Strategic Campaign Communication:
Evidence from 30,000 Candidate Manifestos

Caroline Le Pennec∗

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Abstract

This paper uses a novel dataset of more than 30,000 candidate manifestos issued between 1958 and 2017 to study how politicians strategically use their campaign communication when they are constrained by party politics. Existing models predict that, under electoral pressure, candidates should compete on policy issues and converge to the policy position that is preferred by their electorate. However, in many contexts, politicians run for election in local races under a national party ticket and cannot deviate from their party platform. How do politicians run strategic campaigns when their ability to adjust their policy position is limited? To address this question, I exploit a unique institutional setting—the French legislative elections—in which individual candidates compete in two-round elections and issue their own campaign manifesto before each election round. This empirical design provides variation in the competitive environment within race, as the set of competitors changes from the first to the second round and runoff candidates have an incentive to adapt their campaign strategy accordingly. It also provides a systematic record of campaign messages issued by the same candidate at each stage of the competition. Using various methods of computational text analysis, I show that candidates who benefit from the support of fewer base voters in their district are more likely to strategically moderate their discourse in the runoff and appeal to other voters. They do so by emphasizing consensus-based non-policy issues (e.g. individual traits or local issues) as opposed to their party platform. In addition, I find that discourse moderation predicts higher politician quality and better constituency service once elected. While we tend to pay more attention to party-level competition, my results indicate that candidate-specific campaigns can give voters information that matters for representation and is hidden from national party platforms—such as information on individual politician quality.

∗University of California, Berkeley; clpennec@berkeley.edu

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1 Introduction

An effective democracy requires competitive elections. During electoral campaigns, politicians use language and rhetoric to compete with one another on policy issues or personal attributes. Campaign communication helps voters make an informed vote choice and choose the candidate that best corresponds to their preferences (Holbrook 1996; Hillygus and Shields 2008; Kendall et al. 2015). Electoral competition may determine which messages candidates choose to emphasize during the electoral season and therefore which information is provided to voters, possibly affecting political outcomes and representation.

In many electoral contexts, competition on policy positions is limited, and the scope for strategic campaign communication is reduced. For instance, candidates who run for seats in their national parliament are constrained by their national party platform and cannot tailor their policy positions to the local political context in which they are competing for election. This paper investigates an understudied question: how politicians with partisan constraints run strategic campaigns at the individual level. Using a novel and rich dataset of campaign manifestos issued by individual candidates at different stages of the campaign, I show that candidates adjust their rhetoric as their competitive environment changes, by strategically choosing whether to emphasize partisan policy issues or neutral non-policy arguments. Importantly, changes in rhetoric toward consensus-based statements are more prevalent among candidates whose party platform receives less support in their district, and among politicians who engage in more legislative activity and provide better constituency service once in office. To rationalize these empirical findings, I propose a model of electoral competition where policy positions are exogenously fixed. However, candidates differ in their quality as politicians—through differences in experience or ability to perform better once elected—and may signal their type by advertising non-policy issues instead of their party platform during the campaign.

To understand what motivates this particular framework, I start by discussing existing models of spatial competition that predict policy convergence between party platforms. In Downsian models (Downs 1957), candidates choose their location on a unidimensional policy space, and voters vote for the candidate who is closest to their own ideal point. According to the median voter theorem, two candidates running against each other should converge to the same location and commit to the platform preferred by the median voter to win the election.
This key mechanism ensures that elected politicians implement policies aligned with the preferences of their electorate. However, policy convergence may fail for a number of reasons. First, policy convergence is not credible in citizen-candidate models, as politicians have their own policy preferences and cannot commit to implementing their electorate’s preferred platform (Osborne and Slivinski 1996; Besley and Coate 1997). Second, adjusting one’s policy position also might not be credible if previous policy announcements have already been made (Owen and Grofman 2006; Adams and Merrill 2008; Kamada and Sugaya 2014). Third, in any electoral system that uses a plurality rule to elect national representatives, elections are held at the local level between individual candidates who run under a party ticket and can hardly deviate from the party platform decided at the national level. Examples of such systems include parliamentary elections in the UK or France and, to a smaller extent, congressional elections in the US. In such elections, party labels are useful, as they provide voters with a strong signal of candidates’ policy preferences (Snyder and Ting 2002). However, in parliamentary systems where party discipline is very strong, elected representatives issue and vote on bills as instructed by their party (Schwarz et al. 2017). Hence party labels prevent candidates from (credibly) adjusting their platform to the policy preferences of the electorate whose support they seek—an insight that has been left out of existing theoretical and empirical studies of electoral competition.

This paper investigates how individual politicians run strategic campaigns, particularly when they have little room to compete on policy issues. I exploit a unique institutional design in which individual candidates—who run under a party ticket for seats in the national lower house—compete in two-round elections and issue their own campaign manifesto before each round. I assemble a new dataset of more than 30,000 of these manifestos, circulated by candidates to French legislative elections between 1958 and 1993. In France, candidate manifestos are part of the official campaign and are mailed to all registered voters by the state a few days before each election round. They are a primary method of communication—for politicians to address their voters directly, and for voters to learn information about their district-specific candidates beyond the national campaign of their party. This institutional design offers a number of empirical advantages in the study of candidate-specific campaign strategies and their response to competition. First, most countries have no systematic record of campaigns run by individual candidates at the local level, and studies of campaign messages are limited to either party manifestos (e.g., the Comparative Manifesto Project (Merz
et al. (2016)) or statements of national candidates (e.g., the American Presidency Project (Woolley and Peters 2017)). I overcome this limitation, as French candidate manifestos provide a homogeneous account of campaign messages issued by all politicians in their local district. Second, in the French two-round electoral system, candidates who make it to the runoff can extend their campaign for one more week and adjust their communication to the new competitive environment. More precisely, the set of competitors is reduced—from multiple candidates whose party platforms span the whole ideological space to fewer strong opponents, usually one from the left and one from the right. In addition, the outcome of the first election round provides a clearer signal of which candidates benefit from an electoral advantage in their district and which do not. Hence, two-round elections provide natural variation in some key aspects of electoral competition within a same race. Leveraging the large number of repeated candidate manifestos in my dataset (close to 7,000), I estimate the within-candidate rhetorical adjustments to these changes—fewer candidates on the ballot and updated beliefs on their respective electoral strengths—with high statistical precision. Moreover, I observe repeated candidate manifestos across more than 3,000 district-level races, which provides enough variation to determine which factors drive the observed discourse adjustments. Heterogeneous patterns across different types of districts and candidates bring evidence that the estimated causal impact of the runoff on rhetorics—for those who make it to the runoff—reflects a strategic response to changes in competition, as opposed to alternative and less interesting interpretations.

More specifically, the strategic response I study is the interplay of two campaign strategies from one round to the next: the traditional spatial competition on partisan platforms and an alternative form of competition on personalized, non-policy issues. During electoral campaigns, candidates can advertise their own ability, experience, or attachment to their local district. They can also attack their opponents for their lack of such attributes. I propose a theoretical framework in which campaigning on these non-policy issues, instead of advertising an exogenous policy platform, is a signal of politician quality. I build a simple model of competition in a two-round election, where voters gain utility from being represented by the candidate of a party they feel ideologically close to but also from being represented by a high-quality politician, with better political abilities or longer experience, who may provide better non-policy benefits. Politician quality is also referred to as valence in the

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1In this paper, high-quality politicians do not necessarily have desirable moral traits like honesty or empathy.
literature; Polborn and Snyder (2017) define it as: “any attribute that is important to voters and not related to the main policy cleavage that is captured by the national party positions.” Intuitively, voters certainly care about policy representation, but they also care about dimensions of representation that do not involve position-taking on partisan issues, such as constituency service or leader charisma. In this paper, high-quality politicians are likely to face a lower cost of effort exertion and, therefore, once elected are likely to provide better non-policy representation. Their campaigning skills are also likely to be better.

In the model, candidates can choose to compete on their party platform, which is exogenously fixed and cannot be altered, or to advertise more consensus-based non-policy issues instead. This second strategy bears two costs: a direct implementation cost and the electoral cost of losing some ideological voters who interpret campaign messages focused on non-policy issues as a lack of commitment to the party line. The first cost decreases with politicians’ quality—as issuing a convincing personalized statement is easier for candidates with better political ability or experience—while the second cost increases with initial electoral support. I derive conditions for the existence of a pooling-then-separating equilibrium, where all candidates campaign on their party platform in the first round but high-quality politicians with lower electoral support strategically switch to non-policy issues in the second. They do so because not all candidates qualify for the runoff, so those who compete in the second round may attract voters whose preferred ideological candidate is no longer on the ballot and who may be persuaded to vote for a candidate they believe to be a competent politician instead. The model yields several predictions that I can test for empirically. First, campaign messages issued in the second round are expected to be less partisan due to the increased share of candidates who prefer advertising non-policy issues as opposed to their party platform—a pattern that I will refer to as discourse moderation. Second, candidates who moderate their discourse the most are predicted to be electorally vulnerable in their district. Third, they are also predicted to provide better non-policy representation—due to their higher quality as politicians.

I test for the first prediction of discourse moderation by scaling the manifestos on the left-right dimension of language using computational text analysis. I adopt a supervised method that uses the known party affiliations of candidates to give each manifesto a partisan score, which reflects the prevalence of polarized words spoken relatively more often by left-wing as opposed to right-wing candidates (and vice-versa). I measure the
within-candidate change in partisan score between election rounds and find that, on average, candidates adjust their discourse to use more neutral, less partisan language in the second round. Individual extremeness is reduced by a fourth of the observed mean extremeness in the first round. This estimate corresponds to a significant shift in content, equivalent to replacing about 20% of partisan words with completely neutral words, or to replacing 40% of those partisan words with partisan words from the opposite ideological side. Within-candidate moderation between election rounds corresponds to about a half of the overall difference in mean extremeness between second- and first-round manifestos—while the other half is explained by the runoff qualification of candidates who issued more moderate manifestos than average in the first round. The result is robust to a wide array of alternative scaling methods, which are discussed at length in Appendix D.

A series of additional tests shows that discourse moderation in the partisan space is driven by a switch in communication strategy: from writing a manifesto focused on the party platform, where policy positions are very salient, to writing a more personalized manifesto, where the salient issues are now less partisan, non-policy issues instead. First, I construct a measure of party cohesion, defined as the average share of a manifesto that is identical to any other manifesto from the same party. This quantity is high among candidates who use a manifesto template common to all candidates from their party and low among candidates who write completely personalized manifestos using their own words and layout. I find a strong correlation between discourse moderation and personalization: candidates who moderate their discourse the most between election rounds are the same ones who reduce the share of their manifesto dedicated to a common party template. This is not a mechanical correlation, as discourse moderation could be driven by parties issuing more moderate platforms between election rounds and instructing all their runoff-qualifying candidates to advertise those new moderate positions with a common manifesto template in the second round. Instead, discourse moderation is driven by candidates issuing more personalized manifestos. In addition, candidates tend to choose words that are less polarized in the runoff, as opposed to using polarized words from both ideological sides. Words that are most often dropped tend to refer to policy issues, such as “firm”, “economy”, “family” or “safety”. At the same time, candidates shift to refer to their own names and their opponents’ names, as well as local places around their district, more often. As expected in this institutional context, discourse moderation does not reflect policy moderation. Instead, it corresponds to
rhetorical shift and a change in issue salience—from polarized policy issues toward a less-partisan discourse focused on non-policy arguments—not policy convergence toward more centrist positions on specific partisan issues.

Next, I test for the heterogeneous patterns predicted by the model and provide evidence that the decision to moderate one’s discourse is not random. First I find that within a same party, discourse moderation is negatively correlated with several measures of observed electoral advantage in the runoff, such as the vote share received in the first round or incumbency status. I also provide suggestive evidence that facing an extreme opponent who is less likely to be a threat, as opposed to a moderate candidate with better electoral prospects, causes strong candidates to moderate their discourse less often. Hence the empirical results are consistent with the second prediction of the model described in Section 2: candidates tend to advertise less partisan non-policy issues when they are electorally weak in their district, and they stick to their party platform when a large share of their electorate supports it. Second, discourse moderation predicts lower electoral success: A one standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation reduces the predicted probability of winning by 4 percentage points, even when controlling for observed measures of vulnerability. While this result could reflect a negative causal impact of discourse moderation on electoral success, I provide additional evidence consistent with the selection effect predicted by the model: among candidates affiliated with the same party, those who decide to switch to non-policy issues in the second round are those whose chances of winning are systematically lower, regardless of their campaign strategy.

Finally, I find evidence that supports the model’s last prediction: discourse moderation correlates with better non-policy representation. Using data on the legislative activity of each representative (Gavoille and Verschelde 2017), I find that politicians who were elected after moderating their discourse between election rounds tend to exert more effort once in office, especially on constituency service activities such as issuing written questions to the government on their constituents’ behalf. A one standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation increases the predicted yearly number of written questions issued by a representative by 11% of the mean number of written questions issued by any representative in a year.

Overall, this paper suggests that while party competition is certainly important, competition between individual politicians also shapes their campaign strategies and the type
of information made available to voters, which eventually matters for voter representation. These insights could apply more broadly to any form of economic competition between agents who are constrained by a national brand and may choose different advertising strategies to adjust to the preferences of their local market.

1.1 Contribution to the literature

The methods and results presented in this paper contribute to several strands of the literature. First, they document how politicians under electoral pressure engage in strategic behavior at the individual level. Using party (not candidate) manifestos or statements in the media, existing papers have provided empirical evidence that parties may change their policy positions as a response to changes in competition. However, individual candidate response to electoral incentives has been investigated much less, primarily due to data limitations. Measures of ideological positions are often limited to the post-election behavior of elected politicians, such as roll-call voting (Poole and Rosenthal 1985; Lee et al. 2004), legislative debates and speeches (Gentzkow et al. 2019b; Perry and Benoit 2017; Ash et al. 2017), or both (Kim et al. 2018). Attempts to estimate the ideological position of all candidates—as opposed to elected ones—have used candidate surveys (Ansolabehere et al. 2001) or less direct measures of policy preferences such as campaign donations (Bonica 2014, 2018). A few studies have looked at candidate repositioning in experimental settings (Tomz and Van Houweling 2014), and others have exploited observational data to compare ideological positions between primary and general election candidates using campaign donations (Hall and Snyder 2015), between incumbents and challengers using television advertisements (Henderson 2016), or between multi-member and single-member districts using candidate manifestos (Catalinac 2018). Finally, Enke (2018) studies the variation in moral appeal from documents issued by Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump over the 2016 US Presidential campaign.

