ARTICLE
SPECIAL SECTION

Bordering Inclusion and Exclusion in the Discourses of Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour

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This paper focuses on the discursive construction of borders and discourses of exclusion and inclusion in French right-wing populist discourse. It elaborates on the idea of the politicization of borders in contemporary political communication and their symbolic meaning as an expression of national sovereignty, security, and identity. Using the approach of discourse analysis, the author investigates how bordering discourses were employed by Marine Le Pen and Eric Zemmour during the 2022 presidential campaign. The empirical analysis focuses on the parties' programs, candidates' discourses, and their social media communication. This offers valuable insights into how political actors construct borders and shape 'us' and 'them' groups.[1]

Introduction

In one of Ruth Wodak's recent books, _The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean_, she argues that "in spite of an ever more unified and globalized world, more borders and walls emerge, defining nation states and protecting them from dangers both alleged and real" (Wodak 2015, 94). Indeed, recent global changes, migration flows, and geopolitical transformations have brought the border back to the center of the political arena, and new or renewed bordering narratives and practices feed numerous populist discourses and movements all across the world (Osuna 2022). The politics of bordering and exclusion become the core of populist rhetoric deepening the antagonistic frontier between 'us' and 'them' and calling for the construction of new walls to protect the borders of nation-states. In the USA, Donald Trump came into power promising to make America great again and to preserve America for Americans by constructing the great wall to minimize migration. The Brexit campaign was focused on "taking back control" over politics and borders to restore the greatness of the state and protect the country from unwelcomed foreigners. The French political landscape is no exception; bordering narratives are at the heart of the campaigning of right-wing parties in today's presidential election, and the candidates are extensively using exclusionary rhetoric in order to minimize migration and preserve the nation. Seen not as a territorial divider, but as a recurring symbol of national homogeneity, sovereignty, and security of a nation-state, in political communication the border serves as a tool for the construction of national identity and of legitimization of exclusion of the 'other' (Osuna 2022).

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The containing and limiting nature of borders within the nation provides the criteria for the division of the population into those who have the right to belong to the group of 'us' and thus enjoy the advantages of nationhood and those who are considered outsiders, in this way instrumentalizing the dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion. Following Massimiliano Demata, "this dichotomy shapes the contours of the various identities associated with (and created by) borders and acts as a discriminatory principle on which one's belonging to the nation is founded" (Demata 2022, 11). Nations constantly draw their power from borders and exercise it over them "because they are conceptualized and narrated as key elements of the nation within its public sphere" (Demata 2022, 10). Thus, in the socio-political space, borders emphasize the categories of difference and sameness and define the criteria of belonging to a nation, which represents an effective mechanism for producing clear boundaries between 'the people' and the 'other', two key concepts of populism (Mudde 2004). Contributing to the processes of both ordering and othering, they are used to "to formulate certain parameters of inclusion and exclusion in discourse" (Demata 2022, 11) which help to mobilize voters. Simultaneously, these border narratives are constructed not as an affirmation of neutral lines between nation-states, but as spatial structures that are constantly re/affirmed or negotiated, involving a wide range of strong individual and collective emotions such as fear and hatred towards the 'other' or affective belonging to the group of 'us' and hope for a better collective future. In other words, borders can serve as highly significant mobilizers of shared feelings that help political actors consolidate a collective 'us' and build the nation. As Anssi Paasi argues "in geopolitical terms, borders are thus related to 'people', 'nation', and 'culture'" and represent "the complex, perpetually ongoing, hegemonic nation-building process" (Paasi 2012, 2305). To understand the meaning of borders in politics, we need to study "how borders can be exploited to both mobilize and fix territory, security, identities, emotions and memories, and various forms of national socialization" (Paasi 2012, 2307) and perceive them not as uncontested entities but as socially and politically constructed, emotionally powerful discourses of bordering that unfold history, belonging, and identity.

While the concept of the border has undergone extensive analysis in relation to globalization, politics, migration, and culture (Schmidtke 2021; Vezzoli 2021; Calabrò 2021; Gheorghiu 2020), there is a limited body of research specifically dedicated to populist discourse on borders. Some studies delve into the symbolism of the border wall in political populist communication (Demata 2022; Espejo 2019), while others examine the emotional dynamics of border discourses (Beurskens 2022). Additionally, some research also focuses on the European context of populist discourses of bordering (Lamour & Varga 2020; Osuna 2022). The goal of this research is to fill this gap, shed light on the empirical understanding of the relation between the border and populism, and analyze the discursive construction of border narratives in French right-wing populist discourse. Building on a content and discourse analysis of political communication from two French right-wing populist parties and their leaders during the 2022 electoral campaign, this paper aims to scrutinize the strategies of othering, inclusion, and exclusion in relation to borders. I will compare the main discursive strategies of the leaders of the two parties that represent the main populist actors in France: Marine Le Pen from the National Rally (Rassemblement National) and Eric Zemmour from the party Reconquest (La Reconquête). The National Rally, which was called Front National until 2018, is a well-known nationalist and right-wing party that has existed since 1972. La Reconquête (launched in December 2021) is a newly created party with nationalist and radical right-wing positions. They both advocate for the implementation of anti-immigration politics with the aim of protecting French identity and sovereignty, as well as for the stricter control of illegal immigration. Combining their exclusionary discourses with an anti-elitist position, they saw significant success in the 2022 election (Eric Zemmour was ranked fourth in the first round, and Marine le Pen second in the first and second rounds), which proves their increasing popularity and wide acceptance of their ideas among French voters.

