

French Foreign Policy Shifts in a Multi-dimensional Perspective: The Impact and Consequences of Populism

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Abstract. French foreign policy has played an important role in global politics in history. As one of the core countries in Europe, France's diplomatic decisions not only affect its own interests, but also have a far-reaching impact on the political landscape of Europe and even the world. In the past few decades, the process of globalization, regional conflicts, EU internal dynamics and other factors have continuously reshaped France's diplomatic strategy. In recent years, the rise of populism has been particularly eye-catching. It not only triggered great changes in domestic politics, but also had a far-reaching impact on France's foreign policy. As a political phenomenon, populism is usually characterized by anti-elite, anti-dism and an emphasis on national sovereignty and the will of the people. In France, the rise of populism is reflected not only in the words and deeds of politicians and political parties, but also in the attitude and voting behavior of voters. The impact of populism on French foreign policy is mainly reflected in its attitude towards the European Union, its position on immigration and refugee issues, and its attitude towards international cooperation and multilateralism. This article aims to explore the foreign policy transformation of France under the influence of populism from a multidimensional perspective and analyze the consequences of this change. By comparing France's diplomatic strategies in different historical periods, people can more clearly understand the role of populism in it and its potential impact on future international relations.

Keywords: Populism, French foreign policy, European, integration, international politics, Diplomacy.

1. Introduction

France has always played an important role on the international stage, and its foreign policy has distinctive characteristics. After World War II, France established an independent foreign policy through de Gaullism, emphasizing national sovereignty and independent decision-making. After the end of the Cold War, France further promoted European integration while staying active in global affairs. However, since the 21st century, the process of globalization has intensified, and the international environment and domestic political pattern faced by France have undergone profound changes.

Against the backdrop of the unpredictable global political situation, France's foreign policy has undergone significant changes. In recent years, the rise of populism has triggered far-reaching political and social changes in Western democracies. This article aims to explore the transformation of French foreign policy from a multi-dimensional perspective, paying special attention to the impact of populism on it and its consequences.

This article deeply discusses the far-reaching impact of populism on the development of French foreign policy, and tries to reveal the specific role of this phenomenon in contemporary international politics and its potential political consequences. This paper will adopt a theoretical framework from a multi-dimensional perspective, including political science, international relations theory and sociological theory, to comprehensively analyze the transformation of French foreign policy. Through the above research methods, this article will reveal the specific impact of populism on French foreign policy. Preliminary research shows that the rise of populism has indeed changed the direction of France's foreign policy to some extent. For example, on the EU issue, France has shown stronger independence and skepticism, which is different from the traditional pro-European position. At the same time, France's attitude in international affairs has also become more concerned about its own interests, showing a certain conservative tendency [1]. The article not only describes superficial phenomena, but also deeply analyzes how populism takes root and grows in the unique political soil

of France, and then gradually becomes a key factor in shaping the concept of France's foreign relations policy.

In recent years, populism has not only caused drastic changes in France's domestic politics, but also profoundly affected the direction of France's foreign policy. The rise of populism marks a major change in France's traditional foreign policy, which has had an impact on the country's foreign strategy that cannot be ignored. This article will carefully analyze the role of populism in promoting France's strategic autonomy, and will also point out the international challenges and potential risks it brings.

Moreover, this article also focuses on the far-reaching impact of populism on the strategic partnerships between France and other important countries, especially with China. The article will evaluate how this partnership adapts to the current international political and economic order and whether it can effectively resist or pose a challenge to the existing order. Through such research, the author hopes to provide readers with a more comprehensive understanding and provide new insights and thinking for future international policy formulation.

Generally speaking, this study is not only an academic paper on the discussion of the relationship between populism and French foreign policy, but also an in-depth examination of this sensitive issue in the history of international relations. The research in this article provides a framework for understanding the impact of populism on national foreign policy. Future research can further explore the different impacts of different types of populism on foreign policy, as well as the coping strategies of other countries in the face of the wave of populism. Through transnational comparative research, people can have a more comprehensive understanding of the widespread impact of the global phenomenon of populism on international politics.