To the best of my knowledge, this paper is the first to measure within-candidate rhetorical adjustments over the electoral season in a systematic way, using actual campaign messages issued by a large sample of individual politicians, as opposed to national parties or elected legislators only. To carry this empirical analysis, I borrow from an emerging literature that uses text as data (Grimmer and Stewart 2013; Gentzkow et al. 2019a), particularly to construct measures of discourse partisanship in party manifestos (Laver et al. 2003; Slapin and Proksch

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2For an extensive literature review on party positioning, see Adams (2012), as well as Adams et al. (2005), Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009) and Debus et al. (2016), among others.
Applying existing methods to French electoral discourse, I find that a simple scaling approach based on Wordscores (Laver et al. 2003) yields the same results as a more recent approach: the multinomial inverse regression framework of Taddy (2013), Taddy et al. (2015), and Taddy (2017).

Importantly, I provide evidence of discourse moderation that is not policy moderation—as most existing papers would assume. Instead, it reflects a change in issue salience among candidates who, as in Aragonès et al. (2015) or Adams et al. (2016), can advertise their policy position or campaign on non-policy issues. In this regard, while Adams et al. (2006) argue that niche parties must stick to their policy positions over time to avoid losing ideological supporters, I find that discourse moderation is particularly strong among marginal candidates with extreme positions—probably because they suffer from lower electoral support as compared to moderate candidates, and because switching to non-policy issues generates a large shift from a very polarized policy platform to a neutral message.

This paper also speaks to a large theoretical literature that incorporates a valence dimension in electoral competition. Empirical evidence suggests that both voters and candidates do value character-based attributes, especially during campaign periods (Abney et al. 2013). In some existing models, valence is known to voters—either exogenously determined (Ansolabehere and Snyder 2000; Groseclose 2001; Hummel 2010; Polborn and Snyder 2017) or endogenously acquired (Carrillo and Castanheira 2008; Ashworth and De Mesquita 2009; Serra 2010). Other models assume that valence is unobserved but can be revealed through a signaling game between candidates (Kartik and McAfee 2007). A common feature of all these papers is the endogenous choice of policy positions, with different predictions around whether candidates’ platforms should converge or diverge when one candidate has a valence advantage over the others. Finally, some models of political selection depart from this assumption and model candidate entry as an endogenous response to both exogenous platforms and exogenous valence (Dal Bó and Finan 2018). In this paper I propose a similar framework, where both valence and policy positions are exogenously fixed—but while policy positions are known to voters, valence attributes, which I refer to as quality throughout the rest of the paper, are not. Hence, candidates cannot choose their platform optimally. Instead, they can signal their quality as politician and motivation to exert effort by making strategic communication choices during their campaign.

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Footnote:

3For instance, see Green (2007); Adams et al. (2009); Stone and Simas (2010); Franchino and Zucchini (2015); Nyhuis (2016)
More generally, my findings relate to research on electoral campaigns and political advertisement, which have been found to influence voters’ choice. Experimental evidence shows that voters respond to information on candidates’ platforms (Tomz and Van Houweling 2008; Kendall et al. 2015) and care about campaign promises when they are made explicit (Cruz et al. 2018). Unlike previous contributions, this paper exploits “real-life” campaign statements issued by all candidates and distributed to all voters. They make a particularly appealing dataset as one may reasonably expect politicians to use this controllable communication medium in the best and most strategic way—however marginal the impact on voters’ choice might be.

Finally, the paper contributes to a relatively recent literature on two-round electoral systems and provides evidence of strategic discourse adjustments between rounds. Since the contribution of Duverger (1955), many studies have exploited runoff elections to study the prevalence and impact of strategic and expressive voting (Cox 1997; Piketty 2000; Blais et al. 2007; Fujiwara et al. 2011; Bouton 2013; Bouton and Gratton 2015; Pons and Tricaud 2018a), candidate entry and policy volatility (Solow 2013; Bordignon et al. 2017), or longer and more divisive electoral competition (Fouirnaies and Hall 2019). When it comes to candidates’ realignment, Laver et al. (2006) argues that—in the context of French presidential elections, “given the short time between rounds (i.e., two weeks), it also seems reasonable to assume that candidates cannot dramatically change policy positions between the two rounds in any credible way.” While I support the claim that candidates cannot switch policy positions between rounds, I show that they can adjust other aspects of their campaign communications instead.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 proposes a simple model of competition between individual candidates with exogenous policy positions. Section 3 presents the institutional setting and data. Section 4 tests for the first prediction of the model and measures discourse moderation between election rounds. Section 5 then tests for the second and third predictions of the model, providing evidence that discourse moderation is a strategic decision made by electorally vulnerable candidates and high-quality politicians. Finally, Section 6 concludes.

For instance, see Holbrook (1996); Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1997); Hillygus and Shields (2008); DellaVigna and Gentzkow (2010); Gerber et al. (2011); Durante et al. (2014); Pons (2018); Spenkuch and Toniatti (2018); Bekkouche and Cagé (2018); Le Pennec and Pons (2019).
2 Model

2.1 Empirical predictions

In this section, I present a simple theoretical framework that rationalizes the following empirical predictions—which I will test for in Sections 4 and 5:

Discourse moderation  The mean ideological content of campaign messages is expected to be more neutral in the second round. This is because some candidates change the focus of their message from partisan policies in the first round to consensus-based non-policy issues with neutral partisan content in the second round. As will become clear when deriving the model’s equilibrium, candidates may change the relative salience of these advertised issues—policy vs. non-policy—in the runoff to signal their quality and attract voters whose preferred ideological candidate is no longer on the ballot.

Selection on electoral vulnerability and politicians’ quality  Discourse moderation is expected to be more common among:

- Vulnerable candidates with lower electoral support: among candidates qualified for the second round, those who moderate their discourse the most are those whose party platform receive less support from their district’s electorate.

- High-quality politicians who perform better once elected: among elected representatives, those who moderated their discourse the most during the campaign are those who engage in more legislative activity and provide better non-policy representation once in office.

Section 2.2 presents the theoretical framework in which these predictions may be generated, and Section 2.3 derives the condition for the existence of a pooling-then-separating equilibrium—in which all candidates campaign on their party platform in the first round but high-quality politicians who are electorally vulnerable switch to non-policy issues in the second round.

2.2 Setup

Voters  I follow the framework in Bordignon et al. (2017) and consider an electorate with 4 groups of ideological voters, \( J = 1, 2, 3, 4 \), ranging from far left to far right. Voters within a
Group share the same policy ideal point \( q_J \), with \( q_1 < q_2 < q_3 < q_4 \). Without loss of generality, I assume that ideal points are evenly spaced on the unit interval: \( q_1 = \frac{1}{8}, \ q_2 = \frac{3}{8}, \ q_3 = \frac{5}{8}, \ q_4 = \frac{7}{8} \). However, the voter groups are not evenly sized. The share of voters who have extreme preferences is \( 2\alpha \): \( \alpha \) are far left \( (J = 1) \), and \( \alpha \) are far right \( (J = 4) \). A share \( \alpha - \sigma \) of voters is moderate left \( (J = 2) \), while a share \( \alpha + \sigma \) is moderate right \( (J = 3) \), where \( \sigma \) is a random shock uniformly distributed on \([-e, e]\). Intuitively, the share of extreme voters on each side is known before any election is held, but the relative strength of moderate left-wing ideology over moderate right-wing ideology among voters is uncertain.

I further impose that \( \alpha < \bar{\alpha} \), and \( \alpha - \bar{\alpha} < e < \bar{\alpha} \). The interpretation of these two assumptions is that each moderate group is larger than any extreme group. However, it is possible for the \( \sigma \) shock to be large enough that one of the two moderate groups falls below the size of each extreme group.

**Parties and candidates** Each voter group supports a corresponding ideological party—\( P = 1, 2, 3, 4 \)—with policy platform \( q_P = q_J \). An election is held between 4 individual candidates—also referred to as politicians—affiliated with each party and committed to following their party’s guidelines if elected. They get an office rent \( R > 1 \) if elected and nothing otherwise.\(^5\)

Besides their party affiliation, candidates differ in quality \( \theta \in [0, 1] \): with probability \( \eta \), candidate \( P \) is a high-quality politician, \( \theta_P = 1 \), while with probability \( 1 - \eta \), candidate \( P \) is a low-quality politician, \( \theta_P = 0 \).\(^6\) Quality refers to ability, experience, and other factors that can account for political competence. For instance, high-quality politicians can exert more effort on legislative activity and provide better constituency service while in office. Unlike their party affiliation \( P \), candidates’ quality \( \theta \) is private information.

**Vote choice** Voters \( J \) gain utility from being represented by their corresponding ideological candidate \( P = J \). They also gain utility from being represented by a high-quality politician, including from candidates \( P \neq J \).

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\(^5\)In this model, candidates are individual representatives of their national party who receive personal benefits from being in office and from their party being in power, not citizens who could still get representation benefits if another candidate was elected.

\(^6\)I assume that \( \eta \) is the same across candidates of all parties, but this assumption is not crucial and could be relaxed.
Voters $J$’s utility from electing candidate $P$ is of the form:

$$V_J(P) = \mu \mathbb{1}[P = J] - (q_P - q_J)^2 + \omega \theta_P$$

where utility decreases quadratically in the distance between the voters’ ideal point $q_J$ and the party platform of the elected politician $q_P$. We define $\mu$ as the utility premium from being represented by the candidate affiliated with the voters’ preferred party $P = J$. It represents the voters’ identification or attachment to that party, in addition to the benefits of being represented by a candidate who supports their preferred policy platform. I assume that $\mu$ is large enough that if candidate $P = J$ is on the ballot and has a non-zero chance of winning the election, $J$ would prefer voting for them over any other candidate—regardless of their politician quality. $\omega$ represents non-policy representation: the benefits from being represented by a high-quality politician. I further assume that $\frac{3}{16} < \omega < \frac{5}{16}$: If candidate $P = J$ is not on the ballot—and if candidates’ quality is known—voters prefer being represented by a high-quality politician over a low-quality one who would be ideologically closer, unless that high-quality politician is located at the opposite extreme of the ideological spectrum.\footnote{The proof of this statement and the rationale for this assumption are discussed in Appendix A} In other words, moderate right-wing voters may be enticed to vote for a high-quality candidate from the far left, but extreme right-wing voters would never be.

Moreover, if all candidates (such that $P \neq J$) on the ballot are of the same quality type, voters $J$ vote for the candidate whose platform is closest to their ideal point $q_J$. In case of a tie, they randomly choose between the two closest candidates. For instance, if candidates $P = 2$ and $P = 4$ are on the runoff ballot and are known to be of the same quality type, voters $J = 1$ and half of voters $J = 3$ choose $P = 2$, while the other half of voters $J = 3$ choose $P = 4$.\footnote{I assume that voters must vote and abstract away from participation concerns.}

**Electoral rule** The election has two rounds: the 4 candidates compete in the first round, the $\sigma$ preference shock is realized and an election is held. The 2 candidates with the highest vote shares compete against each other in the second round. A random popularity shock with mean zero shifts a share $\epsilon$ of votes from one candidate to the other, and the candidate who gets the most votes among the 2 is elected.

**Campaign messages and beliefs** Before each election round $r$, candidates can send campaign messages. The ideological content of the message projected on the left-right partisan space is
\( \tilde{S}_r = S^r \times q_P, \) with \( q_1 < q_2 < q_3 < q_4. \) \( S^r \in \{0, 1\} \) indicates whether the candidate campaigns on her party platform \( (S^r = 1) \) or on non-policy issues with neutral ideological content \( (S^r = 0) \).

Advertising the party platform has no cost to the candidate; the platform is decided and put together at the national level such that any affiliated candidate can use the material produced by the party’s leadership without any editing work. In contrast, campaigning on non-policy issues bears an implementation cost, as the message has to be personalized and cannot come directly from the national party. This cost is assumed to be lower for high-quality politicians. First, writing a convincing manifesto focused on non-policy issues requires strong political and rhetorical skills. Second, it requires the politician to have a good knowledge of the local political context or positive personal qualities and experience to put forward. Hence, the implementation cost is defined as \( c_P = c^H \theta_P + c^L (1 - \theta_P), \) with \( c^H < c^L. \) Campaigning on non-policy issues can be an informative signal of the candidate’s unknown quality type. I define \( \tilde{\theta}^S = P(\theta_P = 1 | S_P = S) \) as the voters’ posterior belief that candidate \( P \) is high quality after receiving campaign message \( S \in \{0, 1\} \).

A second key assumption of the model is that not all voters are Bayesian updaters. A large fraction \( 1 - \lambda \) of voters across all ideological groups do update their belief of candidates’ quality using Bayes’ rule, so that:

\[
\tilde{\theta}^S = \frac{P(S_P = S | \theta_P = 1)\eta}{P(S_P = S | \theta_P = 1)\eta + P(S_P = S | \theta_P = 0)(1 - \eta)}
\]

where \( \eta \) is the rational prior belief that candidate \( P \) is high-quality, absent any signal. A smaller fraction \( \lambda \) misunderstands the candidates’ incentives to campaign on non-policy issues. These voters believe that a candidate chooses to advertise non-policy arguments because they are not fully committed to the policy platform of the party they are running for, without updating their belief of the candidate’s quality. In addition, the utility function of electing candidate \( P \) for these voters is of the form:

\[
V_J(P) = \mu \mathbb{1}[P = J] + \omega \theta_P
\]

so that—conditional on quality—they only derive utility from being represented by the candidate of their preferred party and are indifferent between all other candidates. Therefore, if candidate \( P \) chooses \( S_P^r = 0 \), a share \( \lambda \) of her supporters \( J = P \) expects to lose their \( \mu \) benefit from electing that candidate and randomly chooses between her and any other candidate.
This assumption is necessary to impose an electoral cost of advertising non-policy issues on top of the implementation cost. Importantly, this electoral cost penalizes primarily strong candidates with a large share of ideological voters.\footnote{This feature of the model is what allows me to build a separating equilibrium on electoral vulnerability. Importantly, I need the electoral cost to remain the same no matter who the opponent is and which strategy they choose in the second round.}

2.3 Pooling-then-separating equilibrium

I now derive conditions for the existence of a pooling-then-separating equilibrium, in which all candidates choose to campaign on their party platform in the first round but some prefer to switch to non-policy arguments in the second.

