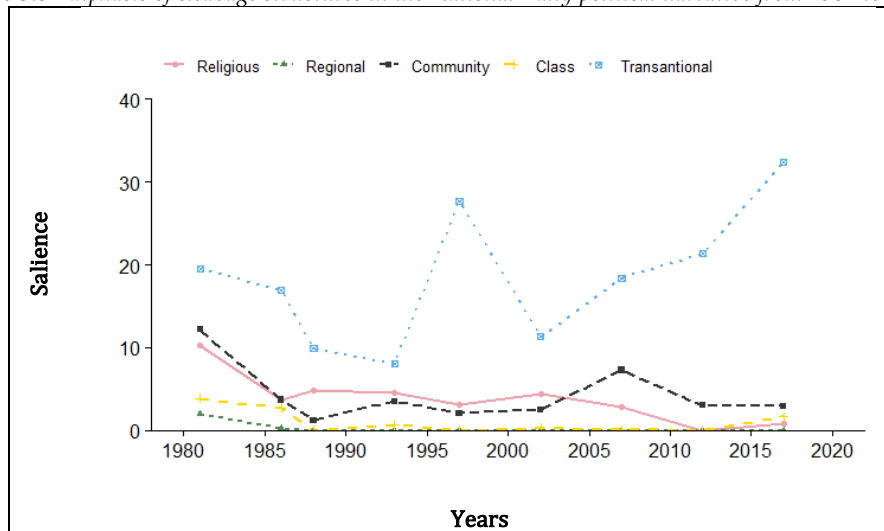
cleavage, this is poorly addressed by the National Rally. Finally, the transnational cleavage is still the most salient cleavage structure addressed by the National Rally. It reached its first peak at 28% in 1997 and, then, it tended to increase again in the next electoral campaigns reaching its second peak at 32% in 2017.

Figure 5.7 Emphasis of cleavage structures in the National Rally political offer from 1981 to 2017



Source: Author's elaboration.

Figure 5.8 Emphasis of cleavage structures in the National Rally political narrative from 1981 to 2017

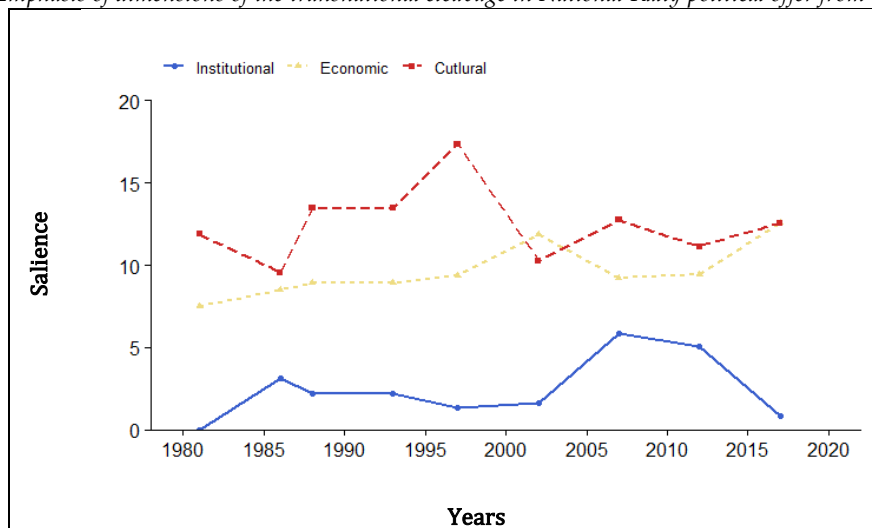


Source: Author's elaboration.

The results show the dominant role that the transnational cleavage has played in the National Rally's supply side. Therefore, in order to further elaborate this result, the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage helps to explain which dimension has mostly been owned by the party. Starting from the political offer, figure 5.9 shows that the cultural dimension usually dominates in the National Rally's electoral manifestos. Indeed, since the early 1980s, the cultural dimension never decreased below the threshold of 10% and it has more space than any other dimensions in most of

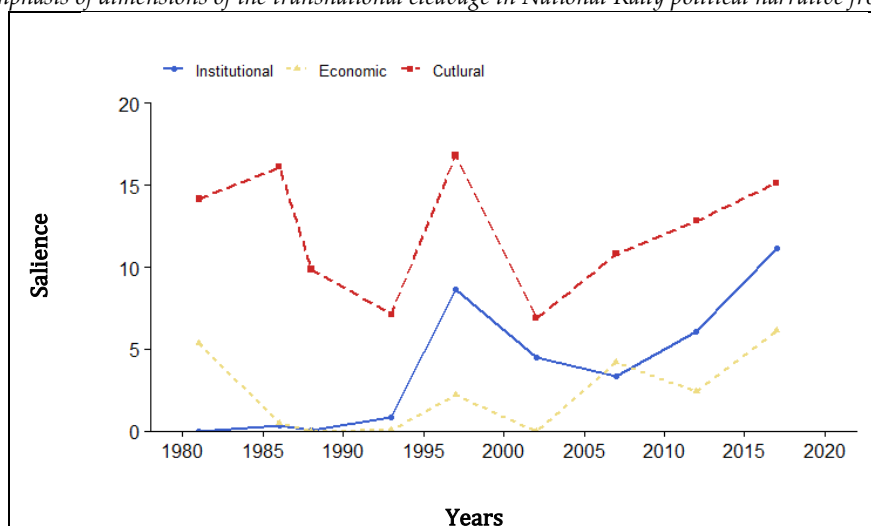
the years – except for two electoral campaigns (2002 and 2017). The economic dimension is the second one being addressed by the party in terms of emphasis. However, the space dedicated to the economic dimension tends to be the same level across the years between the 8% and the 13%. Finally, the institutional dimension is not significantly addressed by the National Rally. This dimension exceeds the 5% threshold only twice (in 2007 and 2012). As concerns the National Rally’s political narrative (figure 5.10), the cultural dimension is still the dominant one, but it is less addressed by the party when compared with its political offer. Indeed, the cultural dimension lies somewhere in between the 7% and 17%. The economic and the institutional dimensions are almost ignored by the National Rally (especially in the 1980s). However, since 1997, the institutional dimension significantly increased from 1993 to 2017 (where it will reach the peak at 11% in 2017), while the economic dimension slightly increases during the same period. It occasionally surpasses the institutional dimension in 2007, but it will reach its peak at 6% only in 2017.

Figure 5.9 Emphasis of dimensions of the transnational cleavage in National Rally political offer from 1981 to 2017



Source: Author’s elaboration.

Figure 5.10 Emphasis of dimensions of the transnational cleavage in National Rally political narrative from 1981 to 2017



Source: Author's elaboration.

When looking at the similarities and differences between the political offer and the political narrative of the National Rally, it is evident how the twofold dimensions of the supply side played different roles over the years. Among all classical cleavages, the religious cleavage has played an important role in defining National Rally's supply side. However, figures 5.7 and 5.8 underline to what extent political offer and political narrative have addressed the religious cleavage. Truly, when measuring the level of party's internal coherence, there is a weak coherence between political offer and political narrative ($r = 0.3$). This result resonates with what most of scholars have argued about the relationships between the religious cleavage and the National Rally (Simmons, 1996; Veugelers, 1997; Davies, 2010). Although the religious cleavage is not clearly explicit in National Rally's supply side, it can be argued that it is surely implicit. Indeed, figures 5.7 and 5.8 show that the religious cleavage finds more space in the political offer than the political narrative. Hence, one could argue that although the religious cleavage is fundamental for the National Rally's ideology, it is not used to appeal to new voters and for that reason, it does not require too much propaganda coverage during the electoral campaigns. On the other hand, it is still a backbone topic for the party, and it stands out in terms of policies that the National Rally wishes to prioritise once joining the government. Moving forward, the regional cleavage did not play any significant role in the National Rally's supply side. In terms of internal coherence, the political offer and the political narrative were weakly coherent ($r = 0.4$). Nevertheless, it was not addressed by National Rally's supply side since 1986 and, within its political offer, the cleavage was only marginally addressed. As concerns the cleavages of the functional axis, these two political conflicts have experienced different processes of coherence. For instance, the class cleavage has an extremely low level of coherence ($r = 0.02$). This

result is partially similar to the religious cleavage. Indeed, the National Rally tends to dedicate more space to the class cleavage in its political offer rather than in its political narrative. On the other hand, the community cleavage shows a significant high level of party's internal coherence ($r = 0.8$). This result suggests that, for the National Rally, the community cleavage deserved to be addressed by the party not only as a number of policies to propose to the electorate (political offer), but also as a means to appeal to the electoral support of both loyal and new voters (political narrative). Nevertheless, the National Rally tends to put slightly more emphasis on the community cleavage within the political offer than the political narrative. Finally, the transnational cleavage shows low level of party's internal coherence ($r = 0.3$). This result is mostly due to the inconsistency of the National Rally when addressing this political conflict within its supply side. Although the transnational cleavage is consistently addressed by the National Rally over the years, it has more fluctuations in the political narrative (such as in 1997). Moreover, the transnational cleavage has been mostly addressed by the political offer rather than by the political narrative. Nevertheless, the National Rally pressed much more on the transnational cleavage in its political narrative since the electoral campaign of 2012 when Marine Le Pen succeeded her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, as the leader of the party.

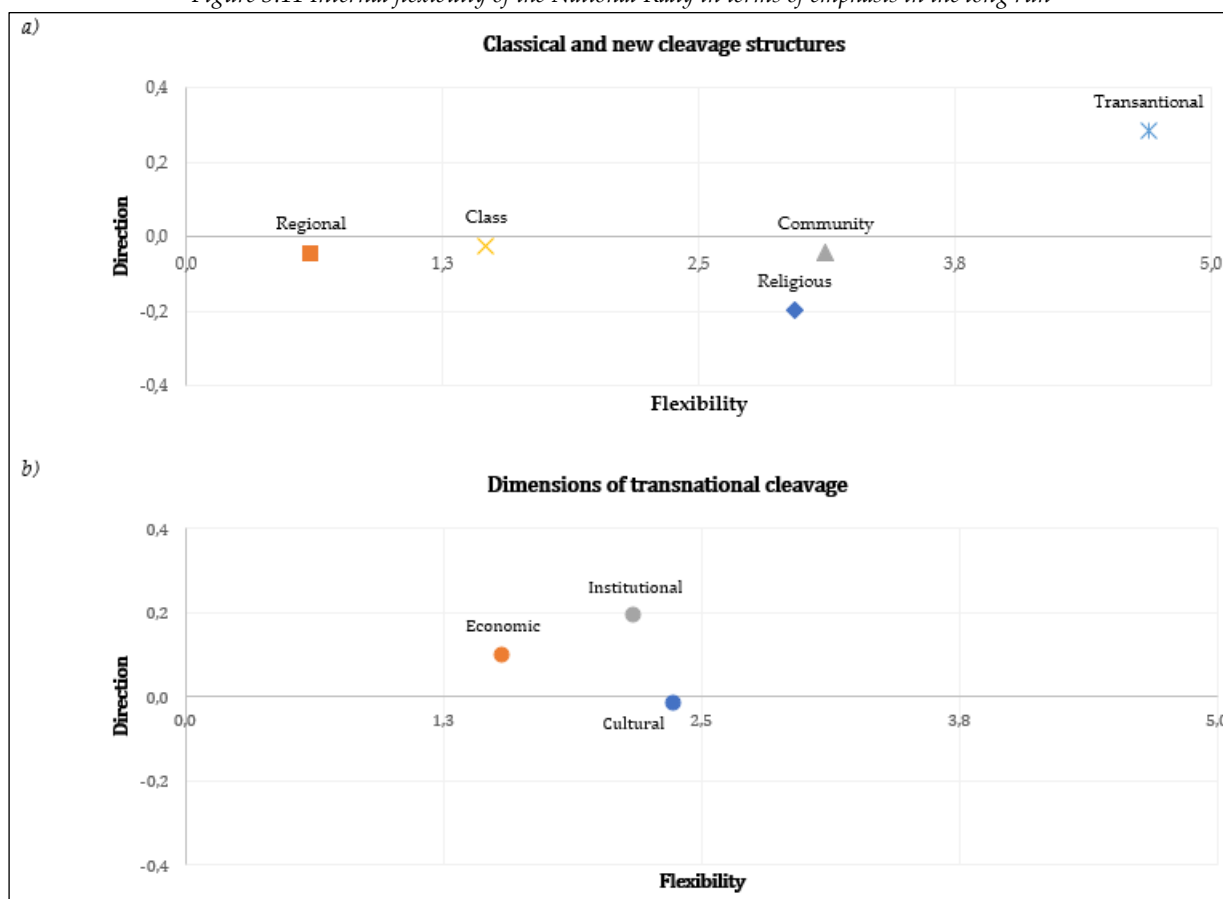
When looking at the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage, figures 5.9 and 5.10 show that the National Rally has addressed these issues differently in its political offer and political narrative. Starting from the institutional dimension, the level of the party's internal coherence is weakly negative ($r = -0.1$). This result means that the National Rally had antithetical plans in both political offer and political narrative when addressing this topic. In the 1980s, both political offer and political narrative coherently addressed the institutional dimension, but since the early 1990s both dimensions of the supply side antithetically addressed this topic. The economic dimension is poorly coherent ($r = 0.1$). That is to say that the political offer and the political narrative do not increase or decrease in tandem over the years. Moreover, the political offer dedicates more emphasis to the economic dimension than the political narrative. Finally, the political narrative is also poorly coherent ($r = 0.2$). In the early 1980s, the political narrative dedicated more space to the cultural dimension than the political offer, but since the late 1980s they have reversed. Ultimately, since 2012, the political narrative has overtaken the political offer and it also increases.

Lastly, figure 5.11 below shows the internal flexibility of the National Rally in terms of emphasis in all classical cleavages (a) and dimensions of transnational cleavage (b). Thus, in the first part, all

classical cleavages are less flexible than the new transnational cleavage. This phenomenon of internal inflexibility in the long run is especially evident for the regional cleavage, the class cleavage and the community cleavage. In all these three cleavages, the trend line coefficient (which determines the flexibility in the long run) is below 0.06 unit. Nevertheless, these cleavages experienced different types of inflexibility and we can observe it by looking at the variation unit. For instance, the regional cleavage had a significant low level of variation. This suggests that the regional cleavage did not experience significant fluctuations in terms of emphasis over the years. On the other hand, the class cleavage and the community cleavage experienced periods of significant change in the short run (from e to $e + 1$), but in the long run, the National Rally has kept the same amount of emphasis since the early 1980s. As concerns the religious cleavage, this political conflict demonstrates a moderate level of flexibility. From 1981 to 2007, it has been steady, but since 2012 it dropped, and it covered a marginal space in the supply side of the National Rally in the most recent years (late 2010s). Finally, the new transnational cleavage is the most flexible when compared with the other classical cleavages both in terms of variation and direction. This result shows as the National Rally increased its 'issue ownership' over the transnational cleavage.

When looking at the second part (b) of figure 5.11, the flexibility of dimensions of the transnational cleavage is evident. The economic dimension and the cultural dimension are less flexible than the institutional dimension. Yet, between the economic dimension and the cultural dimension, the cultural dimension is the dimension that has remained frozen over the years. By contrast, the economic dimension is the least one having experienced changes in terms of variation across the domestic elections, but it has moderately increased in terms of direction. Finally, as concerns the institutional dimension, this has been more flexible than the other dimensions but, overall, it shows moderate level of flexibility (especially when compared to the internal flexibility of the transnational cleavage). Indeed, from 1981 to 2017, the tendency is to increase, demonstrating that over the years the National Rally seeks to be recognised by the French electorate as 'issue owner' of the institutional dimension.

Figure 5.11 Internal flexibility of the National Rally in terms of emphasis in the long run



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: this table shows the overall supply side (political offer and political narrative) of the case study. The internal flexibility is determined by the combination of the standard deviation > 0 and the trend line direction $\neq 0$ of such supply side compared with the other ideological conflicts.

In this section, I have shown that when considering the multidimensional nature of the supply side, the level of emphasis is not always coherently addressed by the National Rally. In sum, there are a few cases where the political offer and the political narrative increased and decreased in tandem over the years (e.g. community cleavage). Moreover, the National Rally tends to dedicate much more space to each cleavage in its political offer rather than in its political narrative. Indeed, when analysing the *National Hebdo* (the official press organ of the National Rally), most of the articles were usually dedicated to general issues referencing the personal competence of its politicians or criticising the lack of such competence from other competitors' leaders.

To conclude, the second part of this section demonstrates that the National Rally has experienced processes of internal flexibility concerning some cleavages over long periods of time. The religious cleavage, the institutional dimension and the economic dimension are moderately flexible, while the transnational cleavage is strongly flexible. However, the other conflicts, such as regional cleavage, class cleavage, community cleavage and cultural dimension, are to be considered as frozen. To this

end, taking into account the above results on the National Rally's internal flexibility in terms of emphasis, the research hypotheses H3a, H3c and H3e are confirmed, while the research hypothesis H3g is rejected.

5.2.2.2 Position

This section further develops the previous analysis by exploring the National Rally's internal flexibility in terms of position in the long run. From table 5.3, we can see the position of the National Rally in each cleavage structure in the last nine general elections held in France. Starting from the cleavages of the territorial axis, the religious cleavage and the regional cleavage tend to be polarised towards the same dichotomy over the years. In most of the electoral campaigns, the National Rally held the same position towards the dichotomies 'Church' and 'Periphery'. Indeed, the National Rally keeps a strong polarised position towards the dichotomy 'Church' at -1 since the early 1980s. However, there has been an electoral campaign that showed short-term flexibility in 2007 – where for the first time the party held a neutral position. The regional cleavage also seems to be strongly polarised towards the dichotomy 'Periphery' in National Rally's political offer, except for few years of moderate positioning in 1981 and 2002. On the other hand, the functional axis presents some differences with the territorial axis. Its cleavages demonstrate much more flexibility. Indeed, starting from the community cleavage, the National Rally expressed three different stages in its supply side. In the first one, from 1981 to 1993, the national Rally did not really stand over one dichotomy but rather preferred a neutral position. However, since 1988, the party shifted towards the dichotomy 'Rural', but keeping a moderate position. Subsequently, from 1997 to 2012, the National Rally held a strong position towards the dichotomy 'Rural' fluctuating between -0.7 to -1. Eventually, the National Rally considerably shifted again towards the opposite dichotomy 'Urban' at 0.6 in 2017. Similarly, the class cleavage also experienced three main phases of change within National Rally's supply side. From 1981 to 1997, the National Rally held a strong position towards the dichotomy 'Employers' at +1 in all over the period observed. Subsequently, from 2002 to 2007, the party shifted towards a moderate position, but moving towards the dichotomy 'Workers'. Since 2012, the National Rally had a significant shift in terms of position towards the dichotomy 'Workers' reaching the level -0.7 in 2017. Finally, as concerns the new transnational cleavage, the National Rally experienced two main phases. Excluding the first electoral campaign in 1981 where the national Rally was polarised towards the dichotomy 'anti-EU', from the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the National Rally fluctuated between the neutral and the moderate 'anti-EU' positions, but then the party strongly

shifted towards a more polarised position towards the dichotomy ‘anti-EU’ until the most recent electoral campaign in 2017.

When looking at the National Rally’s political narrative in table 5.3, the cleavage structures show less internal flexibility in the short run when compared with the party’s internal flexibility in the political offer. The cleavages of the territorial axis do not present consistent changes both in the short run and in the long run. Indeed, in both cleavages the National Rally almost never change position all over the period observed. In the religious cleavage, the National Rally keeps a strong polarisation towards the dichotomy ‘Church’; while, in the regional cleavage, the party holds a moderate position towards the dichotomy ‘Centre’. The same phenomenon seems to happen also within the functional axis. The community cleavage and the class cleavage are both quite stable over the years. On the one hand, within the community cleavage, the National Rally fluctuates within the neutral position – in some electoral campaigns, the party holds moderate positions towards the dichotomy ‘Rural’, but most of the times it is neutral. There are, however, few electoral campaigns where the National Rally strongly favours the dichotomy ‘Rural’ (in 1988 and 2002). On the other hand, the class cleavage is less flexible in the short run. From one electoral campaign to another, the National Rally holds its stand over the dichotomy ‘Employers’ fluctuating from +0.8 to +1. To conclude, the National Rally keeps also a consistent level of position within the new transnational cleavage. From 1981 to 2017 the National Rally strongly support the dichotomy ‘anti-EU’.