Populism and Borders

Although populist movements and parties are not a new political phenomenon and have been studied by many researchers (Schwörer 2021, 11–12), the recent rise of populist parties in Western Europe and America has proliferated the interest in populism research, and the academic debate about what populism means has developed considerably. Nowadays, populism is studied from different angles, as an ideology, movement, or regime, but also as a party, as a code, a syndrome, a political cognitive schema, or as a dimension of political culture (Demertzis 2006, 32). In trying to define this global phenomenon, researchers have elaborated several approaches, seeing it as a political logic (Laclau 2005), political style (Moffit 2016), or ideology (Mudde 2004). For Laclau, populism is seen as a particular logic of political life, a discourse that pits 'the people' against dominant elites by constructing an antagonistic frontier between different parts of society and challenging the hegemonic socio-political order. In its ideational dimension, populism is defined as a 'thin-centred ideology' which "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2004, 543). Populism as a political style refers to the performative aspect of political communication and consists in the study of phenomena through the interactions of 'the leaders' as

performers, 'the people' as the audience, and 'the media' as the stage of this performance (Moffit 2016). Despite the diversity of definitions of this contested concept and the variety of populist agendas and strategies around the globe, researchers agree on two core concepts of this phenomenon: the people versus the elite in a challenge to the hegemonic order. This paper adopts Laulau's perspective, defining populism as a specific political logic of articulation, which involves the construction of two antagonistic groups, the 'people' and the 'elite' within the society. These two types of collective identities are negotiable and discursively constructed by the articulation of equivalence and difference by various social actors (Laclau 2005, 83). Laclau sees the construction of an antagonistic frontier between 'us' and 'them' (the 'people' and the system, the 'people' and the elite, 'us' and 'them') as one of the preconditions of the development of populism, which, together with the equivalential articulation of popular demands, makes the emergence of the 'people' possible (Laclau 2005, 74).

The emotional dynamics of political communication function as a fundamental component of populist rhetoric (Nguyen et al. 2022; Wodak 2015), especially for right-wing populism. The antagonistic relationship within a society generated by populist movements produces 'a certain structure of feelings which convinces people that they are part of something greater' (Minogue 1969, 197), and at the same time, allows the construction of differences between the groups of 'us' and 'them'. Positive and negative emotions play a crucial role in the processes of alignment and separation within society and take part in the construction of populist discourses as affective markers of expression of social relations of power, hierarchy, and distinctions (Scheibelhofer 2020, 543). The emotions of hate and love are equally important for the delineation and re/imagining of collective identities, reproduction, and the proximity and distance between different social groups (Ahmed 2004, 25). From one side, the politics of love (to the nation, to the collective us) helps create an active identification with the nation, with the group of those "like me" and who are "with me" (Ahmed 2004, 36), and to draw the contours of a community of insiders, to which its participants are emotionally attached. As Paul Scheibelhofer noted, it helps to promote "the notion of a community of equals that "naturally" belongs to a particular territory, a territory its members are invited to feel to belong to and feel entitled to inhabit, undisturbed by strangers" (Scheibelhofer 2020, 543). From another side, populism generates the 'politics of fear', a set of discursive strategies aimed at generating fear and anger towards the 'other' in order to distinguish oneself from those outside and deepen the antagonism between 'us' and 'them' (Wodak 2015). The politics of fear and anger makes it possible to trigger collective anxieties, externalize enemies, and "blame others for the precarious, risky and threatening situations" the collective 'us' faces (Demertzis 2006, 39). In addition, the populist tendency to polarize society and split

it into two antagonistic camps provides a perfect setting for the generation of anger and hate toward the 'other' (Rico et al. 2017, 449). Thus, both positive and negative emotional dynamics mutually contribute to the construction of the populist rhetoric of exclusion and inclusion.

In the West–European context, populism is predominantly found on the radical left and radical right (Rooduijn & Akkerman 2017), which display its mechanisms of construction of core populist concepts. On the radical right, populism is combined with nativism and authoritarianism, and it is culturally exclusionist (Mudde 2007). The presence of the bad other and the nation as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) is central to self-identification and the establishment of its collective identities. As Anton Pelinka argues, contemporary populism is aimed mostly at the mobilization against the enemy from abroad, which makes populism more and more ethno-nationalistic (Pelinka 2013, 9). The elites are seen as those who are responsible for the globalization and mass migration politics that threaten national homogeneity, and the other is externalized (Rydgren 2007, 242). Right-wing populism strengthens the feeling of national belonging and in-group connections by emphasizing homogeneous ethnicity, by a return to traditional values and shifting from enemies inside the country ('the elite') to the external other, the enemy outside of national boundaries. Within this approach, the definition of the nation is limited to ethno-national parameters of 'the people' and seen as a sovereign community that exists within a specific territory. Thus, access to the national identity of community members is defined via one's national heritage, the place of birth, and spatial belonging (Wodak 2015, 101). Borders become a part of the discursive constitution of 'the nation' because they help produce shared understandings of identity and a sense of inclusion or exclusion (Osuna 2022). In right-wing populist discourse, strong borders are linked to the notion of strong nation, national security, and homogeneity (Beurskens 2022). They divide people, discursively producing marginal groups of those who do not belong to 'the people'. In other words, exclusionary border narratives reinforce the sense of self and of belonging to a certain community and deepen antagonistic differences between 'us' and 'them'.