First round In the first round, the 4 candidates are present on the ballot and seek to maximize their vote share to be qualified for the second. As $\sigma$ is unknown, all candidates have a chance to qualify, and voters vote for their preferred ideological candidate—no matter their beliefs on the candidates’ quality. Hence, there is no opportunity for any candidate to poach voters from other ideological groups by advertising non-policy issues and signaling quality. Instead, choosing $S^1_P = 0$ would cost candidate $P$ a share $\frac{3\lambda}{4}$ of voters who would randomly choose another candidate instead—as well as the direct implementation cost $c_P$—for no benefit at all. Therefore, in the first round all candidates choose $S^1_P = 1$, and all voters assign the same prior probability of being high-quality $\eta$ to all candidates.

The $\sigma$ shock is realized, the election is held, and the moderate candidate with vote share $\bar{\alpha} + |\sigma|$ is selected for the second round. With probability $\frac{\pi - \alpha}{e}$, the other moderate candidate with vote share $\bar{\alpha} - |\sigma| > \alpha$ is selected, and with a lower probability $1 - \frac{\pi - \alpha}{e}$, an extreme candidate with vote share $\bar{\alpha}$ is randomly selected instead.

Second round I define $sh(S^2_P)$ as the vote share of candidate $P$ before the second round popularity shock $\epsilon$, given campaign strategy $S^2_P$. The probability of being elected is given by:

$$P \left( sh(S^2_P) + \epsilon_P > \frac{1}{2} \right) = sh(S^2_P)$$

where I assume that $\epsilon$ is uniformly distributed, $\epsilon \sim U(-\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$. Hence candidate $P$’s expected value from choosing $S^2_P = 0$ is $E[V_P|S^2_P = 0] = sh(0) \cdot R - c_P$, where $R$ is the office rent and $c_P$ is the implementation cost of advertising non-policy issues. The expected value from choosing
$S^2_P = 1$ is $E[V_P \mid S^2_P = 1] = sh(1) \cdot R$. Candidate $P$ chooses $S^2_P = 0$ if the former exceeds the latter.

**Proposition 1:** For $\frac{c^L}{\pi} > (1 - \lambda)\alpha > \frac{c^H}{\pi}$, only high-quality candidates ever choose $S^2 = 0$, while all low-quality candidates choose $S^2 = 1$.\(^{10}\)

Intuitively, if the cost of campaigning on non-policy issues for low-quality politicians is higher than the best possible gain from doing so, they always continue advertising their party platform in the second round. As a consequence, a share $1 - \lambda$ of voters correctly infer that all candidates who campaign on non-policy issues are high-quality politicians ($\bar{\theta}_0 = 1$).

This proposition implies a separation in terms of quality: low-quality politicians never campaign on non-policy issues. However, it does not imply that all candidates who campaign on their party platform are low quality. Indeed, even if the cost of advertising non-policy issues is lower than the expected benefit for some high-quality politicians, it could remain higher for others due to the electoral cost of losing a share $\lambda$ of core ideological supporters.

**Proposition 2:** For $(1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} (\pi + e) < \frac{c^H}{R} < (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} \pi$, there exists a $\sigma^*$ on $[0, e)$ such that high-quality candidates with vote share $\pi + \sigma^*$ or higher choose to campaign on their party platform in both rounds.

This proposition implies a separation in terms of electoral vulnerability. If the cost of campaigning on non-policy issues is large enough for high-quality politicians as well, it is optimal for candidates who secured enough support in the first round to keep advertising their party platform in the second instead of switching to non-policy issues and losing part of this support. Conversely, high-quality politicians with a lower first-round vote share switch to non-policy issues. A share $1 - \lambda$ of voters update their beliefs accordingly and infer that candidates with a vote share smaller than $\pi + \sigma^*$ play $S^2_P = 0$ if they are high-quality politicians and $S^2_P = 1$ if they are not. Candidates with vote share $\pi + \sigma^*$ or higher always choose $S^2_P = 1$, whether they are high- or low-quality politicians.

Propositions 1 and 2 imply that for

$$\frac{c^L}{R} > (1 - \lambda)\alpha > \frac{c^H}{R} = (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} (\pi + \sigma^*)$$

\(^{10}\)Proofs of each proposition are shown in Appendix A.
with $0 \leq \sigma^* < e$, there exists a pooling-then-separating equilibrium in which all candidates campaign on their party platform in the first round but high-quality politicians who are electorally vulnerable switch to non-policy issues in the second round.

### 2.4 Alternative models

The predictions described in Section 2.1 could be rationalized by alternative theoretical frameworks that I find worth mentioning for future work. First, instead of deterministically appealing to non-ideological voters and disappointing a fixed share of ideological voters, campaigning on non-policy issues may yield the same expected outcome as campaigning on the party platform, but with some additional risk: candidates choosing this strategy will either win or lose votes with some uncertainty. If politicians are risk averse, then strong candidates who have already secured a large amount of support would prefer to stick to their party platform, while weak candidates who have nothing to lose would take the risk and choose to make non-policy issues more salient instead.

Second, campaigning on non-policy issues may reflect an attempt to keep the candidate’s ideological base mobilized and encourage turnout in the runoff, instead of an attempt to attract voters from other ideological groups. In this scenario, electorally vulnerable candidates would be more likely to moderate their discourse than strong candidates if voters are more likely to abstain from voting when their preferred candidate has a lower chance of winning.

### 3 Institutional context and data

#### 3.1 Legislative elections in France

Legislative elections are held every five years to elect about 550\(^{11}\) representatives (députés) at the bicameral Parliament’s lower house, the Assemblée nationale (or henceforth: AN). In France, the lower house has the primacy over the upper house (Sénat), whose members are elected indirectly by citizens who hold local political mandates. Instead, representatives of the AN are elected by all French citizens aged eighteen or above under a two-round uninominal plurality rule in a multiparty setting. Multiple individual candidates compete for one seat in each district (circonscription). A candidate is elected after the first election round if she receives an absolute majority of votes (50% of the valid ballots) representing at least 25% of the number of votes.

\(^{11}\)The total number of representatives varies across elections.
registered voters. Otherwise, a second round is held one or two weeks later, in which all candidates who received above a certain vote share in the first round can run. If less than two candidates pass the qualifying threshold, the first two candidates run against each other in the runoff. The candidate who gets the most votes in the second round wins the election. While a few districts have three, four, or sometimes only one candidate running in the second round, a vast majority of them (close to 80%) end up with two candidates on the ballot. Typically, a candidate who makes it to the runoff would face other candidates affiliated with sister parties from the same political orientation (e.g., Socialist and Communist parties on the left) in the first round, and a strong competitor from the opposite orientation in the second round (e.g., a left-wing Socialist candidate against a right-wing Gaullist candidate). More specifically, 70% of the runoff candidates in the sample face an opponent from the opposite political orientation—left or right—in the second round. The French party system has therefore been described as "bipolar multipartism" (Duverger 1973; Knapp 2002).


Party affiliations Candidates may declare a party endorsement when filing their individual candidacy to the Ministry of the Interior prior to the election. The Ministry then uses the self-reported party affiliations to report electoral results by party—or coalition of parties—which is what I observe in my data. Candidates who do not want to run under a party ticket or fail to secure a party endorsement may still run as independents. If they do so, they do not benefit from the political and financial resources of a national party organization, the public recognition of the party name, or the support of voters who strongly identify with a specific party. The possible benefit of running unaffiliated, however, is a greater flexibility in position taking and the support of voters who may not like any of the parties running a candidate in their district. In my sample, while 25% of the candidates present in the first

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12 As later explained in Section 4.4, the qualifying threshold changes over time, from 5% of registered voters in 1958 and 1962, to 10% from 1967 to 1973, and 12.5% after that.
13 The electoral rule described here does not exactly match the framework from Section 2, but in practice, the model setup is close enough to the empirical setting for the theoretical intuitions to hold.
14 Two exceptions should be noted. First, an election was held in 1968 only one year after the previous one, following the dissolution of the AN by the President of the Republic, Charles de Gaulle. Second, the sample is missing the 1986 election, which was held under a departmental list system, with a proportional allocation of seats in one single round. François Mitterrand dissolved the AN two years later, following his reelection as president, and a new election was held in 1988 under the uninominal plurality rule.
15 The Ministry of the Interior identifies between 5 and 17 different parties per election year included in the sample.
round are identified as independent candidates, only 3% of them make it to the runoff. Hence, an overwhelming majority of candidates who get an opportunity to adjust their campaign strategy between election rounds chose to run with a party affiliation.

There is no legal process for candidate selection and endorsement within a party. Parties choose their candidates in a centralized manner (Lundell 2004) or with internal primaries reserved to party members. In all likelihood, parties endorse and allocate candidates to districts in order to maximize their chances of winning seats, taking into account factors such as politicians’ quality and local competition (Gavoille and Verschelde 2017). Hence candidate entry—in particular, the entry of strong candidates with a high chance of victory—is heavily determined by their national party organization. In addition, a key feature of the French parliamentary system is the strong party discipline (Sauger 2009; Wilson and Wiste 1976) that constrains individual representatives. Similar to British MPs, French députés are elected on a party ticket and have a negligible “personal” vote once elected (Eggers and Spirling 2014).

Following the existing literature (Pons and Tricaud 2018a,b), I use the official party labels provided by the Ministry of the Interior to classify candidates (including independent ones) between five partisan families: far left, moderate left, center, moderate right and far right. About 9% of the candidates in my sample do not fall in any of these traditional ideological categories and are referred to as ‘non-classified’. In the rest of the paper, I refer to political orientation as the broader categories left (far left and moderate left) and right (far right and moderate right), unless specified otherwise.

3.2 Candidate manifestos

During the official campaign, individual candidates have the right to issue one electoral manifesto (profession de foi or circulaire) before each election round, which is distinct from their national party manifesto. Examples of candidate manifestos are provided in Appendix Figures A1 through A4. The preparation and printing costs are considered part of the official campaign spending and can be partially reimbursed by the state16. These two-page documents are then mailed to all registered voters by the state.

Survey evidence depicts these manifestos as an important campaign tool. In a survey published before the 2017 presidential election (OpinionWay, 2017), 24% of citizens declared that they counted manifestos among the three most important ways of gathering information

16The state refunds up to 47.5% of campaign spending to candidates who received more than 5% of votes in the first round.
about candidates. In comparison, television was mentioned by 64%, online media by 26%, printed news by 18%, and radio by 15%. The fact that, in 2017, candidates’ manifestos were mentioned about as often as online media suggests that they are not a negligible part of the heavy campaign communication voters receive during the weeks leading up to the election. In all likelihood, this number is a lower bound for the share of voters who learned about their candidates through the manifestos over my sample period, when much fewer media options were available to individual politicians. Of course, television was already an important medium of communication during this time. But while television shows, debates, and ads are the prominent media for candidates who campaign at the national level—such as candidates for the presidential elections or party leaders who advertise their national platform before the legislative elections—it is unlikely that voters learn much about the individual candidates running in their district on TV. Conversely, individual manifestos are a prime vehicle for candidates to run their own campaign communication and tailor the message to the specific voters in their district.

This paper exploits a novel dataset of manifestos from candidates running in French legislative elections between 1958 and 1993. Manifestos issued over that period were collected by the CEVIPOF and recently digitized by the CEVIPOF and the SciencesPo Library (Gaultier-Voituriez 2015, 2016). The digitized corpus is publicly available online through the Archelec project. Appendix B.1 provides additional details on both the original corpus and how the final dataset is constructed. In particular, it describes the steps I followed to disaggregate the CEVIPOF corpus, digitized at the district × election round level, into a corpus of single-candidate manifestos—where each manifesto’s issuing candidate was identified manually and linked to candidate-level electoral results using fuzzy string matching. The final dataset contains 31,314 manifestos, including first-round manifestos for 90% of all candidates competing in a first election round, and both first- and second-round manifestos for 86% of candidates present on a runoff ballot in metropolitan France over the 1958-1993 period. More precisely, I observe repeated manifestos for 6,793 candidates across 3,312 district-level races. As shown in Appendix Table A1, the observable characteristics of these candidates are

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17https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof/

18Candidates without any manifesto account for 13% of all candidates over that period. They are either very minor candidates who did not issue a manifesto, or their manifesto is missing because in some election years, a few local agencies did not mail the candidates’ manifestos to the CEVIPOF, despite official government’s instructions.
comparable to the characteristics of all runoff candidates—including those whose manifestos are missing, alleviating the concern that my empirical results are biased by sample selection.

Table Appendix A2 provides summary statistics at the district level for all 4,224 races included in the sample—including those in which a runoff was not held—by election year. The average number of registered voters per district ranges from 58,000 to 75,000, with an overall mean of 65,000. The average number of candidates per district ranges from 5 to 9 in the first round, with an overall mean of 6 candidates. 81% of the districts hold a runoff election, with an average of 2 to 3 candidates competing in the second round. Finally, turnout is quite high, at an average of 75% in both rounds, without any systematic pattern of increased or decreased turnout between election rounds.

**Additional manifestos** I complement the main sample with manifestos issued before the 2017 election, which were made available online by the French Ministry of the Interior prior to the election.\(^{19}\) I will use this shorter corpus to show that patterns of discourse adjustment measured up until 1993 still hold true today. As described in Appendix B.1, manifestos issued between 1993 and 2017 are currently unavailable.

Finally, I collect manifestos issued by national parties before each of the nine elections from the Manifesto Project database\(^{20}\) when available. These documents were usually issued a few months before the election to present the overall party platform and sometimes to provide specific guidelines to prepare individual candidates for their campaign.