Table 5.3 Position of cleavage structures in the National Rally political offer and political narrative from 1981 to 2017

	State (+1) vs. Church (-1)		Centre (+1) vs. Periphery (-1)		Urban (+1) vs. Rural (-1)		Employers (+1) vs. Workers (-1)		Pro-EU (+1) vs. Anti-EU (-1)	
	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN
1981	-1	-1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1	1	-0.7	-0.9
1986	-1	-1	-0.9	0.3	0.2	-0.1	1	0.8	0.1	-0.9
1988	-1	-1	-0.9	NA	-0.5	-0.6	1	NA	-0.4	-1.0
1993	-1	-1	-0.9	NA	-0.5	-0.5	1	1	-0.4	-1
1997	-1	-1	NA	NA	-1	-0.1	1	NA	-0.8	-1
2002	-1	-1	-0.6	NA	-0.8	-0.9	0.4	1	-0.8	-1
2007	0*	-1	-1	NA	-0.7	-0.1	-0.1	1	-0.6	-1
2012	-1	NA	-1	NA	-0.8	0.2	-0.6	NA	-1	-1
2017	-0.7	-0.6	-1	NA	0.6	0.5	-0.7	1	-0.9	-1

Notes: PO = Political Offer, PN = Political Narrative, NA = Not Available; * = this value is negative: -0.04. Source: Author’s elaboration.

When looking at National Rally’s positional changes within the new transnational cleavage, table 5.4 below shows that the three dimensions can experience different processes of flexibility. Starting from the political offer, the institutional dimension experiences two stages. From 1981 to 1993, the

National Rally did not hold any polarised positions, the party was neutral. However, from 1997 to 2017, the National Rally drastically shifted towards a strong polarisation on the dichotomy 'Souverainisme'. As concerns the economic dimension, the National Rally's political offer fluctuated from strong positions towards the dichotomy 'Marketism' in 1986 to moderate positions towards the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism' in 2002. However, in the 2017 French general elections, the National Rally shifted towards the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism' between -0.9 and -1. Finally, the cultural dimension is the only one that did not experience any processes of flexibility from one election to another. Indeed, the National Rally held its position from -0.8 to -1 all over the period observed, demonstrating that the National Rally never changed its position from the dichotomy 'Nativism'.

As regards the political narrative in table 5.4, the three dimensions of the transnational cleavage tend to hold more static positions over the years (with few exceptions). Within the institutional dimension, the National Rally used to hold neutral position in 1981 and strong position towards the dichotomy 'Federalism' in 1986. Nevertheless, the National Rally shifted towards the opposite dichotomy 'Souverainisme' at -1 in the next electoral campaign, and it kept this position until 2017. Secondly, within the economic dimension, the National Rally had substantial changes in the 1980s, moving from a moderate position towards the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism' in 1981 to neutral positions in both 1986 and 1988. However, from the beginning of the 19th century, the National Rally kept strong positions towards the dichotomy 'Welfare Chauvinism' until the last electoral campaign in 2017. Finally, within the cultural dimension, the National Rally never changed its position. The party strongly stands towards the dichotomy 'Nativism' at -1 over the period observed.

Table 5.4 Position of dimensions of the transnational cleavage in National Rally political offer and political narrative from 1981 to 2017

	Federalism (+1) vs. Souverainisme (-1)		Marketiers (+1) vs. Welfare chauvinists (-1)		Multiculturalism (+1) vs. Nativism (-1)	
	PO	PN	PO	PN	PO	PN
1981	NA	NA	-0.3	-0.6	-1.0	-1.0
1986	0.4	1	0.9	0	-0.8	-1.0
1988	0.0	-1	0.2	NA	-0.9	-1.0
1993	0.0	-1	0.2	-1	-0.9	-1.0
1997	-1	-1	-0.4	-1	-1.0	-1.0
2002	-1	-1	-0.6	NA	-1.0	-1.0
2007	-1	-1	0.1	-1	-1.0	-1.0
2012	-1	-1	-1.0	-1	-1.0	-1.0
2017	-1	-1	-0.9	-1	-1.0	-1.0

Notes: PO = Political Offer, PN = Political Narrative, NA = Not Available. Source: Author's elaboration.

Based on data from tables 5.3 and 5.4, the National Rally's position might differ when looking at the multidimensional nature of the supply side. Starting from the cleavages of the functional axis, for instance, both religious and regional cleavages are not coherently addressed over the years – see the religious cleavage ($r = 0.2$) – and the party even addressed the cleavages in different ways – see the regional cleavage ($r = -0.96$). In the case of the religious cleavage, overall, the National Rally kept strong positions towards the dichotomy 'Church' in both dimensions of supply side. With the exception of one electoral campaign in 2007, the political offer is more moderate than the political narrative. Nevertheless, in both dimensions of the supply side, political offer and political narrative tended to move towards a more moderate position within the dichotomy 'Church'. These results are much in line with previous studies on the National Rally that have underlined the importance of the Catholic religion for the party's communication (Simmons, 1996; Veugelers, 1997; Davies, 2010). From these results, one could argue that the National Rally could be identified as a Catholic party; however, other scholars have underlined that the type of Catholicism that the National Rally has displayed over the years was controversial because it was not perceived as compatible with the main doctrine of Christianity (Davies, 2010: 577). Moreover, Veugelers (1997: 34) demonstrated, for instance, that the supporters of the National Rally were mostly those people that defined themselves as Catholics, but they were also non-practitioners. Notwithstanding, the Catholic fundamentalists are one of the most important factions that formed the ideological background of the party (Simmons, 1996: 199). On the other hand, as concerns the regional cleavage, the political offer and the political narrative are extremely unrelated, and each dimension of the supply side proposes antithetical positions. For instance, the political offer underlines National Rally's position towards the dichotomy 'Periphery', while the National Rally's political narrative denotes neutral position tending towards the dichotomy 'Centre'. It should be recalled that France has a strong unitary character that differentiate this Western European country from many others (e.g. Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium and Italy). Yet, there are many peripheral territories in France with distinctive identities such as the island of Corsica, Alsace, Brittany and the Basque Country. Nevertheless, the country's main philosophy (from the French Revolution) that *France is one and indivisible* has succeeded in weakening and dividing the regional elites in organising against the centre (Amoretti and Bermeo, 2004: 217). For that reason, one could argue that the National Rally tried to use its electoral manifestos in order to appeal the votes of those people living in peripheral territories with electoral promises to sustain local identities and the local economies. On the other hand, the political narrative was not used as a tool to emphasise this position, but rather to temper National Rally's

position over a more moderate one. The cleavages of the functional axis did not experience same levels of party's internal coherence. For instance, the community cleavage was moderately coherent ($r = 0.5$). Both political offer and political narrative increased and decreased almost in tandem. Moreover, although the political narrative used to be more polarised than the political offer in the 1980s and in the early 1990s, in the last four electoral campaigns the political narrative tended to be less polarised than the political offer. Within the class cleavage, the National Rally is not considerably coherent between political offer and political narrative ($r = -0.4$). Indeed, although the two dimensions of supply side were polarised towards the same dichotomy ('Employers') from 1981 to 1997, the political offer shifted towards the dichotomy 'Workers' from 2002 to 2017. Finally, among cleavage structures, the new transnational cleavage also shows that the National Rally was moderately coherent ($r = 0.4$) and looking more in detail, the main difference between the political offer and the political narrative is that the National Rally expressed more moderate positions within its political offer in terms of policies that it wanted to propose once in government. On the other hand, the National Rally's political narrative served as a change in tone to polarise party's position more towards the dichotomy 'anti-EU'.

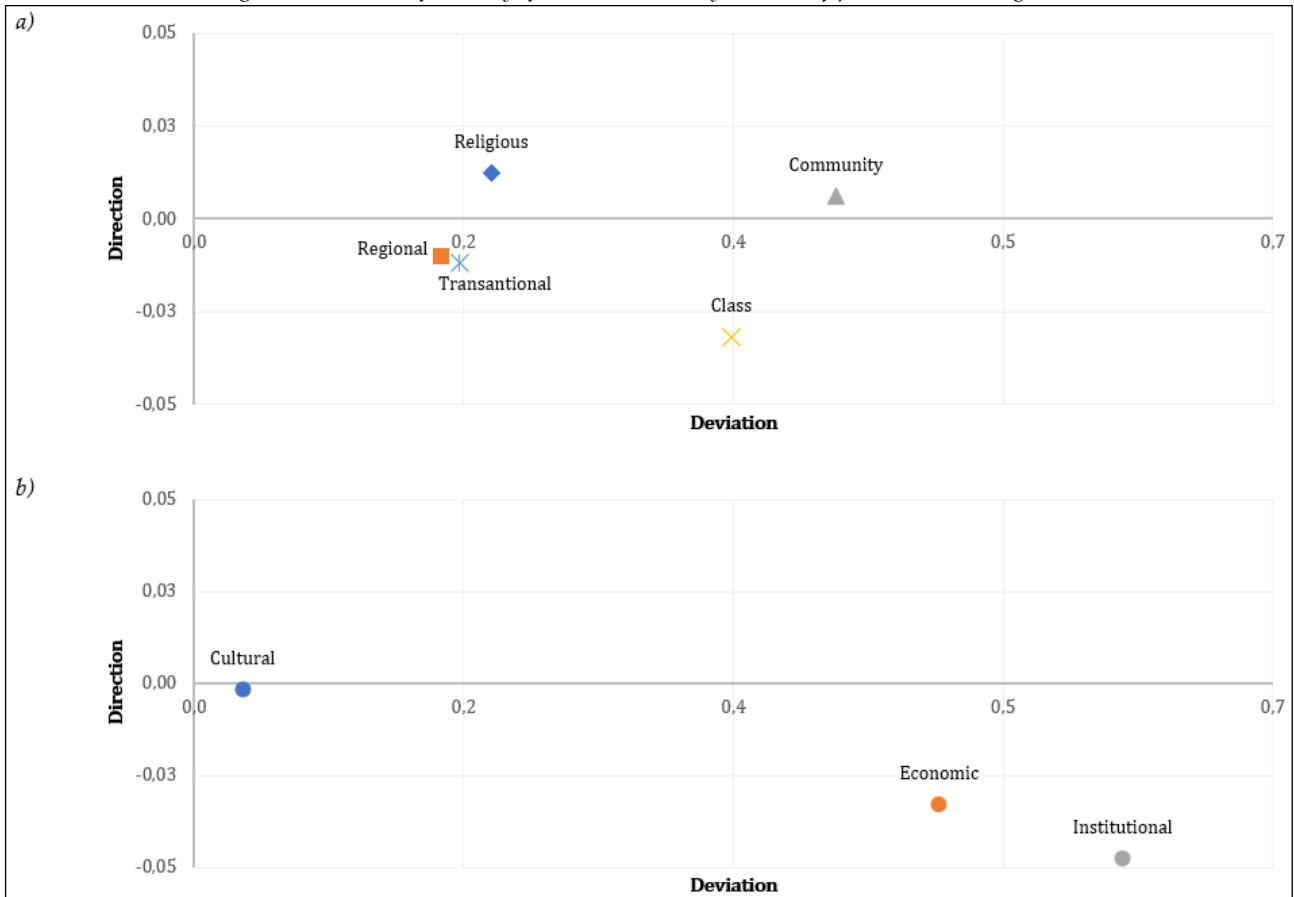
The transnational cleavage does not show a significantly high level of party internal coherence. However, when looking closer to the level of coherence between political offer and political narrative for each dimension of the transnational cleavage, the National Rally demonstrates much more consistency over the years. For instance, within the institutional dimension, the level of coherence reaches 0.7. In this case, both political offer and political narrative fluctuate from one dichotomy to another (especially in the earlier electoral campaigns), but one notices that the political offer tends to be more neutral than the political narrative. Indeed, the latter takes much more polarised positions until 1993. Since the electoral 1997 campaign, on the other hand, both political offer and political narrative keep the same position. Within the economic dimension, there is a similar level of coherence at 0.7. One difference with the institutional cleavage is that the political offer and the political narrative alternate the role as most polarised tool within the supply side in the 1980s. However, since the early 1990s, the political offer expresses more neutral or moderate positions, while the political narrative is more polarised. To conclude, it is not possible to mathematically quantify the level of coherence of the National Rally within the cultural dimension, because the political narrative never changes its value from -1. On the other hand, the political offer never changes in terms of position fluctuating from -0.8 to -1. Therefore, one could argue that political offer

and political narrative are perfectly coherent from the theoretical point of view, since they are both strongly polarised towards the dichotomy 'Nativism'.

To conclude this section, figure 5.12 shows further evidence of National Rally's internal flexibility in terms of position but focusing on the long run this time. The first part (a) shows the internal flexibility of all cleavage structures, while the second part (b) shows the internal flexibility for each dimension of the transnational cleavage. Starting with the cleavages of the territorial axis, one can observe that the regional cleavage is frozen while the religious cleavage is weakly flexible. Indeed, within the regional cleavage, the National Rally kept a moderate position towards the dichotomy 'Periphery' all over the period observed. As regards the religious cleavage, the National Rally slightly moved from a polarised to a moderate position within the same dichotomy 'Church'. When looking at the cleavages of the functional axis, these are clearly more flexible than the cleavages of the territorial axis. Firstly, the community cleavage is the conflict that experienced fluctuation the most from one election to another in terms direction. Thus, the community cleavage is to be considered as weakly flexible because the National Rally does not keep a constant position, but it always drastically changes over the years. On the other hand, within the class cleavage, the National Rally demonstrates being slightly flexible, but it must be considered as weakly flexible because it shifted its position from a polarised position on the dichotomy 'Employers' to a more moderate one. Finally, the new transnational cleavage is frozen. Indeed, the National Rally did not shift in terms of position over the years, but it kept a strong polarisation towards the dichotomy 'anti-EU' (except in 1986 which was more moderate).

Thus far, the results show that the transnational cleavage is frozen. However, the second part (b) of figure 5.12 offers the opportunity to deepen the analysis of this new cleavage. Indeed, one can observe that all dimensions of transnational cleavage have different levels of internal flexibility. At first glance, the cultural dimension is visibly frozen both in terms of deviation and direction. In contrast, both the institutional dimension and the economic dimension show levels of internal flexibility. In both dimensions, the National Rally has changed its position over the years. Within the economic dimension, the National Rally is weakly flexible as it shifted from a moderate position on 'Welfare chauvinism' to a more polarised position towards the same dichotomy; while, within the institutional dimension, the party is strongly flexible as it moved from a positive position to the dichotomy 'Federalism' to a polarised position towards the dichotomy 'Souverainisme'.

Figure 5.12 Internal flexibility of the National Rally in terms of position in the long run



Source: Author's elaboration. Notes: this table shows the overall supply side (political offer and political narrative) of the case study. The internal flexibility is determined by the combination of the standard deviation > 0 and the trend line direction $\neq 0$ of such supply side compared with the other ideological conflicts.

In light of these results, there are some cleavages where the National Rally coherently addressed cleavages in both political offer and political narrative (e.g. the community cleavage, the transnational cleavage and all dimensions of the transnational cleavage). Other cleavages showed weak or inconsistent levels of coherence (e.g. the religious cleavage, the regional cleavage and the class cleavage), demonstrating that also for the National Rally the exclusive analysis towards the political offer or the political narrative is not sufficient.

Finally, although the internal flexibility in the long run does not apply in all cleavages or dimension of the transnational cleavage, there is substantial empirical evidence suggesting that the National Rally has been flexible over the years. It was weakly flexible with the religious cleavage, community cleavage, the class cleavage and the economic dimension, while it was strongly flexible with the institutional dimension. To this end, the above results on the National Rally's internal flexibility in terms of position show that the research hypotheses H3d and H3f are confirmed, while the research hypotheses H3b and H3h are rejected.

5.3 Conclusion: campaigning strategies from election to election

This chapter set out to investigate the internal flexibility of the League and the National Rally in both terms of emphasis and position over a long period of time – from the early 1980s until the late 2010s. In order to achieve this, I proposed an innovative approach in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the supply side of political parties combining the joint analysis of both the political offer and political narrative. Indeed, a party’s message does not rely on only one data source. By contrast, in order to provide a general perception of parties’ ideology, I argued that the supply side of political parties must be explored as the product of interaction of parties’ electoral manifestos and parties’ official press organs (see section 3.2.1.2). As such, they contribute to the continued need to examine the supply side of political parties as a mixture of communicative tools with different purposes, but with the same goal to deliver parties’ communication in order to maximise votes. When looking at the changes in the supply side of the research case studies, this chapter has sought to reveal that eRRPs, such as the League and the National Rally, do demonstrate levels of internal flexibility in the long run regardless of their consolidated brand reputation or their funding cleavage. Indeed, in some cases, there are flexible cleavage structures, but there are also other cleavages which are actually frozen. Below, table 5.5 outlines how the League and the National Rally have changed in terms of internal flexibility in each cleavage structure and dimensions of the transnational cleavage. The categories ‘frozen’, ‘weakly’, ‘moderate’ and strongly inform to what extent the cleavage structures and dimensions of the transnational cleavage have been flexible over the years.

Table 5.5 Findings from the analysis of Chapter 5

League	Emphasis	Position	Overall internal flexibility
Religious cleavage	Frozen	Frozen	0
Regional cleavage	Strongly	Frozen	1
Community cleavage	Frozen	Strongly	1
Class cleavage	Weakly	Weakly	2
Transnational cleavage	Moderately	Moderately	2
- <i>Institutional dimension</i>	Frozen	Strongly	1
- <i>Economic dimension</i>	Weakly	Moderately	2
- <i>Cultural dimension</i>	Moderately	Frozen	1
National Rally			
Religious cleavage	Moderately	Weakly	1
Regional cleavage	Frozen	Frozen	0
Community cleavage	Frozen	Weakly	1
Class cleavage	Frozen	Weakly	1
Transnational cleavage	Strongly	Frozen	1
- <i>Institutional dimension</i>	Moderately	Strongly	2
- <i>Economic dimension</i>	Moderately	Weakly	2
- <i>Cultural dimension</i>	Frozen	Frozen	0

Notes: The cells show how many indicators are flexible: 0 = Frozen, 1 = Partially flexible, 2 = Fully flexible. Source: Author’s elaboration.

In this conclusion, I will outline two major findings from this chapter. The first concerns the similarities and differences between the League and the National Rally on the transnational cleavage within their supply side. From this analysis, I can empirically demonstrate that both parties have been internally flexible as regards the new transnational cleavage. However, there are few differences between the case studies. It emerges from this analysis that the transnational cleavage has been internally flexible in terms of both emphasis and position within the supply side of the League. Indeed, the transnational cleavage has drastically increased over the years and the League has also changed its position towards the EU. It moved from an ambiguous pro-EU position to a fervent opposition to the European integration project, holding a strong polarised position towards the dichotomy 'anti-EU'. By contrast, as concerns the National Rally, the transnational cleavage seems to constrain the flexibility of this party. Indeed, the National Rally has increased the level of emphasis on this new cleavage structure. However, the party has kept its stand towards the dichotomy 'anti-EU' since the early 1980s. The implication raised from this analysis is that both the League and the National Rally have been internally flexible with the transnational cleavage, albeit in a different manner. Therefore, these results reassess the theoretical assumption of the classical cleavage model (inspired by historical institutionalist ideas) that political parties do not change. Yet, it is in line with my bounding assumption that the National Rally found it more difficult than the League to be flexible on the new transnational cleavage (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.2).

Thus far, this chapter has investigated the variation in emphasis and position that the League and the National Rally experienced on the new transnational cleavage. However, a deeper analysis of the internal flexibility of the transnational cleavage can provide more insights into how established RRP's addressed this topic. For that reason, building upon the multidimensional nature of the new transnational cleavage proposed in this study, this chapter has also revealed which dimensions played a key role in shaping the parties' internal flexibility with regard to the new cleavage.

Indeed, looking at the second major finding from this chapter, the League and the National Rally demonstrate different levels of internal flexibility in terms of emphasis and position in all three dimensions of the transnational cleavage. Starting with the institutional dimension, the League is partially flexible (only in terms of position), while the National Rally is fully flexible. When looking at the economic dimension, both the League and the National Rally demonstrate flexibility (both in terms of emphasis and position). Finally, when looking at the cultural dimension, the analysis shows

that the League is partially flexible (only in terms of emphasis), while the National Rally is frozen in both terms of emphasis and position.

