

ASSOCIATION FRANÇAISE DE SCIENCE POLITIQUE CONGRESS, LYON, 30 JUNE - 2 JULY 2026

ST 48 · TOWARDS NEW USES OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS?

The role of far-right political influencers

during electoral campaigns (2017–2024)

41 channels · 16,424 videos · 1.17M political sentences · 7M comments · YouPol infrastructure

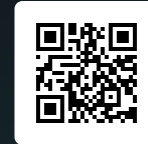
Tristan Boursier¹, Antoine Lemor²

¹Sciences Po, CEVIPOF · ²Université de Sherbrooke

YouPol · CEVIPOF · CAPP · CIRST · RFICS



you-pol.com



data.you-pol.com

CODE: AFSP2026

Outline

1

Why this research

political influencers, framings and campaign moments

2

Method

YouPol corpus · 10 themes · prototypes · panel models

3

Findings

campaigns tighten on institutions · the migration shift is inter-electoral · asymmetric coupling to opinion

PART I

Why this research

9 June 2024 · the dissolution, live, on YouTube

Jean Massiet · left

YOUTUBE LIVE · 11 JUNE 2024 · 350K SUBSCRIBERS

« Can we get a quick explainer on the dissolution for the newcomers to the channel? »

L'Œil de l'Élite · VA Plus · far right

YOUTUBE · JUNE 2024 · CAMPAIGN COVERAGE

« Every MP who was in office until today is out ! Macron was elected with the support of 20% of voters. »

Political YouTubers are becoming commentators of electoral periods in their own right (and possibly influential ones?).

What campaigns do to the discourse of political influencers

Social media are now ordinary sources of information, where influencers take a growing place and blur the boundaries between influence, journalism and advertising (platformisation of journalism).

HARFF 2025 ; RIEDL 2023 ; KLUVER 2025 ; NADERER 2023 ; SCHWEMMER 2025

In France, the far right invested YouTube early and structurally: a « metapolitical » strategy where the cultural battle is meant to prepare the electoral one.

BOURSIER 2025 ; MALY 2020 ; GANESH 2025 ; NOROCEL 2022

But the articulation with the electoral moment is a blind spot, and it has barely been compared with the left, which has also built its own YouTube channels.

MUNGER 2022 ; SUURONEN 2022 ; GOODWIN 2023 ; CUSHION 2021

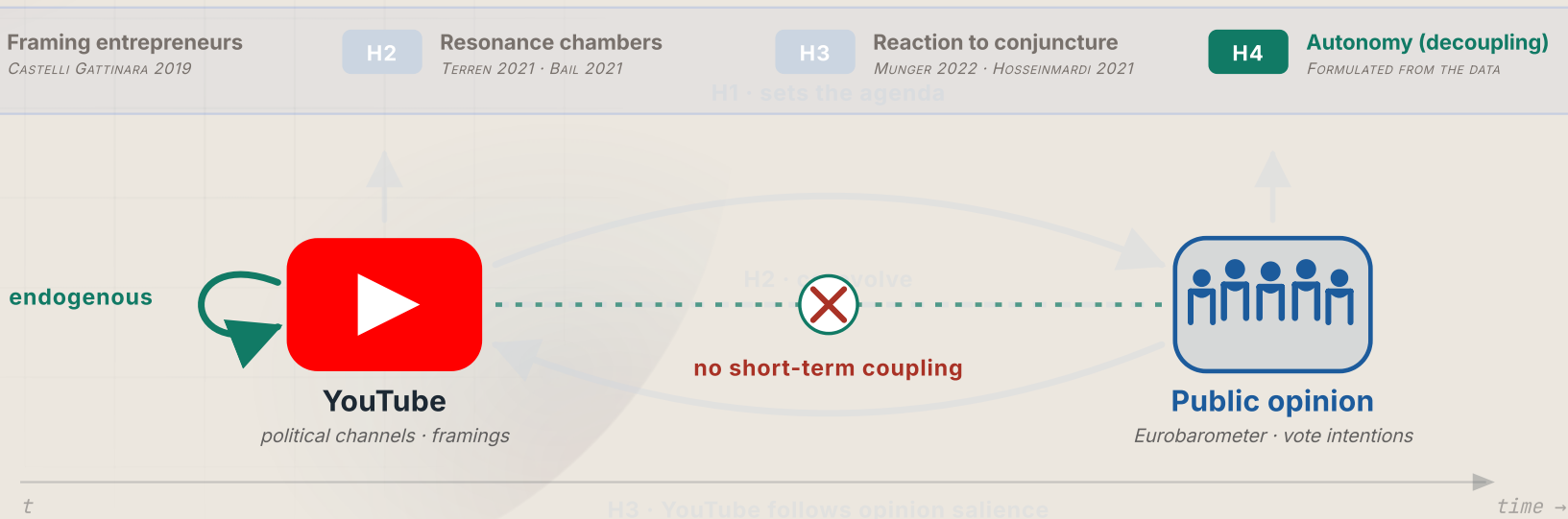
Issue ownership confers an advantage on an issue, not a monopoly: immigration, the nation, security or democracy form a shared issue terrain, invested by both camps.