### 3.3 Legislative activity

I collect data on the legislative activity of elected representatives from several sources. First, I exploit the dataset constructed by Gavoille and Verschelde (2017) from the *Tables nominatives* of each representative. In particular, it provides the yearly number of (a) bills that the representative worked on as primary author, (b) public interventions during legislative debates, (c) reports on bill proposals,\(^{21}\) and (d) oral questions asked to members of the government. These measures of legislative activity have been exploited in existing research to measure how much effort elected representatives exert on activities that benefit their local

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\(^{19}\) The online 2017 manifestos account for 63% of the candidates running in the first round that year and 61% of those running in the second round.

\(^{20}\) https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/

\(^{21}\) Before being discussed in public session, a proposed bill must be reviewed by the appropriate committee. A representative is then chosen to write a report on the outcome of these discussions and provide some expertise on the subject.
constituents as opposed to citizens nationwide (Bach 2011) or their overall quality as politicians (Gavoille and Verschelde 2017).

Next, I construct a new dataset of legislative textual content from oral and written questions to the government as well as short descriptions of bill proposals. Written and oral questions without debate are typically used to refer to local issues raised by constituents, while oral questions with debate refer to more general policy issues. These data were collected by scraping the AN’s website or by extracting the content of archived copies of the AN’s official record (Journal Officiel). More details on these legislative tools and the construction of this database can be found in Appendix B.2.

The final sample on legislative content includes the content of questions—of all types—issued between 1958 and 1973 (between ~5,000 and ~17,000 questions per legislature), the content of written questions issued between 1973 and 1997 (between ~35,000 and ~63,000 questions per legislature), the content of oral questions between 1981 and 1997 (between ~500 and ~2000 questions per legislature), and the short description of bill proposals between 1988 and 1997 (~1,000 per legislature).

4 Discourse adjustment between election rounds

In this section, I test for the model’s first prediction: discourse moderation in the runoff. I first scale the manifestos on a partisan space of language and measure within-candidate changes in discourse extremeness between rounds. Next, I perform a series of tests to show that discourse moderation reflects a switch from party platform to personalized non-policy issues.

4.1 Scaling manifestos

The main objective is to project the content of each manifesto onto a unidimensional partisan space. I start with standard text pre-processing, described in Appendix C.1, which reduces the vocabulary to an average of about 4,800 unique words per election and 234 tokens (words) per manifesto. Next, I perform an unsupervised principal component analysis to evaluate how many dimensions are needed to explain variation in the choice of words used by candidates. Methods and results are described in detail in Appendix C.2. I find that the first component

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22 The construction of this new dataset heavily relied on contributions by Paul Vertier, to whom I am extremely grateful.

23 In the rest of the paper I use the words partisan and ideological interchangeably to refer to the traditional left-right cleavage in politics.
explains 6 to 16% of the total variance depending on the election year, which is about twice as much as the share of the total variance explained by the second component. Importantly, the first principal component tends to separate left-wing candidates from right-wing ones, given their known party affiliation. This exercise suggests that manifestos’ content is not entirely reduced to the left-right partisan cleavage and varies along other dimensions of language, but that the partisan aspect of discourse is the primary source of variation in word choice across candidates.

I adopt a supervised approach to scale these documents explicitly on a left-right axis—that is, to assign a single partisan score to each manifesto. Intuitively, I use the known party affiliation of the candidates in the sample to determine which political orientation each word is associated with and get a finer estimate of any candidate’s partisan leaning based on their choice of words.\footnote{Recent research \cite{Goet2019} suggests that supervised methods relying on known party affiliations should be preferred over unsupervised methods of measuring ideological polarization through speech.}

I use a simple approach that builds on the \textit{Wordscores} method introduced by \cite{Laver2003} (2003). The partisan score of document $j$—where a document is the manifesto of a given candidate at a given round in a given election year—is defined as:

$$S_j = \sum_w p_{wj} \cdot s_w$$

where $s_w$ is the score of word $w$, and $p_{wj} = \frac{c_{wj}}{m_j}$ is the normalized frequency of word $w$ in document $j$, with $c_{wj}$ the frequency of word $w$ in document $j$ and $m_j$ the total number of words in document $j$.

Following studies of discourse polarization \cite{Gentzkow2010, Gentzkow2019b}, I aggregate the content of manifestos issued by candidates from left-wing\footnote{\textit{Lutte Ouvriere}, Communist Revolutionary League, Communist Party, Socialist Party, Other Left, etc} and right-wing\footnote{Front National, Gaullist Party, RPR, Other Right, etc} parties—excluding non-classified candidates and candidates from parties labeled as centrists—in the first election round as reference texts to anchor the partisan space. Then I define:

$$s_w = \frac{p^R_w}{p^R_w + p^L_w} - \frac{p^L_w}{p^L_w + p^R_w}$$
where \( p'_w = \sum_{j \in I} c_{wj} \) is the normalized frequency of word \( w \) in the aggregate of manifestos from ideological side \( I \) (with \( I = L, R \)). The score of each word ranges from \(-1\), when it is only used by left-wing candidates and never right-wing ones, to \(1\), when it is only used by right-wing candidates and never left-wing ones.

Intuitively, a manifesto with a negative (positive) score contains mostly words that are primarily spoken by left (right)-wing candidates, while a manifesto with a partisan score close to zero either uses words primarily spoken by either side indifferently or uses words that are just as common among left-wing candidates as right-wing ones. I implement the normalization proposed by Martin and Vanberg (2007),\(^{27}\) which ensures that the original distance between the two reference texts is preserved in the estimated score dispersion. Hence, the final partisan score is not bounded between \(-1\) and \(1\). Instead, a score of \(1\) corresponds to the expected score of a randomly picked right-wing candidate, while a score of \(-1\) corresponds to the expected score of a randomly picked left-wing candidate.

The twenty words with the highest (most right) and lowest (most left) average score over the nine elections are shown in Table 1. On the left side, polarized words refer to the left-wing agenda over the Cold-War period—"disarmament," "democracy"—or to pro-worker policies—"capitalist," "employers," "railroad worker,” “layoff.” On the right side, polarized words refer to economic policies—"recovery," "free trade," "deficit”—and conservative moral values—"patriot," "moral.”

Figure 1 shows the kernel density of estimated partisan scores in the first round, by political orientation and pooled across election years: far left, left, center, right, and far right.\(^{28}\) The observed dispersion of scores from left to right follows the expected ranking of candidates given their known party affiliation. Importantly, manifestos issued by extreme candidates tend to receive a more negative (on the left) or more positive (on the right) score than moderate candidates, suggesting that extreme candidates do employ a more polarized discourse and choose words less likely to be used by candidates from the opposite political orientation. Similarly, centrist manifestos—which were excluded from the construction of

\(^{27}\) The final partisan score is defined as:

\[
Score_j = \frac{S_j}{S_R}
\]

where \( S_R = \sum_w p'_w \cdot s_w \) is the estimated partisan score of the aggregate right-wing corpus. Therefore \( Score_j = 1(-1) \) is the estimated partisan score of the right-wing (left-wing) reference text.

\(^{28}\) Non-classified candidates or candidates endorsed by regional parties without a clear political orientation are excluded.
word scores—receive a partisan score close to zero but closer to the right side of the scale. This is intuitive, as French parties labeled as centrist are often closer to moderate right-wing parties than left-wing ones.

In spite of this compelling evidence that Wordscores provides reliable measures of latent discourse partisanship, I raise a few concerns about the validity of the method (Lowe 2008) and discuss how I address them in Appendix C. The results are robust to alternative choices of vocabulary and word score definitions. They are also robust to alternative scaling methods, including an application of a more recent approach: multinomial inverse regression with gamma-lasso penalization, developed in Taddy (2013), Taddy et al. (2015), and Taddy (2017). All technical details and results are shown in Appendix C.3, Appendix D, and Appendix Table 5.

4.2 Discourse moderation

I use the constructed partisan score to test whether candidates moderate their discourse between election rounds and by how much.

First, I plot the distribution of partisan scores across election rounds in Figure 2. The tighter tails in Figure 2b as compared to Figure 2a are indicative of the selection of more moderate candidates in the second round: those who are qualified for the runoff and decide to stay in the competition were less extreme in the first place. The even tighter tails in Figure 2c as compared to Figure 2b show discourse moderation between the first and second round among candidates who make it to the runoff: partisan scores tend to be closer to a neutral score of zero in the second round.

To explore this pattern more systematically, I first estimate the following regression model:

\[ Extremeness_{ire} = \alpha + \beta O_{ire} + u_{ire} \]

where \( Extremeness_{ire} = |Score_{ire}| \) is the absolute partisan score of candidate \( i \) before round \( r \) of election \( e \) and \( O_{ire} \) is a dummy variable equal to one if \( r = 2 \). Standard errors are clustered by district \( \times \) year to account for correlated shocks within the race.

\[ ^{29}\text{Alternative vocabularies pool manifestos from both rounds, exclude words with low Tf-Idf scores, or use out-of-sample manifestos from previous elections or candidates who do not make it to the runoff. Alternative word score definitions give more negative (positive) weight to words used by far left (far right) candidates.} \]

25
\(\beta^O\) represents the overall difference between the mean extremeness measured in manifestos issued in the runoff and the mean extremeness measured in all manifestos issued in the first round. Column 1 of Table 2 shows that manifestos issued in the second round are, on average, less extreme than manifestos issued in the first round. The estimate of -0.37 is significant at the 1% level and corresponds to about 40% of mean extremeness among all first-round candidates. This result may be driven by two effects: the runoff qualification of politicians who tend to be more moderate than the average candidate in the first round (as suggested by Figure 2b), and a change in rhetoric between election rounds—among candidates who compete in both rounds (as suggested by Figure 2c).

To explore this latter pattern, I estimate a regression model of the form:

\[
\text{Extremeness}_{ire} = \alpha_{ie} + \beta^I R_{ire} + u_{ire}
\]

where candidate \(\times\) year fixed effects \(\alpha_{ie}\) are included—which restricts the sample to candidates who are present in both rounds and excludes those who compete only in the first.

\(\beta^I\) measures the within-candidate change in extremeness in the runoff. Column 2 of Table 2 shows that, on average, as candidates adjust their manifesto toward less partisan content, their extremeness decreases by 0.19. This estimate is significant at the 1% level and corresponds to about a quarter of mean extremeness in the first round—among candidates who make it to the runoff. It also corresponds to 51% of the overall difference in extremeness between election rounds (column 1), indicating that half of this overall difference is driven by individual discourse moderation among candidates who compete in both rounds—while the other half is driven by the qualification of candidates who issued a more moderate manifesto in the first round.

Overall, these results are consistent with the first prediction from Section 2.1. On average, the content of second-round manifestos is less partisan than it was in the first round, both because candidates who compete in the runoff tend to be more moderate candidates, and more interestingly because they adjust their rhetoric to issue a less partisan message in the second round. This pattern is robust to several alternative scaling methods, as shown in Appendix Table A5.
**Heterogeneity across parties and election years** Discourse moderation is a common pattern across candidates from all partisan leanings. Figure 3 shows density plots of partisan scores in each round by political orientation. A shift to the center of the scale is visible for both left-wing and right-wing candidates, but the shift is much stronger for the far right (Figure 3e). This striking result can be explained in two ways: first, far right candidates campaign on very polarized policy platforms with strong partisan words in the first round, so their extremeness shrinks significantly more when they switch to neutral non-policy issues in the runoff than it does for candidates who advertise more moderate policies—and hence use more moderate words—initially. Second, consistent with the theoretical predictions in Section 2 and the evidence I will provide in Section 5, extreme candidates who make it to the runoff tend to be more electorally vulnerable than their opponents and have a larger incentive to advertise non-policy issues in the second round.

Density plots for each election year can be found in Appendix Figure A8. While the discourse moderation pattern is stronger in some years than others, it remains consistent over the whole period. Interestingly, the density plots also suggest a decrease in discourse polarization over time, especially among candidates who qualify for the runoff. While the distribution of first-round partisan scores among candidates who will run in the second round is very similar to the overall distribution of first-round partisan scores in election years prior to 1973, candidates who qualify for the runoff after that date tend to be candidates who issued more moderate manifestos in the first round. In addition, polarized discourse shifts from left to right, with a large density of negative scores (left-wing discourse) in the first election years shrinking over time, and a large density of positive scores (right-wing discourse) emerging after 1981.

**Discourse moderation today** I test for discourse moderation patterns in more recent elections using the corpus of manifestos from the 2017 election. Columns 3 and 4 of Table 2 show that applying the standard Wordscores approach to estimate changes in partisanship across rounds in 2017 yield similar patterns. In particular, column 4 shows a slightly smaller within-candidate moderation pattern corresponding to a fifth of the mean absolute score in the first round, but still significant at the 1% level.
I now perform a series of additional tests to show that discourse moderation reflects changes in rhetoric and issue salience, from policy positions and party platforms to non-policy issues—as predicted by the model in Section 2.

4.3 Discourse personalization

Party cohesion First, I show that discourse moderation correlates with the personalization of a manifesto’s content. I propose a measure of party cohesion based on how much of a manifesto’s content is identical to that of any other manifesto from the same party. I construct the Levenshtein distance, or edit distance, between every possible pair of candidates within a given party and a given election year. More precisely, I compute the minimum share of tokens that must be edited—inserted, deleted, or substituted—to make two manifestos exactly identical. I define cohesion between two documents as one minus this distance. Therefore, two manifestos that contain a large "copied and pasted" block of text would have a cohesion close to one, while two manifestos with very few identical chains of consecutive words would have a cohesion close to zero. Party cohesion is defined as the mean pairwise cohesion across all possible pairs of candidates within a same party (excluding independent candidates without a clear party affiliation).

Appendix Table A6 displays party cohesion in the first round, averaged by political orientation across all election years. Two facts are worth noting: first, the low mean cohesion among candidates from left, center and right-wing parties suggest that it is not common for mainstream candidates to use a large block of text that would be found in many other candidates’ manifestos from the same party. Candidates from the same party may still expose similar arguments and defend a common policy platform, but they tend do so in personalized sentences and using their own layout. Second, mean cohesion is much stronger among candidates from extreme parties on the far left or the far right (24pp and 26pp resp.), showing that candidates from marginal parties often use an identical template with much fewer personalized elements.