2. Historical Background of French Foreign Policy

2.1. French Foreign Policy after World War II

After World War II, France was faced with the dual task of rebuilding the country and restoring its international standing. During this period, France's foreign policy focused on restoring relations with its neighbors, especially with Germany. Between 1945 and 1954, France viewed the prevention of a German resurgence as the main goal of its foreign policy. However, over time, France gradually shifted from a policy of dismembering and weakening Germany to a policy of reconciliation and cooperation with Germany. This shift was not only based on the realization and judgment of the situation at home and abroad, but was also the result of reflection and change of the original conception [2]. The French Government was convinced that peace could only be secured by practicing practical cooperation in international organizations. This change of conception enabled France to begin to gradually implement a policy of reconciliation with Germany in the early postwar period, laying the foundation for the establishment of the European Community.

Secondly, during the Cold War, France actively participated in the process of European integration while maintaining the independence of European external relations. The relationship between France and Germany was further developed after the end of the Cold War, and both countries took the enhancement of Franco-German cooperation and the advancement of the European integration process as the base and support of their own diplomatic strategies. This cooperative relationship has not only facilitated the broad development of their alliance relations, but also continues to play the role of a "twin-engine engine" to promote the continuous development of the cause of European integration.

In addition, the foreign policy adjustments during the Chirac presidency were also an important turning point. Chirac to promote the "Chiracism diplomacy" is a pragmatic, realistic style of diplomacy, which is characterized by a strong "de Gaulleism" color, but also different from de Gaulle's "pure political diplomacy. The main characteristic is a strong "de Gaulleism" color, but also different from de Gaulle's "purely political diplomacy" and Mitterrand's "human rights diplomacy"

[3]. Chirac's foreign policy adjustments were adapted to the post-Cold War world pattern and France's domestic economic needs, but at the same time faced many difficulties and unpredictable factors.

To summarize, France's foreign policy after World War II underwent a major transformation from toughness toward Germany to reconciliation and cooperation, while actively participating in the European integration process during the Cold War and making all-round foreign policy adjustments during the Chirac period. This shift was based not only on considerations of security and stability in Europe, but also to promote the economic recovery and integration process in Western Europe.

2.2. French Diplomacy during the Cold War

During the Cold War, France sought an independent foreign policy between the two camps of the United States and the Soviet Union. During Charles de Gaulle's government, France tried to maintain the independence of Europe's foreign relations by establishing a diplomatic meeting system of Franco-German core and multilateral consultations. In addition, France has also actively participated in major historical processes such as decolonization, post-war reconstruction and cooperation in Western Europe. Although France maintained a certain degree of independence in the Cold War, its foreign policy was still influenced and restricted by the United States and the Soviet Union.

2.3. French Foreign Strategy in the Post-Cold War Period

After the end of the Cold War, France readjusted its foreign policy. President Mitterrand put forward a new concept of France's diplomatic strategy in the new era, aiming to accelerate the integration process of the European Community and expand the influence of the European Union. After entering the 1990s, France once again made directional adjustments to its foreign policy to adapt to the new international strategic environment. During this period, France emphasized cooperation with French-speaking African countries, and also focused on the growing influence of the United States and China in Africa. With the changes in the world pattern, France is also actively adjusting its policy towards China, changing from strategic cooperation to strategic competition [4]. This transformation is part of France's response to the challenges and opportunities brought about by China's rise, aiming to ensure that France maintains important influence in international and regional affairs.

At the same time, France's military intervention policy is also being adjusted. Although military intervention has always been an important part of France's foreign policy, after the Cold War, France adjusted its military intervention strategy to take a more prudent and collective approach to the crisis [5]. This change reflects the importance of France paying more attention to international cooperation and multilateralism while pursuing national interests.

3. The Rise of Populism and Its Impact on French Domestic Politics

3.1. Definition and Characteristics of Populism

The rise of populism and its impact on French domestic politics can be analyzed from multiple dimensions. First of all, the definition and characteristics of populism need to be clear. Populism is an ideology that believes in the people, advocates the sovereignty of the people, and calls for the transformation of elite rule in the name of the people [6]. It emphasizes the inherent integrity and consistency of the people, takes a right-wing conservative position on nationalism, globalization, multiculturalism and other themes, and emphasizes diluting ethnic identity, opposing multiculturalism, and even globalization in practice. In addition, populism advocates the direct action of the majority of the people in the procedural arrangement, emphasizes the reform of the current regime, and forms practical demands such as anti-representative system and anti-representative system.

3.2. The Development of Populism in France

The historical development of French populism is a complex and multidimensional process, involving historical, social, economic and political aspects.