When deepening the analysis on the dimensions of the transnational cleavage for each case study, the analysis reveals that the internal flexibility of new transnational cleavage has been shaped by different dimensions within the supply side of the League and the National Rally. Therefore, the core results are threefold. Firstly, within the supply side of the League, all dimensions of the new transnational cleavage show internal flexibility, but the economic dimension is the one that mostly shaped League's attitude towards the EU. For instance, one of the main arguments used by the League, in the 1980s, was to accelerate the implementation of the European Monetary Union (EMU), because the Northern regions of Italy would benefit from it and they were economically prepared to handle this economic process (Quaglia, 2008: 69). In this sense, the League perceived the European integration process as beneficial to the economies of the Northern regions, because it would cause the weakening of the centralised national government in favour of more autonomy at the regional/local level. For instance, in 1992, the newspaper *Lombardia Autonomista* ran the headline "farther from Rome, closer to Europe" (*Lombardia Autonomista*, 5 March 1992).

Secondly, moving to the National Rally, both the institutional and the economic dimensions had a decisive role in shaping the new cleavage, but mostly in terms of emphasis. Indeed, the French party accelerated its coverage on the EU issue since the early 1980s in order to compete as a political alternative, at the national level, against the ultra-liberal agenda promoted by the EU. Yet, in terms of position, the institutional dimension seems to be more decisive in influencing the transnational cleavage than the economic dimension. Indeed, at the very origin of this party, the pro-Europeanism proposed by the National Rally was purely geo-political (Shields, 2007: 240). The reinforcement of the EU was meant to strengthen militarily the European countries and to intensify warfare cooperation against the threat of the Soviet Union. For instance, in the electoral manifesto of 1981 one of the main program points was "ensuring peace and national independence through loyalty to our European and Atlantic alliances" (National Rally manifesto, 1981). Le Pen also repeatedly declared that "Europe needs France, the world needs Europe. A strong France within a strong Europe" (National Hebdo, 26 February 1986). Nevertheless, once the threat of communism disappeared in the early 1990s, the new external enemies of the National Rally were the European technocrats, politicians and bankers.

Finally, the cultural dimension has played a deeper role (in terms of emphasis) within the transnational cleavage of the League, while it was a counterweight to the National Rally's flexibility with regard to the transnational cleavage. Indeed, it is shown from this analysis that, within the supply side of the League, the cultural dimension has played a significant role in increasing the emphasis that the League has employed on the transnational cleavage as a whole, while, within the supply side of the National Rally, the cultural dimension is fully frozen. That is to say that the dichotomy "Nativism" is what anchored the National Rally to the dichotomy "anti-EU" over the course of domestic elections.

As outlined in chapter 4, one could observe that the political context of the League and the National Rally has changed over the years. Similarly, this chapter has illustrated whether and how the two case studies have changed their supply side with regards to the new transnational cleavage (and its dimensions). The following chapter will, finally, explore the last dimension constitution ideological parties' flexibility: the manifest demand side.

6 The Metamorphosis of the Established Radical Right

Electorate

6.1 Introduction: the electoral impact of the EU-voters' orientations

The previous chapters (4 and 5) have explored in detail the first two factors constituting ideological flexibility of political parties. This chapter proceeds by examining the manifest demand side of such ideological flexibility. Seymour Martin Lipset argued in one of his major contributions (*Political Man*) that “in every modern democracy conflict among different groups is expressed through political parties” (1960: 220). In essence, this assertion captures the core nature of conflict in democratic regimes, which is built on the fundamental role that political parties play in our society. Political parties are, indeed, fundamental in the classical cleavage model in order to allow cleavages to rise from the societal world to the political realm (see Zuckerman, 1975). Along with other authors (e.g. Sartori, 1990; Franklin, 2010; Kriesi, 2010), Bartolini and Mair (2007) also built their definition on cleavage structures from this assertion that cleavage structures must find organisational expression in society. To this end, researchers in party competition have, for a long time, investigated the reasons why voters support certain political parties rather than others.

Drawing from the work of Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, Dolezal, Bornschieer and Frey (2008) on the impact of cleavage structures on voting behaviour, making the implicit assumption that demand side and supply side are correlated: “Parties, for instance, should respond strategically to changes in voters' preferences. Similarly, [cleavage structures] should be important not only for explaining the structure of voters' attitudes, but also for determining their voting choices” (Kriesi et al., 2008: 296). Like Kriesi et al. (2008) Chapters 4 and 5 show that changes within the latent demand side and the supply side of political parties coincide. Chapter 6 aims to fill the gap between these findings. For this reason, the analysis in this chapter will focus on the third factor that determines the flexibility of parties: external flexibility (see section 2.5.3).

The academic literature has investigated consequences of voters' issue-orientations extensively. For instance, with regards to the classical religious cleavage, Olson and Green (2006) make an argument

about the religious gap between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the USA, stating that the former tends to collect most votes from religious practitioners, while the latter party tends to appeal more secularist voters. Similarly, Van der Brug et al. (2009) demonstrate that, during European elections, Catholics usually vote for right-wing parties and secularists vote left-wing parties. Accordingly, when moving to the core interest of this study about the consequences of voters' EU-orientations, most empirical research available shows that both sociodemographic and attitudinal characteristics linked to the transnational cleavage can influence party preference. Guth and Nelsen (2021), for example, find strong evidence that objective⁶⁰ characteristics distinguish voting behaviour for populist parties and mainstream parties. To some extent, voters of right populism and left populism resemble each other. Both electorates hold strong antagonistic attitudes towards the European Union and their national governments, confirming the anti-elitist characteristic of populist parties, and they also belong to the lowest educated groups. Yet, they differentiate with regards to the immigration issue. Guth and Nelsen (2021) confirm that voters of populist left-wing parties have not anti-immigrant attitudes, while voters that are significantly hostile to immigrants are more likely to support populist radical-right parties. Similarly, Siegers and Jedinger (2021) confirm that anti-immigrant attitudes are determinant on voting preference for right-wing populist parties. Furthermore, Carrieri and Vittori (2021) empirically demonstrate that voters with antagonistic attitudes towards the EU fiscal policy are also more likely to support radical right parties. These studies' results suggest a very obvious answer to the question on what are the core factors of the transnational cleavage that explain the link between voters and radical right parties: these factors are the antagonistic attitudes related to the transnational cleavage as 'sovereignism', 'welfare chauvinism' and 'nativism'.

Based on the above literature confirming that voters nowadays endorse radical right parties because of anti-EU attitudes, it is still a matter of discussion whether these voters' EU-orientations have been stable as the time progresses. Therefore, like Kriesi and colleagues (2008: 296-319), the aim of this chapter is to explore whether and to what extent cleavage structures (classical and new) and the dimensions of the transitional cleavage influenced voting behaviour in favour of eRRPs. In this way, it will be possible to observe whether the eRRPs' electorates have changed from election to election. To accomplish this, I have run logistic regression models in order to measure the impact of cleavages

⁶⁰ The authors refer to the term objective characteristics when exploring the sociodemographic attributes of respondents and subjective characteristics when exploring the attitudinal attributes of respondents (Guth and Nelsen, 2021).

and dimensions of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour, relying on secondary data from the standard version of the Eurobarometer (EB). This impact will be compared among cleavages (and dimensions) across time, both in terms of predictive magnitude and direction.⁶¹ Finally, I will focus on each dimension of the transnational cleavage in order to explore whether these dimensions have changed in terms of magnitude and/or direction impacting voters' behaviour for eRRPs. Therefore, I will consider the manifest demand side of the League and the National Rally as externally flexible on cleavage structures, and dimensions of the transnational cleavage, whether at least one between magnitude and direction demonstrate flexibility. To this end, I will test the magnitude/direction hypothesis (H4) (see section 2.5.3) through the combination of the following measurements:

- The magnitude and the direction of the coefficients generated by logistic regressions.

6.2 Results: parties external flexibility

As concerns the analytic strategy in the next sections of this chapter, I examine the cleavages' impact in predicting voting behaviour for eRRPs through the following procedural steps for both the League and the National Rally. First of all, I separately describe the impact of cleavages on voting behaviour in each political context. In this first step, I therefore run multivariate regression models in order to estimate by what means each predictor variable (including the control variables) impacts voting behaviour for the League or the National Rally. Secondly, I run one last multivariate regression model with all predictors (the independent variables) and the control variables (age, gender and education) for each political context. The reason is twofold. This strategy allows me, firstly, to observe whether the impact of cleavages on voting behaviour does not change regardless of adding more variables to the model. If the level of magnitude, direction and significance do not substantially change, the model confirms that the cleavage structure does impact voting behaviour. Secondly, I will use these multivariate regression models in order to compare the impact of cleavages on voting behaviour over time. The latter step is necessary in order to test the fourth set of research hypotheses (H4). With regards to the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, I will follow the same procedures described. Therefore, for each dimension of the transnational cleavage, I test the impact

⁶¹ The predictive magnitude corresponds to the size of the coefficient, indicating to what extent the independent variable influences the dependent variable. Similarly, the predictive direction informs which dichotomy of a cleavage structure (or dimension of the new transnational cleavage) is responsible to influence the voting behaviour of respondents.

of each dimension of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour between the early 1990s and the late 2010s.

6.2.1 *The external flexibility of the League*

This section will focus on the external flexibility of the League over the last ten domestic electoral campaigns in Italy. The first part shall start by comparing voters' issue-orientations among cleavage structures, while the second part will be dedicated to dimensions of the transnational cleavage.

6.2.1.1 Impact of classical and new cleavage structures on voting behaviour

Tables 6.1a and 6.1b report the regression results of respondents' voting behaviour in the first political context (late 1980s/early 1990s), while table 6.2 shows the regression results in the second political context (late 2010s).⁶² As I previously explained (see section 3.2.4.2), in each table, models investigate the single impact of each cleavage structure (independent variables) after controlling for age, gender and education (control variables).

Starting from table 6.1a, which refers to the 1987 Italian general election, the predictor variable, *regional* cleavage, indicates a positive, but not significant effect. Therefore, this predictor did not have a significant effect on the odds of observing respondents voting for the League. When moving to the table 6.1b, which refers to the 1994 Italian general election, the predictor variables, *class* cleavage and *community* cleavage, are the only one to be a significant predictor for respondents' League preference. Therefore, the results indicate, for instance, that a voter who subjectively positions herself/himself with the working class was less likely to vote for the League, but if the elector came from a rural area, it was more likely that respondent would vote for the League. This means that for each one unit increase on League preference, the probability of supporting the League decreased about 2 percentage points if the voter is self-identified with the dichotomy 'Workers' and increased about 7 percentage points if voter came from her/his city/town/village. Instead, from the same table, all the other predictors (*religious* and *transnational* cleavages) combined with the control variables

⁶² For each model, I tested the assumption of multicollinearity. Therefore, I measured the Variance Inflation Factors (VIFs) in order to detect the presence of multicollinearity. The VIFs scale starts from 1, when there is no correlation between predictors, and there is not an upper limit. Nevertheless, any VIFs that fall in between 1 and 5 can be considered as a moderate multicollinearity, which does not require any improving measures to the model. However, any VIFs greater than 5 is cause of concern and it does require corrective measures. 10 is the upper limit (Menard, 2002). All variables relied between 1 and 1.2.

are not significant. This also means that these two cleavage structures did not significantly impact the odds to observe respondents voting for the League.

Empirically speaking, the most unexpected result from these tables is the regional cleavage in table 6.1, which is not significant, although the League was founded by this ideological conflict⁶³. Nevertheless, I stated in Chapter 3, section 3.2.1, the sample size of those people that voted for the League in the 1987 and 1994 Italian general elections were not really large in the datasets (EB36 and EB42). Hence, the reason why *class* and *community* are statistically significant is because the population of those that voted for the League are more evenly distributed in both categories, in contrast to those cleavages that are not significant (see Appendix D). Nevertheless, there is still space for interpretation when looking at the regression coefficients. In the first political context, between the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the variables representing the *class* cleavage and the *transnational* cleavage decreased respondents' chances of voting the League. This means that if a respondent is self-identified with the working class or she/he hold Eurosceptic attitudes, it is less likely that the respondent will vote for the League. On the other hand, with regards to the other three cleavages, one could argue that if a respondent thinks that religion is important in her/his life, feel more attached to her/his city/town/village or the respondent comes from a rural area, it is more likely that the respondent will give her/his support for the League.

Moreover, when looking to the magnitude of cleavages from table 6.2, the electorate of the League was mostly driven by the *class* cleavage, which has traditionally been interpreted as the ideological conflict between left vs. right. Indeed, since League's foundation, the backbone of the League's electorate originates from the small and medium-sized enterprises that identified in the League the opportunity to economically benefit the deregulation proposed by the party that would have brought less taxation for the entrepreneurs coming from the Northern Italian regions. Unfortunately, because of the lack of the regional cleavage within the same database of the other cleavage structures (EB42), it is not possible to compare the relative impact of this cleavage with the other ideological conflicts within the same year. However, table 6.2 shows that the *community* cleavage is the second predictor in terms of predictive magnitude with the dependant variable. Finally, the least impactful cleavages on voting for the League were the *religious* and the *transnational* cleavages. The latter

⁶³ This result may be explained because the participants in the EB were not selected evenly by region, thus, Northern parts of the country are less represented and, for that reason, diluting the regional differences in Italy.

ideological conflict is the least impactful predictor when compared with the other variables in table 6.2.

Table 6.1 The impact of the regional cleavage on League preference in the first political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 1987 general election (1 simple logistic regressions)

	First political context – 1994 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Regional cleavage (ref: Centre)	.623	.562	N/s	.011	446

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB36 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

Table 6.2 The impact of cleavage structures on League preference in the first political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 1994 general election (4 separate simple logistic regressions)

	First political context – 1994 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Religious cleavage (ref: State)	.215	.443	N/s	.020	406
Community cleavage (ref: Urban)	.551	.305	***	.021	503
Class cleavage (ref: Employers)	-1.012	.415	***	.037	485
Transnational cleavage (ref: Pro-EU)	-.182	.573	N/s	.010	503

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB42 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

Moving on to the next table (6.3), we can observe how the electorate's issue-orientations on cleavage structures influenced voting behaviour for the League in the second political context (the 2018 Italian general election). In table 6.3, all predictors are statistically significant, so one can claim that these cleavages, when are individually selected to predict the DV, had a significant effect on the odds of observing respondents voting for the League in the last Italian general election. Starting with the *religious* cleavage, the expected logit for an electorate to vote for the League in 2018 was .489 higher than the expected logit when religion is not important in the electors' life. This means that the probability of supporting the League increased about 25 percentage points for each unit increase of respondents feeling that religion is important in their lives. For the *regional* cleavage, table 6.3 shows that the expected logit for an Italian voter to give her/his vote to the League when feeling attached towards her/his city/town/village was -.382 points slighter than the expected logit when a respondent felt less attached towards her/his city/town/village. Therefore, the probability of supporting the League decreased about 14 percentage points with each unit increase of respondents standing for the dichotomy 'Periphery'. With regards to the *community* cleavage, the expected logit for voting the League when coming from a rural area was .503 points greater than the expected logit when voters came from an urban area. Therefore, the probability of supporting the League increased

about 20 percentage points with each unit increase with respondents coming from a rural area. Moreover, the *class* cleavage shows that the expected logit for an Italian voter to give her/his preference to the League when self-identified with the working class was -.569 points smaller than the expected logit when respondents are self-identified with the dichotomy employers. Hence, the probability of supporting the League decreased about 10 percentage points with each unit increase when respondents self-identified with the working class. Finally, the *transnational* cleavage shows that the expected logit for an Italian voter to give her/his preference to the League when standing for the dichotomy 'anti-EU' was 1.091 points higher than the expected logit when respondents hold pro-European attitudes. Consequently, the probability of supporting the League increased about 31 percentage points with each unit increase of respondents holding Eurosceptic attitudes.

To sum up, according to the results stated above, one can notice that 'Church', 'Centre', 'Rural', 'Employers' and 'anti-EU' are the dichotomies that increased the likelihood of respondents voting for the League. Moreover, in terms of relative impact of each coefficient regression, table 6.3 shows that *transnational* cleavage is the major factor that determined voting behaviour for the League in the 2018 general elections. This is followed by the *class* cleavage, which continues to demonstrate an important influence on respondents' voting behaviour for the League. The *community* cleavage and the *religious* cleavage are somewhere in the middle. Finally, the *regional* cleavage is the weakest predictor in terms of impact on League's preference when compared with the other independent variables.

Table 6.3 The impact of cleavage structures on League preference in the second political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 2018 general election (5 separate simple logistic regressions)

	Second political context – 2018 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Religious cleavage (ref: State)	.489	.313	*	.027	536
Regional cleavage (ref: Centre)	-.382	.174	***	.032	536
Community cleavage (ref: Urban)	.503	.198	***	.036	536
Class cleavage (ref: Employers)	-.569	.230	***	.035	533
Transnational cleavage (ref: Pro-EU)	1.091	.192	***	.087	536

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: Source: EB91.5 available from (GESIS) at <http://zocat.gesis.org/>.

Before turning to the comparison of cleavages' impact across time, I ran one last multivariate regression model with all predictors (the independent variables) and the controlling variables (age, gender and education) for each political context. Table 6.4, below, shows three separate multivariate

regression models in order to check the predictability strength of each cleavage (with the previous models) and to compare this strength over time. So, in the first political context, when looking to the predictability of the strength of cleavages, one could observe that the *class* cleavage and the *community* cleavage are still statistically significant after adding the other predictors to the model. Therefore, I can confirm that both cleavages have indeed a causal relationship with the variable League preference. However, when focusing on the second political context, the multivariate regression model of the 2018 Italian general election in table 6.4 shows that the *religious* cleavage is the only predictor that has lost significance. The reason behind this empirical result is that the *religious* cleavage was not, actually, at the core of the causal effect to provoke respondents' League preference. But, rather, the other predictors provoked an inferential effect on the DV. In fact, the *regional*, *community*, *class* and *transnational* cleavages are still statistically significant, which means that these respondents' issue-orientations have indeed an impact on their voting behaviour for the League in the 2018 Italian general elections.

Finally, moving to the comparison of cleavages' impact over time, one could observe that some predictors did not change both in terms of direction and magnitude, while other cleavages have drastically changed from one political context to the other. The most significant changes can be observed with the *regional* and the *transnational* cleavages. The results from table 6.4 indicate that these cleavages had an opposite impact compared with the first political context. This means that there has been a significant shift in the reasons behind voters supporting the League when considering these two cleavages. On the other hand, the other three cleavages did not change direction over time. Therefore, these results demonstrate that when League's voters stand for the dichotomies 'Church', 'Rural' or 'Employers', it is still more likely for them to vote for the party. Furthermore, when looking to the changes of the absolute impact of cleavages, table 6.4 shows that the *transnational* cleavage used to be the least impactful predictor in the 1994 Italian general elections, but in the 2018 Italian general election it became the major factor that determined voting behaviour for the League. One last finding that is worth it pointing out is that the *class* cleavage and *community* cleavage still have a significant impact on those who voted for the League. These results underline how classical cleavages can still be vital for determining voting behaviour for eRRPs. Therefore, comparing the external flexibility among cleavage structures, I can demonstrate that the above results corroborate the research hypotheses H4a and H4b.

Table 6.4 The impact of cleavage structures on League preference after controlling for age, gender and education (3 separate multivariate logistic regressions)

	First political context						Second political context		
	1987			1994			2018		
	Beta	SE	Sig	Beta	SE	Sig	Beta	SE	Sig
Religious cleavage (ref: State)	-			.085	.451	N/s	.359	.332	N/s
Regional cleavage (ref: Centre)	.623	.536	N/s	-	-	-	-.381	.182	***
Community cleavage (ref: Urban)	-			.497	.347	*	.645	.210	***
Class cleavage (ref: Employers)	-			-.695	.431	**	-.840	.240	***
Transnational cleavage (ref: Pro-EU)	-			-.494	.748	N/s	1.175	.197	***
Constant	-4.178			-3.934			-2.046		
Nagelkerke R2	.011			.046			.135		
N	446			393			533		
% correctly predicted	97.2			93.4			77.3		

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Sources: EB36=1987, EB42=1994, EB91.5=2018 available from (GESIS) at <http://zcat.gesis.org/>.

6.2.1.2 Impact of dimensions of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour

In the second part of this section, I am looking at the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage. Table 6.5 shows how the dimensions of the transnational cleavage impacted voting behaviour for the League in the first political context (the 1994 general election), while table 6.6 reports the same results for the second political context (the 2018 general election).