I now provide evidence that discourse moderation correlates with discourse personalization. To do so, I exclude candidates who do not compete in a runoff election, then calculate each candidate’s mean cohesion with all other candidates from the same party in each separate election round. Discourse personalization is defined as (minus) the change in a candidate’s mean cohesion between election rounds. Hence, a positive personalization value
means that the candidate has reduced the share of her manifesto dedicated to a textual block common to all candidates in the party.

Figure 4 displays binned scatter plots of standardized personalization against standardized moderation, where candidate $i$’s discourse moderation in election year $e$ is defined as (minus) the change in absolute partisan score between election rounds:

$$\text{Moderation}_{ie} = \text{Extremeness}_{1ie} - \text{Extremeness}_{2ie}$$

Hence, a positive value of $\text{Moderation}_{ie}$ means that candidate $i$ issued a partisan manifesto in the first round but a more neutral one in the second. The scatter plot on the raw data shows a positive correlation, driven at the extreme by candidates who strongly moderate their discourse and strongly reduce their party cohesion as well. The correlation is even more striking after residualizing both moderation and personalization on initial extremeness in the first round, party cohesion in the first round, and the interaction between the two, as well as district×year fixed effects and party×year fixed effects (Figure 4b). Candidates who moderate their discourse more than other candidates from the same party—who issued a similar manifesto in the first round—also tend to reduce the share of their manifesto that is dedicated to a common party block more than others.

Appendix Figure A9 shows similar correlation patterns between discourse moderation and discourse personalization when using an alternative measure of cohesion: the edit distance between a given manifesto and the party manifesto provided by the Manifesto Project (when available).

I conclude that discourse moderation is tied to discourse personalization: candidates who moderate their discourse the most also write more personalized manifestos in the second round. This is not a mechanical result. Discourse moderation would correlate with less content personalization if moderation reflected a shift in party platform between rounds—toward more centrist positions or a mix of positions from both political orientations—and if all candidates from a same party adopted a common template to advertise this new platform. Conversely, candidates could both personalize their manifesto in the runoff and become more extreme in their discourse, either by insisting on the most partisan aspects of their party platform or by referring to policy propositions from more extreme parties. Instead, discourse
moderation is not driven by national party constraints, and the individual decision to personalize one’s manifesto in the runoff involves issuing less partisan content.

**Choice of neutral words** The observed pattern of discourse moderation can reflect two types of adjustment: candidates using more neutral words or candidates using polarizing words from both left and right in the runoff. I estimate equation 2 with each manifesto’s mean absolute word score as the outcome, $\sum_w p_{w,j} \cdot |s_{w,i}|$, divided by its standard deviation in the first round, to facilitate the interpretation of the results. A word’s absolute score is a measure of how predictive of a political orientation that word is. Words with low absolute scores are indifferently used by left-wing and right-wing candidates and are therefore unlikely to carry any strong partisan meaning. Consequently, manifestos with a low (high) mean absolute word score tend to use neutral (polarized) words.

Results are shown in column 2 of Table 3: on average, the mean absolute score of words used in second-round manifestos decreases by 20% of a standard deviation relative to first-round manifestos. This estimate is significant at the 1% level. Together with the estimate displayed in column 1 of Table 3, which shows that the average length of a manifesto decreases by 159 words—more than half of the mean number of tokens in the first round—I conclude that candidates write shorter statements and tend to choose less polarized words in the runoff.30

**Words dropped and added the most** Next, I compute the within-candidate change in normalized frequency from first to second round for each word and identify the words that are, on average, dropped or added the most. Table 4 shows the 20 words with the highest mean negative change over the 9 elections and the 20 words with the highest mean positive change. While words added the most to second-round manifestos are mostly generic words specific to electoral rule—“lead,” “second,” “outcome,” “abstention”—words that are dropped the most tend to refer to policy-making and programmatic content—“firm,” “economy,” “family,” “safety,” “taxation.” It suggests that second-round manifestos contain fewer elements of actual policy platforms and more mundane statements regarding the outcome of the first election round and the current state of the campaign.

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30The main result on discourse moderation is robust to controlling for text length in equation 2, suggesting that moderation is not entirely driven by a cut in the length of the manifesto but by a deeper change in content too. Estimates are shown in Appendix Table A4.
I perform the same analysis separately for left- and right-wing candidates and show the 20 words dropped or added the most when weighting their average difference in usage across rounds by their word score. This exercise reveals which polarized words tend to be dropped between rounds.\textsuperscript{31} Results are shown in Appendix Table A7 and suggest a similar pattern: programmatic words such as “profit,” “health,” and “factory” on the left or “tax policy,” “currency,” and “recovery” on the right tend to be dropped. The words added the most in the second round suggest a defensive strategy against the opponent from left-wing candidates (“fear,” “block,” “opposition”) and an emphasis on individual qualities from right-wing candidates (“cross,” “legion,” “honor,” and “medal” refer to military or civil awards).

**Personal and local references** I count the number of times a manifesto mentions the first or last name of any candidate in the race. I estimate model 2 with three alternative outcomes: the number of occurrences of one’s first or last name, occurrences of the main opponent’s name,\textsuperscript{32} or occurrences of other candidates’ names, relative to the overall number of tokens in the manifesto. Each outcome is divided by its standard deviation in the first round to facilitate interpretation of the results. Columns 3 to 5 of Table 3 show that in the second round, candidates refer more often to themselves (the number of occurrences of a candidate’s own name increases by 94% of a standard deviation) and to other candidates (74% of a standard deviation for the main opponent and 93% of a standard deviation for any other candidate who competed in the first round). All estimates are significant at the 1\% level and suggest that politicians personalize their runoff manifesto by referring more often to district-specific candidates, both themselves and their competitors.

Next, I count the number of times a manifesto mentions the department in which the candidate is running and the number of times it mentions a municipality (commune) from that department, relative to the overall number of tokens in the manifesto. These outcomes are also divided by their standard deviation in the first round. Columns 6 and 7 of Table 3 show that the number of local mentions goes up in the second round: by 12\% of a standard deviation for the district’s department and 8\% of a standard deviation for municipalities in the department. Both estimates are significant at the 1\% level. Candidates put more emphasis on

\textsuperscript{31}Words that are dropped or added the most by both left and right-wing candidates tend to be widely used words with a neutral score, so that non-weighted differences in usage show similar results across left and right. I choose to show weighted differences instead, in order to capture heterogeneity across parties.

\textsuperscript{32}The main opponent is defined as either the leading candidate if the manifesto is issued by a runner-up or vice-versa. Consequently the sample is restricted to first and second-ranked candidates for this specification.
their local anchoring in the second round, maybe as an attempt to make themselves appear to be the candidate of all voters in the district, not only that of the ideological voters who supported their party platform in the first round.

4.4 Discussion: the impact of competition

Section 4.2 provided evidence of discourse moderation on the partisan space of language in the runoff, as predicted by the model in Section 2. However, while in Section 2 discourse adjustments are described as a strategic response to the change in the competitive environment between election rounds, the findings presented so far do not rule out alternative drivers of discourse moderation, such as the passage of time: candidates might switch to non-policy issues in the runoff because they already advertised their party platform in the first round and they want to provide new information to the voters in the second. In other words, the within-candidate regression from Section 4.2 does provide an estimate for the causal impact of the runoff on discourse extremeness-conditional on running in the second round—but does not ensure that this parameter is of interest. Appendix E.1 provides suggestive evidence that discourse moderation is (causally) determined by the number of candidates qualified for the second round, so that deciding to adjust one’s discourse is indeed a response to the change in electoral competition (more precisely, the number of competitors) between election rounds.

While a majority of districts hold a runoff between two candidates (70% of the races in the sample), it is possible for a third candidate to compete if all three candidates receive more than a certain number of votes in the first round. According to the theoretical framework in Section 2, the number of candidates present in the second round should affect the first two candidates’ strategic decision to adjust their manifesto. Indeed, the number of indifferent voters whose preferred ideological candidate is unavailable is reduced, limiting the possible gains from advertising non-policy issues and signaling quality. Hence, the first two candidates are expected to moderate their discourse less often when more than two candidates qualify for the runoff.

I closely follow the empirical strategy described in Pons and Tricaud (2018a) to estimate the causal impact of the qualification of a third candidate on discourse moderation among the first- and second-ranked candidates—holding these candidates’ characteristics constant,

Findings in Pons and Tricaud (2018a) support this intuition: voters tend to favor their preferred ideological candidate and vote expressively in the runoff instead of voting strategically for a stronger candidate with better chances of winning.

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including their electoral vulnerability and politician quality. Technical details and results are discussed in Appendix E.1, Appendix Figure A10, and Appendix Table A8. Overall, estimated effects are quite noisy—possibly due to small sample sizes. Despite these weaknesses, they follow the predicted patterns described above: first- and second-ranked candidates tend to moderate less when a third candidate qualifies for the runoff. Interestingly, this negative impact seems mostly driven by the response of candidates who face a main opponent (first- or second-ranked) from the opposite political orientation but a third-ranked candidate from the same orientation, as opposed to candidates who face both a main opponent and a third-ranked candidate from the opposite orientation.\textsuperscript{34} While the model does not provide formal predictions for this differential effect, the interpretation is intuitive: if voters switch their support more easily from their preferred ideological candidate toward other candidates from the same political orientation, as opposed to candidates from the opposite orientation, then a candidate facing an ideologically close opponent faces a higher risk of losing core ideological voters when advertising non-policy issues. In order to secure the support of her ideological voters, she should reinforce her partisan message from the first round and stick to her party platform.\textsuperscript{35}

To conclude this discussion, the regression discontinuity test provides suggestive evidence that candidates moderate their discourse as a response to the change in the set of competitors between election rounds.

To illustrate the rhetorical adjustments described in Section 4, Appendix F discusses and compares two concrete examples: a first candidate (Jean-Marie Le Pen) who substantially moderated his discourse and another (Dominique Paille) who issued an almost identical manifesto in both election rounds. Why do some candidates choose to moderate their discourse by depolicizing their campaign manifesto and making non-policy issues more salient, while others stick to the same rhetoric and leave their manifesto virtually unchanged? In the next section, I test for the second set of theoretical predictions from Section 2 and show that discourse moderation correlates with electoral vulnerability and/or politician quality.

\textsuperscript{34}I exclude non-classified candidates whose political orientation is not clear from this definition.
\textsuperscript{35}This hypothesis is supported by the data: in the sample, 84% of the first- or second-ranked candidates who run in a district where the third-ranked candidate is from the same political orientation are moderate candidates facing a third-ranked candidate from an alternative moderate party as well (as opposed to an extreme party).
5 Strategic selection into discourse moderation

According to the theoretical framework in Section 2, candidates who moderate their discourse the most are those who are high-quality politicians and whose national party platform does not benefit from strong support in their local district. This is because they have the ability to write a convincing manifesto focused on non-policy issues, and they have less to lose than strong candidates: the electoral cost of losing support from a share of their core ideological supporters is lower than the gain from winning the support of voters whose preferred ideological candidate is no longer on the ballot. I test for these predictions in several ways. First, I show that benefiting from an observed electoral advantage after the first round predicts less discourse moderation and provide suggestive evidence that this relationship is causal. Second, I show that candidates who select into discourse moderation are those who have fewer chances of winning their district—regardless of their campaign strategy. Finally, I show that among elected representatives, those who selected into discourse moderation during the campaign are those who engage in more legislative activity and provide better constituency service once in office.

5.1 Electoral advantage and discourse moderation

I estimate an equation of the form:

$$Moderation_{ie} = \alpha_{de} + \lambda_{pe} + \gamma X_{ie} + \delta Extremeness1_{ie} + u_{ie}$$ (3)

where Moderation$_{ie}$ is (minus) the change in absolute partisan score between election rounds for candidate $i$ in election year $e$, and $\alpha_{de}$ is a district×year fixed effect$^{36}$ that controls for district-level factors common to all candidates competing in the same race. $X_{ie}$ is a measure of candidate $i$’s electoral advantage before the second election round, which I define below.$^{37}$ Extremeness1$_{ie}$ is the candidate’s absolute partisan score in the first round, which I include to ensure that $\gamma$ measures the relationship between electoral advantage and discourse moderation when holding initial extremeness constant. As discussed later, some specifications also include party×year fixed effects $\lambda_{pe}$.

$^{36}$In all specifications that include department×year, district×year and/or party×year fixed effects, I allocate singleton observations to a common year fixed effect to avoid dropping them from the sample.

$^{37}$I also include dummy variables indicating whether $X$ is defined for candidate $i$. This allows to keep as many observations as possible across specifications, including candidates whose characteristics may be missing.
First, I test whether candidates from a party with strong national support adjust their discourse differently, as compared to candidates from a smaller party. Column 1 of Table 5 displays the $\gamma$ estimate from equation 3 when $X$ is a dummy variable equal to one if candidate $i$ runs for a party supported by the president in office and the majority in power. The point estimate is negative and significant at the 1% level, indicating that on average, candidates affiliated with the presidential party moderate their discourse less often than other candidates from the same district and with comparable levels of discourse extremeness in the first round. The estimate’s size of 0.14 corresponds to about 75% of the overall mean discourse moderation in the sample. It suggests that candidates from the party in power stick to their party platform in the runoff more often than candidates from the opposition. To the extent that being the party in power reflects recent electoral success and high national support, this finding is consistent with the prediction that candidates with a strong electoral advantage moderate less. However, this result does not exclude an alternative channel that is worth noting: the party in power may have better resources to enforce a strong party discipline and impose higher constraints on their candidates, limiting their ability to run personalized campaigns in their district.