PETROCIK 1996 ; DENNISON & GEDDES 2019 ; CASTELLI GATTINARA 2019

RESEARCH QUESTION

What do electoral campaigns do to the production of French political YouTubers — and **how does their framing relate, over time, to public opinion**: do they anticipate it, accompany it, follow it, or remain autonomous from it?

Four scenarios on the link to public opinion



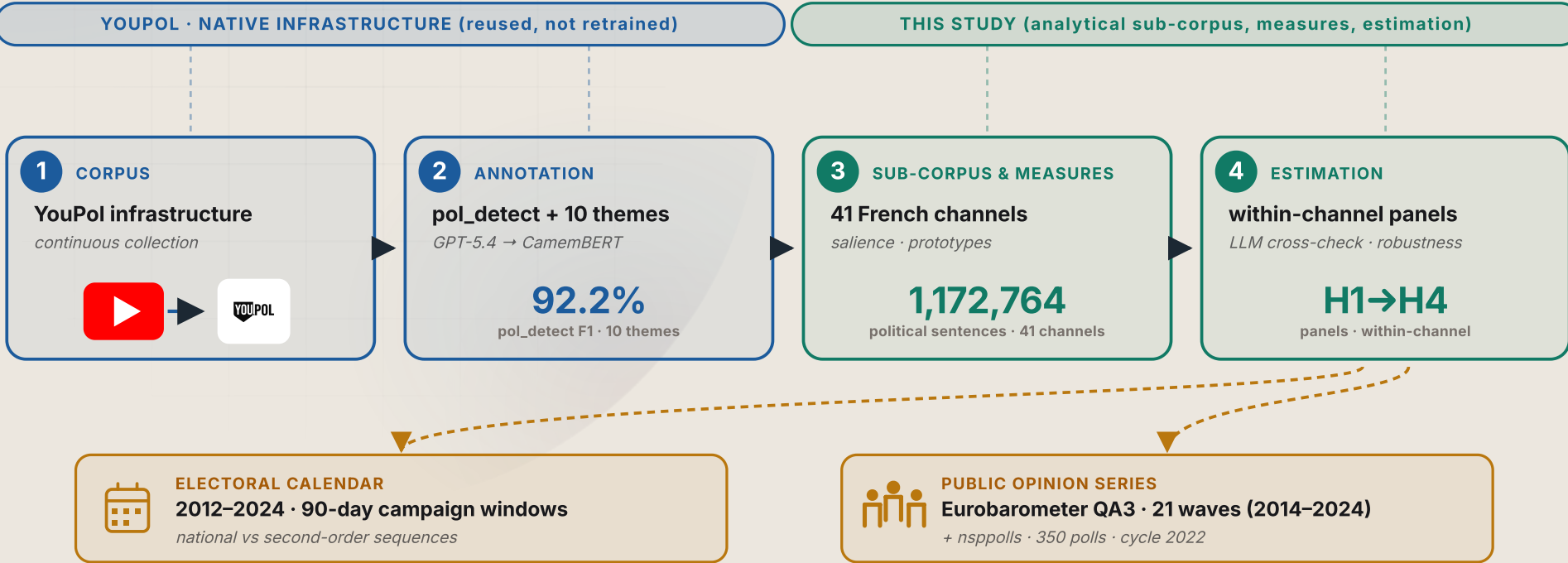
Not mutually exclusive · the relative weight varies by issue, sequence and political family.

→ We test the four expectations on the same data, family by family, issue by issue.