As shown in table 6.5, none of the predictors are statistically significant. This result tells us that these independent variables, therefore, did not have a significant impact on the odds of respondents voting for the League. On the other hand, empirically speaking, this result is actually in line with my expectations built from the results of table 6.2. In fact, table 6.2 already anticipated that the transnational cleavage altogether was already not statistically significant. So, it is not surprising that the same result emerges when looking at these particular dimensions individually. Nonetheless, by looking at the regression coefficients, one can observe that variables representing the *institutional* and *cultural* dimensions decrease respondents' chances to vote for the League. These results mean that if a respondent holds antagonist attitudes towards the EU-membership or if the respondent holds an exclusive national identity, it is less likely that the elector will vote for the League. On the other hand, with regards to the economic dimension, this predictor increases. So, if a respondent thinks that the EU-members does not benefit Italy, it is more likely that the voter will give her/his support for the League.

These results deepen our understanding on how the transnational cleavage influenced voting behaviour for the League in the 1994 general election. But when focusing on the cultural dimension, it is surprising that the League's electorate tended more towards a multicultural identity rather than an exclusive national one. However, although the League had a long run reputation in favouring the dichotomy 'Nativism', it should not be forgotten that the cultural dimension did not have much space in its supply side in the 1980s and in the 1990s (see section 5.3.2.1). Indeed, it is only after the League's annual meeting of 1996 that the leader, Umberto Bossi, announced that the federalist project would have only been achieved by using the message of the ethnic 're-awakening' of Northern Italians (Gold, 2003: 103). This 're-awakening' was meant to reinforce a common denominator that would gather all Northern Italians under the federalist fight of the League also based on ethnical grounds. Yet, when looking to the relative impact of these dimensions within the transnational cleavage, the League's electorate was mostly influenced by the cultural dimension. Then, this was followed by the institutional dimension and, finally, the economic dimension was the least impactful dimension to influence voting behaviour for the League.

Table 6.5 The impact of dimensions of transnational cleavage on League preference in the first political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 1994 general election (3 separate simple logistic regressions)

	First political context - 1994 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Institutional dimension (ref: Federalism)	-.214	.422	N/s	.012	471
Economic dimension (ref: Marketism)	.031	.386	N/s	.006	393
Cultural dimension (ref: Multiculturalism)	-.591	.426	N/s	.024	488

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB42 available from (GESIS) at <http://zcat.gesis.org/>.

Moving to the next table 6.6, we can observe that in the second political context, all dimensions of the transnational cleavage are statistically significant, demonstrating that they did have an impact on the likelihood of a respondent voting for the League. The *institutional* dimension shows that the expected logit for an Italian voter to give her/his vote to the League when standing for the dichotomy 'Souverainisme' was .860 points greater than the expected logit when a respondent stand for the dichotomy 'Federalism'. Consequently, the probability of supporting the League increased about 24 percentage points with each unit increase of respondents who thought that EU-membership was not good for Italy. With the *economic* dimension, the expected logit for an Italian elector voting for the League when thinking that EU-membership was not a benefit for Italy was 1.101 points greater than the expected logit when a respondent stands for the dichotomy 'Marketism'. Further, the probability

of supporting the League increased about 32 percentage points with each unit increase of respondents who support for the dichotomy 'Welfare chauvinism'. Finally, the expected logit in support of the League when holding an exclusive national identity was .574 points greater than the expected logit for a respondent holding a multicultural identity. This would mean that for each unit increase of respondents who stand for the dichotomy 'Nativism', the probability of supporting the League thus increased about 23 percentage points.

Focusing on the regression coefficients, 'Souverainisme', 'Welfare chauvinism' and 'Nativism' are the dichotomies that increased the likelihood of League preference. Moreover, in terms of relative impact of each coefficient regression, table 6.6 shows that the economic dimension is the most impactful dimension to influence voting behaviour for the League. This is followed by the institutional dimension and, finally, by the cultural dimension.

Table 6.6 The impact of dimensions of transnational cleavage on League preference in the second political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 2018 general election (3 separate simple logistic regressions)

	Second political context – 2018 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Institutional dimension (ref: Federalism)	.860	.196	***	.061	530
Economic dimension (ref: Marketism)	1.101	.194	***	.090	518
Cultural dimension (ref: Multiculturalism)	.574	.184	***	.048	533

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB91.5 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

To conclude, I ran a final multivariate regression model including all the predictive variables and the control variables in the same model for each political context in order to check the predictive strength of these dimensions and whether this strength has changed over the two political contexts. When looking to the strength of the dimensions of the transnational cleavage, one can observe that in the second political context both the *institutional* and the *cultural* dimensions have lost statistically significance, while the *economic* dimension is still statistically significant. These results mean that the association between the *institutional* and *cultural* dimensions with the dependent variable observed from table 6.6 were not really the core of what was explaining those variances on how people voted, but it was, actually, the *economic* dimension that explains the reason why the transnational cleavage influenced people voting behaviour for the League in the 2018 Italian general election.

Finally, turning on the comparison between dimensions' impact on voting behaviour over time, table 6.7 shows that all predictors have changed in terms of direction. Indeed, in all three

dimensions, the direction of the second political context is the opposite of those in the first political context. This means that there has been indeed a drastic shift on the impact that these dimensions have in determining League's preference. It is evident as the League could benefit from voters' support in the first political context when League electors had more pro-European attitudes. Nevertheless, in the more recent political context, an opposite pattern emerges, and anti-European attitudes increase the likelihood for voters to support the League. Secondly, in terms of magnitude, the *institutional* and the *economic* dimensions are the only ones that experienced substantial changes from 1994 to 2018. In the 1994 general election the *institutional* dimension was the first variable moving voters to support the League, while in the 2018 general election it is no longer the major predicting factor. By contrast, the *economic* dimension turned to be the second predicting variable in the 1994 general elections, but it became the first predicting variable in the 2018 general elections. Finally, the *cultural* dimension did not change in terms of magnitude as it remained to be the last predicting variable to influence voting support for the League both in 1994 and 2018. Therefore, when looking at the external flexibility among dimensions of the transnational cleavage, this analysis shows that the research hypotheses H4c, H4d, H4e, H4f and H4h are confirmed, while the research hypothesis H4g is rejected.

Table 6.7 The impact of dimensions of transnational cleavage on League preference in the second political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 2018 general election (2 separate multivariate logistic regressions)

	First political context			Second political context		
	1988			2017		
	Beta	SE	Sig	Beta	SE	Sig
Institutional dimension (ref: Federalism)	-.301	.583	N/s	.339	.268	N/s
Economic dimension (ref: Marketism)	-.028	.486	N/s	.733	.257	**
Cultural dimension (ref: Multiculturalism)	-.020	.481	N/s	.182	.202	N/s
Constant	-3.607			-2.133		
Nagelkerke R2	.015			.088		
N	374			509		
% correctly predicted	93.6			78.6		

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Sources: EB42=1994, EB91.5=2018. available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

6.2.2 The external flexibility of the National Rally

This section will focus on the external flexibility of the National Rally over the last nine legislative electoral campaigns in France. The first part shall start comparing voters' issues-orientation among cleavage structures, while the second part will be dedicated to dimensions of the transnational cleavage.

6.2.2.1 Impact of classical and new cleavage structures on voting behaviour

In this section, I analyse the National Rally in order to explore to what extent each cleavage impacted French electors' likelihood of voting for this eRRP and to establish whether the predictive strength of cleavages changes over time. Tables 6.8 and 6.9 show to what extent cleavages influenced the vote for the National Rally in the first political context, while table 6.10 depicts the same phenomenon in the second political context. Starting with table 6.8, which refers to the 1988 legislative election, one can notice that the *regional* cleavage and the *class* cleavage are the only predictors that significantly relate to the likelihood for each unit increase in National Rally preference. With the *regional* cleavage, the expected logit for a French voter is to give her/his vote to the National Rally when feeling more attached to her/his city/town/village was -.613 points less than the expected logit when a respondent is less attached to her/his city/town/village. The probability of supporting the National Rally thus decreased about 1 percentage point with each unit increase of respondents standing for the dichotomy 'Periphery'. With regards to the *class* cleavage, the expected logit for a French voter to give her/his vote to the National Rally when self-placed with the working class was .685 points greater than the expected logit when a respondent is self-placed with the dichotomy 'Employers'. Therefore, the probability of supporting the National Rally increases about 5 percentage points with each unit increase of respondents standing for the dichotomy 'Workers'. On the other hand, the predictors *community* and *transnational* are not statistically significant. Similarly, in table 6.9, which refers to the 1993 legislative election, the *religious* cleavage is also not statistically significant to influence the odds to observe French electors to vote for the National Rally.

Focusing on the regression coefficients, from table 6.8, the results show that the *regional* cleavage is the only variable that decreases respondents' chances of voting for the National Rally. This means if a respondent feels more attached towards her/his city/town/village, it is less likely for her/him to vote for the National Rally. However, all the other regression coefficients are positive (including the predictor in table 6.9). Therefore, when respondents stand towards the dichotomies 'Rural', 'Workers', 'anti-EU' and 'Church', it is more likely for them to vote for the National Rally. Yet, the most surprising result from the first political context, contradicting my analysis of the National Rally's supply side, is the impact of the *class* cleavage. In its supply side, the National Rally used to stand for the dichotomy 'Employers' when addressing this topic, but National Rally's electorate is more likely to vote for the party when they are self-identified with the working class. However, this result can be explained by the 'double electorate' phenomenon (Charlot 1988: 39) that took place in

France since 1988. This phenomenon was described by Charlot (1988) as the capacity of the National Rally to also attract voters from non-traditional societal groups, such the blue-collar workers, who were not persuaded to vote for this party for its position on the *class* cleavage, but rather for its position towards cultural issues (see also Andersen and Evans, 2003; 104). In terms of predictive magnitude, the *class* cleavage is the most impactful predictor towards the DV. More unexpectedly, it is followed by the *regional* cleavage, and then by the new *transnational* cleavage as the third most intense predictor, which is also the funding cleavage of the National Rally. Finally, the least impactful predictor is the *community* cleavage.

Table 6.8 The impact of the cleavage structures on National Rally preference in the first political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 1988 legislative election (4 simple logistic regressions)

	First political context - 1988 French legislative election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Regional cleavage (ref: Centre)	-.613	.416	*	.066	531
Community cleavage (ref: Urban)	.014	.387	N/s	.056	534
Class cleavage (ref: Employers)	.685+	.434	*	.014	513
Transnational cleavage (ref: Pro-EU)	.501	.392	N/s	.063	534

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. + = in this model I excluded the controlling variable 'education', because almost all respondents were polarised towards the same category. Source: EB36 available from (GESIS) at <http://zocat.gesis.org/>.

Table 6.9 The impact of the religious cleavage on National Rally preference in the first political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 1993 legislative election (1 simple logistic regressions)

	First political context - 1988 French legislative election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Religious cleavage (ref: State)	.148	.444	N/s	.009	397

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB42 available from (GESIS) at <http://zocat.gesis.org/>.

When moving to the second political context, table 6.10 also shows variables with a predictive strength that is also statistically significant. This is especially the case of the *class* cleavage and the *transnational* cleavage. Starting with the *class* cleavage, table 6.10 shows that the expected logit for a French voter to give her/his vote to the National Rally when self-placed with the working class is .601 points greater than the expected logit when a respondent is self-placed with the dichotomy 'Employers'. Therefore, the probability of supporting the League increases about 36 percentage points with each unit increase of respondents standing for the dichotomy 'Workers'. Moreover, with regards to the *transnational* cleavage, the expected logit for voting for the National Rally when the respondents hold Eurosceptic attitudes is 1.600 points greater than the expected logit when voters have pro-European attitudes. Therefore, the probability of supporting the National Rally increases

about 53 percentage points with each unit increase withstanding for the dichotomy 'anti-EU'. Conversely, all the other predictors are not statistically significant, meaning that they did not have a significant effect on the odds of observing respondents voting for the National Rally in the 2017 French general election.

Highlighting the regression coefficients, one can thus observe that when respondents stand towards the dichotomies 'Church', 'Periphery', 'Rural', 'Workers' and 'anti-EU', it is more likely for them to vote for the National Rally. Finally, table 6.8 also shows that the *transnational* cleavage has become the most impactful predictor on National Rally's preference. Then, the *class* cleavage is the predictor, among the classical cleavages, that mostly impacted electors' choice for the National Rally. The *religious* cleavage still has a relative impact when compared with the other predictors. Finally, both the *regional* and the *community* cleavages have a small predictive impact to National Rally's preference.

Table 6.10 The impact of cleavage structures on National Rally preference in the second political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 2017 legislative election (5 separate simple logistic regressions)

	Second political context – 2017 French legislative election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Religious cleavage (ref: State)	.248	.455	N/s	.122	477
Regional cleavage (ref: Centre)	.082	.197	N/s	.122	477
Community cleavage (ref: Urban)	.079	.204	N/s	.122	477
Class cleavage (ref: Employers)	.601	.209	***	.143	471
Transnational cleavage (ref: Pro-EU)	1.600	.209	***	.242	477

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB91.5 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

To conclude the first part of this section, I ran two more multivariate regression models including all independent variables and the control variables at the same time. Before comparing the regression coefficients from two different political contexts, the multivariate regression analyses provide information on whether the cleavages are indeed strong predictors for the electors to vote for the National Rally. In table 6.11, starting with the first political context, one can observe that only the *class* cleavage is still statistically significant after adding all the other predictors to the model. On the other hand, the *regional* cleavage is no more statistically significant. Therefore, only the *class* cleavage had a significant predictive power towards the DV. Similarly, in the second political context, the *transnational* cleavage is still statistically significant, while the *class* cleavage is no more

statistically significant at the conventional level of standards of 95%. From table 6.11, there is evidence of any cleavage to be significant in both political contexts.

When observing to what extent the impact of issues-orientations changed over time, I start by describing the change in terms of direction of the regressor coefficients. Indeed, three out of four classical cleavages had an opposite impact in the second political context compared with the first one. This means that there has been a significant shift in the reasons behind French electors voting for the National Rally when considering these three cleavages (*religious, regional* and *community*). On the other hand, the *class* cleavage and the *transnational* cleavage are constant over the years. Indeed, French people tend to vote for the National Rally when standing for the dichotomies ‘Workers’ and ‘anti-EU’ in both political contexts. Finally, in terms of the magnitude of the regression coefficient, the main changes happened to be with the *regional, class* and *transnational* cleavage. The *regional* and the *class* cleavages have decreased, while the *transnational* cleavage has increased. To this end, when looking at the external flexibility among cleavage structures, this analysis shows that the research hypothesis H4a is confirmed, while the research hypothesis H4b is rejected.

Table 6.11 The impact of cleavage structures on League preference after controlling for age, gender and education (3 separate multivariate logistic regressions)

	First political context						Second political context		
	1988 ^a			1993			2017		
	Beta	SE	Sig	Beta	SE	Sig	Beta	SE	Sig
Religious cleavage (ref: State)	-	-	-	.148	.444	N/s	-.029	.480	N/s
Regional cleavage (ref: Centre)	-.554	.468	N/s	-	-	-	.102	.213	N/s
Community cleavage (ref: Urban)	.236	.438	N/s	-	-	-	-.043	.220	N/s
Class cleavage (ref: Employers)	.718	.440	**	-	-	-	.270	.223	N/s
Transnational cleavage (ref: Pro-EU)	.461	.447	N/s	-	-	-	1.565	.218	***
Constant	-3.642			-2.239			-1.577		
Nagelkerke R2	.032			.009			.251		
N	510			397			471		
% correctly predicted	97.1			95.9			80.6		

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant, a= in this model I excluded the controlling variable ‘education’, because almost all respondents were polarised towards the same category. Sources: EB36=1988, EB42=1993, EB91.5=2017 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

6.2.2.2 Impact of dimensions of the transnational cleavage on voting behaviour

The second part of this section investigates the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage of National Rally’s voters. Table 6.12 shows how the dimensions of the transnational cleavage impacted voting behaviour for the National Rally in the first political context (1988

legislative election). Table 6.13 depicts the same inferential effect in the second political context (2017 legislative election).

Table 6.12 shows that none of the predictors had a significant impact on the odds of observing respondents voting for the National Rally in the 1988 French general election. This result is in line with the previous findings since the transnational cleavage is not statistically significant in table 6.8. However, when looking at the regression coefficient of these predictors, there are some differences among these dimensions. Firstly, the *institutional* dimension has an opposite sign than the other two dimensions. Indeed, the regression coefficient is negative, which suggests that if respondents did not think that the EU membership is good for France, it was less likely that they would vote for the National Rally. On the other hand, the *economic* dimension and the *cultural* dimension are positive. This means that if the respondents stand for the dichotomies ‘Welfare chauvinism’ and ‘Nativism’, it is more likely that they will vote for the National Rally in the 1988 general election. Finally, it should be noted that the magnitude of the *economic* dimension and *cultural* dimension are considerably greater than the *institutional* dimension.

Table 6.12 The impact of dimensions of transnational cleavage on National Rally preference in the first political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 1988 legislative election (3 separate simple logistic regressions)

	First political context - 1988 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Institutional dimension (ref: Federalism)	-.025	.410	N/s	.058	512
Economic dimension (ref: Marketism)	.427	.410	N/s	.063	447
Cultural dimension (ref: Multiculturalism)	.355	.396	N/s	.059	526

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB36 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

When shifting to the second political context, we can observe that all predictors are statistically significant and, one can argue that these variables significantly impact the odds of observing respondents voting for the National Rally. Starting with the *institutional* dimension, that the expected logit for a French elector to give her/his vote to the National Rally when standing for the dichotomy ‘Souverainisme’ was 1.312 points greater than the expected logit when a respondent stand for the dichotomy ‘Federalism’. Therefore, the probability of supporting the National Rally increased about 40 percentage points with each unit increase of French respondents who thought that the EU-membership was not good for their country. The expected logit of the *economic* dimension for a respondent to vote for the National Rally when thinking that EU-membership did not benefit France was 1.595 points greater than a respondent that stand for the dichotomy

‘Marketism’. The probability of the National Rally’s preference, thus, increases about 52 percentage points with each unit increase of French respondents who think that the EU-membership does not benefit their country. Finally, with the *cultural* dimension, the expected logit for a French elector to vote the National Rally when standing for the dichotomy ‘Nativism’ is 1.324 points greater than the expected logit when a respondent holds attitudes in favour of the dichotomy ‘Multiculturalism’. The probability of supporting the National Rally can be computed as this increased about 48 percentage points with each unit increase of French respondents who stand for the dichotomy ‘Nativism’.

Table 6.13 shows that, in all three dimensions, there is coherence between National Rally’s position and the reasons why electors voted for the National Rally. Indeed, in all three dimensions, respondents that stand for the antagonistic dichotomies towards the European integration project (‘Souverainisme’, ‘Welfare chauvinism’ and ‘Nativism’) are more likely to vote for the National Rally. Moreover, in terms of the regression coefficients’ magnitude, the *economic* dimension has a more impactful effect on the DV than the *institutional* and *cultural* dimensions.

Table 6.13 The impact of dimensions of transnational cleavage on National Rally preference in the second political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the 2017 legislative election (3 separate simple logistic regressions)

	Second political context – 2017 Italian general election				
	Beta	SE	Sig	Nag.R2	N
Institutional dimension (ref: Federalism)	1.312	.210	***	.207	474
Economic dimension (ref: Marketism)	1.595	.222	***	.214	445
Cultural dimension (ref: Multiculturalism)	1.324	.209	***	.201	472

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Source: EB91.5 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

After demonstrating to what extent each dimension of the transnational cleavage individually impacts the DV, I ran two more multivariate regression models including all predictors to test the fourth set of research hypothesis (H4). From table 6.14, we can observe that the *cultural* dimension has a significant impact to the likelihood of observing respondents voting for the National Rally even in first political context. This result suggests that the *institutional* and the *economic* dimensions are positive confounding variables, meaning that they tend to bias the association between the *cultural* dimension and the DV away from the null hypothesis. However, I would like to recall that the statistical significance can be negatively impacted by small sample sizes (Thiese et al., 2016). In this case, the analysis of the 1988 French general election relies on a particularly small sample size of National Rally’s voters, but the regression coefficient is not appreciably different from the previous table (6.12). Hence, there is still room for interpretation of these results. On the other hand,

in the second political context, all dimensions of the transnational cleavage are statistically significant, confirming that they were the core of what was explaining those variances on how people voted for the National Rally in the 2017 general election. It is worth to noticing here, that the cultural dimension is statistically significant in both political contexts.