In their paper "Bordering, Ordering and Othering", Henk van Houtum and Ton van Naerssen have noted that borders are not places that are "fixed in space and time" and "should rather be understood in terms of bordering, as an ongoing strategic effort to make a difference in space among the movements of people, money or products" (van Houtum & Naerssen 2002, 126). In this case, the borders are seen not as "physical and visible lines of separation" (Newman 2006, 144), but as continuous processes of reaffirmation and negotiation of socio-geopolitical space and identity through legitimation of "inclusion in, or exclusion from, the nation" (Demata 2022, 11–12). According to van Houtum and Naerssen,

the process of construction of a border is realized through bordering, ordering, and othering mechanisms (van Houtum & Naerssen 2002). The othering is understood as a discursive process of differentiation and hierarchization of people in which more powerful groups who "define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups", defining "legitimacy and superiority of the powerful and condition identity formation among the subordinate" (Jensen 2011, 65). The hierarchization can be built on varied criteria, including race, gender, class, age, etc. (Jensen 2011). Within political communication, the othering, i.e. "political practices of elimination, of the cleansing of the 'other' that lives inside an imagined community" (van Houtum & Naerssen 2002, 126), is extremely productive for populist discourse because it "takes place towards 'them' or outsiders" and in this way mobilizes 'us' by providing a necessary criterion of differentiation between 'they/them' and 'us'. Othering is represented as a "critical element in ordering, that is how geographical, cultural, governmental and legal dividing lines between 'inside' and 'outside', 'we' and the 'Other', are established and maintained at various scales, from local communities to global dividing lines" (Paasi 2021). This practice of exclusion and marginalization of those 'outside' the borders (Demata 2022, 13) is tightly connected to the moral interpretation of the actors (Demata 2022; Wodak 2015; Osuna 2022; Yerly 2022) and emotional connection to the homeland (Wodak 2015, 102). Borders, as symbols and manifestations of power relations, norms, values, and legal and moral codes, help to build an emotional connection to a homeland and its people on one hand and produce fear, anger, and hate towards the externalized other on the other hand (Newman & Paasi 1998).

Case and Method

This paper uses Critical Discourse Analysis and specifically the Discourse Historical Approach (Wodak 2001, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak 2009) to analyze the mechanisms of bordering, exclusion, and inclusion in French right-wing populist discourse. The Critical Discourse Analysis approach sees language as a form of social practice and is focused on the examination of its role in shaping social structures and norms, power relations, and ideologies (Wodak 2001; Fairclough 2000). The Discourse-Historical Approach as a part of CDA emphasizes the analysis of discursive practices within their historical context, going beyond the immediate analysis of language structures and use and emphasizing the role of discourse in shaping and being shaped by historical processes (Wodak 2001, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak 2009). Following Wodak (2001), the Discourse Historical Approach consists of three dimensions. The first dimension is the descriptive one, the specific contents or topics of a discourse are identified. Secondly, discursive

strategies are investigated, which are seen as planned actions that are being implemented to achieve a certain political, psychological, or other goal (Wodak et al. 2009, 31). Thirdly, specific linguistic means and context-dependent linguistic realizations are identified and examined to reveal the implicit content of the discourse. The empirical analysis in this paper is mainly focused on the analysis of the discursive strategies as they are especially productive for the construction of discourses of inclusion and exclusion. Nomination and predication strategies allow the construction of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Argumentation strategies which are realized through the application of topoi represent conclusion rules, which associate the argument with the claim or conclusion. Perspectivization strategies clarify the point of view from which the 'self', the 'other', and the arguments are described. Intensification/mitigation strategies modify the illocutionary force of utterances with respect to their epistemic status (Wodak 2001). The dataset comprises documents from heterogeneous sources (interviews, public addresses, Electoral programs, parties' official platforms, Twitter posts) published during the first and second round campaigns of the presidential election in France (November 2021–April 2022).

Marine Le Pen's and Eric Zemmour's Bordering Discourses

The 2022 French presidential elections were held on 10 and 24 April 2022 with two right-wing candidates in the top four ratings: Marine Le Pen (23% in the first and 41% in the second round) and Eric Zemmour (7%). Marine Le Pen, the daughter of notorious French politician Jean-Marie Le Pen and the leader of the far-right party National Rally since 2011 was familiar to French voters as she also ran for the French presidency in 2012 and 2017, and it was not surprising that she would represent the main opponent for Emmanuel Macron in 2022. After two defeats in presidential elections, she thoroughly reconceptualized the program of the party to "polish the rough edges of the National Rally" and soften her image and rhetoric (Mazoue 2022). The second far-right candidate, Eric Zemmour, only officially entered the political stage in November 2021, but this well-known polemicist and TV personality, author of more than ten books and numerous papers, was already considered as one of the potential candidates of right-wing French political power since 2019. In the first phase of the election, he even seemed to constitute a threat to Marine Le Pen and her party (Alduy 2022), when he obtained 16.5 % in the polls and came in second in the presidential race, just behind Emmanuel Macron (Fourquet & Kraus 2022). Later, Eric Zemmour lost the score and Marine le Pen succeeded in advancing into the second round and obtained 41%, the highest result for the National Rally since its creation. In the media, Le Pen and Zemmour are called, "the two faces of French far right' (Tournier & Elkaim 2022) or the