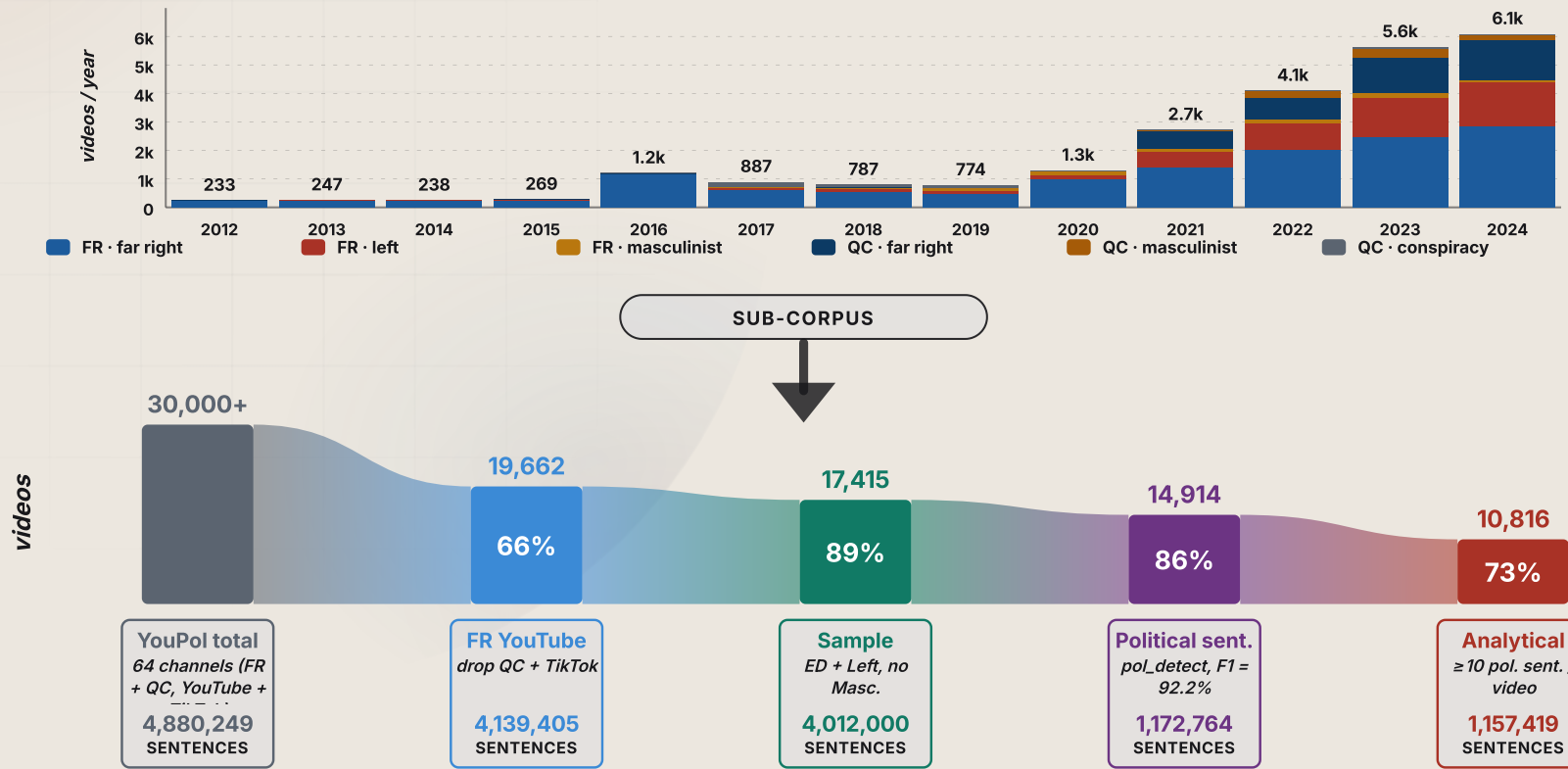
PART II

Method

Method overview

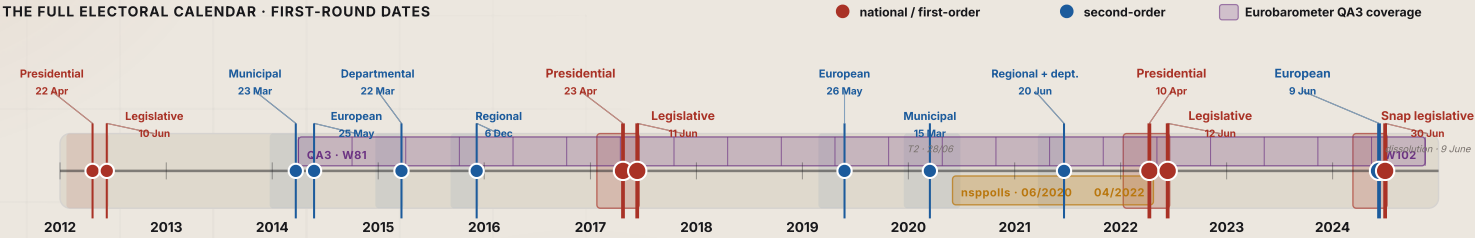


Step 1 · Sub-corpus



Step 2 · Electoral time, analytical sample and opinion

THE FULL ELECTORAL CALENDAR · FIRST-ROUND DATES



Campaign window = 90 days before round 1 → last round (60 / 120 d in robustness). Same-year windows merge into sequences. Snap legislative 2024 starts at the dissolution on 9 June.

THE THREE NATIONAL SEQUENCES · ANALYTICAL SAMPLE (VIDEOS WITH ≥10 POLITICAL SENTENCES)

2017	national sequence		DESCRIPTIVE SUPPORT		
	channels	videos	pol. sent.	med.	
Far right	4	223	1,905	28	
Left	(3)	(31)	(2,889)	—	
comments · ED 5,792 · Left —					

2022

national sequence

channels

videos

pol. sent.

med.

Far right

15

871

33,827

36

Left

16

393

69,434

77

comments · ED 555,459 · Left 204,233

2024

national sequence

channels

videos

pol. sent.

med.