Next, I compare discourse moderation across candidates who are affiliated with the same party and issued manifestos of similar extremeness in the first round, but who face different electoral prospects in their respective district. The objective is to determine whether two candidates running under a same platform adjust their discourse differently if one benefits from an electoral advantage in her district and the other does not. I start by testing a direct prediction from the model in Section 2: candidates who received a high vote share in the first round are less likely to adjust their rhetoric toward non-policy issues in the runoff. Column 2 of Table 5 provides empirical evidence for this result: a 10-percentage-point increase in first round vote share predicts a decrease in discourse moderation by 0.02, an estimate that corresponds to about 10% of the overall mean discourse moderation in the sample and that is significant at the 1% level. Column 3 shows that discourse moderation is also lower among incumbent representatives who benefit from an incumbency advantage (-0.03) than it is among challengers, an estimate that accounts for 15% of the overall mean moderation and is significant at the 1% level as well.

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38Presidential party and majoritarian party in Parliament are always the same in the sample, as none of the elections included was held during a period of cohabitation between President and government from opposite orientations.
Finally, I construct a measure of the predicted gain in support from voters whose preferred ideological candidate did not make it to the runoff. Absent any change in campaign strategy, ideological voters of a candidate who is not on the runoff ballot are expected to support the candidate with an ideologically close party platform in the runoff. I restrict the sample to districts where only the first two candidates compete in the runoff and construct a lower bound of the predicted gain in vote for each candidate, depending on their own political orientation, the orientation of their opponent, and the vote shares received by candidates of each orientation in the first round. For instance, a moderate left-wing candidate facing a moderate right-wing candidate is predicted to gain (at least) the support of voters who chose either a different candidate from the moderate left or a candidate from the far left in the first round. Conversely, an extreme right-wing candidate facing a moderate right-wing one is predicted to gain the support of voters who chose a different candidate from the far right in the first round—so in most cases, no voter at all. When both runoff candidates have the same orientation, I divide the total predicted vote gain from voters who chose any non-qualified candidate in the first round by two. According to the negative estimate in column 4 of Table 5, candidates who are more likely to benefit from that increased support between election rounds moderate their discourse less often than others. The point estimate is significant at the 1% level and shows that for each 10 percentage-point increase in predicted vote gain, candidates are expected to decrease their discourse moderation by 0.03 (15% of the mean discourse moderation overall). It remains as high and significant when I include the three measures of electoral advantage described above in the same regression (column 5).

**Regression discontinuity approach** I now provide suggestive evidence that benefiting from an electoral advantage and higher predicted support than the opponent causes candidates to moderate their discourse less often in the runoff. The theoretical assumption that—absent any information on politician quality—voters whose preferred candidate is no longer on the ballot vote for the remaining candidate with the policy platform closest to their ideal implies that a centrist candidate facing an extreme one is more likely to win than a centrist facing another centrist. According to the model presented in Section 2, a moderate left-wing candidate facing an extreme right-wing opponent in the runoff gains votes from both the far left voters and some of the moderate right-wing voters, while a similar moderate left-wing candidate facing a moderate right-wing opponent instead only gains votes from the far-left voters. The difference
in predicted vote gain is even larger between a moderate left-wing candidate facing an extreme far-left opponent, who attracts all voters from the right and far right, and a similar moderate left-wing candidate facing a moderate right-wing opponent, who attracts voters from the far left only.

Given the prediction that candidates moderate their discourse to signal their quality when they are electorally weak, centrist candidates are expected to moderate their discourse less often when they face an extreme candidate and hold a strong electoral advantage than when they face another centrist candidate. To test for this, I exploit districts where the first-ranked candidate does not get enough support to win in the first round and where the second-ranked candidate does not pass the runoff-qualifying threshold either. In such districts, a runoff election is held between the two candidates who got the highest vote shares in the first round. When the second- and third-ranked candidates are from different political orientations and receive very close vote shares in the runoff, the orientation of the candidate that gets to compete against the first-ranked candidate in the runoff can be considered as good as random. In other words, a (moderate) first-ranked candidate may be quasi-randomly assigned an opponent who is an extreme candidate as opposed to a centrist one. Using a regression discontinuity design around the difference in vote shares between the second- and third-ranked candidates when one is centrist and the other is extreme, I provide suggestive evidence that facing an extreme candidate as opposed to a centrist one decreases the propensity to moderate one’s discourse—especially when facing an extreme opponent from the same orientation, as opposed to a centrist opponent from the opposite orientation. Results are shown in Appendix Figure A11 and Appendix Table A9, and are further discussed in Appendix E.2. While none of the estimates are significant due to extremely small sample sizes, they are sizeable and consistent with the prediction that, everything else being equal, holding a district-specific electoral advantage decreases discourse moderation.

Overall, I find empirical support for the theoretical prediction that candidates switch to a communication strategy focused on less partisan non-policy issues in the second round when they are electorally weak and have nothing to lose.

5.2 Selection on electoral vulnerability

In this section, I test whether the electoral prospects of candidates who moderate their discourse between election rounds differ from the prospects of candidates from the same
party who do not. I estimate a model of the form:

\[ Y_{ie} = \alpha_{de} + \lambda_{pe} + \beta \text{Moderation}_{ie} + \delta \text{Extremeness}_{1ie} + u_{ie} \] (4)

where \( Y_{ie} \) is a measure of electoral success for candidate \( i \) at election \( e \), \( \alpha_{de} \) is a department×year\(^{39} \) or district×year fixed effect depending on the specification and \( \lambda_{pe} \) is a party×year fixed effect. In some specifications, I also control for the three measures of ex ante electoral advantage from columns 2 through 5 of Table 5, as well as a set of dummy variables indicating whether each of these included factors is missing. To facilitate the interpretation of the results, I divide discourse moderation by its overall standard deviation.

Column 1 of Table 6 shows the \( \beta \) estimate from using a dummy variable equal to one if candidate \( i \) is elected in election \( e \) as outcome. On average, a one standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation decreases the predicted chance of winning by 8 percentage points, an estimate that is significant at the 1% level. This negative correlation is not surprising, given the previous findings that candidates who moderate their discourse the most were electorally vulnerable in the first place. However, column 2 shows that the negative relationship between discourse moderation and the probability of winning the election still holds when controlling for the three observed measures of electoral advantage described above: a one-standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation decreases the election rate by 3 percentage points, an estimate that is also significant at the 1% level.

Columns 3 and 4 of Table 6 show a similar pattern when defining electoral success as the actual gain in votes from first to second round as outcome: candidates who moderate their discourse the most gain fewer votes between rounds than others. When controlling for the observed electoral advantage, a standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation predicts a reduction in the actual gain in votes between rounds of 0.3 percentage point (an estimate significant at the 10% level). Finally, columns 5 and 6 of Table 6 show that, among elected politicians, candidates who moderated their discourse win by a smaller margin of victory as well. On average, a one standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation decreases the election margin by 0.6 percentage point when controlling for the observed electoral advantage (column 6), an estimate that is significant at the 1% level.

\(^{39}\)Metropolitan France is divided into 90 to 95 departments depending on the year, where each department is a collection of districts.
The negative relationship between discourse moderation and electoral success could reflect a treatment effect: moderating one’s discourse by switching to non-policy issues in the runoff may cause a candidate to lose more often. Appendix Table A10 raises some doubt about this interpretation. When restricting the sample to candidates who run in multiple election years and estimating equation 4 with additional candidate fixed effects over time, the size of the correlation between discourse moderation and election drops and is no longer significant (column 1). Hence the negative estimate from column 1 of Table 6 is likely driven by politician-specific factors that do not vary over time: candidates who moderate their discourse the most are also candidates who have lower chances of winning their district, regardless of their campaign strategy—possibly because they run in areas where their party is always less popular. Columns 2 and 3 of Appendix Table A10 show that, within a candidate, discourse moderation does not significantly predict either a lower gain in votes nor a lower election margin if elected.

Therefore, my preferred explanation for the results in Table 6 is a selection effect, consistent with the model’s predictions: among candidates affiliated with the same party and having issued a manifesto of similar extremeness in the first round, those who moderate their discourse the most are electorally vulnerable on both observed and possibly unobserved dimensions, which is why they win less often. In other words, these relatively weak candidates could do even worse if they did not switch their communication strategy toward less partisan arguments in the runoff.

Overall, the empirical findings described in this section support the theoretical predictions from Section 2: discourse moderation is more prevalent among electorally vulnerable candidates than among strong candidates with better chances of winning. As a reminder, weak candidates may switch to more neutral non-policy issues in the runoff to attract voters whose preferred ideological candidate is no longer on the ballot and who are indifferent enough between the two remaining candidates’ platforms. This strategy may be effective in swinging votes if advertising non-policy issues is a credible signal of the politician’s quality. I now test for the prediction that candidates who moderate their discourse are indeed high-quality politicians.
5.3 Selection on politician quality

While I do not observe politician quality directly, I use an *ex post* measure of candidates’ quality based on their legislative activity once in office. Arguably, politicians with better inherent ability or longer experience are more likely to engage in legislative activity once elected. In particular, I am interested in activities related to constituency service—the non-partisan activities that do not involve position-taking on policy issues and provide benefits to the representative’s constituents only, as opposed to all national citizens.

First, I construct a measure of politicians’ overall activity once elected by aggregating the four measures described in Section 3: bill authorship, interventions, reports, and questions to the government. I define the number of questions to the government differently depending on the legislature. For the first four legislatures in the sample, I use the total number of questions (written and oral) that were extracted from the official record. For the last five legislatures, I add up the number of written and oral questions that were collected separately. In all cases, when a representative cannot be linked to any question from the AN website or the official record, I use the number of oral questions provided by the dataset in Gavoille and Verschelde (2017). Then I average the four measures over the number of years the representative held office. Finally, I standardize each average measure and sum them up to obtain a mean activity Z-score, which is itself standardized to have a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one.

I estimate regression model 4 with the mean Z-score defined above as the outcome—including party×year and department×year fixed effects—on the restricted sample of candidates who were elected after two election rounds. For interpretation purposes, I also divide Moderation by its standard deviation. Column 1 of Table 7 shows that a one-standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation increases the predicted activity Z-score by 7% of a standard deviation, an estimate that is significant at the 5% level. While this result is consistent with the prediction that discourse moderation is more common among high-quality politicians who face a lower cost of exerting effort and perform better once elected, I discuss two additional explanations.

First, the positive correlation between discourse moderation and legislative activity may be a result of the selection on vulnerability discussed in Sections 5.1 and 5.2: representatives...
who got elected after moderating their discourse because they were electorally vulnerable are likely to work harder once in office to increase their chances of reelection. In column 2 of Table 7 I repeat the estimation from column 1, controlling for the three observed measures of electoral advantage described in Section 5.1: vote share in the first round, incumbency status, and predicted vote gain between rounds. The point estimate is virtually unchanged, suggesting that the positive correlation between discourse moderation and legislative activity is not solely driven by the fact that candidates who moderated their discourse the most were also electorally vulnerable. Appendix Table A11 shows that the result is also robust to including the election margin as an additional control, and Appendix Table A12 shows no significant heterogeneous pattern when I interact Moderation with each of the measures of electoral advantage described in Section 5.1, neither separately nor when all are included in the same regression. Candidates who moderated their discourse, got elected after a tough race, and face uncertain electoral support in the next election do not work harder once in office than candidates who also moderated their discourse but had an easy victory and enjoy higher chances of reelection. Overall, the evidence provided here points against electoral vulnerability as the main driver of the positive relationship between legislative activity and discourse moderation.

Second, the positive estimates in columns 1 and 2 of Table 7 may reflect a causal impact of discourse moderation on legislative activity: some representatives may exert more effort than others because they moderated their discourse over the campaign, and they would not do so otherwise. Under this interpretation, switching to non-policy issues in the runoff is not only a signal of quality but a binding commitment to work harder once in office. While very appealing, this interpretation is unlikely to be true: column 1 of Appendix Table A13 shows that, while still positive, the correlation between discourse moderation and legislative activity is much smaller and not significant when restricting the sample to representatives elected multiple times and controlling for politician fixed effects across election years. Hence discourse moderation and legislative activity are likely both determined by a third (time-invariant) factor: politician quality.

In the next columns of Table 7 I estimate model 4 for each activity measure separately, including the breakdown between written questions and oral questions (OQ) with and

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42The election margin is most likely endogenous to discourse moderation, as shown by the positive relationship in Table 6 (columns 5 and 6), but it provides a good measure of ex post electoral vulnerability, as representatives who barely won their district do not enjoy the same electoral security as those who won in a landslide.
without debate from the data I collected separately for the more recent legislatures. The pattern described above is strikingly similar across all activities: discourse moderation is correlated (though not always significantly) with higher levels of activity across all measures.\footnote{The fact that discourse moderation predicts more effort on all types of activities, as opposed to a substitution between policy work and constituency service, is additional evidence of selection based on politician quality as opposed to electoral vulnerability.} The strongest relationship is observed for questions to the government (column 6) and written questions issued in 1973 or later (column 7). A one-standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation increases the predicted yearly number of written questions issued by a representative by 3, an estimate that represents about 11\% of the mean number of written question issued by year and is significant at the 5\% level. This result is particularly interesting, as written questions to the government are arguably the most constituency-focused activity a representative can engage in. For instance, \textit{Bach (2011)} uses the number of written questions issued by a representative as a proxy for casework activity that benefits their constituents and only them—as opposed to legislative committee work that can benefit citizens nationwide. Hence the positive correlation between discourse moderation and the number of issued written questions suggests that politicians who adjust their discourse the most toward less-partisan arguments during the campaign also tend to perform better on less-partisan activities that involve constituency service.

These findings are consistent with the theoretical prediction that candidates who moderate their discourse are high-quality politicians (Section 2). In particular, together with the finding from Section 5.2 that elected politicians who moderate their discourse tend to win by a smaller vote share margin (columns 5 and 6 of Table 6), the positive correlation between discourse moderation and legislative activity suggests that representatives who switched to less-partisan arguments during their campaign were both more electorally vulnerable and higher-quality politicians than those who won after sticking to their party platform. However, in the model, \textit{all} candidates moderate their discourse because they are electorally vulnerable and high-quality politicians—not only the elected ones. While not contradicting this prediction in any way, the results presented in this section do not rule out alternative explanations. In particular, my empirical findings are compatible with a model in which not all candidates can credibly signal their quality and some vulnerable candidates moderate their discourse without raising their chance of election. For instance, some may switch to non-policy arguments but fail to use the ones that would successfully convey their quality to voters. Only the very high-quality
politicians can credibly switch campaign strategies, win the election, and prove to be high-performing representatives later on.