"two main far-right contenders in the French election" (Gaudot 2022), and their ideological principles are often compared. Some political analysts think that Zemmour's rhetoric helped Le Pen to normalize and de-demonize the political radical right position of her party (Alduy 2022; Mayer 2022). Despite the two candidates sharing much ideological common ground and being located on the extreme right of the French political spectrum, their rhetorical style is different. Le Pen and Zemmour rely a lot on anti-elitist rhetoric, perceiving national and EU political elites as the main enemies of the people. They both build their campaigns on anti-migration and ethnocentric discourses, seeing migration as the source of all social and economic problems, and advocate for strong national identity, traditional values, and for France for French citizens, but justify it differently. Zemmour, "populist 'French Trump'" (Cendrowicz 2021), is considered more radical and intellectual and extensively exploits his image as a 'new face' in politics, a person outside the system, while Le Pen relies on her rich political experience and seems to be the 'more popular' candidate (Mayer 2022). Let us analyze in more detail the main differences between Marine Le Pen's and Eric Zemmour's ways of constructing the symbolic meaning of the national border and the peculiarities in their use of the strategies of othering, inclusion, and exclusion.

Border politics was at the core of Le Pen's and Zemmour's 2022 electoral campaigns; security, migration, and border control issues represented key elements of their programs. Their bordering strategies were built around the renegotiation of France–EU borders, intertwining with specific populist discursive elements, such as the us-them antagonism, idealized construction of 'the people', nostalgic construction of the nation-state, and charismatic leadership. These components collectively facilitated the dissemination of narratives pertaining to exclusion and inclusion. While Marne Le Pen made the border a center of her campaign by combining it with the ideas of the rule of law and national priority in different socio-economical domains, Zemmour's rhetoric was largely inspired by the replacement theory of Renaud Camus and a revisionist vision of French history.

In Marine Le Pen's discourses, the border was always central to discussions about national security, identity, and sovereignty. In 2022, Le Pen refused the idea of a national referendum to leave the European Union which she largely promoted in 2017, and moved from the concept of "frexit" to the fusion of three core ideas in her program: "citoyenneté-identité-immigration" ("citizenship-identity-immigration"), advocating for strict border control as a matter of interior and exterior security, and protection of public order and preservation of French identity (Le Pen 2022a). Seeing migration as one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, Le Pen claimed that France failed to "control" or to "muster" the migration flows which led to "communitarianism, separatism" when "more and more people living in

France do not want to live according to French morals, do not recognize French law and sometimes want to impose their lifestyles on their neighbors, at school, at work, in the public services, in the public space" (Le Pen 2022b, 8).[2]

In her program, Le Pen contended that the present government not only neglected to implement border control but also supported a policy of open borders. This, according to her, has led to the surge in "uncontrolled" illegal migration, posing a significant threat to "French nationality, French identity, French heritage" (Le Pen 2022b, 16). Throughout her campaign, Le Pen remained committed to one of the main goals of the National Rally, namely to fight illegal migration by restoring border control: "Elected President, I will expel the illegals. To stop the illegal immigration that ruins us and threatens our way of life, I will control the borders and put an end to the call for social air" (Le Pen, @MLP_officiel 2022 February 7). In her interviews and tweets, she promised to expel all illegal migrants outside the national borders. Le Pen directly connects the border control regime and security within the state. In an interview for France 3 (2022, 0:40–1:00) she said that that her project, which is aimed at "returning the French their country", is based on two important issues: immigration and insecurity. By aligning these two issues, she explicitly asserted that migration poses a direct threat to the country. The emphasis on border security is particularly evident in her tweet dated August 24, 2021: "We cannot fight immigration without national borders. You cannot fight drugs without national borders. Fraud cannot be fought without national borders". By intertwining immigration, drug control, and fraud prevention with the concept of borders, Le Pen transformed the national border into a symbol of security of the state. The politician strategically employs the topos of threat, emphasizing the perceived danger posed by the 'other', and draws on the topoi of law and justice to argue that open borders contribute to increased criminal activities within the country. This rhetorical approach is integral to justifying the migration policy of her party, which she describes as the "backbone of the program" and underscores her advocacy for strict border control (France 3 2022, 7:00–7:50).

Another argument emphasized in Le Pen's official program to advocate for stringent border control is the claim that the impacts of migration are not limited to France alone, they also adversely affect the countries of origin: "The mass immigration suffered by France is also a scourge for the countries of origin" (Le Pen 2022b, 8). She affirmed that a considerable number of active and young individuals choose to emigrate to Europe, contributing to a shortage of workforce in their respective native countries. This, in turn, hampers the proper development of these nations. This 'vicious circle' slows down the development of the countries of origin and makes more people leave their homes. That is why, according to Le Pen, the limitation of

departures of their nationals is "also a service to return to these countries" (Le Pen 2022b, 8). This way of perspectivation and employing the topos of usefulness (strict border control will help develop the countries of origin) and responsibility (exclusion of the 'other' is for the good of the system) helps Marine Le Pen justify exclusion with implicit discriminatory context. The focus on exclusion as a means to ensure not only the stability and security of France but also to assist the nations from which migrants originate intertwines ideas of national interest and a sense of responsibility for the broader global system of well-being and serves as a 'noble' justification for stringent immigration policies.