Far right

14

847

31,046

50

Left

15

586

81,565

103

comments · ED 348,889 · Left 359,025

TWO TYPES OF PUBLIC-OPINION DATA

EUROBAROMETER · QA3 · SALIENCE

21 biannual waves · 2014–2024

"Two most important issues facing the country"

France share · via data.europa.eu

Immigration · crime · environment

Only homogeneous salience source over 2014–24

NSPPOLLS · VOTE INTENTIONS · 2022

350 polls · Jun 2020 → Apr 2022

Open aggregator of Commission des sondages notices

Round 1: RN + Reconquête + DLF + Les Patriotes

Averaged per poll, then by month

Only densely-pollled cycle · none for 2017 / 2024

WHY THIS PERIMETER?

2017 · 2022 · 2024

national sequences with both families

Other elections

test first-order vs second-order scope

Left · 2017 thin → descriptive support only

Step 3 • Ten themes

THEMATIC REPERTOIRE **SIED** • *Score Idéologique d'Extrême Droite* • Boursier & Lemor 2025

Following Mudde's morphological theory (2007), the SIED operationalises far-right ideology on two layers: themes and positions. We keep only the **thematic layer** — what issue the sentence is about — and drop the position layer. A theme is an issue both families address. 10 themes

1 Immigration 2 Nationalism 3 Authority / ... 4 Democracy ... 5 Progress 6 Tradition 7 Ecology 8 Equality / hi... 9 Libertariani... 10 Technology

10

Technology

THEMATIC REPERTOIRE

Technology, innovation, AI, robotics, transhumanism.

« La Chine n'est plus seulement l'atelier du monde. L'empire du milieu fait désormais la course »

Le Fil d'Actu • 11 avr. 2021

Step 4 · Classifier performance and manual precision



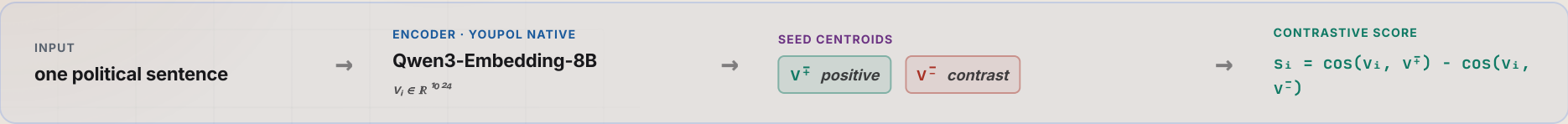
POL_DETECT · POLITICAL GATE

92.2% F1 macro κ = 0.79 1,000 doubly-coded sentences · sets the denominator

POLITICIZATION OF COMMENTS

93.5% accuracy multilingual detector adapted to comments

Step 5 · Three semantic scores in the embedding space



03 Electoral talk

Prototype score · $\cos(v, v^+) - \cos(v, v^-)$

validation

AUC = 0.91 · precision = 0.98 at $\tau_e = 0.07$

Captures the electoral process itself: candidacies, polls, vote instructions, schedule, results, dissolution.

V^+ POSITIVE SEEDS — INCARNATE THE CONSTRUCT

« Le second tour de l'élection aura lieu dimanche. »
« Les sondages donnent le candidat en tête des intentions de vote. »

V^- CONTRAST SEEDS — SURFACE-SIMILAR, SEMANTICALLY DISTINCT

« Le Parlement a voté la loi de finances hier. »
« Les députés ont adopté ... »

STEP 4 · THEME VOLUME

Binary classifiers

how much the theme is talked about



STEP 5 · REGISTER WITHIN THE THEME

Continuous prototype scores

which register the speaker uses to talk about it

Step 6 • Estimation strategy

IDENTIFICATION PROBLEM • THE COMPOSITION TRAP

Channels enter, exit and differ over time:
an aggregate movement may be pure composition.

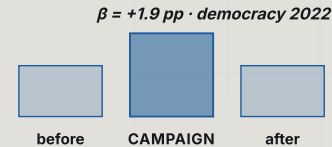
DEFAULT ANSWER

all estimates are WITHIN-CHANNEL

1 Campaign effect

$$y^i = \beta \cdot \text{campaign}^i + \alpha^c(i) + \epsilon^i$$

- fixed effects: channel
- symmetric neighbouring windows
- SE clustered by channel

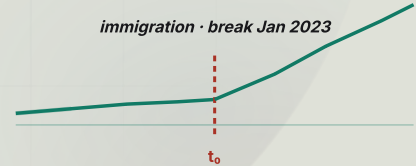


READS change in pp inside the channel

2 Trend break

$$s^k(t) = \alpha + \beta_1 t + \beta_2 (t - t_0)_+$$

- piecewise linear · break at t_0
- HAC SE · monthly-volume weights
- raw vs balanced panel



READS slope change after t_0 in pp / year

3 Opinion panel

$$\Delta \bar{y}^{C,W} = \beta \cdot \Delta x^{W-1} + \epsilon^{C,W}$$

- channel × wave panel
- first differences
- 6 months before each wave

tests H3 (and symmetric H1)



READS standardised β , direction sign

4 Robustness

$$\tau \in \{.3, .5, .7\} \cdot W \in \{60, 90, 120\}$$

- threshold τ variants
- window W variants
- leave-one-out
- 550 LLM labels

550

Claude Opus controls



17 LOO variants

CHECKS sign & significance across specs

READING KEY • HOW TO READ B

β = change in pp of the theme share
inside each channel, never an aggregate movement.