When comparing the regression coefficients from one political context to the other, one can observe that only the *institutional* dimension has changed in terms of direction. There has been a shift on the reasons why French electors voted for the National Rally. In the 1988 general elections, voters that stand for the dichotomy ‘Federalism’ are more likely to vote for the National Rally, but in the 2017 general elections the inferential effect on the DV is the opposite. By contrast, both the *economic* and *cultural* dimensions did not change in terms of direction. Finally, when considering the magnitude of predicting coefficients, the *economic* and the *cultural* dimensions have changed from 1988 to 2017. In the 1988 general election the *economic* dimension was the second variable moving voters to support the League, while in the 2017 general election it became the major predicting factor. By contrast, the *cultural* dimension turned to be the first predicting variable in the 1988 general elections, but it became the second predicting variable in the 2017 general elections. Finally, the *institutional* dimension did not change in terms of magnitude as it remained the last predicting variable to influence voting support for the League both in 1988 and 2017. Therefore, when looking at the external flexibility among dimensions of the transnational cleavage, this analysis shows that the research hypothesis, H4d, H4e and H4g are confirmed, while the research hypotheses H4c, H4f and H4h are rejected.

Table 6.14 The impact of dimensions of transnational cleavage on National Rally preference in the second political context after controlling for age, gender and education in the French legislative election (2 separate multivariate logistic regressions)

	First political context			Second political context		
	1988			2017		
	Beta	SE	Sig	Beta	SE	Sig
Institutional dimension (ref: Federalism)	-.181	.473	N/s	.615	.278	***
Economic dimension (ref: Marketism)	.342	.456	N/s	.991	.871	***
Cultural dimension (ref: Multiculturalism)	.631	.430	**	.899	.241	***
Constant	-5.439			-1.837		
Nagelkerke R2	.076			.263		
N	432			440		
% correctly predicted	96.0			81.0		

Notes: Logistic regression models predicting whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0). Sig *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, N/s Not significant. Sources: EB36=1987, EB91.5=2017 available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

6.3 Conclusion: voters crossing the line of the transnational cleavage

The main objective of this chapter has been to examine in detail the third element constituting parties' ideological flexibility and explore the way as electorates of the two case studies have changed after a long period of time. Chapter 6 was built on the idea of the *behavioural* aspect of cleavages (Bartolini and Mair, 2007) with the aim of filling the gap in the analysis between the demand side and the supply side (Kriesi et al., 2006), determining whether there have been changes within the eRRPs' electorates in Italy and France from the Maastricht Treaty to the most recent domestic election. Therefore, following the argumentation of this chapter, the above empirical analysis explores the third factor that evaluates whether a political party has been flexible in terms of the changes of its electorate (external flexibility). Below, table 6.13 shows how cleavage structures (classical and new) and dimensions of the transnational cleavage have developed in influencing Italian and French voters to support the League and the National Rally. The categories 'different' and 'same' inform whether the cleavage structures and dimensions of the transnational cleavage have been flexible over the years.

Table 6.15 Findings from the analysis of Chapter 6

League	Magnitude⁺	Direction	Overall external flexibility
Religious cleavage	Different (↑)	Same	1
Regional cleavage ^b	Different (↓)	Different	2
Community cleavage ^c	Same	Same	0
Class cleavage ^c	Same	Same	0
Transnational cleavage ^b	Different (↑)	Different	2
- <i>Institutional dimension</i>	Different (↓)	Different	2
- <i>Economic dimension^b</i>	Different (↑)	Different	2
- <i>Cultural dimension</i>	Same	Different	1
National Rally			
Religious cleavage	Same	Different	1
Regional cleavage	Different (↓)	Different	2
Community cleavage	Different (↑)	Different	2
Class cleavage ^a	Different (↓)	Same	1
Transnational cleavage ^b	Different (↑)	Same	1
- <i>Institutional dimension^b</i>	Same	Different	1
- <i>Economic dimension^b</i>	Different (↑)	Same	1
- <i>Cultural dimension^c</i>	Different (↓)	Same	1

Notes: The cells show how many indicators are flexible: 0 = Frozen, 1 = Partially flexible, 2 = Fully flexible. + = the magnitude also shows if increased (↑) or decreased (↓) from one political context to the other. These variables were statistically significant: a=statistically significant in the first political context, b=statistically significant in the second political context, c=statistically significant in the first and second political context. Source: Author's elaboration.

Overall, there are two main findings standing out from this chapter. Firstly, from this analysis, I can empirically demonstrate that both parties have been externally flexible as regards the new transnational cleavage. However, there are some differences that emerge from the above results. From the Italian electorate, there is indeed a change of voters' EU-orientations for the League in both

terms of magnitude and direction. I have shown that the new cleavage structure differently influences the Italian electors voting for the League. In the 1994 general elections, Italian voters that hold positive attitudes towards the EU are more likely to vote for the League. Nevertheless, in the 2018 general elections, the impact is the opposite and, therefore, a Eurosceptic attitude increases the probability of a vote for the League. Moreover, it emerges from this analysis that, in the first political context, the transnational cleavage is not the most impactful factor to influence voting behaviour for the League, as it is the class cleavage that is more impactful. Subsequently, the new transnational cleavage has become at least as important as (or even more important than) the other classical cleavages in determining the reasons why Italian electors vote for League (see table 6.6).

Moving to the National Rally, the results corroborate my expectation that voters' EU-orientations towards the party did not remain stable from one political context to another. Yet, unlike the League, it is partially flexible. Results show that the transnational cleavage has changed in terms of magnitude, but not in terms of direction. Indeed, in both legislative elections (1988 and 2017), table 6.9 shows that antagonistic attitudes towards the EU increase the likelihood of a respondent to vote for the National Rally. However, when focusing on the magnitude of the new transnational cleavage, we could confirm that in the 1988 legislative election, the new cleavage is not the most impactful cleavage in determining voting behaviour for the French party. However, in the 2017 legislative election, the new transnational cleavage becomes the most impactful in terms of magnitude.

Second, and finally, the results confirm the importance of focusing also on the transnational cleavage. Indeed, from this analysis, it is possible to observe different developments between the League and the National Rally. Starting with the institutional dimension, the League is fully flexible, while the National Rally is partially flexible (only in terms of direction). Similarly, when looking at the economic dimension, the League is fully flexible, while the National Rally is partially flexible (only in terms of magnitude). Finally, when looking at the cultural dimension, both the League and the National Rally are partially flexible. The League is partially flexible only in terms of direction, while the National Rally is also partially flexible only in terms of magnitude.

In sum, the implications raised from this chapter are twofold. Firstly, by showing that the impact of voters' EU-orientations can change over the years, the results from this chapter further confirm the theoretical expectations of this study. The eRRPs can be programmatically flexible over long periods of time because their electorate has changed from one political context to another. As Mair (2005, 373) argued "a cleavage must find organizational expression" and I have empirically demonstrated

that the League and the National Rally became (or ceased to be) the organisational expression of certain cleavages and dimensions of the transnational cleavage. However, overall, the electorate of the eRRPs are not homogeneous. In fact, the League's electorate is fully flexible, while the National Rally's electorate is partially flexible.

Secondly, this analysis was also necessary to show that electorates of the radical right do not coherently change with regard to the transnational cleavage. In Italy, the economic dimension is the major factor that changed the impact of the transnational cleavage in influencing voters to support the League. In France, by contrast, there is not a specific dimension that influenced the overall voting support for the National Rally. Yet, for the French party, the institutional dimension and the economic dimension proved to have been decisive for the (partial) flexibility of this party on the long run.

This chapter concludes the empirical section of this work. In the following (and last) chapter, there will be ultimate comparison of the two case studies that demonstrate how the League and the National Rally have been more ideologically flexible than we thought with regards to the new transnational cleavage from the early 1980s to the late 2010s.

PART 3: CONCLUSIONS

7 Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has investigated the flexibility of established radical right parties (eRRPs) with regard to the new transnational cleavage. The significance of this thesis is that it highlights the complexity of parties' nature, demonstrating that the classical cleavage model designed by Lipset and Rokkan does not sufficiently depict the ideological flexibility of political parties, which require a more dynamic cleavage model. The evidence that I gathered in the preceding empirical chapters demonstrates that the League and the National Rally have been capable of ideological flexibility with regards to the transnational cleavage, but in different ways. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to compare the core findings of the League and the National Rally in order to provide an important insight whether and to what extent they have been ideologically flexible with regard to the new transnational cleavage.

In this chapter, I will, first, provide a summary of the study starting from the historical account that represented the turning point of the European integration process (the signing of the Maastricht Treaty) and, then, I will restate how the thesis was organised and what is achieved in each chapter. Subsequently, I will summarise and compare the key results of this study showing to what extent the League and the National Rally have been ideologically flexible towards the new transnational cleavage. I will, then, present the major contributions of this research findings for debates on cleavage theory, the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage and the political relevance of eRRPs. Finally, this chapter concludes by discussing this study's limitations and makes suggestions for further research.

7.2 Summary of the study

On the 7 February 1992 the Heads of State from the European member states signed the Maastricht Treaty. It was the result of several years of discussions between Western European governments that eventually led to the creation of the European Union (EU). This agreement between countries was a compromise among member states in order to accelerate the European integration process

(Hooghe and Marks, 2009: 21). As such, the new EU was built to affirm common interests, ideas and values. At the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, the EU was a transnational institution that represented twelve Western European countries, which despite their unique characteristics (historical and economic), were driven by a common vision to implement an ever-stronger European integration process (Varsori, 2010). This ambitious project was not only sustained by the political elites in charge of the negotiations on the European integration process, but it was also backed by a large majority of European public opinion which fluctuated between supportive and pragmatic attitudes (Boomgaarden et al., 2011). They were the years of the permissive consensus; a period of time when the political elites would negotiate on insulated deals without asking an explicit mandate from their national electors (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). In addition, at party level, all the established political forces (from the left-wing to the right-wing) agreed to depoliticise the European issue in order not to compromise the fate of the political integration process (Marks et al., 2002).

In 2017, on the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the Treaties of Rome, the leaders of the EU member states renewed their commitment to these principles by affirming unity, solidarity and cooperation among the European member states. They asserted that “we are united and stronger: hundreds of millions of people across Europe benefit from living in an enlarged Union that has overcome the old divides” (European Union, 2017: 1). Nevertheless, the European political landscape has since changed. First of all, the EU is, at this point, representing a much more extensive part of the European continent than in the past: from Southern Europe to Scandinavian Europe and from Western Europe to Eastern Europe. This large number of European member states can potentially undermine the development of the European integration process because each country has equal leverage power to accelerate or to slow down this project according to their national interests (Jones et al., 2021). For instance, in 2010, the European member states were divided between creditor and debtor countries demanding different economic strategies to solve the Eurozone crisis. Similarly, in 2015, the European member states were again divided between peripheral transit countries (in the South and East of Europe) and ‘desired’ destination countries (such as Germany, France, UK or the Scandinavian countries) which did not agree on how handling the migration flows – not even within these group of countries.

Secondly, at a political party level, the European issue evolved as a politicised issue or even as an emerging cleavage structure (Hooghe and Marks, 2018) that influences the domestic political debates. In fact, party competitions, at national levels, are currently characterised by a rise of

Eurosceptic governments that might destabilise, in the long run, the European integration process fuelling the ideological conflict between those political forces that encourage an even stronger European integration against those political forces that reclaim national sovereignty – such as UKIP that obtained Brexit, the National Rally that demanded Frexit in 2017 and also the League that allegedly demanded Italexit in 2018.

Therefore, in this new political landscape, there has been a growing academic interest in understanding how political parties structure the European issue at both European and national levels (see e.g. Conti, 2014). Within this strand of research, the radical right parties (RRPs) are identified as EU issue owners and, therefore, use this topic to mobilise voters (see Kriesi et al., 2008; Inglehart and Norris, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 2018). Furthermore, according to theorists who employed the classical cleavage model designed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), “there is [also] the implicit assumption that when a political party belongs to a given side of a cleavage, it does not cross the line from one dichotomy to another” (Scopelliti, 2021a: 1; see Emanuele et al., 2020). For that reason, when exploring the link between the RRPs and Euroscepticism, there is the tacit expectation that these parties have persistent antagonistic ideological features against the EU and as they belong to the same party family, they accordingly approach in the same way the transnational cleavage (Pirro et al., 2018).

However, in Chapter 1, I pointed out that it is the aim of this study to problematise this approach addressing the following research question: *how ideologically flexible are established radical right parties with regards to the new transnational cleavage?* In its broadest sense, the claim made in this study is that established radical right parties (eRRPs) are actually capable of being ideologically flexible on the European issue over long periods of time. Additionally, my main argument goes beyond the bottom-up approach (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) and the top-down approach (Sartori, 1990) that political parties’ ideological framing takes place through one-way processes. Rather, I argue that political parties are actors that can and do change ideologically for both structural and instrumental reasons (Katznelson and Weingast, 2005). They are thus not to be counted either as passive agents or free actors. Both environment and agency explanations are equally important because political parties derive from and, at the same time, mobilise cleavage structures.

In Chapter 2, the research framework was explained on three theoretical streams of research. The first is based on the *cleavage theory* proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). This contribution was fundamental for this study as I consider the cleavage theory to be the most important theoretical

starting point in order to understand the origin of political parties and, subsequently, how they behave. Concepts like cleavage structure were employed to frame how political parties structure ideological conflicts and how to measure their change over the decades, taking into consideration dichotomist nature of cleavages and also considering the diachronic perspective for a divide to mature into an ideological conflict (cleavage). The second one is the strand of research derived from the *neo-institutionalist theories* (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Katznelson and Weingast, 2005; Kriesi et al., 2008). I, especially, relied on complementary concepts from historical institutionalism and rational choice institutionalism in order to provide a more dynamic cleavage model that takes into account the flexibility of political parties. The latter is conceptualised as the combination of three equally important and interrelated factors (contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility). Finally, this study is also based on the *multidimensionality of complex political issues* (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002; Gattinara, 2016), including the new transnational cleavage. As such, despite some thirty years of political scientific research, where scholars explored RRP's attitudes towards the EU, the tendency is still to conceptualise the transnational cleavage as a one-dimensional conflict. For instance, when exploring Euroscepticism, scholars have debated divergent logics of conflict to make clear the 'sceptical' nature of this notion such as institutional logics (Brunazzo and Gilbert, 2017), economic logics (Leupold, 2015) and cultural logics (Taggart, 1998). Accordingly, I argue that the transnational cleavage can be split along three dimensions: an institutional dimension ('Federalism' vs. 'Souverainisme'), an economic dimension ('Marketism vs. Welfare Chauvinism') and a cultural dimension ('Multiculturalism' vs. 'Nativism'). Overall, Chapter 2 contributes to three central scholarly discussions: cleavage studies, European studies and radical right studies.

In Chapter 3, I identified the operationalisation of the ideological flexibility of political parties (see section 3.2.1.1). This innovative approach is based on the assumption of contingent flexibility (see section 2.4.2); that political parties are influenced by the changes within the demand side and, vice versa, that the demand side is also shaped by the strategic choices made by the political parties. Therefore, in order to verify the flexibility of parties, change must take place in both the demand side and supply side of political parties. The quantitative analysis of this study was based on six indicators:

- *polarisation* and *societal divisions* for the contextual flexibility;
- *emphasis* and *position* for the internal flexibility; and
- *magnitude* and *direction* for the external flexibility.

Although all six indicators have been employed to detect flexibility, it is not necessary that all of them need to be present in order to represent the multiple factors constituting party ideological flexibility as changed. If at least one between polarisation/societal divisions, emphasis/position and magnitude/direction is flexible, the multiple factors can be considered flexible as well. Consequently, in order to determine whether a party has been fully/partially flexible or frozen, one must observe how the three factors constituting parties' flexibility interact with each other. Therefore, once the latent demand side confirms its flexibility, there must also be coherence between the supply side and the manifest demand side (see section 3.2.1.1). According to this coherence, the ideological flexibility of parties is designed as (i) *fully flexible* when political parties coherently change in terms of issue ownership and position, (ii) *partially flexible* when political parties coherently change either ownership or position and (iii) *frozen* when political parties do not change in neither issue ownership nor position.

Subsequently, the empirical chapters tested my research hypotheses. Chapter 4 focused on evaluating whether the historical juncture produced polarisation and/or societal divisions within Italian and French public opinions. The analysis of the latent demand side (see section 2.5.1) is the first attempt of its kind (so far) to exclusively focus on two aspects of the well-known Bartolini and Mair's (2007) definition of cleavage structure: the empirical aspect and the normative aspect (see section 2.2.1). In fact, the main achievement of Chapter 4 is in depicting whether and when these two aspects of the new transnational cleavage have changed over the decades. Subsequently, Chapter 5 tackled the changing strategies employed by the two parties with regards to the new transnational cleavage. This step of analysis was also fundamental because it counts the aspect that is missing in Bartolini and Mair's definition, but it was previously argued by Giovanni Sartori (1990) in its top-down approach: the supply side of political parties (see section 2.5.2). Moreover, Chapter 5 also provides an original database that better represent what political parties say combining both their political offer and political narrative (see section 3.2.1.2). Finally, Chapter 6 explored the last aspect of Bartolini and Mair's definition: the organisational aspect. The study of the manifest demand side (see section 2.5.3) was also important. Political parties are, after all, expression of citizens' voting behaviour. As stated by Kriesi et al. (2008), voting behaviour (or the organisational aspect) is the bridge that link the demand side to the supply side of political parties. Therefore, this analysis manages to show changes within the Italian and French electorates as regards the impact of their voters' EU-orientation to support the League and the National Rally.

Overall, this research concludes in contributing to existing knowledge on cleavage structures, Euroscepticism and the radical right in the following theoretical ways. First, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of the flexibility of parties on cleavage structures. Flexibility has often been interpreted with a limited and fixed framework of single factors examining either the demand side or the supply side of party politics, often, in a synchronic perspective. In contrast, by implementing a diachronic approach, this study combines multiple factors (from the demand side to the supply side) in order to explore flexibility. On this basis, this study demonstrates that the flexibility of parties is a result of parties' strategies (internal flexibility), environmental conditions (contextual flexibility) and electoral considerations (external flexibility).

Secondly, beyond the holistic conceptualisation of ideological flexibility, this thesis has also offered an innovative analysis of the new transnational cleavage. This topic has usually been explored as a one-dimensional issue. However, in this thesis, I empirically tested whether the transnational cleavage implied more than an approved/rejection stance towards the EU, to discover that it involves ideological sub-dimensions that can elucidate different forms of Euroscepticism from parties that belong to the same party family.

Thirdly, the conceptualisation of the established RRP offers the opportunity to deepen our understanding on the radical right party family (how it evolved). In fact, the RRP should not merely be considered as outcast of the parliamentary and governmental activities, because after years of normalization processes of the radical right's discourse (Krzyżanowski, 2020; Wodak, 2021), the RRP is one of the core players of our current democratic regimes (see Muis and Immerzeel, 2017; Mols and Jetten, 2020). By recognising this, the findings of this study will pave the way for further research within the social and political sciences which should provide a richer understanding of party politics, Euroscepticism and radical right.

Having recapped the thesis, the following section will be dedicated in compare the core findings of both the League's and the National Rally's ideological flexibility with regard to the new transnational cleavage.

7.3 Core findings

This section integrates the key results of the empirical Chapters 4, 5 and 6 on the flexibility of eRRPs on the new transnational cleavage. When reviewing the theoretical literature (Chapter 1), I found arguments in support of the theory that political parties are inflexible and stick to cleavage structures

because political parties are conceptualised by historical institutionalists as “embedded in a political history and support network that limits their opportunities” (Dalton and McAllister, 2015: 777). However, by combining historical and rational choice institutionalism (see e.g. Katznelson and Weingast, 2005), I expected that political parties would be more active than the literature expects. In fact, the core idea of party ideological flexibility (based on the framework of the cleavage theory and the neo-institutionalist theories) is that parties’ ideological change is observed whether variations occur in all factors constituting party ideological flexibility (contextual flexibility, internal flexibility and external flexibility). Below, table 7.1 shows whether and to what extent the League and the National Rally have been flexible on the transnational cleavage from the early 1980s to the late 2010s.

Table 7.1 Ideological flexibility of the League and the National Rally on the transnational cleavage from 1980 to 2020

	Contextual flexibility	Internal Flexibility	External flexibility	Is the party flexible?
<i>League</i>				
Transnational cleavage	2	2	2	Yes
<i>National Rally</i>				
Transnational cleavage	2	1	1	Yes

Notes: The cells show how many indicators are flexible: 0 = Frozen, 1 = Partially flexible, 2 = Fully flexible. Source: Author’s elaboration.