**Partisanship once elected** I now test for the alternative explanation that, besides politician quality, discourse moderation reflects an attempt from more extreme candidates to form alliances with sister parties in the runoff, by disengaging from her party’s most divisive policy propositions from the first round. In such scenario, a candidate elected after moderating her discourse would be expected to adopt a less-partisan discourse once in office, and to work on more moderate bill proposals as well. I show that discourse moderation only weakly correlates with measures of partisanship once elected, suggesting that discourse adjustments during the campaign are driven by differences in politician quality as opposed to different coalition strategies within a same party. To do so, I apply the scaling method described in Section 4.1 - which was used to construct manifestos’ partisan scores—to scale elected representatives on the left-right space of language based on the textual content they issue while in office. For the first four legislatures (1958-1972), I scale each representative using the content of all questions identified in the official record, which are mostly written questions but can also be oral ones. For the last five legislatures (1973-1996), I scale each representative using the content of each question type separately: written questions, oral questions without debate, and oral questions with debate.

I estimate regression model 4 using these different measures of extremeness—the absolute partisan score from each object—as outcome (divided by their standard deviation for interpretability). The results, shown in Table 8, suggest that candidates who moderated their discourse more than other elected candidates from the same party also tend to be less extreme in their questions to the government over the first five legislatures, between 1958 and 1973 (column 1). A one-standard-deviation increase in discourse moderation decreases predicted extremeness in questions once elected by 11% of a standard deviation, an estimate that is significant at the 5% level. However, estimates over the next legislatures are very small and not significant at any conventional level (columns 2 through 4). Interestingly, column 5 shows a positive—though still insignificant—relationship between discourse moderation and extremeness in bills’ descriptions. This is consistent with the claim that discourse moderation is not about policy moderation and local coalitions between parties, as representatives who
moderated their discourse during the campaign do not tend to propose more moderate bills than representatives from the same party who did not.

Overall, the empirical findings from this section support the theoretical prediction that discourse moderation is driven by selection on both electoral vulnerability and politician quality. As a result, individual candidates’ campaign strategies being informative and advertising non-policy issues, as opposed to their party platform, is predictive of better non-policy representation.

6 Conclusion

I exploit a new dataset of more than 30,000 manifestos issued by individual candidates to French Legislative elections between 1958 and 1993 to show that candidates adapt their communication strategy to the competitive environment in which they are running, even when their policy positions are determined by a national party. Importantly, their strategic communication choices can be informative of their quality as politicians and their ability to provide voters with better non-policy representation once elected.

I construct individual partisan scores in each election round using a supervised scaling approach applied to the textual content of the campaign manifestos and show that candidates who make it to the runoff tend to send a more neutral message in the second round. In a context where individual candidates cannot credibly deviate from their party platform, discourse moderation refers to the strategic choice of campaigning on less-partisan, non-policy issues. These findings are consistent with a model of electoral competition where policy positions are fixed but candidates can choose to compete on non-policy issues instead of their party platform to signal their quality as politician and their ability to provide better constituency service if elected.

The findings in this paper apply to any setting in which candidates run under a party ticket that provides them with the public recognition of that party but limits their ability to adjust their policy positions to the local context and the preferences of their electorate. These findings also extend to settings in which politicians are constrained by their previous policy announcements and cannot credibly alter them later on, such as electoral systems with primary and general elections (e.g., the US). While in some existing papers, candidates are allowed to adjust their policy positions to the change in electorate after the primary stage.
(Stokes et al. 1992; Tomz and Van Houweling 2014; Henderson 2016), in others candidates are constrained by the policy announcements made initially and cannot readjust optimally between stages (Owen and Grofman 2006; Adams and Merrill 2008). This paper reconciles both views: candidates between primary and general elections may not be able to credibly switch from partisan policy positions to a centrist platform—as centrifugal forces of spatial competition would predict—but they may still be able to adjust their campaign communication toward a more neutral discourse focused on non-policy issues and swing votes that way.

From a policy standpoint, this paper has a few implications I find worth noting. First, candidate-specific campaigns benefit voters, as they may provide information that is hidden from national party platforms and matters for representation, such as politician quality. Hence, campaign regulators should promote methods of communication that allow individual politicians to address their constituents directly, such as candidate manifestos, local events (Bidwell et al. 2016), or door-to-door interactions with voters (Cantoni and Pons 2016)—in addition to regulating national television ads or debates between party leaders (?). In particular, ensuring that all candidates have the resources to issue their own campaign statements may help voters cast the vote that best corresponds to their preferences.

Second, individual campaigns may also benefit parties, as their ability to win seats in districts where their platform receives low electoral support is likely to increase when their high-quality candidates are able to signal their type. In the theoretical framework I propose, candidates from extreme parties with few ideological supporters are the ones who gain the most votes from advertising non-policy issues in the runoff, as opposed to insisting on their polarized policy positions. Further research will be needed to determine whether the strategic recourse to non-policy advertisement in campaign communication has contributed to the recent electoral success of parties from the radical right in many consolidated democracies.


Notes: Figure 1 shows, for each political orientation from far left to far right, the kernel density of partisan scores in the first round. The partisan score is constructed using the Wordscores approach described in Section 4.1 and indicates the partisan leaning of discourse in each manifesto from left-wing (negative score) to right-wing (positive score). Non-classified candidates are excluded. Observations are pooled across election years. N=22,160.
Figure 2: Kernel density of partisan scores across election rounds

(a) First round

(b) First round if present in the second round

(c) Second round

Notes: Figure 2a shows the kernel density of partisan scores in the first round, pooling observations from all election years and all political orientations (N=24,431). Figure 2b adds the kernel density plot of partisan scores if the first round of a selected sample of candidates: those who make it to the runoff (dashed line, N=7,138). Figure 2c adds the kernel density plot of partisan scores in the second round, for candidates who compete in the runoff and whose second round manifesto is available (solid line, N=6,883). Other notes as in Figure 1.
Figure 3: Kernel density of partisan scores across election rounds by political orientation

Notes: Figure 3 shows the kernel density of partisan scores both in the first (dashed line) and second (solid line) election round, for each political orientation separately from far left to far right. The sample is restricted to candidates who run in both election rounds and whose manifestos are available. Non-classified candidates are excluded. Observations are pooled across election years. Other notes as in Figure 1.
Figure 4: Correlation between discourse moderation and content personalization

(a) Raw correlation

(b) Residualized

Notes: Figure 4a shows a bin scatter plot and the best linear fit of standardized personalization against standardized moderation. Personalization is (minus) the change in pairwise Levenhstein distance to other manifestos from the same party between rounds and moderation is (minus) the change in absolute partisan score. In Figure 4b, both personalization and moderation are residualized on party cohesion in first round, extremeness at first round, the interaction between the two, district fixed effects, and party fixed effects. The sample is restricted to candidates who run in both election rounds, whose manifestos are available, and who are endorsed by a well-identified party. N=6,785.
Table 1: Lowest and highest average word scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original word</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
<th>Original word</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pcf</td>
<td>communist party</td>
<td>-0.973</td>
<td>ideologie</td>
<td>ideology</td>
<td>0.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capitaliste</td>
<td>capitalist</td>
<td>-0.903</td>
<td>commandeur</td>
<td>leader</td>
<td>0.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patronat</td>
<td>employers</td>
<td>-0.902</td>
<td>redressement</td>
<td>recovery</td>
<td>0.691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desarmement</td>
<td>disarmament</td>
<td>-0.842</td>
<td>patrie</td>
<td>patriot</td>
<td>0.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loyer</td>
<td>rent</td>
<td>-0.792</td>
<td>blesser</td>
<td>hurt</td>
<td>0.652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democratise</td>
<td>democracy</td>
<td>-0.776</td>
<td>liberal</td>
<td>free trade</td>
<td>0.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheminot</td>
<td>railroad worker</td>
<td>-0.766</td>
<td>chirurgien</td>
<td>surgeon</td>
<td>0.631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>armeement</td>
<td>armament</td>
<td>-0.761</td>
<td>investiture</td>
<td>inauguration</td>
<td>0.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syndicaliste</td>
<td>unionist</td>
<td>-0.754</td>
<td>occidental</td>
<td>western</td>
<td>0.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instituteur</td>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>-0.743</td>
<td>veterinaire</td>
<td>vet</td>
<td>0.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>militant</td>
<td>activist</td>
<td>-0.738</td>
<td>croix</td>
<td>cross</td>
<td>0.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>licenciement</td>
<td>layoff</td>
<td>-0.737</td>
<td>officier</td>
<td>officer</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democra</td>
<td>democracy</td>
<td>-0.711</td>
<td>deficit</td>
<td>deficit</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revendication</td>
<td>claims</td>
<td>-0.694</td>
<td>morale</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>0.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>militer</td>
<td>advocate</td>
<td>-0.692</td>
<td>legion</td>
<td>legion</td>
<td>0.576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edf</td>
<td>public electricity</td>
<td>-0.657</td>
<td>frontiere</td>
<td>border</td>
<td>0.542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortune</td>
<td>wealth</td>
<td>-0.647</td>
<td>redresser</td>
<td>recovery</td>
<td>0.542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nistes</td>
<td>communist</td>
<td>-0.641</td>
<td>medaille</td>
<td>medal</td>
<td>0.542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coucher</td>
<td>lay down</td>
<td>-0.606</td>
<td>exces</td>
<td>excess</td>
<td>0.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millier</td>
<td>thousand</td>
<td>-0.597</td>
<td>cabinet</td>
<td>cabinet</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 1 displays the 20 words with the lowest (left) and highest (right) average score over the 9 election years. The English translation was performed by the author.
Table 2: Discourse moderation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runoff</td>
<td>-0.374***</td>
<td>-0.189***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>30,879</td>
<td>13,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-sq (within)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean at round 1</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 2 shows the results from a regression of discourse extremeness on a dummy for being a manifesto issued in the runoff. Extremeness is defined as the absolute partisan score constructed from the main Wordscores approach. In columns 2 and 4, candidate×year fixed effects are included - which restricts the sample to candidates who run in the runoff and whose two manifestos are available. Standard errors are clustered by district×year and shown in parentheses. Statistical significance: *p < 0.10,**p < 0.05,***p < 0.01.
Table 3: Change in manifesto content across rounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Text length (1)</th>
<th>Word polarization (2)</th>
<th>Self (3)</th>
<th>Main opp. (4)</th>
<th>Other opp. (5)</th>
<th>Department (6)</th>
<th>Municipality (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runoff</td>
<td>-158.749***</td>
<td>-0.199***</td>
<td>0.943***</td>
<td>0.737***</td>
<td>0.930***</td>
<td>0.122***</td>
<td>0.077***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.376)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-sq (within)</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean at round 1</td>
<td>367.872</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate*Election FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 3 shows the results from a regression of several outcomes related to the textual content of manifestos on a dummy variable for issuing that manifesto in the runoff—conditional on running in both election rounds. In column 1 the outcome is the number of tokens (words) in the document. In column 2 the outcome is the absolute word score constructed in section 4.1. Outcomes in columns 3 through 7 are shares constructed from counting the number of mentions of the candidates’ names, the district’s department and its municipalities, and dividing by the total number of tokens in the manifesto. In columns 2 through 7, the outcome is divided by its standard deviation in the first round. In columns 4 and 5, the sample is restricted to candidates ranked first or second in the first round. Other notes as in Table 2.
Table 4: Twenty words dropped/added the most between election rounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original word</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Avg Diff</th>
<th>Original word</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Avg Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>entreprise</td>
<td>firm</td>
<td>-0.142</td>
<td>tete</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creation</td>
<td>creation</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
<td>prochain</td>
<td>next</td>
<td>0.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>economie</td>
<td>economy</td>
<td>-0.133</td>
<td>second</td>
<td>second</td>
<td>0.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>famille</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>-0.122</td>
<td>victoire</td>
<td>victory</td>
<td>0.245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annee</td>
<td>year</td>
<td>-0.120</td>
<td>confirmer</td>
<td>confirm</td>
<td>0.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>securite</td>
<td>safety</td>
<td>-0.112</td>
<td>accorder</td>
<td>give</td>
<td>0.194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>augmentation</td>
<td>raise</td>
<td>-0.102</td>
<td>deuxieme</td>
<td>second</td>
<td>0.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>charger</td>
<td>taxation</td>
<td>-0.097</td>
<td>rassembler</td>
<td>gather</td>
<td>0.184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allocation</td>
<td>benefits</td>
<td>-0.096</td>
<td>jean</td>
<td>jean</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industrie</td>
<td>manufacturing</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>exprimer</td>
<td>express</td>
<td>0.166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>familiale</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>apporter</td>
<td>bring</td>
<td>0.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>-0.093</td>
<td>appel</td>
<td>call</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activite</td>
<td>activity</td>
<td>-0.091</td>
<td>resultat</td>
<td>outcome</td>
<td>0.157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entreprendre</td>
<td>entrepreneur</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>appelser</td>
<td>call</td>
<td>0.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>domaine</td>
<td>domain</td>
<td>-0.087</td>
<td>nom</td>
<td>name</td>
<td>0.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impot</td>
<td>taxation</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
<td>largement</td>
<td>widely</td>
<td>0.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industriel</td>
<td>industrial</td>
<td>-0.084</td>
<td>legislatives</td>
<td>legislative</td>
<td>0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revenir</td>
<td>come back</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>volunte</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>0.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>abstention</td>
<td>abstention</td>
<td>0.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amelioration</td>
<td>improvement</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
<td>pierre</td>
<td>pierre</td>
<td>0.135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 4 shows the words with lowest and highest average within-candidate change in normalized frequency between election rounds, across all 9 election years. The English translation was performed by the author.
Table 5: Discourse moderation and electoral advantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential party</td>
<td>-0.136***</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.136**</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote share</td>
<td>-0.182***</td>
<td>-0.136**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.032***</td>
<td>-0.017</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicted vote gain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.259***</td>
<td>-0.251***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean moderation</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.189</td>
<td>0.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 5 shows the results from a regression of discourse moderation on different measures of a candidate’s electoral advantage: a dummy for being affiliated with the presidential party (column 1), the vote share received in the first round (column 2), a dummy for being the incumbent representative (column 3), and the predicted gain in votes given the political orientation and the vote share received by candidates who are not on the runoff ballot (column 4). All specifications control for extremeness in the first round and district×year fixed effects. Columns 2 through 5 additionally control for party×year fixed effects. The sample is restricted to candidates who run in both election rounds and whose manifestos are available. Standard errors are clustered by district×year and shown in parentheses. Statistical significance: *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.
Table 6: Discourse moderation and electoral success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elected (1)</th>
<th>Elected (2)</th>
<th>Vote share gain (3)</th>
<th>Vote share gain (4)</th>
<th>Election margin (5)</th>
<th>Election margin (6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>-0.084***</td>
<td>-0.033***</td>
<td>-0.006***</td>
<td>-0.003*</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.006***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>6793</td>
<td>3029</td>
<td>3029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nb of Elections</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean outcome</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>0.453</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>0.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department*Year FE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table 6 shows the results from a regression of electoral success on discourse moderation (divided by its standard deviation). The outcome is a dummy for being elected (columns 1 and 2), the change in vote share between election rounds (columns 3 and 4), and the margin of victory conditional on being elected (columns 5 and 6). All specifications control for party \( \times \) year fixed effects and extremeness in the first round. Columns 1 through 4 control for district \( \times \) year fixed effects, while columns 5 and 6 control for department \( \times \) year fixed effects. Column 2, 4, and 6 control for the observed measures of electoral advantage from Table 5. In column 5, the sample is restricted to elected representatives who win the election—after two election rounds. Standard errors are clustered by district \( \times \) year in columns 1 through 4 and shown in parentheses. Statistical significance: \(* p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01.\)
Table 7: Discourse moderation and legislative activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Z-score (1)</th>
<th>Mean Z-score (2)</th>
<th>Bill Authorship (3)</th>
<th>Interventions (4)</th>
<th>Reports (5)</th>
<th>All questions (6)</th>
<th>Written questions (7)</th>
<th>OQ without debate (8)</th>
<th>OQ with debate (9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>0.071**</td>
<td>0.072**</td>
<td>0.068*</td>
<td>0.168*</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>1.955**</td>
<td>3.095**</td>
<td>0.076*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td>(0.961)</td>
<td>(1.512)</td>
<td>(0.045)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2742</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>1117</td>
<td>1117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nb of Elections</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean outcome</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>2.988</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>20.733</td>
<td>26.015</td>
<td>0.456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The outcome in columns 1 and 2 is the mean Z-score of all four outcomes in columns 3 through 6: the number of bills the representative worked on as primary author, the number of public interventions in legislative debates, the number of reports written on bill proposals, and the number of issued questions to the government of all types (all four measures are yearly averages). The sample is restricted to elected representatives who won after two election rounds. In columns 7 through 9, the outcome is the average yearly number of written questions issued in 1973 and later, the number of oral questions without debate and the number of oral questions with debate asked in 1981 or later (excluding the 1986-1988 legislature), respectively. Other notes as in Table 6.
Table 8: Discourse moderation and extremeness once elected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All questions</th>
<th>Written</th>
<th>OQ no debate</th>
<th>OQ w/ debate</th>
<th>Bills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>-0.116**</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.059)</td>
<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>(0.075)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nb of Election</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Span</td>
<td>58-72</td>
<td>73-96</td>
<td>81-96</td>
<td>81-96</td>
<td>88-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean extremeness</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td>1.171</td>
<td>1.107</td>
<td>1.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The outcome in column 1 is the absolute partisan score (divided by its standard deviation) constructed from the content of questions to the government of all types issued by each representative before 1973—aggregated at the representative level. In column 2, the absolute partisan score is constructed from the written questions issued in 1973 or later, while in columns 3 and 4 it is constructed from oral questions with and without debate in 1981 or later (excluding the 1986-1988 legislature). In column 5, the absolute partisan score is constructed from short descriptions of bill proposed by each representative as primary author, in 1988 or later. Other notes as in Tables 6 and 7.
Appendix