While for Le Pen the key concept was the control of the border and migration, Zemmour's objective was to stop migration flows. Even before the official announcement of his candidacy, when addressing the topic of borders, Zemmour already expressed his opinion by saying that "borders mean peace" and French people "have the right to protect our way of life, our health, our civilization" (Fdesouche 2020), and since the very beginning of the presidential campaign, Zemmour had established himself as a messianic candidate (Mager 2022), the savior of the nation, putting security, immigration, and identity issues at the center of his program. The securitized national borders were positioned as an existential issue for the French people and symbolized the guarantee of national integrity and homogeneity. Strong borders meant peace and prosperity for the nation-state, a chance to turn back the lost glory of the nation. To save the nation, he was ready to "close the borders if necessary" because: "I want to stop migratory flows, I don't want more than 275,000 legal entries per year into the territory, and 400,000 in all with the right of asylum. Yes, I want to stop that, especially coming from a civilization very far from ours" (Punchline 2021, 20:00–22:00). As we see from the example, Zemmour was opposed to both legal and illegal migration. He connected the idea of the open border to a supposed threat to the French nation: uncontrolled "migration flows" from other counties endanger French civilization and the way of life. Zemmour relies more on the topos of threat and danger than Le Pen, presenting migration as an existential issue for the whole nation and promoting the idea of closed borders as the only means of national preservation.

In a broader sense, Zemmour connected the notion of borders with a sense of being at home and a shared collective feeling of belonging. He directly associated the borders of a nation-state with the notion of home by saying: "Our country has borders. Your home has boundaries. The law will be the same: no entry!" (Zemmour, @EricZemmour 2022 January 23). Throughout his campaigning, he instrumentalized the concept of "exilés de l'intérieur" ("exiled from inside"), which symbolically describes the French nation which is about to lose its territory and identity. According to Zemmour, it was exactly the absence of a strong border that caused this feeling of exile among the French

people. This concept combined a melancholic longing for the past, a feeling of lost home, and hopelessness. Zemmour defined it in the following way: "You haven't moved and yet you feel like you're no longer at home. You have not left your country, but it is as if your country has left you. You feel like foreigners in your own country, you are exiles from within" (Zemmour 2021a, 2:10–3.:00). By saying that the French people do not belong to their country anymore, that they feel like foreigners themselves, Zemmour tries to mobilize a sense of loss and individual emotional longing for the past and to rescale it to the dimension of the whole country. This "strange and penetrating feeling" of internal exile is tightly connected with a vision of borders as symbolic contours of a homogenous nation-state and with a longing for the collective past, where Zemmour entangles individual nostalgic memories with glorious historical events and famous personalities of the country: "You feel like you are no longer in the country you know. You remember the country you knew as a child, you remember the country your parents described to you. You remember the country … of Joan of Arc, Bonaparte and General de Gaulle, the country of the knights … the country of Victor Hugo" (Zemmour 2021a, 0:50–2:00). Using sentimental memories about the country of one's childhood and saying that "this country, which you cherish is disappearing", allowed Zemmour to romanticize the image of France and to construct an imagined state with strong borders that can be reconquered again. In his electoral program, Zemmour advocated for the necessity to reconquer and save for future generations "a France as prosperous, united and peaceful as the one we inherited" (Zemmour 2022). For Zemmour, the true France is a country of the past, a country that only exists in films or books (Zemmour 2021a), placed somewhere in the seventies, a prosperous state with strong borders and a homogenous population, an ideal that is almost lost. In a period dominated by patriarchal order, law, and social harmony, Zemmour's France is based on the feeling of affection to the local, to the past, to the "good old times", and the rejection of the present, of the global, of progress. The past, for him, is a period of "a great cultural coherence of the French people" (SpectatorTV 2021, 18:30–19:00), a time of national homogeneity and glory of French civilization and culture, while the present is associated with the "decline of France" provoked by the ruling elite, who does not protect their borders anymore and is ready to sacrifice France for "a chimera of European federalism" (Zemmour @EricZemmour 2022 January 2). The old France belongs to the collective "we" constructed by the politician, to the authentic Frenchmen, people who share the same religion, the same vision of the past and present and consider themselves a part of one glorious nation. Later in his campaigning, Zemmour repeatedly addressed the "glorious" past of the country and the necessity to protect "the French genius against the standardizing phenomenon of globalization". Thus, in his argumentation, he largely uses the topos of history

(life was better before the "other" arrived) to justify the politics of closed borders. Throughout the campaign, he offered different solutions for strengthening the borders of the nation-state, from the creation of a Re-migration ministry and the formation of new border-guard military units to the construction of a wall. The idea to build a wall seemed logical to Zemmour. As Trump wanted to separate the USA from the undesirable migration with a wall, Zemmour was ready to build a border wall on the external borders of the European Union to stop the threatening 'other': "Me, I will sway the European majority in favor of the wall which will be financed by European funds because it is essential. And I think that the countries that have built a wall like Hungary are the ones that defend European civilization" (BFMTV 2022a, 1:15:00–1:16:00). Zemmour's discourse on borders, which appears to be more radical than Le Pen's, is oriented towards shaping the border as a symbol of the nation. This involves a profound emphasis on the topos of threat, accentuating perceived dangers to the nation, and the topos of history, which integrates historical narratives into the discourse.

Thus, for both Le Pen and Zemmour, bordering discourses were central to their campaigns, but they differed in emphasis and rhetoric. While Le Pen focused more on control and the rule of law, seeing the border as a symbol of national security and well-being, Zemmour justified closed border policies through historicization of the discourse and propagation of nostalgic reconstruction of the nation's past. Table 1 provides a comparative overview of Le Pen's and Zemmour's visions of borders.