First of all, the origin of French populism can be traced back to the late 20th century, especially the acceleration of globalization and European integration, which led to the division of social classes and the intensification of economic inequality. Against this background, right-wing populist parties such as the National Front (later known as the National Alliance) came into being, attracting a large number of voters dissatisfied with the current political and social conditions under the slogan of anti-immigration, anti-European integration and anti-elite [7].

The rise of the National Front marks an important stage of the development of French populism. Since Marina Le Pen took over as party chairman, the party has reformed in an attempt to get rid of its early extreme image and adopt more moderate policies and strategies [8]. These reforms enabled the National Front to achieve remarkable results in the 2017 presidential election, become the third largest political force in France, and occupy an important position in the European Parliament.

However, despite the political success of the National Front, its rise has also caused widespread concern and controversy. On the one hand, it is seen as a challenge to the traditional political party system, which may lead to political polarization and social division. On the other hand, the National Front's policy propositions are considered to have a negative impact on the economic and social development of France and even Europe.

In addition, the rise of French populism also reflects broader social and cultural changes. Globalization and immigration have intensified the diversity and complexity of society, and also stimulated people's anxiety about identity, culture and security. These factors work together to promote the development of populist ideas and reshape the political pattern of France to a certain extent.

3.3. The Impact of Populism on France's Domestic Political Landscape

The specific impact of populism on the political pattern in France is mainly reflected in several aspects.

The first is political polarization and social division. The rise of populism has intensified the political polarization and class antagonism in French society. The rise of right-wing populist parties such as the National Front reflects the dissatisfaction of the middle and lower classes with the existing political system and policies, and they seek a political party that can represent their own interests. This sentiment is reflected in the "Yellow West Movement", which reflects the crisis of representative democracy and reveals the failure of traditional political parties, trade unions and mainstream media to effectively integrate public opinion [9].

The second is the change of the political party system. The rise of populist parties has changed the political party system in France. The success of the National Front not only made it the third largest political force in France, but also became the largest party in the European Parliament. This change shows that populist parties can gain significant support in the election, thus reshaping the political pattern of France and even Europe to a certain extent.

At the same time, it will also have an impact on foreign policy and internal affairs reform. The claims of populist parties usually include anti-globalization, anti-European integration, anti-immigration, etc. These propositions have influenced France's foreign policy and the direction of internal affairs reform to a certain extent. For example, the policy propositions put forward by Marina Le Pen, the leader of the National Front, include strengthening security, political and economic reforms, which reflect the impact of populism on the French political agenda.

Moreover, the proliferation of populism has led to changes in social trends. On the one hand, it activates nationalist and populist sentiments, especially in the face of globalization and immigration problems. On the other hand, the rise of populism has also prompted some voters to turn to alternatives to the mainstream democratic model.

Finally, there is a challenge to the democratic system. The rise of populist parties poses a challenge to the democratic system of France and even Western countries. They questioned the basic principles of representative democracy by emphasizing the concept of “people” and questioning the existing political and economic system [10].

4. Impact of Populism on French Foreign Policy

4.1. Populists' Foreign Policy Ideas

The influence of populism on French foreign policy is mainly reflected in its dual role in foreign policy. As a “thin ideology” and political discourse, populism tends to look for enemies, anti-transnationalism and anti-globalism. This tendency is reflected in France's foreign policy as a critical attitude towards globalization and European integration, as well as a weakening of support for traditional allies such as the United States. In addition, populists have promoted independence and regional cooperation in French foreign policy by emphasizing nationalism and protectionism.

4.2. The Impact of Populism on EU Policy

The impact of French populism on aspects of EU policy has been multidimensional. First, the changing political landscape of party politics in France, particularly the rise of far-right parties, has had a significant impact on EU and European integration policies, as evidenced by the 2005 referendum that rejected the Constitutional Treaty of the European Union, a decision that reflected a political contest between the mainstream parties and the new far-right parties [11]. In addition, the French National Front has used the political resources of the European Union to gain a foothold in domestic political competition, a strategy of “political exploitation” that reveals some of the dilemmas of European democracy.

The rise of populism in France, especially through economic globalization, the European debt crisis, the refugee crisis and other multiple crises in the context of the National Front under the leadership of Marine Le Pen to implement a series of anti-European integration, anti-Islamization policies and tactics, on the French and even the European political arena and the integration of the development of a negative impact. This populist tendency is not only reflected in the rejection of immigrants, but also in the widespread questioning of globalization and European integration.