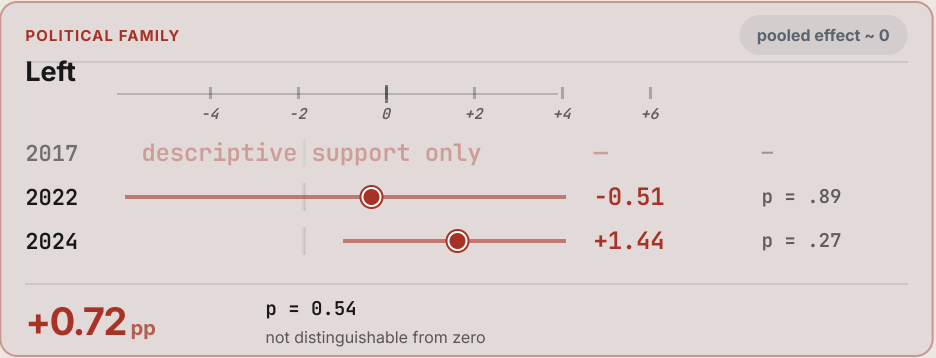
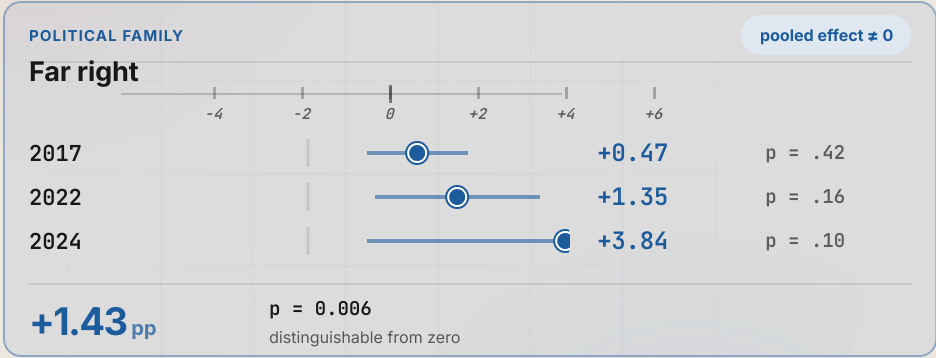
CONCRETE EXAMPLE

$\beta = +1.9 \text{ pp}$ on democracy · far right · 2022
= +1.9 pp more political sentences on institutions, inside the same channels.

PART III

Results

R1 · Campaigns politicise the far right modestly; the left, not at all



Example A · electoral coverage

A culture/web entertainment channel reads a horse-race poll for the snap legislatives.

« This is a poll on vote intentions for the snap legislatives on 30 June and 7 July. The Rassemblement national will see a major rise — 235 to 260 seats. »

Psyhodelik · 11 June 2024

Example B · thematic amplification

Long-form interview of Jean-Marie Le Pen the day after the 2nd round: identity vocabulary legitimised.

« Talking about the great replacement on TV, or about Français de souche, was forbidden. It was unthinkable. It was being a nazi. »

VA Plus · 10 May 2022

KEY READ

Campaigns politicise content asymmetrically.

+1.43 pp pooled on the far right (p = 0.006); +0.72 pp on the left, indistinguishable from zero. The left is already highly political outside campaign windows.