From the above table 7.1, one can observe that both the League and the National Rally demonstrate their flexibility with regard to the transnational cleavage. These results confirm, on a markedly general level, that the transnational cleavage is not ideologically predefined, but is a result of ideological flexibility. In a comparative perspective, considering as RRP’s are entitled as EU issue owners with a strong antagonist position to it (Leruth et al., 2018), it is striking to observe that both political parties have been flexible, but have experienced the political potential generated by the transnational cleavage in slightly different ways.

Starting with the League, I illustrated in Chapter 4 that the transnational cleavage generated polarisation and societal divisions within society after the founding of this party. Moreover, from Chapter 5, I showed how the strategies employed by the party have changed both in terms of emphasis and position, while, from Chapter 6, there is also evidence that the voters’ EU-orientations regarding the League have also changed accordingly in terms of magnitude and direction. Overall, my research demonstrates that the League has completely changed after the historical juncture in all factors (and indicators) constituting its ideological flexibility. Italian public opinion is the ideal breeding ground for the League as it increased its level of ownership, and it also increased its

antagonization towards the EU within its supply side. While, alongside this, the League's electorate is also more motivated to support this party when considering the European issue because of their negative attitude towards the European integration process. That is to say that, as the historical juncture produced new polarisations and societal divisions within the Italian public opinion, the League has been fully flexible in increasing its ownership of the European issue and shifting position from marginal pro-Europeanism to hard-Euroscepticism.

As regards the National Rally, this party has also changed in all the constitutive factors of ideological flexibility like the League, but with important differences. Similar to Italian public opinion, Chapter 4 shows that the French public opinion is also a breeding ground for the National Rally as polarisations and societal divisions originated after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. Moreover, it is confirmed in both Chapters 5 and 6 that the National Rally has employed different strategies towards the transnational cleavage and the manifest demand of the National Rally has also changed. Yet, both the supply side and the manifest demand side changed solely in terms of emphasis/magnitude, but not in terms of position/direction. In fact, this party kept an antagonistic stance towards the EU and, similarly, its electorate tended to be more likely to support this party from the same stance all over the period observed. Eventually, according to these data, the National Rally is to be considered as partially flexible as it ideologically changed the way it approached the transnational cleavage substantially increasing its issue ownership on the EU.

Based on the general background of the parties' flexibility with regard to the new transnational cleavage, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 also deepen the analysis of the link between the eRRPs and Euroscepticism by taking into consideration the multidimensional nature of the transnational cleavage implying that each dimension of the transnational cleavage (institutional, economic and cultural) might have experienced ideological flexibility in different ways (see also Baumgartner and Jones, 2002; Gattinara, 2016).

Table 7.2, below, summarises the key results of the thesis, as presented in Chapter 4, 5 and 6, covering whether and to what extent the League and the National Rally have been ideologically flexible on the three dimensions of transnational cleavage from the early 1980s to the late 2010s.

Table 7.2 Ideological flexibility of the League and the National Rally on the dimensions of the transnational cleavage from 1980 to 2020

	Contextual flexibility	Internal Flexibility	External flexibility	Is the party flexible?
<i>League</i>				
Institutional dimension	2	1	2	Yes
Economic dimension	2	2	2	Yes
Cultural dimension	0	1	1	No
<i>National Rally</i>				
Institutional dimension	1	2	1	Yes
Economic dimension	2	2	1	Yes
Cultural dimension	0	0	1	No

Notes: The cells show how many indicators are flexible: 0 = Frozen, 1 = Partially flexible, 2 = Fully flexible. Source: Author's elaboration.

As shown in Table 7.2, one can observe that the League and the National Rally present both similarities and differences in the extent to which they have been flexible on the dimensions of the transnational cleavage. They have been similar in regard to the overall level of ideological flexibility towards these dimensions. In fact, in both case studies, the institutional and the economic dimensions are to be considered as flexible, while the cultural dimension does not show ideological flexibility. However, they present differences on the extent to which they have been ideologically flexible on each dimension of the transnational cleavage.

Starting with the institutional dimension, the results from Chapter 4 confirm that the transnational cleavage has impacted both the Italian and French latent demand sides, provoking an increase in polarisation. Yet, the institutional dimension provoked societal divisions in the Italian latent demand side, but not in the French latent demand side. Moreover, the two parties experienced ideological flexibility of the institutional dimension differently in their supply side and manifest demand side. The League, for instance, has changed its strategies on how to address the institutional dimension solely in terms of position. While within the League's manifest demand side, its electorate has changed the reasons for supporting the League in terms of both magnitude and direction. Yet, this study demonstrates that the League is to be considered as partially flexible on the institutional dimension. In fact, although the League did not coherently change its issue ownership on the institutional dimension on both the supply and manifest demand side, it has substantially changed the way it would approach this topic moving from standing for the federalist dichotomy towards its antithetical dichotomy of souverainism. The National Rally was similar to the League in terms of position/direction, but unlike the League, it has also demonstrated flexibility with regard to its issue ownership within the supply side. Indeed, the strategies employed by the National Rally have

changed both in terms of emphasis and position, while the reasons behind voters' support for the National Rally have only changed in terms of direction, but not in terms of magnitude. Overall, the party is partially flexible as it changed position shifting from an ambiguous stand for the federalist dichotomy towards a strong souverainist dichotomy.

Moving to the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage, like the institutional dimension, the latent demand side has been ideologically flexible in both case studies. The transnational cleavage has indeed provoked increased polarisation and new societal divisions. However, when focusing on the other two factors composing parties' ideological flexibility (supply side and manifest demand side), we can observe different levels of ideological flexibility within the economic dimensions in the League and the National Rally. Indeed, in this case, the League has shown flexibility in the strategies employed to address the economic dimensions over the years both in terms of emphasis and position. Accordingly, the reasons why voters support the Italian party have changed both in terms of magnitude and direction. Therefore, the League is fully flexible as it increases its issue ownership on the economic dimension and changes the way it would address this topic from an ambiguous position in favour of the marketism dichotomy to a strong position towards the welfare chauvinist dichotomy. The National Rally, on the other hand, is similar to the League in terms of issue ownership, but it differs in terms of position. In fact, the National Rally has increased its issue ownership on the economic dimension, yet it has kept welfare chauvinist positions throughout the period observed. Chapter 5 has indeed demonstrated flexibility within its supply side in terms of position. However, this shift was not substantial as it passed from a moderate welfare chauvinist position to a strong welfare chauvinist position (because it changed within the same dichotomy). For that reason, I shall interpret the flexibility of the National Rally differently from that of the League on the economic dimension, confirming that the National Rally is partially flexible on this topic as it changed only in terms of issue ownership.

Finally, when considering the cultural dimension, Table 7.2 shows that this conflict did not experience ideological flexibility in all its constituent factors in either of the case studies. Following my arguments from Chapter 2 on what is 'something less' than flexible (see section 2.4.3), I am proposing two alternative interpretations with regards to the results on the cultural dimension for both the League and the National Rally. The cultural dimension of both case studies should not be considered as flexible because they are, respectively, examples of 'behavioural change' and 'perceptive change' (see table 2.2). Such conditions can be interpreted as an attempt by the parties

to adaptation, rather than flexibility, in a pre-existed conflict through predefined ideological knit and already established structural roots. In this scenario, as I have demonstrated in Chapter 4, the contexts of the League and the National Rally within the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage were already highly polarised and societal divisions were already pre-existing before the period observed. To this end, the League reconfigured in both the supply and the manifest demand side, but there is no consistency either in terms of issue ownership or position. In fact, the League has extended its ownership on the cultural dimension in its supply side alongside a shift in the manifest demand side of direction from multiculturalism to nativism. As regards the National Rally, it has been even more inflexible than the League. The French party has never changed its strategies towards the cultural dimension. Moreover, although the electorate supporting the French party has changed in terms of magnitude (it actually decreased), the National Rally's voters kept voting for the party because they stand for the nativist dichotomy throughout the period observed. To this end, considering that both the League and the National Rally were not flexible in all constitutive factors of parties' flexibility when addressing the cultural dimension, this should be considered as frozen.

In summary, this study provides insights into the way eRRPs, in Italy and France, have developed their ideological flexibility towards the new transnational cleavage. Moreover, I can argue that the examined eRRPs have ideologically changed on the European integration project in all its constituent dimensions. Overall, the two case studies reject the federalisation project of the member states, the European common market, and the multicultural idea of society proposed by the European institutions. Yet, as Vasilapoulou (2018: 144) suggests, RRP's "do not oppose the EU project to the same extent. The way in which they frame, discuss and politicise the EU issue exhibits a great degree of variation".

Indeed, the main conclusion that can be drawn from this thesis is that the ideological flexibility of the League on the transnational cleavage has increased its issue ownership thanks to the economic dimension and has shifted from marginally pro-Europeanism to hard-Euroscepticism because of the economic and institutional dimensions. Therefore, the League has developed the way it has approached the EU moving from what has been called "people's Europe" or "ethno-federalism" (Héraud, 1959; Shore, 1993; Boussaguet and Dehousse, 2008; Visone, 2018). To a pro-Europeanism (institutionally and economically) that still rejects the multicultural attempt of the EU. Therefore, the EU not considered as a vehicle for the construction of a European identity and, thus, "the Europe of the sovereign peoples is the Europe of the enhancement of territories, inalienable reservoirs of

identities, cultures, values and traditions. [...] the European Union was born as a union of states and citizens: we are Europeans, but we are also, and to a greater extent, people from the Po Valley” (Euromanifesto of the Northern League, 2008: 1-26).⁶⁴

With regard to the partial flexibility of the National Rally on the transnational cleavage, it ultimately moved from a soft-Euroscepticism to hard-Euroscepticism because of its ideological flexibility in terms of its position within the institutional dimension, while its ownership towards the European issue has mostly been influenced by the economic dimension. Indeed, the French party initially expressed a ‘Euro-Pragmatism’ or ‘Utilitarian Europeanism’ (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 303; Leruth and Startin, 2017: 156) only in institutional terms by claiming “to support a coherent European project, that included support for a common European defence and nuclear strategy, a common foreign and security policy, common immigration controls, a common currency and a *European preference*” [author’s emphasis] (Hainsworth et al., 2004: 45). Yet, the National Rally held antagonist positions towards the European integration process both in its economic and cultural dimensions. For that reason, the National Rally is to be considered as ideologically inflexible in terms of position, while the party demonstrates ideological flexibility with regard to the new transnational cleavage mostly because it increased its ownership on this topic thanks to the economic dimension increasing its rejectionist stance towards the EU considered as “the Trojan horse of ultraliberal globalisation: since the Maastricht Treaty, the European treaties have imposed the dogma of free and undistorted competition, and ideologically forbidden state aid to our companies, as well as any form of protection at the EU’s internal and external borders. In short, any form of economic patriotism”⁶⁵ (National Front, 2012: 5).

For the above core findings, one must account for all European issue specific constitutive dimensions when exploring the extent to which eRRPs addressed the new transnational cleavage from the early 1980s to the late 2010s. From this analysis, it follows that the institutional and economic dimensions are the driving forces that fuel ideological antagonization towards the EU, rather than the cultural dimension, which has often been emphasised in studies on the ideological nature of Euroscepticism

⁶⁴ Original text in Italian: “L’Europa dei Popoli sovrani è l’Europa della valorizzazione dei territori, bacini irrinunciabili delle identità, delle culture, dei valori e delle tradizioni. [...] l’Unione Europea nasce come unione di Stati e di cittadini: si è europei ma si è anche, ed in misura maggiore, padani”.

⁶⁵ Original text in French: “L’Union européenne ensuite, cheval de Troie de la mondialisation ultralibérale : les Traités européens imposent depuis le Traité de Maastricht le dogme de la concurrence libre et non faussée, interdisent par idéologie les aides d’Etat à nos entreprises, ainsi que toute forme de protection aux frontières internes de l’UE, mais aussi externes. En bref, toute forme de patriotisme économique”.

of radical right parties (Kneuer, 2019; Treib, 2021). Indeed, this study rather demonstrates that the institutional and the economic dimension of the transnational cleavage played a much bigger role in determining the ideological flexibility of these parties on the European conflict and the extent to which it changed from election to election.

Having reviewed the main core findings of the empirical chapters, the following section will cover in more detail some of the wider implications of this project on the literature on cleavage studies, European studies and radical right studies.

7.4 Contributions to the existing literature

In order to explore the ideological flexibility of eRRPs on the new transnational cleavage I constructed this research based on a number of key studies (e.g. Katznelson and Weingast, 2005; Bornschieer, 2010; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Emanuele et al., 2020). Following the most similar systems design, the aim of this study has been to deliver an empirical comparison between the League and the National Rally, linking the concept of Euroscepticism and its transformations among eRRPs using a diachronic method. This research adopted new approaches in order to answer the research question of this study: *how ideological flexible are established radical right parties with regards to the new transnational cleavage?* To this end, these findings have sought to contribute to three central scholarly discussions.

First of all, this study contributes to our understanding on political parties' ideology and its flexibility. While a focus on parties' ideological flexibility is nothing new in the literature on party politics, this notion nevertheless remains one of the least explored factors when studying cleavage structures because parties are often assumed as ideologically rigid for two main reasons. Firstly, in the last decade, there has been a broad consensus in the literature that political parties are considered inflexible because of their reputation (Volkens and Klingemann, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Emanuele et la., 2020). Another interpretation, in other comparative analyses, is that political parties are still considered rigid because they intercept and absorb new ideological conflicts but reinterpret them under the lens of their already established structures of conflict (Kriesi et al., 2006; Bornschieer, 2010). However, whilst previous research argued about the ideological rigidity of parties on primary and second order issues, this thesis has illuminated new ways in which the cleavage model can be improved in order to include more dynamic mechanisms on parties' ideological flexibility. In fact, this research may indicate that political parties are important actors in the cleavage model (rather

than a mere outcome that derived from it), which changes in tandem with their environment (Berman, 1997). In this sense, agency and environmental explanations should not be considered as the causal factors for one or the other explanation, but rather they are conceptualized as two pillars that simultaneously change. As such, this research is one of the first to attempt to bring a holistic approach to political parties' flexibility in relation to the case of the new transnational cleavage. Ultimately, the empirical analysis in this study shows that the ideological change of political parties is considered to have taken place once both the demand side and the supply side coherently change. Therefore, by highlighting the absence (or limited application) of political parties' ideological rigidity, this thesis broadens our contemporary understanding of party politics bringing in to question the assumption that political parties "do not reinvent themselves with each electoral cycle [as they] have long-standing agendas" (Marks et al., 2002: 586). By contrast, we are witnessing political parties that change ideologically because they lack *Weltanschauung* (worldview), like empty vessels whose ideological flexibility is shaped in response to their electoral interests.

Furthermore, this study contributes to extend the current literature on Euroscepticism exposing how RRP's address the transnational cleavage with a novel approach. Although Euroscepticism was exhaustively discussed and debated among scholars (see e.g. Leruth et al., 2017; Rydgren, 2018), this is the first study that uses the multidimensional framework (Baumgartner and Jones, 2002; Gattinara, 2016). This approach has enabled me to explore in detail how eRRPs shaped their ideology on the European issue from election to election. To this end, by conceptualising the transnational cleavage as the combination of multiple ideological issues, this research provides a new way to understand the nature of Euroscepticism through the 'experience' of the eRRPs. Existing literature on the radical right and Euroscepticism often tends to depict the 'scepticism' of RRP's as an attitude against the EU that is strictly related to one of their core ideological features: nativism – the cultural dimension of the transnational cleavage (see e.g. Beck and Grande, 2007; Mudde, 2007; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012). In fact, the EU is viewed as the institutionalisation of cosmopolitanism which, according to the radical right, is a threat to national sovereignty and ethnic homogeneity (Beck and Grande, 2007: 5). However, instead of exclusively focusing on the cultural dimension, this research has identified from the literature on Euroscepticism two more dimensions that originate from the new transnational cleavage: the institutional dimension and the economic dimension. In doing so, this research exposes many different forms of Euroscepticism that RRP's can express (see Chapter 2, section 2.2.4.5). These findings have important implications. Although the RRP's often

remain antagonistic towards the cultural dimension, there is the potential for great variation of the radical right agenda on the transnational cleavage thanks to the institutional and economic dimensions. In fact, in a context of rising polarisation on the European conflict within the public opinion, the eRRPs, like the League and the National Rally, have been capable of adopting a stance that allows them to adopt elements from both Europeanism and Euroscepticism. Ultimately, this political ambiguity on the transnational cleavage can be a differentiating tool for the eRRPs to distinguish themselves as a strong and independent political alternative in their national party systems to the mainstream parties, which historically favoured all aspects of the European integration process (Brack and Startin, 2015).

Finally, besides contributing to the literature on the cleavage theory and Euroscepticism, this research has also enriched the growing literature on the radical right (Mudde, 2007, 2013; Rovny, 2013; Muis and Immerzeel, 2017; Rovny and Polk, 2020). For many, prior to the migration crisis in 2015, there were doubts about whether RRP would seriously impact the European party systems because of their inexperience in governmental coalitions (Heinisch, 2008; Luther, 2011) or because they are more focused on sociocultural issues rather than socioeconomic ones, which have a major role in European party systems (De Lange, 2012). However, even at an early-stage Cas Mudde have already noted that “with the dominant strain in the populism literature that argues that [RRPs] are destined for success in opposition and failure in government” (Mudde, 2012: 15). In fact, the RRP have electorally increased their support and have, ultimately, in recent years joined governments in coalition without losing electoral support (Mols and Jetten, 2020: 2). Subsequently, as I stated in Chapter 1, RRP have increased in terms of political relevance in most of the European national parliaments since 2014. In this regard, this thesis has contributed to the literature on the radical right by exposing a new lacuna: the *established* RRP. This new strand of research has the potential to examine the Western European politics from a different point of analysis, considering the radical right party family not as a novel competitor, but rather as a consolidated political alternative. In fact, the contributions for the study of long-standing parties of the radical right are twofold. Firstly, it provides the opportunity for the understanding of the contemporary radical right and how it has developed over the decades (this study is an attempt of this kind). Secondly, the increasing role of eRRPs in Western European party systems might contribute to the normalisation of radical right ideals with unpredictable long-term impacts on the resilience of the current liberal democratic regimes.

7.5 Limitations and future research directions

This study comes with some limitations that are a consequence of trade-offs necessary to accomplish this research. It is the aim of this section to address in more detail which have been the most unavoidable challenges I had to deal with and, subsequently, my recommendations for future research directions.

An important challenge to this analysis is that this study has largely ignored the contextual flexibility of the classical cleavage structures. This observation would have been useful in order to compare to what extent different cleavages have developed within the latent demand side of political parties. However, this analysis was not possible because of the lack of data from the early 1980s to the late 2010s on classical cleavage structures with the available Eurobarometers (or any other survey) to represent the contextual flexibility and then compare it with the new transnational cleavage.

Moreover, this study enables me to provide only preliminary conclusions to be tested by further research, because the conceptualisation of *established* parties directed me towards an analysis of a small sample of cases because newer parties did not reflect that conceptualisation. In fact, the proposed conceptualisation of *established* parties led me to ignore all the RRP that have been founded, for instance, in Eastern European member states. Indeed, all these political parties have been founded during the democratisation process that Eastern European countries experienced subsequent to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and since I operationalised as established parties all those organisations that were founded in the early 1980s this meant excluding all RRP from Eastern Europe, such as: Freedom and Direct Democracy (Czech Republic), Law and Justice (Poland) and Fidesz (Hungary). This is unfortunate especially considering the growing literature on Eastern European politics investigating the links between RRP and Euroscepticism (see e.g. Styczyńska, 2017; Tereskiewicz, 2018; Petrović, 2019).

Finally, the conceptualisation of flexibility in this study limits the analysis of parties' ideological flexibility with regard to classical cleavage structures.⁶⁶ In fact, this phenomenon can only be explored with conflicts that can be categorised as new cleavage structures as this study is built on a specific condition in which new cleavage structures arise with the presence of pre-existed political

⁶⁶ In fact, the original idea of this study was to test eRRPs' flexibility toward both classical and the new transnational cleavage. The reason was to observe whether classical ideological conflicts also change over the years.

parties. Therefore, it is not possible to evaluate the ideological flexibility of political parties towards the classical cleavage structures as, in this case, we would be exploring the adaptability of political parties on pre-existing conflicts that are already socially rooted within societies – see section 2.4.3. In fact, one of the reasons why political parties' flexibility with regard to cleavage structures not yet explored is because, for the first time, “the sequence is reversed. Competitive party systems exist[ed] prior to the onset of any new cleavage” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 112), therefore, there are not political parties in existence that are antecedents of the classical cleavage structures because “by the time mass political parties came on the scene, cleavages were already institutionalized” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018: 112), while the new cleavage structures have been consolidating within Western societies since the early 2000s.