Othering as a Strategy of Construction of National Identity

Bordering discourses provide the necessary background for constructing narratives of exclusion and inclusion. Marine Le Pen's and Eric Zemmour's exclusionary discourses are concentrated on immigrants inside and outside the nation-state as the main 'other', which is supposed to reinforce cultural and political cohesion of the nation-state and French traditional identity while suppressing alien identity and culture. Negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation inherent to right-wing discourses represent the main strategy of construction of the threatening 'other'. Both Zemmour and Le Pen used the topos of threat, connecting the threatening 'other' with the criminalization of society, but the topos of culture was also very salient (the 'other' representing alien culture and civilization) in the construction of exclusionary discourse in their campaigns. Nationality and religion are used as the main criteria to define an ideal society in these othering discourses. The ethnicity-centered self-presentation helps Le Pen and Zemmour construct the opposition between different parts of French society, dividing it into two categories: authentic Frenchmen and 'others' ("foreigners, migrants, Muslims"). For both of them, the 'other' is represented by illegal migration flows that invade the country, and these two groups are in a state of constant confrontation.

Zemmour's 'other' is omnipresent, dangerous, and criminalized. If this group prevails, it would mean the end of French civilization. He argues that the country is already invaded by marginalized foreigners, who do not respect the French way of life and bring their own traditions and customs into the country: "You go out in the street, you go anywhere, you go to the suburbs of Paris and you see cities where we are no longer in France, that is to say, where burqas and veils have replaced dresses and skirts, where kebabs have replaced bistros, where halal butchers have replaced French butchers" (Brut 2022a, 7:30–8:30). According to Zemmour, French people are threatened by this hostile heterogeneous group of 'others' from outside and inside. Inside the country, the 'other' represents a source of disorder, violence, crime, and economic instability. During his campaign, he repeatedly says that foreigners, who are gradually replacing French people, are responsible for the degradation of the social and economic pillars of French society: "The French have

Table 1. Marine Le Pen's and Eric Zemmour's Discourse on Borders. Table prepared by the author.

Element	Marine Le Pen	Eric Zemmour
Anti-Migration Stance	Migration as a threat to security and identity	Migration as an existential threat to French civilization
Borders as Symbol	Controlled border, symbol of national security, identity, and sovereignty	Border wall, symbol of peace and prosperity, guarantee of national integrity and French civilization
Use of Emotional Appeal	Fear of 'other'	Fear of 'other', collective feelings of loss, nostalgia and exile
Use of Topoi	Topos of threat Topos of usefulness Topos of responsibility	Topos of threat Topos of history
Proposal for Border Reinforcement	Strict border control, expulsion of illegal migrants	Advocates for a wall on EU external borders, re-migration ministry, politics of closed borders

been driven out by foreigners and immigrants because in these suburbs of the metropolis. We no longer live in the French way, they have become foreign enclaves, enclaves most often Islamized where we walk around in hijab, in djellab, where there are only kebabs and where there are only halal butchers" (LCI 2022, 22:10–23:20). The 'other' is a direct threat to the way of life 'à la française', to everything that is dear to many French and is presented in Zemmour's discourse as the fight for the survival of the nation.

The 'other' is also associated with the threat from outside and depicted as a planned movement of mass migration, which is often associated with the metaphor of war in Zemmour's discourse: "There really exists a war between two civilisations in France. I will protect the French civilisdation" (Zemmour @EricZemmour, 2022 February 17) While strong borders are associated with peace, migration is depicted as an aggressive invasion: "Immigration is war. They want to invade our European countries, that's all, it's not another thing, it's a war" (SpectatorTV 2021, 8:00–9:00). According to Zemmour, migration brings this civilizational war directly to French territory and French people have to face the war "on our soil" (Face à l'Info 2021, 40:00–41:00). Migration represents a planned movement of people, which puts French civilization and its way of life in danger and is a direct source of people's problems and sorrows. Zemmour asserts that this "migrant invasion" is caused by EU policies of the actual French government and represents an existential danger for the French nation because it has the potential to dissolve France in Europe and Africa or even make it disappear: "Macron wants to dissolve France in Europe and in Africa. Me, I don't want to dissolve France either in Europe or in Africa" (Europe 1 2021, 3:00–4:00). Zemmour denounces the destructive role of the ruling elite in the migration crisis, saying that its "uniformizer politics" and "globalizing ideology" lead to the extermination of the nation. This militarist aggressive discourse constructs a border between different parts of French society: French nationals and 'others'. The very name of the party, *The Reconquest*, which evokes the historical period of the Reconquista, a campaign by Christian states to recapture territory from the Muslims, suggests the necessity to fight against an enemy from the other civilization. In his public address in Villepente on the 5th of December, he combined the name of the party with the main program points to give a strong message to his voters: "Yes, the Reconquest is launched! The reconquest of our economy, the reconquest of our security, the reconquest of our identity, the reconquest of our sovereignty, the reconquest of our country!" (Zemmour 2021c). By choosing such an aggressive and militarized manner to verbalize his main program messages, the politician deliberately drew parallels between war and the present state. He claimed that French people are endangered and need to fight for their existence: "My program is designed to reconquer our country, to put an end to the Great Replacement