R2 · National campaigns refocus the agenda on institutions

decrease      increase

within-channel β in pp · * $p < 0.05$ · n.e. = not estimable

	Regional 2015		Pres.+leg. 2017		European 2019		Municipal 2020		Regional 2021		Pres.+leg. 2022		Eur.+leg. 2024	
	ED	G	ED	G	ED	G	ED	G	ED	G	ED	G	ED	G
Electoral talk	+6.5*	n.e.	+4.3*	n.e.	+4.9*	-4.8*	-0.6	-0.1	-1.0*	+0.1	+1.8*	+9.1*	+4.4*	+4.6*
Democracy / institutions	+1.6	n.e.	+5.4*	n.e.	+10.0*	-4.3	+1.3	+2.3	-1.3	+0.8	+1.9*	+5.3*	+3.2*	+1.2
Authority / security	+2.1	n.e.	-0.3	n.e.	-3.2	-0.8	+0.1	-4.0*	-0.4	+2.2	+1.7*	-2.3*	-2.3*	+0.3
Nationalism	+1.7	n.e.	+3.1*	n.e.	+2.1	-2.2	-2.0*	-1.4*	+0.5	+0.6	-0.5	+0.1	+2.4	-0.1
Immigration	-3.8	n.e.	-1.5	n.e.	+0.2	-0.4	-0.9	+0.1	-0.9	-0.8	-0.2	-0.3*	-2.5*	-0.8
Tradition	+1.5*	n.e.	-0.0	n.e.	+1.0	+0.7	-1.7*	-0.3	+1.4	-0.1	-0.0	-0.4*	+0.1	-0.7*
Ecology	-1.0	n.e.	+2.1	n.e.	-7.8*	-1.8	-0.4	+1.7	+1.2*	+2.3	-0.3	-1.6*	-2.5*	-1.5
Equality	-1.0	n.e.	-0.7	n.e.	+0.8	-0.3	-2.9	+0.8	-0.1	-1.1	-1.2*	-0.1	-0.7	-1.1
Libertarianism	+2.3	n.e.	-2.6*	n.e.	+2.8*	+0.2	-0.5	-0.1	+0.2	-0.6*	+0.3	-0.9*	-0.7	-0.4
Progress	-0.8	n.e.	-1.0	n.e.	+9.7	-5.5*	-1.6	+0.6	+1.8	+0.1	-0.1	-0.3	+0.1	-0.2
Technology	-0.8	n.e.	-2.9*	n.e.	+0.3	-0.3	+4.5	-0.3	-1.1	+0.7	+0.8	-0.5	-1.0*	-0.3

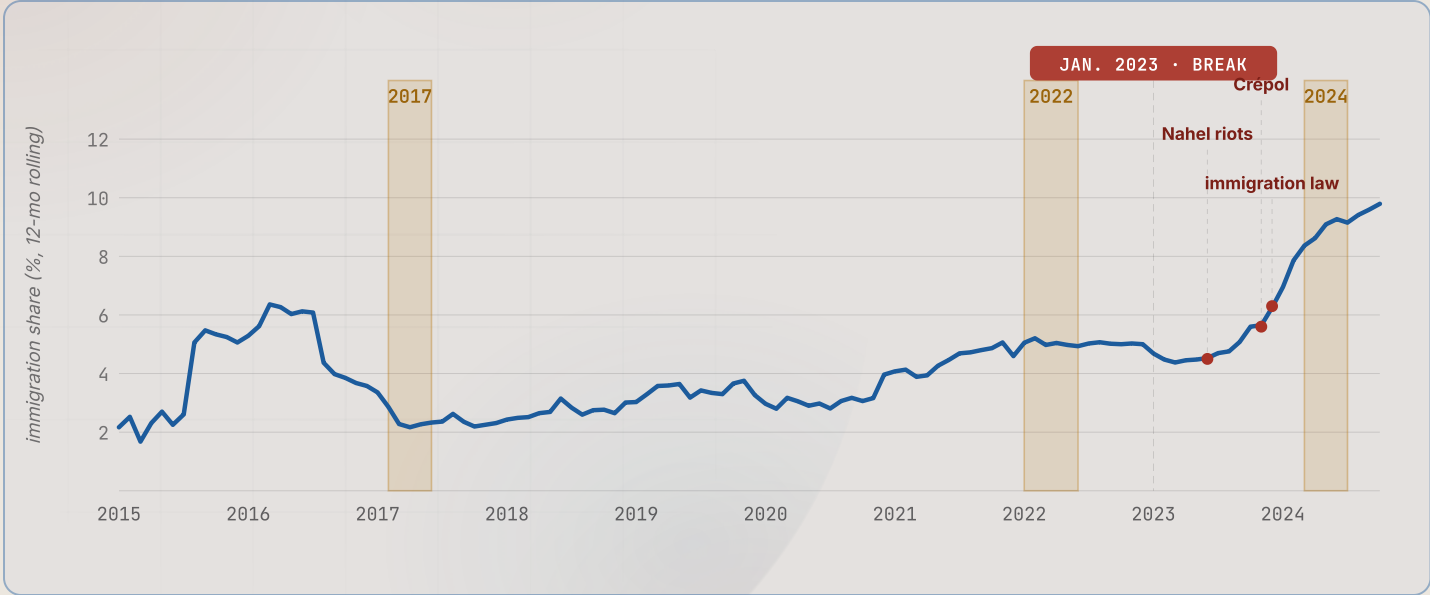


KEY READ

National campaigns refocus the agenda on institutions rather than on identity.

Democracy lifts in every estimable national column (+5.4 / +1.9 / +3.2 pp on the far right; +5.4 pp on the left in 2022). Immigration is stable or declines, including -2.5 pp on the far right in 2024 and -0.3 pp on the left in 2022.