However, the core findings of this study, and their implications, may suggest the formulation of new research questions that can be addressed in future research. Firstly, in terms of reproducibility, this study might be extended in two possible directions. For instance, it might involve the extension of the analysis to other eRRPs (e.g. the Flemish Interest from Belgium, the Reformed Political Party from the Netherlands, the CDS – People's Party from Portugal and the Democratic Unionist Party for the United Kingdom). In this way, it would be possible to provide a comprehensive understanding on how eRRPs from Western European countries have, overall, adapted to the new transnational cleavage from their first electoral opportunity to the most recent election. Likewise, future research could also apply the theoretical framework that I have developed in this study to established political parties belonging to other party families – from the radical left wing to the moderate right wing. As this study has demonstrated, the coexistence of multiple dimensions within the transnational cleavage might provide a complete understanding of how established political parties from Western European countries have adapted their ideology towards the European conflict. Another avenue for further research is the study of parties' flexibility with regard to the new transnational cleavage as a cause of the electoral performance of political parties. As Chapter 2 made it clear, among party families, the radical right is the one which has capitalized the most on the new transnational cleavage (Grzymala-Busse, 2019). Therefore, one could, for example, expect that the capability of eRRPs to be more flexible on the transnational cleavage than on the other established political parties, both from the centre-left and centre-right (which are traditionally more static on the European issue) regarding their electoral performances. Finally, in terms of new methodological opportunities, my typology of the supply side of political parties (jointly constituted by manifestos

and official press releases) will open the way to the development of new studies that seek to integrate all types of partisan literature that can constitute its supply side, such as public speeches, posters, broadcasts, and debates. Ultimately, this would provide a fully comprehensive overview of what political parties actually debate and to what extent. Moreover, there would also be a clear benefit to the literature on multilevel electoral politics to extend this analysis in different electoral arenas from the local/administrative elections to the European elections. This would provide a greater number of observations available to test further theoretical problems.

Appendices

Appendix A. Building the corpus

Building the corpus

The main sources of this research will consist of secondary data collected online and primary archival documents carried out in Italy and France. The aim of data collection was to build a corpus of documents in which the cases studies (established RRP) argued their supply side to the electorate. There are three main data sources: secondary data, party-oriented newspaper, Tweets and electoral manifestos.

Electoral Manifestos

Corpus of the electoral manifesto is combined by both primary and secondary data. The secondary data are directly collected from the Comparative Manifesto Project database. However, the CMP did not collect all manifestos of those parties that did not reach the threshold of the 5% at the national election. Therefore, it was not possible to find already coded manifestos for the League and the National Rally in the early 1980s. In alternative, I could find original electoral manifestos thanks to my archival research in Italy and France, or it was possible to find extracts of electoral manifestos from old newspaper numbers.

Newspapers and Twitter

I provide data produced during electoral campaigns from mass media/social media to analyse established RRP's narrative in national elections. The analysis is based on manual content analysis of newspaper articles. For each case study, parties' press release was chosen. I coded articles from the first page and from the sections of the newspapers reporting domestic politics for each day of the four weeks before the election day. Nevertheless, at present, it is arduous to build a homogeneous sample with this long timeframe from the early 1980s until the late 2020s – many numbers are lost –, but in the event that I could not collect daily numbers, I extended the collection of all existent numbers in the last three months (or all newspapers available) before the election day. I will apply this method to all newspapers in order to check for biases in the primary newspaper source. Moreover, in many cases, established RRP's press releases used to be suspended in the late 2000s. As such, in order to maintain a consistent corpus all over the period observed, I opted to integrate all tweets posted by the official Twitter-account of these parties. I think this is a compromise in line with the recent literature on party communication, which advocates that political parties tend to use social media in order to communicate towards their electorate without any mediation of the press (McGregor et al., 2017).

Table A.1 League's political offer: selected electoral manifestos

Election Year	Source	Type of data
1983	Lombardia Autonomista	Primary
1987	Piemont Autonomista	Primary
1992	CMP	Secondary
1994	CMP	Secondary
1996	CMP	Secondary
2001	CMP	Secondary
2006	CMP	Secondary
2008	CMP	Secondary
2013	CMP	Secondary
2018	CMP	Secondary

Table A.2 League's political narrative: selected newspapers and tweets

Election Day	Period covered	Newspaper/Twitter account	Type of data
27 June 1983	October-November 1982* September 1983	Lombardia Autonomista	Primary
15 June 1987	April 1987 May 1987	Piemont Autonomista	Primary
06 April 1992	January 1992 31 January 1992 24 February 1992 25 February 1992 March 1992 05 March 1992 10 March 1992 30 March 1992	Lombardia Autonomista and Piemont Autonomista	Primary
28 March 1994	04 November 1993 17 December 1993 19 January 1994 26 January 1994 02 February 1994 09 February 1994 16 February 1994 28 February 1994 09 March 1994	Lega Nord: Italia federale	Primary
21 April 1996	22 January 1996 29 January 1996 05 February 1996 12 February 1996 19 February 1996 26 February 1996 04 March 1996 11 March 1996 18 March 1996 25 March 1996	Lega Nord: Italia federale	Primary
13 May 2001	All days from 13 April 2001 to 12 May 2001	La Padania	Primary
10 April 2006	All days from 10 March 2006 to 09 April 2006	La Padania	Primary
14 April 2008	All days from 14 March 2008 to 14 April 2008	La Padania	Primary
25 February 2013	All days from 25 January 2013 to 25 February 2013	La Padania	Primary
04 March 2018	All days from 04 February 2018 to 04 March 2018	@LegaSalvini	Primary

Notes: * I included also the number published in 1982 as it was the absolute 1st number of the newspaper and September 1983 is the second absolute number.

Table A.3 National rally's political offer: selected electoral manifestos

Election Year	Source	Type of data
1981	SciencesPo et les Archives électorales du CEVIPOF	Primary
1986	CMP	Secondary
1988	CMP	Secondary
1993	CMP	Secondary
1997	CMP	Secondary
2002	CMP	Secondary
2007	CMP	Secondary
2012	CMP	Secondary
2017	CMP	Secondary

Table A.4 French National Elections (Newspapers)

Election Day	Period covered	Newspaper/Twitter account	Type of data
12 March 1978	February/March 1978	Le National	Primary
14 June 1981	May 1981	Le National	Primary
16 March 1986	All days from 13 February 1986 to 20 March 1986	National Hebdo	Primary
05 June 1988	All days from 05 May 1988 to 09 June 1988	National Hebdo	Primary
21 March 1993	All days from 18 February 1993 to 25 March 1993	National Hebdo	Primary
25 May 1997	All days from 24 April 1997 to 29 May 1997	National Hebdo	Primary
09 June 2002	All days from 09 May 2002 to 13 June 2002	National Hebdo	Primary
10 June 2007	All days from 10 May 2007 to 14 June 2007	National Hebdo	Primary
10 June 2012	All days from 10 May 2012 to 10 June 2012	@RNational_off	Primary
11 June 2017	All days from 11 May 2017 to 11 June 2017	@RNational_off	Primary

Appendix B. Codebook

The following codebook was drawn from the Comparative Manifesto Project Codebook as it is a well-established procedure recognised by the current academic literature (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al, 2006). Albeit there are two types of sources (manifestos and newspapers' articles/tweets) the coding procedure will be the same in terms of unitising and coding. The only difference will be on which parts of the texts will be coded. There are three main steps to follow: (i) identifying, (ii) unitising and (iii) coding.

Identification

The general rule for this research method is to include as much text as possible from the available data. Yet, according to the Budge et al. (2001), some parts shall be excluded. For the **manifestos**, chapter titles, headings, subheadings, tables, figures and statistics are not included in the coding procedure. All the rest of the text will be coded. For the **newspapers**⁶⁷, given the time-consuming this data source will require, it is not necessary to code each part of the text. It will be sufficient to code only the headline, the lead (if available), and the first paragraph of the article. If the article is not structured in paragraphs, the coder will take the first ten units (Kriesi et al., 2008). For the **tweets**, since this type of data is presented in considerable short sentences, all parts of it will be coded.

Unitising

Independently on which data source the coder is analysing, the coding unit is named by this methodology as quasi-sentence. Each unit represents only one message (thus only one category). It might happen that one message is expressed through one sentence. It is not possible to have two or more sentences that constitute one message, but there might be the possibility that one sentence contain more than one message. If this happens, it is possible to "cut" the sentence in more units accordingly when the messages are not related or when the messages are related but addressing different messages (categories). Moreover, in order to facilitate the coder, the CMP team suggest some clues on where to cut the sentence (if necessary): "semicolons, the possibility to split up the sentence into a meaningful bullet point list; general clues from codes" (Werner et al., 2011: 6)⁶⁸.

Coding

The main, and first, advantage of this research method is in relying in the skills and knowledge of the researcher who can overcome any possible ambiguous message that an automated method could not handle. For that reason, after the coder has unitised the text, it is important to code the text keeping aside the codes' definitions conceptualised by the CMP team (MPP II, 2006). For this project, I have used the same codes' definition made by the CMP team – 4th version of the codebook (see Appendix C). However, as I said, some statements might be ambiguous and more difficult to code. In these circumstances the codes' definition might not be sufficient. Thus, the coder should be careful at the following obstacles. The language of politicians/political parties is too ambiguous. Thus, a

⁶⁷ If the press release is a daily newspaper, it will be coded only the first page and the section concerning domestic politics. If the newspaper is weekly or monthly, each article will be coded.

⁶⁸ The listing of words does not necessarily constitute the listing of different messages. It is thus important to verify that this listing does not refer a general greater message (category).

deeper knowledge of the language is necessary in order to avoid any misunderstanding. There might be the circumstance that politicians are stating more than one message (category), but the gold rule of this procedure is to verify the role of the messages. If they are both goals, they shall be distinguished as two separated units. If one message is the goal, and the other is the mean, the former must be categorised, but not the latter. Finally, the unit might not fall in one of the 28 categories available for this project. If this happens, the unit shall be coded as 'no code applies' (000) (Budge et al., 2001). Yet, the CMP team insists to underline as it is the priority of the coder to assign a category whenever possible. For that reason, the CMP's codebook provides a useful contextual hierarchical method to identify a meaningful category in those circumstances the coder does not know how to code the text unit:

“(a) The rest of the sentence in case the unit is only part of a natural sentence, (b) The previous and the following sentences, (c) The whole paragraph, (d) The whole chapter or article, (e) The whole manifesto or newspaper number, (f) The political discourse concerning the issue in the country at the time of the election” (Werner et al., 2011: 6).

To sum up

The following is the coding procedure: (1) Read the entire section/chapter (manifesto) or article (newspaper) in order to have an informative understanding of text; (2) Separate the sentences in units with a slash symbol [/]; (3) Finally, after you finished to separate the sentences in units, you can start to assign a category for each unit.

Appendix C. Definitions of categories from the comparative manifesto project

All the following codes' definitions are made by the Comparative Manifesto Project team – 4th version (Werner et al., 2011: 15-23).

1. *State (S) vs. Church (C)*

“603 Traditional Morality: Positive: Favourable mentions of traditional and/or religious moral values. May include: Prohibition, censorship and suppression of immorality and unseemly behaviour; Maintenance and stability of the traditional family as a value; Support for the role of religious institutions in state and society”.

“604 Traditional Morality: Negative (S): Opposition to traditional and/or religious moral values. May include: Support for divorce, abortion etc.; General support for modern family composition; Calls for the separation of church and state”.

2. *Centre (C) vs. Periphery (P)*

“301 Federalism (P): Support for federalism or decentralisation of political and/or economic power. May include: Favourable mentions of the territorial subsidiary principle; More autonomy for any sub-national level in policy making and/or economics; Support for the continuation and importance of local and regional customs and symbols and/or deference to local expertise; Favourable mentions of special consideration for sub-national areas”.

“302 Centralisation (C): General opposition to political decision-making at lower political levels. Support for unitary government and for more centralisation in political and administrative procedures”.

3. *Urban (U) vs. Rural (R)*

“701 Labour Groups: Positive (U): Favourable references to all labour groups, the working class, and unemployed workers in general. Support for trade unions and calls for the good treatment of all employees, including: More jobs; Good working conditions; Fair wages; Pension provisions etc”.

“702 Labour Groups: Negative (R): Negative references to labour groups and trade unions. May focus specifically on the danger of unions “abusing power””.

“703 Agriculture and Farmers: Positive (R): Specific policies in favour of agriculture and farmers. Includes all types of agriculture and farming practises. Only statements that have agriculture as the key goal should be included in this category”.

“704 Middle Class and Professional Groups (U): General favourable references to the middle class. Specifically, statements may include references to: Professional groups, (e.g.: doctors or lawyers); White collar groups, (e.g.: bankers or office employees), Service sector groups (e.g.: IT industry employees); Old and/or new middle class.”

4. *Employers (E) vs. Workers (W)*

“401 Free-Market Economy (M): Favourable mentions of the free market and free market capitalism as an economic model. May include favourable references to: Laissez-faire economy; Superiority of individual enterprise over state and control systems; Private property rights; Personal enterprise and initiative; Need for unhampered individual enterprises”.

“402 Incentives (E): Favourable mentions of supply side oriented economic policies (assistance to businesses rather than consumers). May include: Financial and other incentives such as subsidies, tax breaks etc.; Wage and tax policies to induce enterprise; Encouragement to start enterprises”.

“405 Corporatism (W): Favourable mentions of cooperation of government, employers, and trade unions simultaneously. The collaboration of employers and employee organisations in overall economic planning supervised by the state”.

“407 Protectionism: Negative (M): Support for the concept of free trade and open markets. Call for abolishing all means of market protection (in the manifesto or any other country)”.

“412 Controlled Economy (W): Support for direct government control of economy. May include, for instance: Control over prices; Introduction of minimum wages”.

“415 Marxist Analysis: Positive (W): Positive references to Marxist-Leninist ideology and specific use of Marxist-Leninist terminology by the manifesto party (typically but not necessary by communist parties)”.

“504 Welfare State Expansion (W): Favourable mentions of need to introduce, maintain or expand any public social service or social security scheme. This includes, for example, government funding of: Health care; Child care; Elder care and pensions; Social housing”.

“505 Welfare State Limitation (E): Limiting state expenditures on social services or social security. Favourable mentions of the social subsidiary principle (i.e. private care before state care)”.

5. *Federalism (F) vs. Soverainisme (S)*

“108 European Community/Union: Positive (F): Favourable mentions of European Community/Union in general. May include the: Desirability of the manifesto country joining (or remaining a member); Desirability of expanding the European Community/Union; Desirability of increasing the ECs/EUs competences; Desirability of expanding the competences of the European Parliament”.

“110 European Community/Union: Negative (S): Negative references to the European Community/Union. May include: Opposition to specific European policies which are preferred by European authorities; Opposition to the net-contribution of the manifesto country to the EU budget”.

6. *Marketers (M) vs. Welfare chauvinists (W)*

“401 Free-Market Economy (M): Favourable mentions of the free market and free market capitalism as an economic model. May include favourable references to: Laissez-faire economy; Superiority of individual enterprise over state and control systems; Private property rights; Personal enterprise and initiative; Need for unhampered individual enterprises”.

“403 Market Regulation (W): Support for policies designed to create a fair and open economic market. May include: Calls for increased consumer protection; Increasing economic competition by preventing monopolies and other actions disrupting the functioning of the market; Defence of small businesses against disruptive powers of big businesses; Social market economy”.

“406 Protectionism: Positive (W): Favourable mentions of extending or maintaining the protection of internal markets (by the manifesto or other countries). Measures may include: Tariffs; Quota restrictions; Export subsidies”.

“407 Protectionism: Negative (M): Support for the concept of free trade and open markets. Call for abolishing all means of market protection (in the manifesto or any other country)”.

“409 Keynesian Demand Management (W): Favourable mentions of demand side oriented economic policies (assistance to consumers rather than businesses). Particularly includes increase private demand through: Increasing public demand; Increasing social expenditures. May also include: Stabilisation in the face of depression; Government stimulus plans in the face of economic crises”.

“413 Nationalisation (W): Favourable mentions of government ownership of industries, either partial or complete. May also include favourable mentions of government ownership of land”.

7. *Multiculturalism (M) vs. Nativism (N)*

“601 National Way of Life: Positive (N): Favourable mentions of the manifesto country’s nation, history, and general appeals. May include: Support for established national ideas; General appeals to pride of citizenship; Appeals to patriotism; Appeals to nationalism; Suspension of some freedoms in order to protect the state against subversion”.

“602 National Way of Life: Negative (M): Unfavourable mentions of the manifesto country’s nation and history. May include: Opposition to patriotism; Opposition to nationalism; Opposition to the existing national state, national pride, and national ideas”.

“607 Multiculturalism: Positive (M): Favourable mentions of cultural diversity and cultural plurality within domestic societies. May include the preservation of autonomy of religious, linguistic heritages within the country including special educational provisions”.

“608 Multiculturalism: Negative (N): The enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration. Appeals for cultural homogeneity in society”.

Appendix D. Descriptive statistics of variables from EB36, EB42, EB91.5

As stated in this thesis, the reduced sample size can negatively impact the conventional level of standard significance of 95% (Thiese et al., 2016). But I should recall radical right parties did not usually experience significant electoral results at the beginning of their political career, and this is also reflected in the EB datasets. Therefore, although there are important findings from chapter 6, it should be remembered that they are preliminary/experimental because of the small sample size of those who voted for the established radical right parties – especially in in the late 1980s and in the early 1990s (see also Wasserstein and Lazar, 2016; Greenland et al., 2016). See Appendix E in order to observe additional robustness checks for Chapters 4 and 6.

Table D.1 Crosstab between League preference and predictor variable in Italy at the 1988 general elections

		Regional cleavage		Total
		,00 Centre	1,00 Periphery	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	258	409	667
	1,00 Yes	4	14	18
Total		262	423	685

Source: EB36

Table D.2 Crosstabs between League preference and predictor variables in Italy at the 1994 general elections

		Religious cleavage		Total
		,00 State	1,00 Church	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	146	477	623
	1,00 Yes	9	35	44
Total		155	512	667

		Community cleavage		Total
		,00 Urban	1,00 Rural	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	526	234	760
	1,00 Yes	27	30	57
Total		553	264	817

		Class cleavage		Total
		,00 Employers	1,00 Workers	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	530	202	732
	1,00 Yes	42	12	54
Total		572	214	786

		Transnational Cleavage		Total
		,00 pro-EU	1,00 anti-EU	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	699	61	760
	1,00 Yes	53	64	57
Total		752	65	817

		Institutional dimension		Total
		,00 Federalism	1,00 Souvrenism	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	576	141	717
	1,00 Yes	45	9	54

Total		621	150	771
Economic dimension				
		,00 Marketism	1,00 Welfare chauvinism	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	447	146	593
	1,00 Yes	34	10	44
Total		481	156	637
Cultural dimension				
		,00 Multiculturalism	1,00 Nativism	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	572	166	738
	1,00 Yes	45	9	54
Total		617	175	792

Source: EB42

Table D.3 Crosstabs between League preference and predictor variables in Italy at the 2018 general elections

Religious cleavage				
		,00 State	1,00 Church	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	645	39	684
	1,00 Yes	170	17	187
Total		815	56	871
Regional cleavage				
		,00 Centre	1,00 Periphery	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	317	367	684
	1,00 Yes	101	86	187
Total		418	453	871
Community cleavage				
		,00 Urban	1,00 Rural	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	234	449	683
	1,00 Yes	45	142	187
Total		279	591	870
Class cleavage				
		,00	1,00	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	519	160	679
	1,00 Yes	157	28	185
Total		676	188	864
Transnational Cleavage				
		,00 Pro-EU	1,00 Anti-EU	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	400	283	683
	1,00 Yes	59	128	187
Total		459	411	870
Institutional dimension				
		,00 Federalism	1,00 Souvrenism	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	327	348	675
	1,00 Yes	51	131	182
Total		378	479	857
Economic dimension				Total

		,00 Marketism	1,00 Welfare chauvinism	
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	373	285	658
	1,00 Yes	54	126	180
Total		427	411	838
Cultural dimension				
		,00 Multiculturalism	1,00 Nativism	Total
Did you vote for the League?	,00 No	487	196	683
	1,00 Yes	98	80	178
Total		585	276	861

Source: EB91.5.