and the Great Declassment, and to bring back peace and prosperity to the French people" (Zemmour @ EricZemmour, 2022 March 23). Inspired by Renaud Camus' replacement theory, Zemmour advocated the concept of "grand replacement", contending that France, once thriving in the past, is presently undergoing a period of decline. And only Zemmour dared to say what others secretly were thinking but were afraid of saying, that the nation is dying under the pressure of the threatening 'other' but politicians do nothing and bend the knee to the globalization politics of the EU. Zemmour claimed that only he was ready to do everything "for France to stay France" (Zemmour 2021b) and set the main objectives of the Reconquest as "reconquest of the identity, sovereignty, excellence, and prosperity" of the French nation (Zemmour 2022). Thus, the metaphor of war in Zemmour's discourse, presenting the 'other' as a threat through the lens of a planned mass migration, helps to articulate it as an aggressive invasion. This aggressive rhetoric positions the politician as a genuine defender of the nation against an existential challenge.

Together with the war metaphor concerning migration flows, Zemmour often uses another recurring comparison of migration with a crisis: "I think that the biggest crisis that is coming is the migration crisis and the demographic crisis in France which sees the French people being replaced by another people and by another civilization for me it is the most serious crisis that threatens us, the French" (Brut 2022a, 23:30–24:30). He sees migration as the main source of the state of "internal exile" of the French people and compares it with the "Trojan horse", which stealthily spreads alien culture and religion within the country, which provokes a sense of loss and disorientation among French people. This metaphorical approach serves to intensify the perceived dangers associated with migration, fostering the propagation of a sense of decline, loss, and disorientation among the French population. Through these vivid metaphors, Zemmour not only shapes public perception of the 'other" but also reinforces his argument for strict border control.

Interestingly enough, Marine Le Pen also used the war metaphor and referred to migration as the "migratory weapon" during her campaign: "We have to understand what we are up against. We are facing a Europe which is besieged by migrants who are used as a weapon, a new weapon which we will call the migratory weapon" (Francetvinfo 2021, 0:10–0:20). "Besieged" Europe and France are presented as victims of this "migratory weapon". Like Zemmour, Le Pen accused French representatives of power and the authorities of the EU of inactivity, since migration is "a project and not a problem" (Le Pen, @MLP_officiel 2021 November 15) for them. For Marine Le Pen, migration represents a major problem for French society and economy: "Immigration is a problem. Yes, immigration is a major problem, it's not people, it's immigration. It's a process

because when we welcome a lot of people as we did in the 30 last years. First of all we cannot assimilate them correctly. Secondly there is no job for everyone. Thirdly, the social protection system which is extremely generous in France, except that this social protection system has been abandoned under the weight of the number of people to manage and, well, it collapses" (Brut 2022b, 35:30–36:30). According to her, "a lot of people" that France welcomes are the root of many issues at once, including cultural, economic, and social. For her, foreigners who come to France represent a burden because they take away jobs or often do not work and enjoy the privileges of the French social system. She often uses the topos of burden when she talks about the economic consequences of migration: "I want to limit it [migration] because once again we no longer control anything in this area where the presence of illegal immigrants is multiplying on our territory that all of this has a considerable cost for French society, a financial cost but also a cost in terms of security" (BFMTV 2022b, 9:25–10:00). The 'other' is connected to considerable costs that rest on the shoulders of simple French people. Le Pen's 'other' is often presented as an economic migrant, taking away the advantages of French people, or an unemployed person who abuses the system. She claims that "migrants want to go to France, because it is in France that illegal immigrants have the most access to aid, to care, paid by the national community" (Le Pen, @MLP_officiel 2021 November 24). In this situation, French people are presented as victims who work hard but cannot use the benefits of the French social system; they feel mistreated and humiliated. Here, Le Pen introduces the principle of French priority, which she justifies in the following way: "The beautiful souls of the unconditional reception of migrants would like to open the doors to all those who want to enter, while 5 to 7 million people in France are dependent on food aid. Help the French first!" (Le Pen, @MLP_officiel 2021 November 18). Relying on the topos of numbers to victimize the group of 'us', Le Pen underlines her ethnocentric position by using the expression "Help the French first!". During her campaign, she often uses the topos of numbers to justify the politics of strictly controlled borders: "We can no longer accommodate it we no longer have the means we have five million eight hundred seven hundred thousand unemployed we have 10 million poor people and I think it would be a little unfair not to think of them too" (Brut 2022b, 27:30–28:00). Thus, Le Pen relies more on rational argumentation, unlike Zemmour, who instrumentalizes emotional arguments.

The 'other' also represents the main source of danger and threat in Le Pen discourses, but it is often mixed with rational arguments of burden or numbers. This group is associated with an "illegal, clandestine, anarchical and massive" incoming movement of people. The 'other' is a direct threat to the life and well-being of French people because not only criminals but also "terrorists infiltrate among migrants" (Le Pen,

@MLP_officiel 2021 November 10). Le Pen repeatedly uses the predicate "anarchical and massive" in her public addresses and interviews to describe migration as out of control. According to her, this uncontrolled and chaotic movement of people leads to the loss of control over the country, which causes not only security issues but also threatens French identity. Le Pen claims that the 'other' is also a source of crime and disorder in the country: "I will send the delinquents and criminals in their country because when they benefited from hospitality in a country, well we don't break the law I mean and we don't attack people and we don't steal nothing finally good that's his it seems a good common sense" (Face à Baba 2022, 35:00–37:00). Thus, the 'other' is blamed for many socio-economic problems, while the group of 'us' is idealized and depicted as victims who suffer from the presence of the 'other' in the territory of the nation-state.