R3 · Inter-electoral migration rise



PIECEWISE TREND · JAN. 2023 BREAK

before	→	after
+0.4		+3.7
pp / year		pp / year

p < 0.001 · weighted HAC SE

VOLUME ↑ · REGISTER FLAT

+0.16 σ	+0.08 σ
theme volume	ethnic nationalism
p < 0.01	n.s. · p = 0.29

REGISTER TILT · CIVILISATIONAL ↓ · PUBLIC POLICY ↑

-0.15 σ	-0.19 σ
inter-electoral · toward public policy	2024 · toward public policy
p = 0.01	p = 0.02

PUBLIC-POLICY REGISTER · VERBATIM

« Every year there are between 80,000 and 100,000 OQTF, with peaks at 130,000 in 2022. »

Psychodelik · 22 Feb. 2024 · inter-electoral

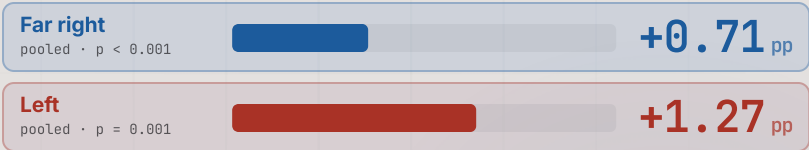
KEY READ

The migration rise is inter-electoral and not a hardening of register.

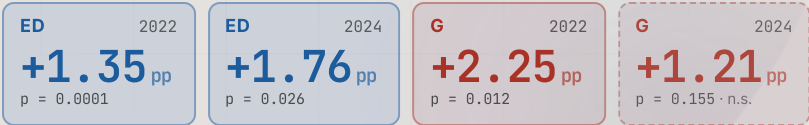
Trend break in January 2023 (p < 0.001). Within channels, +4.04 pp from 2022 to 2024. The ethnic-nationalism score does not follow; the migratory register tilts rather toward public-policy vocabulary than toward identity hardening.

R4 · The audience politicises with the agenda

A · CAMPAIGN EFFECT ON COMMENT POLITICISATION

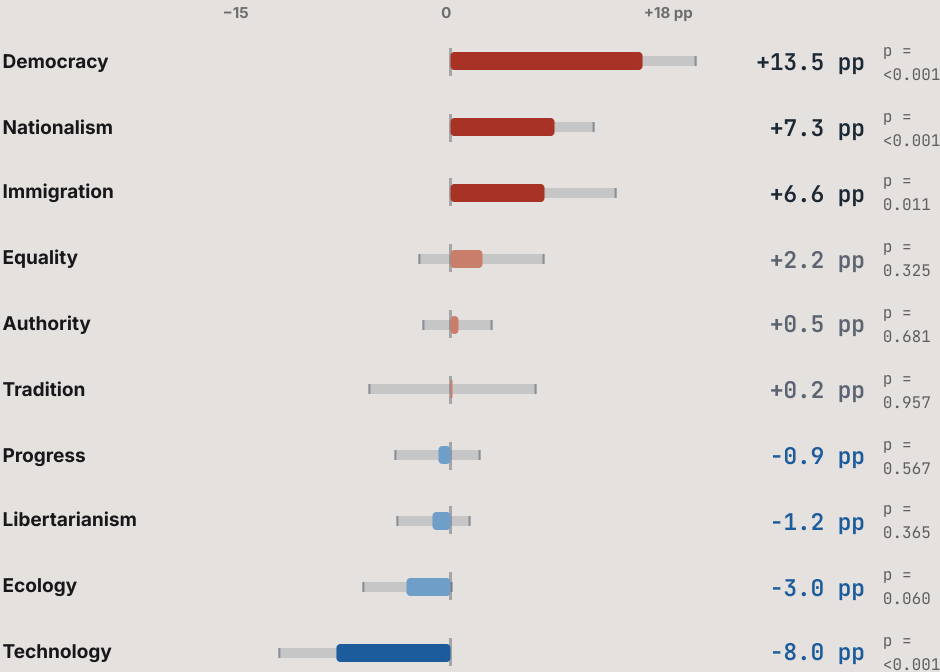


Per-sequence detail (chronological)



B · VIDEO THEMES → POLITICAL COMMENTS · ALL CHANNELS

campaign videos only · channel + sequence fixed effects · 95% CI

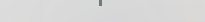
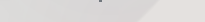


KEY READ

Campaign-window audiences politicise, and the agenda explains which themes mobilise.

Comments are +0.71 pp more political for the far right (p < 0.001) and +1.27 pp for the left. The themes that most mobilise (democracy, nationalism, immigration) overlap with the campaign agenda of R2.