Table D. 4 Crosstabs between National Rally preference and predictor variables in France at the 1987 general elections

		Regional cleavage		Total
		,00 Centre	1,00 Periphery	
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	460	348	808
	1,00 Yes	19	9	28
Total		479	357	836
Community cleavage				
		,00 Urban	1,00 Rural	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	444	369	813
	1,00 Yes	14	14	28
Total		458	383	841
Class cleavage				
		,00 Employers	1,00 Workers	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	468	283	751
	1,00 Yes	10	12	22
Total		478	295	773
Transnational Cleavage				
		,00 Pro-EU	1,00 Anti-EU	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	592	221	813
	1,00 Yes	16	12	28
Total		608	233	841
Institutional dimension				
		,00 Federalism	1,00 Souvrenism	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	546	231	777
	1,00 Yes	19	9	28
Total		565	240	805
Economic dimension				
		,00 Marketism	1,00 Welfare chauvinism	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	418	261	679
	1,00 Yes	12	14	26
Total		430	275	705
Cultural dimension				
		,00 Multiculturalism	1,00 Nativism	Total

Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	514	287	801
	1,00 Yes	14	14	28
Total		528	301	829

Source: EB36

Table D.5 Crosstab between National Rally preference and predictor variable in France at the 1993 general elections

		Religious cleavage		
		,00 State	1,00 Church	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	401	212	613
	1,00 Yes	16	10	18
Total		262	417	222

Source: EB42

Table D. 6 Crosstabs between National Rally preference and predictor variables in France at the 2017 general elections

		Religious cleavage		
		,00 State	1,00 Church	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	587	25	612
	1,00 Yes	134	7	141
Total		721	32	753

		Regional cleavage		
		,00 Centre	1,00 Periphery	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	338	274	612
	1,00 Yes	76	66	142
Total		414	340	754

		Community cleavage		
		,00 Urban	1,00 Rural	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	277	335	612
	1,00 Yes	57	84	141
Total		334	419	753

		Class cleavage		
		,00	1,00	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	391	214	605
	1,00 Yes	55	83	138
Total		446	297	743

		Transnational cleavage		
		,00 Pro-EU	1,00 Anti-EU	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	470	142	612
	1,00 Yes	55	87	142
Total		525	229	754

		Institutional dimension		
		,00 Federalism	1,00 Souvrenism	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	402	206	608
	1,00 Yes	47	95	142
Total		449	301	750

		Economic dimension		
				Total

		,00 Marketism	1,00 Welfare chauvinism	
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	467	114	581
	1,00 Yes	57	67	124
Total		524	181	705
Cultural dimension				
		,00 Multiculturalism	1,00 Nativism	Total
Did you vote for the National Rally?	,00 No	463	140	603
	1,00 Yes	57	82	139
Total		520	222	742

Source: EB91.5.

Table D.7 Descriptive statistics (mean) of all predictive variables in Italy

Italy	First political context		Second political context
	EB36	EB42	EB91.5
Dependent Variable			
Did not vote for the League (0) vs. Voted for the League (1)	0.1	0.1	0.2
Control Variables			
Age (continuous variable)	43	43.1	50.2
Male (0) vs. Female (1)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Low (1), Medium (2), High (3) level of education	1.7	1.7	2
Independent Variables			
State (0) vs. Church (1)		0.8	0.1
Centre (0) vs. Periphery (1)	0.4		0.5
Urban (0) vs. Rural (1)		0.3	0.7
Employers (0) vs. Workers (1)		0.3	0.3
Pro-EU (0) vs. Anti-EU (1)		0.1	0.5
- <i>Federalism (0) vs. Souverainisme (1)</i>		0.2	0.6
- <i>Marketers (0) vs. Welfare chauvinists (1)</i>		0.2	0.5
- <i>Multiculturalism (0) vs. Nativism (1)</i>		0.3	0.4

Sources: EB36, EB42 and EB91.5.

Table D.8 Descriptive statistics (mean) of all predictive variables in France

France	First political context		Second political context
	EB36	EB42	EB91.5
Dependent Variable			
Did not vote for the National Rally (0) vs. Voted for the National Rally (1)	0.1	0.1	0.2
Control Variables			
Age (continuous variable)	43	43.1	48.5
Male (0) vs. Female (1)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Low (1), Medium (2), High (3) level of education	2	2	2.2
Independent Variables			
State (0) vs. Church (1)		0.4	0.1
Centre (0) vs. Periphery (1)	0.6		0.4
Urban (0) vs. Rural (1)	0.4		0.5
Employers (0) vs. Workers (1)	0.4		0.4
Pro-EU (0) vs. Anti-EU (1)	0.3		0.3
- <i>Federalism (0) vs. Souverainisme (1)</i>	0.3		0.5
- <i>Marketers (0) vs. Welfare chauvinists (1)</i>	0.4		0.3
- <i>Multiculturalism (0) vs. Nativism (1)</i>	0.4		0.4

Sources: EB36, EB42 and EB91.5.

Appendix E. Robustness check of inferential analyses in Chapters 4 and 6

In Chapter 4, the robustness check of the inferential analyses takes the form of statistical tests through linear regression models between levels of education and cleavages EB on EB. This would enable the differences between education groups to be tested and shown to be robust. One can observe from tables E.1, E.2, E.3 and E.4 that almost every year the relationship between cleavages and educational groups is statistically significant. The only exception is the economic dimension in Italy, which is not statistically significant in the first EBs, but it eventually become statistically significant from EB46. This still demonstrate as the economic dimension in Italy was not to be considered as very relevant for the trends' changes within the Italian public opinion in the early years, but it eventually became relevant in the later period of time.

Table E.1 Visualization of statistical significance over time of educational groups on transnational cleavage

Eurobarometer	Italy	p	N	France	p	N
19	-0,1	***	938	-0,119	***	924
24	-0,043	*	930	-0,09	***	939
26	-0,041	*	971	-0,059	**	904
27	-0,048	**	936	-0,042	*	920
30	-0,036	*	926	-0,075	***	919
31	-0,073	***	879	-0,134	***	896
33	-0,028	^	868	-0,109	***	910
35.0	-0,032	*	886	-0,092	***	892
36	-0,056	***	1375	-0,118	***	1361
37.0	-0,04	***	1319	-0,147	***	1332
40	-0,073	***	858	-0,118	***	909
42	-0,033	*	1278	-0,128	***	1340
43.1	-0,043	**	899	*,141	***	883
44.1	-0,007		849	-0,122	***	887
46.0	-0,075	***	898	-0,14	***	899
47.1	-0,084	***	856	-0,137	***	901
49	-0,065	***	852	-0,128	***	913
50.0	-0,08	***	863	-0,142	***	897
52.0	-0,05	**	868	-0,128	***	886
53.0	-0,091	***	844	-0,16	***	878
54.1	-0,083	***	856	-0,113	***	895
56.2	-0,097	***	896	-0,165	***	897
57.1	-0,082	***	862	-0,123	***	832
58.1	-0,121	***	901	-0,148	***	919
59.1	-0,096	***	1429	-0,141	***	1495
60.1	-0,113	***	908	-0,157	***	935
61	-0,079	***	894	-0,078	***	938
62.0	-0,07	***	918	-0,096	***	915
64.2	-0,124	***	1437	-0,184	***	1317
73.4	-0,095	***	1411	-0,161	***	1391
91.5	-0,199	***	897	-0,121	***	912

Notes: *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, ^ $p \leq .10$.

Table E.2 Visualization of statistical significance over time of educational groups on institutional dimension

Eurobarometer	Italy	p	N	France	p	N
13	-0,233	***	936	-0,237	***	833
14	-0,043	***	960	-0,119	***	819
15	-0,058	***	1062	-0,168	***	903
16	-0,027	***	907	-0,143	***	846
17	-0,022	***	948	-0,14	***	949
18	-0,119	***	805	-0,154	***	826
19	-0,031		863	-0,127	***	838
20	-0,047	*	848	-0,155	***	870
21	-0,053	**	864	-0,096	***	862
22	-0,055	**	931	-0,129	***	887
23	-0,062	**	925	-0,085	***	859
24	-0,035	^	891	-0,153	***	907
25	-0,072	***	901	-0,098	***	884
26	-0,061	***	940	-0,116	***	866
27	-0,05	**	871	-0,054	**	879
28	-0,027		897	-0,083	***	893
29	-0,072	***	866	-0,114	***	859
30	-0,052	**	902	-0,077	***	883
31	-0,076	***	835	-0,163	***	865
31A	-0,051	**	847	-0,106	***	871
32	-0,035	**	1633	-0,114	***	1677
33	-0,04	*	783	-0,111	***	861
34.2	-0,033		234	-0,032		302
35.0	-0,051	**	834	-0,098	***	857
35.1	-0,039	*	880	-0,1	***	928
36	-0,067	***	1301	-0,118	***	1303
37.0	-0,055	***	1241	-0,147	***	1276
38.0	-0,057	**	824	-0,132	***	869
38.1	-0,044	*	790	-0,131	***	855
40	-0,093	***	801	-0,128	***	863
41.1	-0,027		817	-0,119	***	869
42	-0,059	***	1196	-0,122	***	1304
43.0	-0,079	***	800	-0,166	***	839
43.1	-0,061	***	832	-0,159	***	848
44.1	-0,023		756	-0,121	***	858
45.1	-0,078	***	854	-0,111	***	820
46.0	-0,102	***	833	-0,106	***	867
46.1	-0,059	**	818	-0,149	***	849
47.0	-0,053	*	777	-0,123	***	855
47.1	-0,05	*	779	-0,13	***	864
47.2	-0,097	***	752	-0,102	***	823
48.0	-0,061	**	802	-0,169	***	856
49	-0,053	**	772	-0,161	***	848
50.0	-0,105	***	778	-0,181	***	847
51.0	-0,083	***	752	-0,17	***	823
52.0	-0,098	***	777	-0,172	***	828
53.0	-0,098	***	795	-0,171	***	837

54.1	-0,115	***	805	-0,13	***	847
55.1	-0,088	***	804	-0,109	***	861
56.2	-0,114	***	837	-0,191	***	871
57.1	-0,123	***	802	-0,173	***	853
58.1	-0,13	***	853	-0,134	***	882
59.1	-0,094	***	1312	-0,194	***	1422
60.1	-0,122	***	874	-0,149	***	909
61	-0,105	***	842	-0,132	***	906
62.0	-0,098	***	897	-0,151	***	899
63.4	-0,091	***	846	-0,144	***	902
64.2	-0,142	***	1368	-0,198	***	1280
65.1	-0,102	***	849	-0,155	***	944
65.2	-0,143	***	1397	-0,173	***	1294
66.1	-0,136	***	1414	-0,129	***	1304
67.2	-0,119	***	1306	-0,148	***	1305
68.1	-0,125	***	860	-0,098	***	955
69.2	-0,182	***	1240	-0,115	***	1374
70.1	-0,149	***	838	-0,134	***	933
71.1	-0,154	***	881	-0,109	***	926
71.3	-0,133	***	870	-0,107	***	945
72.4	-0,133	***	1336	-0,159	***	1366
73.4	-0,132	***	1355	-0,153	***	1345
75.3	-0,161	***	886	-0,153	***	930
77.4	-0,075	**	872	-0,127	***	938
79.5	-0,078	***	900	-0,136	***	940
82.4	-0,109	***	810	-0,121	***	920
84.1	-0,123	***	850	-0,134	***	940
86.1	-0,128	***	858	-0,131	***	942
88.1	-0,167	***	871	-0,15	***	919
89.2	-0,112	***	1268	-0,166	***	1432
90.1	-0,143	***	808	-0,146	***	792
91.1	-0,15	***	898	-0,116	***	917
91.5	-0,159	***	877	-0,099	***	896

Notes: *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, ^ $p \leq .10$.

Table E.3 Visualization of statistical significance over time of educational groups on economic dimension

Eurobarometer	Italy	p	N	France	p	N
19	-0,096	***	938	-0,164	***	924
21	-0,068	**	936	-0,131	***	927
22	-0,024		843	-0,129	***	689
23	-0,03		819	-0,079	***	723
24	-0,003		790	-0,121	***	743
25	-0,035	^	769	-0,132	***	691
26	-0,011		833	-0,057	**	709
27	-0,008		753	-0,056	**	725
28	-0,017		787	-0,078	***	729
29	-0,06	***	781	-0,092	***	693
30	-0,016		799	-0,106	***	761

31	-0,034	^	729	-0,154	***	717
31A	-0,01		720	-0,099	***	665
32	-0,022	^	1402	-0,118	***	1371
33	-0,01		687	-0,045	*	734
34.2	-0,053		206	0,02		250
35.0	-0,018		687	-0,107	***	726
35.1	-0,013		758	-0,086	***	787
36	-0,05	***	1301	-0,122	***	1079
37.0	-0,058	***	1021	-0,168	***	1079
38.0	-0,017		685	-0,122	***	711
38.1	-0,032	^	671	-0,143	***	695
40	-0,075	**	651	-0,104	***	714
41.1	0,007		699	-0,125	***	738
42	-0,022		919	-0,08	***	1052
43.1	-0,004		681	-0,074	***	733
44.1	-0,018		634	-0,146	***	708
45.1	-0,023		714	-0,125	***	684
46.0	-0,037		707	-0,1	***	701
46.1	-0,018		692	-0,138	***	692
47.0	-0,057	*	674	-0,101	***	727
47.1	-0,068	**	651	-0,108	***	711
47.2	-0,026		639	-0,119	***	682
48.0	-0,057	*	644	-0,159	***	731
49	-0,062	**	632	-0,121	***	717
50.0	-0,079	***	676	-0,129	***	719
51.0	-0,063	**	605	-0,134	***	656
52.0	-0,066	**	652	-0,127	***	694
53	-0,105	***	667	-0,143	***	686
54.1	-0,081	***	676	-0,124	***	706
55.1	-0,073	**	640	-0,074	**	691
56.2	-0,089	***	684	-0,129	***	698
57.1	-0,081	***	667	-0,17	***	692
58.1	-0,136	***	703	-0,134	***	731
59.1	-0,111	***	1064	-0,124	***	1152
60.1	-0,129	***	767	-0,153	***	753
61	-0,1	***	774	-0,112	***	755
62.0	-0,067	**	785	-0,114	***	813
63.4	-0,119	***	761	-0,171	***	809
64.2	-0,112	***	1256	-0,172	***	1169
65.2	-0,124	***	1255	-0,133	***	1183
66.1	-0,106	***	1253	-0,113	***	1185
67.2	-0,124	***	1118	-0,142	***	1209
68.1	-0,125	***	736	-0,117	***	859
69.2	-0,144	***	1025	-0,109	***	1198
70.1	-0,167	***	713	-0,14	***	857
71.1	-0,172	***	776	-0,106	***	843
71.3	-0,104	***	743	-0,09	***	852
72.4	-0,121	***	1148	-0,164	***	1236
73.4	-0,125	***	1171	-0,151	***	1202

74.2	-0,117	***	753	-0,133	***	868
75.3	-0,119	***	776	-0,183	***	848
79.5	-0,06	*	811	-0,16	***	866
84.1	-0,102	***	797	-0,15	***	870
86.1	-0,178	***	802	-0,172	***	848
88.1	-0,157	***	813	-0,172	***	791
89.2	-0,135	***	1147	-0,123	***	1260
90.1	-0,162	***	744	-0,164	***	705
91.1	-0,192	***	834	-0,104	***	829
91.5	-0,179	***	826	-0,113	***	815

Notes: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$, ^ $p \leq 0.10$.

Table E.4 Visualization of statistical significance over time of educational groups on cultural dimension

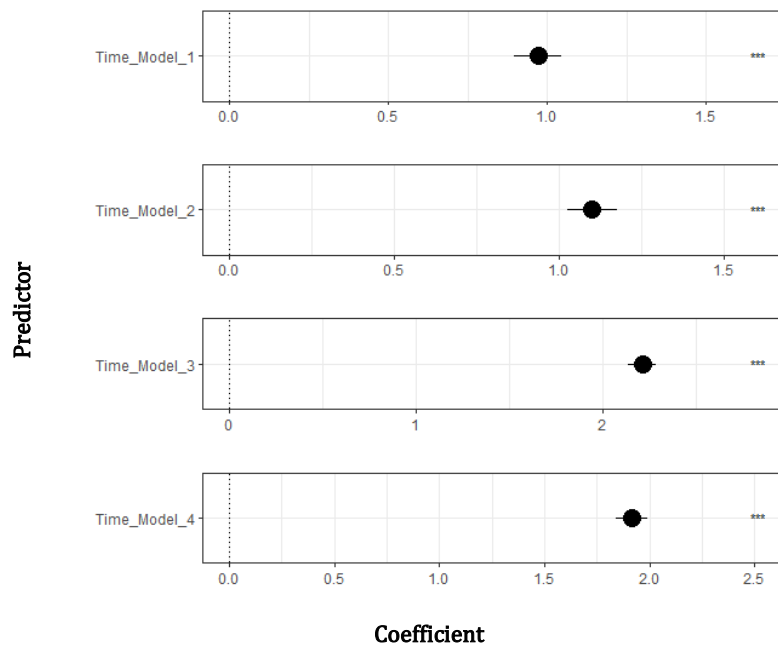
Eurobarometer	Italy	p	N	France	p	N
17	-0,048	*	1042	-0,046	*	1041
19	-0,163	***	936	-0,034		908
24	-0,146	***	915	-0,079	***	923
26	-0,118	***	964	-0,058	**	894
27	-0,152	***	905	-0,085	***	914
30	-0,11	***	913	-0,09	***	909
31	-0,157	***	858	-0,192	***	889
33	-0,151	***	857	-0,124	***	890
35.0	-0,142	***	862	-0,117	***	878
36	-0,187	***	1342	-0,158	***	1341
37.0	-0,158	***	1225	-0,166	***	1300
40	-0,153	***	823	-0,167	***	881
42	-0,104	***	1223	-0,11	***	1301
43.1	-0,124	***	856	-0,145	***	848
44.1	-0,123	***	830	-0,15	***	864
46.0	-0,153	***	877	-0,128	***	865
47.1	-0,141	***	826	-0,17	***	861
49	-0,178	***	806	-0,146	***	874
50.0	-0,158	***	844	-0,171	***	888
52.0	-0,114	***	840	-0,183	***	860
53	-0,139	***	835	-0,157	***	836
54.1	-0,126	***	838	-0,111	***	877
56.2	-0,129	***	867	-0,121	***	868
57.1	-0,118	***	840	-0,101	***	869
58.1	-0,139	***	883	-0,179	***	899
59.1	-0,129	***	1396	-0,146	***	1452
60.1	-0,16	***	881	-0,128	**	904
61	-0,138	***	420	-0,148	***	462
62.0	-0,126	***	457	-0,166	***	437
64.2	-0,154	***	1407	-0,151	***	1302
67.1	-0,143	***	870	-0,18	***	950
73.4	-0,151	***	1355	-0,194	***	1366
76.4	-0,105	***	860	-0,13	***	958
77.3	-0,13	***	855	-0,123	***	921

77.4	-0,096	***	867	-0,148	***	941
79.3	-0,123	***	875	-0,1	***	939
80.1	-0,141	***	838	-0,201	***	952
81.2	-0,119	***	821	-0,178	***	968
81.4	-0,167	***	856	-0,126	***	919
82.3	-0,183	***	1336	-0,166	**	1416
83.3	-0,187	***	863	-0,149	***	907
84.3	-0,177	***	855	-0,185	***	947
85.2	-0,191	***	861	-0,159	***	912
86.2	-0,197	***	871	-0,186	***	898
87.3	-0,168	***	868	-0,21	***	944
88.3	-0,17	***	867	-0,173	***	990
89.1	-0,18	***	865	-0,183	***	929
90.3	-0,171	***	894	-0,189	***	933
91,5	-0,164	***	879	-0,155	***	897

Notes: *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, ^ $p \leq .10$.

In Chapter 6, it is necessary to provide additional robustness checks. In order to do so, I run four logistic regression models by merging the two time points for every case study and I, therefore, added the variable “time” in order to check if this variable is statistically significant (demonstrating that there was flexibility over time) with all the other variables (controlling variables and cleavages). As one can observe in the following Figure E.1, the time variable is always statistically significant in every model and, thus, providing a robustness test that voting impact was flexible over time.

Figure E.1 Forrest plot of the time coefficients in logistic regression models



Notes: Models 1 and 2 predict whether respondents voted for the League (1) or not (0) merging EB42 and EB91.5. Models 3 and 4 predict whether respondents voted for the National Rally (1) or not (0) merging EB36 and EB91.5. *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, ^ $p \leq .10$. Source: All the EBs are available from (GESIS) at <http://zacat.gesis.org/>.

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