Islam in France represents another leitmotiv of Le Pen's and Zemmour's campaigning. Le Pen sees a direct threat to the French way of life and the French nation in Islam: "Islamist ideology goes against all our values, all our principles, and it is reviving violent anti-Semitism. We must eradicate this Islamist ideology EVERYWHERE, from our neighborhoods, our cities, our public services" (Le Pen, @MLP_officiel 2022 January 28). Zemmour defines it as one of the greatest fears of the French nation: "Two fears haunt them: And that of the great replacement, with the Islamization of France, mass immigration and permanent insecurity" (Zemmour 2021c). Zemmour also thinks that "Islam is a civilization incompatible with the principles of France" (*Cnews* 2021, 17:00–17:30) and France is poised to disappear if this alien culture prevails. Le Pen compares Islamism with Nazism or Racism and thinks that "it's an ideology it must therefore be fought wherever it is expressed" (LCI 2021, 7:30–8:00). They both perceive the migration crisis as the leading factor in the alleged Islamization of the country and the radicalization of certain ethnic groups. For example, Zemmour directly connects migration and Islam, which is "dangerous for the French republic", in his interviews: "Ask the French if Islam is dangerous for the French republic and there are too many immigrants or if the great replacement threatens us, there are between 60 and 70% of the French who agree with me" (Brut 2022a, 43:35–44:00). Le Pen sees a direct threat to the French state in Islamism: "Islamism—which aims to replace our mores and our laws by others that are based on inequality between men and women, on the negation of history, which wants to put an end to secularism—and jihadist terrorism pursue the same goals" (Le Pen 2022a). Thus, both Le Pen and Zemmour employed the topos of culture (the 'other' does not belong to our culture and civilization) to create distance between French people and perceived outsiders, generating an atmosphere of fear and hate. They both consider migration and cultural differences as a primary source of terror and extremism and claim that only they are able to fight this

Table 2. Marine Le Pen's and Eric Zemmour's Discourse on Borders. Table prepared by the author.

Element	Marine Le Pen	Eric Zemmour
Image of 'Other'	Immigrants (inside and outside the nation-state)	Immigrants (inside and outside the nation-state)
Construction Strategy	Negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation Exclusion and marginalization of the 'other'	Negative other-presentation and positive self-presentation Exclusion and marginali-zation of the 'other'
Image of Threat	'Other' as a source of crime and disorder	'Other' as an existential threat to the nation
Use of Emotional Appeal	Fear of 'other'	Fear of 'other', collective feelings of loss, nostalgia and exile
Use of Topoi	Topos of threat Topos of culture Topos of burden Topos of numbers	Topos of threat Topos of culture Topos of history Topos of crisis
Main symbols	Migration as migratory weapon	Migration as war Migration as crisis

existential threat to the French nation. Table 2 presents a comparative summary of Le Pen's and Zemmour's othering.

Conclusion

Based on the analytical tools of Discourse Historical Analysis, this paper has examined how border, inclusion, and exclusion are discursively constructed and justified in Marine Le Pen's and Eric Zemmour's political communication during the 2022 electoral campaign. Both politicians assigned significant importance to the border, utilizing it as a symbolic representation of national security, French cultural homogeneity, European civilization's integrity, and, in Zemmour's perspective, a metaphorical representation of the French glorious historical past. The topos of threat was central in their discourse while constructing the image of 'other' inside and outside the state, and the strong border was positioned as crucial for controlling migration and protecting French identity and culture from perceived outsiders. However, Zemmour adopted a more radical stance, advocating for absolute border closure and framing migration as a civilizational war or crisis. In his discourse, the 'other' was verbalized as an invader who represented an existential threat to the French people. In contrast, Le Pen repeatedly employed the topos of usefulness to moderate her argumentation, emphasizing the benefits of a strong border not only for France but also for the countries of origin. Moreover, Zemmour and Le Pen relied on the topos of threat to capitalize popular support on negative emotions and generate fear towards the 'other'. While Zemmour was mostly focused on historical exceptionality, cultural, and civilizational differences, Le Pen also included economic threats and risks coming from the 'other'.

The strategy of positive self- and negative other-presentation was realized through the construction of two antagonistic groups of French society: the French people and the threatening 'other'. The negative other-presentation in Le Pen's and Zemmour's discourse involved the conceptualization of the immigrants and the Muslim population inside and outside the country as enemies of the French nation. The topos of culture played a vital role in the process of othering, targeting cultural differences between the 'authentic' French and the 'other'. This discursive means accentuated perceived cultural and religious distinctions, reinforcing an imagined dichotomy between the group of 'us' and the 'other'. Thus, the border in French right-wing populist discourse serves as a legitimating tool of exclusionary practices but also facilitates selective inclusion within the idealized, imagined national community. Symbolically, it embodies nationhood, security, and homogeneity, becoming a focal point for shaping and consolidating the group of 'us' and delineating the spatial and cultural boundaries of the nation.

Notes

1   This article is part of the Special Section: Border Renaissance, edited by Astrid M. Fellner, Eva Nossem, and Christian Wille, in *Borders in Globalization Review* 5(1): 67–158.

2   Translations from French are the author's.

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