R5 · H1 to H4 tested against opinion

Issue · family		H1 · framing → opinion	H2 · p contemp. <i>descriptive · no direction</i>	H3 · opinion → framing
QA3	Immigration	 n.s.	 -0.23	 n.s.
Far right				
QA3	Immigration	 n.s.	 +0.47	 +0.11
Left				
QA3	Crime / security	 n.s.	 +0.12	 n.s.
Far right				
QA3	Crime / security	 +0.48	 -0.38	 +0.05
Left				
QA3	Environment	 -0.41	 -0.53	 n.s.
Far right				
QA3	Environment	 n.s.	 +0.31	 +0.20
Left				
nspolls	Vote intentions · ED bloc	 n.s.	 n.s.	 n.s.
Far right				

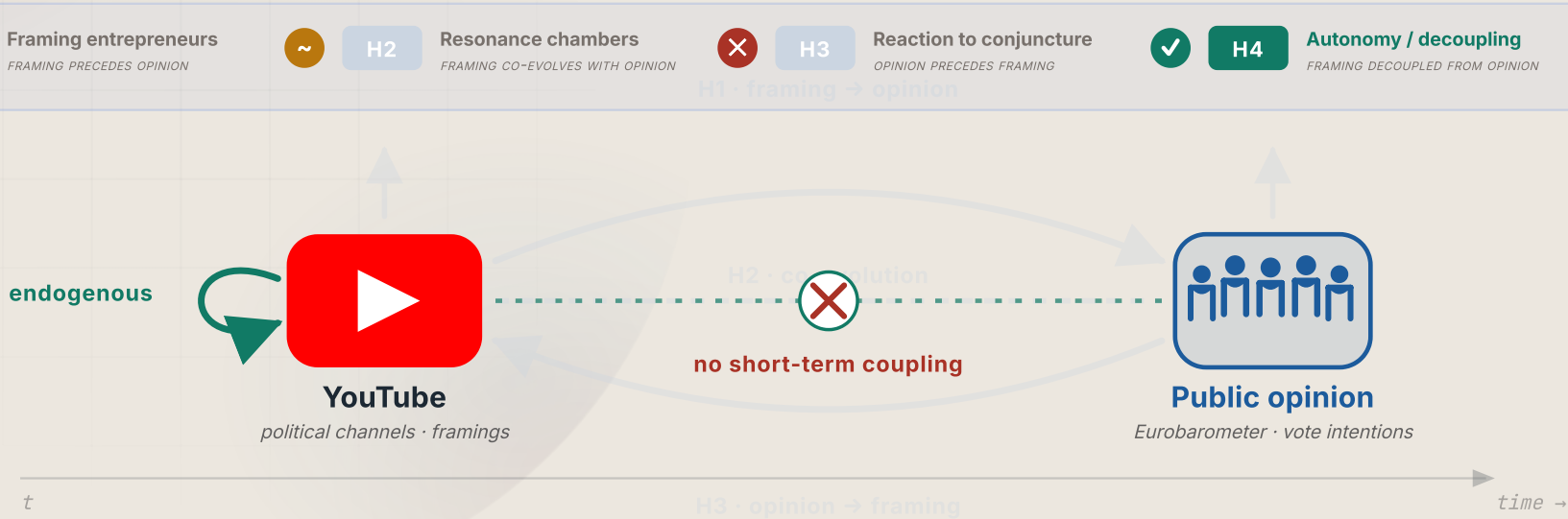
Far right 0 / 4 positive H3 effects

Left 3 / 3 positive H3 effects on all three issues

◆ KEY READ

Asymmetric coupling to public opinion.
On the left, opinion-to-framing coefficients are positive on the three Eurobarometer issues (+0.11, +0.05, +0.20). On the far right, no coefficient is positive on any issue, and nspolls 2022 vote intentions show no coupling either.

In summary



ASYMMETRIC VERDICT *The left tracks issue salience · the far-right agenda is decoupled in the short run.*

Scope · short-term coupling with measured opinion. No estimation of cumulative persuasion or individual change.

PART IV

Conclusion

Conclusion

IF WE HAD TO KEEP A SINGLE RESULT

On YouTube, the left is coupled with opinion and the far right is decoupled from it.

Which could be interpreted as the far right seeking to impose its issues while the left reacts to them. The far right talks about its issues independently of measured opinion and voting intentions.

1

Modest, institutional politicisation in campaign

The electoral moment modestly politicises the far-right pole, around the vote and democratic institutions more than around identity.

2

A 2023–2024 inflection sliding to public policy

Immigration salience rises in 2023–2024, but its register slides toward public-policy vocabulary: a normalisation?

3

The relation to opinion: left follows, far right is decoupled

The left tracks measured opinion; the far right is decoupled from it.

LIMITS

Platform coverage, semi-annual opinion resolution, time-invariant channel labels, sensitivity of effect size to the most voluminous channel.

NEXT STEPS

Replication on TikTok (collection in progress in YouPol), comparison across national contexts, direct measures of cumulative exposure and attitude change.

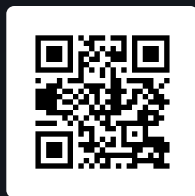
Thank you!

Questions and discussion

Tristan Boursier · Antoine Lemor

Sciences Po, CEVIPOF · Université de Sherbrooke

YouPol · CEVIPOF · CAPP · CIRST · RFICS



you-pol.com