However, the impact of populism on EU foreign policy is not all negative. Populist parties in France have also contributed to a certain extent to the “Francization” of the EU, including the increased redistributive nature of monetary and fiscal policies, as well as the concepts of “European sovereignty” and “strategic autonomy” as the main focus of the EU's foreign policy. This includes the increased redistributive nature of monetary and fiscal policies, as well as the concepts of “European sovereignty” and “strategic autonomy” becoming geopolitical claims of the EU. This suggests that while populism may have increased skepticism and resistance to the EU integration process, it has also prompted the EU to reconsider and reorient its direction and strategy to some extent.

In addition, the rise of populism also reflects the prevailing discontent and challenges to the existing order in society. To a certain extent, this dissatisfaction has prompted the EU to rethink its governance model and decision-making mechanism, which may facilitate reforms and adjustments within the EU [12]. For example, in the face of the rise of populist parties, the EU will place greater emphasis on enhancing cooperation and coordination among member States in order to address common challenges and threats.

4.3. The Impact of Populism on Immigration Policy

With the rise of right-wing populist parties in France, especially the increasing influence of the National Front, the French government's position and strategy on immigration policy have changed significantly. These political parties usually advocate limiting the number of immigrants and

emphasize nationalism and anti-globalization, which directly affects the government's immigration policy formulation.

At the social level, the rise of populism reflects public dissatisfaction and concerns about immigration policies. Research shows that there is a positive correlation between the existence of immigrants and right-wing populist support, especially in areas with more immigrants [13]. This change in social attitude has prompted the government to take more conservative or restrictive measures on immigration policy.

Although the French government tries to take the initiative on immigration issues by reforming the immigration bill, right-wing populist political forces are still trying to influence the implementation of immigration policies through legislation and public opinion. In this case, the government faces pressure and challenges from different political forces in promoting immigration policies.

The rise of French populism has also influenced France's image on the international stage and its role in the process of European integration. Populism tends to emphasize nationalism and anti-European integration positions, which may affect France's relations with other EU countries and France's position in global politics.

Finally, it is well known that there is a force of multiculturalism in French society, which is in opposition to the single nationalism and anti-immigration positions of right-wing populism. This conflict not only affects the formulation of immigration policies, but also may lead to social division and political instability.

4.4. The Impact of Populism on France's Relations with China

The rise of populism in France has had a complex impact on Sino-French relations. From a historical perspective, France has deep cultural and political ties with China. For example, the study of Le Pres in China has not only enriched the French anthropological and sociological theory, but also influenced the French view of China [14]. However, with the rise of populism, the attitude of the French public and political elite towards China may become more cautious or critical, especially in the context of economic globalization and cultural diversity.

In addition, the rise of populist parties may cause France's position in international affairs to be more inclined to protectionism and nationalism, which may affect the trade and investment relations between China and France. For example, the policy propositions of the National Union include elements of trade protectionism and extreme nationalism, which may lead France to adopt a more conservative strategy in economic cooperation with China.

However, populism may also prompt France to seek cooperation with other countries and regions, including China, in some areas to meet common global challenges such as climate change and terrorism. Therefore, although populism may bring some uncertainty and challenges, it may also provide new opportunities for cooperation in Sino-French relations.

In short, the impact of the rise of populism in France on Sino-French relations is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it may exacerbate tensions between the two countries; on the other hand, it may also promote cooperation between the two sides on certain key issues. How to balance these factors will be an important topic in the future development of Sino-French relations.

5. Conclusion

The ascendancy of populism has exerted a profound influence on the formulation of French foreign policy, instigating a discernible pivot towards the prioritization of national sovereignty, a heightened sense of skepticism towards European integration, and a proclivity for unilateral decision-making. These transformative shifts present a myriad of challenges and opportunities, particularly in the domain of France's diplomatic engagements with key global actors such as China. The present study embarks on a thorough exploration of the nuanced and multifaceted repercussions engendered by diverse populist movements on the realm of foreign policy, delving into comparative analyses across

borders to unravel the expansive ramifications of populism on the domain of international relations and policy construction.

Through an exhaustive examination of the interplay between populism and French foreign policy, this research endeavors to furnish valuable insights that are of paramount importance to policymakers and scholars alike. By shedding light on the imperative necessity for adaptive strategies in navigating the swiftly evolving landscape of global politics, this study underscores the indispensable need for nuanced and astute approaches in responding to the challenges posed by the ascendant tide of populism.

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