A Model

Vote choice  Voters choose a (known) high-quality candidate with an ideologically distant—but not too distant—policy platform \( ((q_P - q_J)^2 = \frac{1}{4}) \) over a (known) low-quality candidate with a closer platform \( ((q_P - q_J)^2 = \frac{1}{16}) \) if:

\[
-\frac{1}{4} + \omega > -\frac{1}{16} \iff \omega > \frac{3}{16}
\]

However, they prefer a low-quality candidate closer to their ideal point to a high-quality candidate with a very distant platform if:

\[
-\frac{1}{4} > -\frac{9}{16} + \omega \iff \omega < \frac{5}{16}
\]

To ensure that candidates always vote for their ideologically preferred candidate \( P = J \) when she is on the ballot, we consider the decision of extreme voters who may have an incentive to vote strategically for the moderate candidate of the same political orientation in the first round to increase their chances of victory against the opposite political orientation, even when their preferred extreme candidate is still in the race. If voters \( J = 1 \) vote for \( P = 1 \), that candidate is selected for the second round with probability \( 1 - \frac{\pi - \mu}{\epsilon} \) and wins the election in the second round with at least probability \( (1 - \frac{1}{2})\alpha \) —i.e., the vote share an extreme candidate would get by campaigning on non-policy issues in the runoff if it were not a credible signal of quality. If voters \( J = 1 \) vote for \( P = 2 \) instead, that candidate is selected for the second round unequivocally and wins with at most probability \( 1 - (1 - \frac{1}{2})\alpha \) (i.e., the vote share she would get when facing an extreme candidate or a weak moderate candidate who campaigns on non-policy issues non-credibly).
Hence, the expected utility of voters $J = 1$ from voting for $P = 1$ exceeds the expected utility from voting for $P = 2$ if:

$$
\left(1 - \frac{\pi - \alpha}{e}\right) (1 - \frac{\lambda}{2}) \alpha \mu > \left(1 - (1 - \frac{\lambda}{2}) \alpha\right) \left(-\frac{1}{16} + \omega\right)
$$

$$\iff
\mu > \frac{1}{8} \frac{(1 - (1 - \frac{\lambda}{2}) \alpha)}{(1 - \frac{\pi - \alpha}{e}) (1 - \frac{\lambda}{2}) \alpha}$$

where I used the fact that $\omega > \frac{3}{16}$. So for $\mu$ large enough, extreme voters prefer to vote for their extreme party’s candidate over a close moderate candidate in the first round—even if that moderate candidate was known to be high quality.

**Proposition 1** The highest possible gain from campaigning on non-policy issues as opposed to the party platform in the runoff would be obtained by an extreme candidate running against an "adjacent" moderate candidate. Without loss of generality, let us consider an election with $\sigma > \bar{\sigma} - \alpha$, so that the moderate left-wing candidate $P' = 2$ qualifies for second round and the extreme left-wing candidate $P = 1$ is randomly chosen to compete against her. The maximum gain of playing $S_2^2 = 0$ is obtained when candidate $P'$ plays $S_1^2 = 1$ and advertising non-policy issues is a credible signal of quality—so that voters believe $P$ is high quality but $P'$ is not. In this case, the extreme candidate gains the support from the share $1 - \frac{\lambda}{2}$ of the rational voters from groups $J = 3$ who are not too distant to the platform $q_1$—so $(1 - \frac{\lambda}{2})(\pi - \sigma)$—as a fraction $\lambda$ of them do not update their belief on the candidate’s quality and randomly choose between $P' = 2$ and $P = 1$. The electoral cost is the share $\frac{\lambda}{2}$ of voters $J = 1$ who lose confidence in their preferred candidate and choose randomly between her and $P'$. Hence, the net gain is:

$$R(1 - \lambda)(\pi - \sigma) - c_P$$

In the limit, this quantity is maximized when $\sigma \to \bar{\sigma} - \alpha$. Hence, for:

$$c_L > R(1 - \lambda)\alpha$$

the direct cost of campaigning on non-policy issues is always higher than the potential benefit for $c_P = c_L$. Therefore, low-quality politicians always choose $S^2 = 1$, and a share $1 - \lambda$ of voters
update accordingly: \( P(\theta_P = 0 | \theta_P = 0) = 0 \) and \( \tilde{\theta}(\cdot) = 1 \) - that is, voters infer that a candidate who campaigns on non-policy issues is high quality, no matter their vote share.

**Proposition 2** By symmetry, the highest potential gain in votes from playing \( S^2_{\theta_P = 0} \) instead of \( S^2_{\theta_P = 1} \) for the advantaged moderate candidate \( P = 2 \) —when facing extreme candidate \( P' = 1 \) —is gaining a share \( (1 - \lambda)(\bar{\pi} - \sigma) \) of voters from the voter groups \( J = 3 \) when the opponent \( P' = 1 \) also plays \( S^2_{\theta_P' = 0} \). The cost is the loss of a share \( \lambda/2 \) of voters from groups \( J = 2 \) and \( J = 4 \), who would have voted for \( P = 2 \) otherwise, so \( -\lambda/2(\bar{\pi} + \sigma + \alpha) \). Hence, in the limit, the net gain of advertising non-policy issues instead of the party platform for advantaged candidate \( P = 2 \) is:

\[
R \left( (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} (\bar{\pi} + \sigma) \right) - c_P
\]

This quantity is also the highest possible gain of campaigning on non-policy issues for an advantaged moderate candidate facing the moderate candidate from the opposite orientation (e.g., \( P = 2 \) against \( P = 3 \)). For \( (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} (\bar{\pi} + \varepsilon) < \frac{c_H}{\pi} < (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} \bar{\pi} \), there exists a \( \sigma^* \) on \([0, \varepsilon]\) such that for any preference shock \( \sigma > \sigma^* \), the best possible gain of playing \( S^2_{\theta_P = 0} \) for the advantaged candidate with vote share \( \bar{\pi} + \sigma \) is lower than the cost of doing so:

\[
 \left( (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} (\bar{\pi} + \sigma) \right) R < \left( (1 - \lambda)\alpha - \frac{\lambda}{2} (\bar{\pi} + \sigma^*) \right) R = c_H
\]

In this equilibrium, moderate candidates with a first-round vote share higher than \( \bar{\pi} + \sigma^* \) never play \( S^2_{\theta_P = 0} \), even if they are high-quality politicians. All high-quality politicians with a vote share lower than \( \bar{\pi} + \sigma^* \) receive a higher benefit of switching to non-policy issues than the cost of doing so. A share \( 1 - \lambda \) of voters update accordingly: \( \tilde{\theta}(\bar{\pi} + \sigma) = 1 \) for any \( \sigma < \sigma^* \). As both high- and low-quality politicians with a first-round vote share \( \bar{\pi} + \sigma \) or higher play \( S^2_{\theta_P = 1} \), voters expect candidates with high support to be high-quality with probability \( \eta \).

### B Data

#### B.1 Candidate manifestos

Electoral manifestos (*professions de foi*) are a key part of the French electoral campaigns, and together with ballots and election posters, they represent one of the three main parts of official
electoral propaganda. Candidates take care of the printing of these manifestos, which can be reimbursed by the state if they gather at least 5% of the votes during one of the two rounds of the election (Electoral law, articles R39 and L216). The mailing is taken over by an official local propaganda committee as long as the format of the manifestos respects certain criteria. More specifically, electoral manifestos must have a maximum size of 210x297 millimeters and a weight ranging between 60 and 80 grams per square meter (Electoral law, article R29). Furthermore, they cannot combine the three colors of the French flag (blue, white, and red, per article R27 of the electoral law), except if they are part of a party’s emblem. If these constraints are met, the manifestos are mailed to voters, together with ballots, maximum four days before the election (for the first round), and three days before the second round (in the case of a runoff) (Electoral law, articles R34 and R38). Examples of candidate manifestos are shown in Appendix Figures A1 through A4.

To the best of the author’s understanding, the CEVIPOF systematically collected the quasi-universe of manifestos after each election starting from 1958, thanks to the support of the government, which instructed departmental administrations (préfectures) to mail all manifestos issued in their districts to the research center, and to a large network of collaborating researchers who shared manifestos they had collected individually. For reasons that remain unclear, this widespread collection effort faded away after 1993. It came back to life in more recent elections, including 2007 and 2012, but these corpora have not been digitized yet.

The digitized corpus of manifestos from 1958 to 1993 is publicly available on archive.org,44 along with other campaign documents like electoral ballots, posters, flyers, etc. A major limitation of the public data in its current form is that each document corresponds to the collection of manifestos for one election round in one district, not a single candidate manifesto. A necessary step before performing any analysis is to break down district-level documents into individual manifestos and link each manifesto to their issuing candidate. An automatic identification of the author from each page’s content is rendered difficult by the variety of names mentioned in each manifesto45 and some heterogeneity in manifestos’ length.46 Therefore, each page was linked to their issuing candidate "by hand", from the human-readable PDF version of each item.

44https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof/
45Many candidates also mention their opponent(s) in their manifesto.
46While the vast majority of manifestos are two pages long, they are sometimes one, three, or four pages long.
I supplement the corpus of manifestos with electoral outcomes for each election over the 1958-1993 period, which were collected and generously provided by Nicolas Sauger and Pons and Tricaud (2018a). Each election dataset includes district-level information such as the number of registered voters and turnout, as well as candidate-level characteristics—most importantly, official party affiliation and vote share in each election round. Incumbency status is also reported, but information on whether non-elected candidates ran in the past is not. Hence I use fuzzy string matching on candidates’ last name and first name across election years to identify which candidates run several times in the same department.

While the main sample ends in 1993, an additional sample of manifestos issued by candidates at the most recent legislative elections was also collected. In 2017, manifestos were made available online for the first time by the Ministry of the Interior and webscraped by Regards Citoyens, an open-source website advocating for transparency and accessibility of political data. I perform optical character recognition to convert the raw PDF documents into machine-readable text and pre-process the textual content as described above. As not all manifestos were posted online prior to the election, this sample contains 63% of the manifestos issued in the first round and 61% of those issued in the second.

B.2 Dataset on legislative content

As per the general rules of the AN (Art. 135), elected representatives can express their voters’ concerns and interests on specific topics and policies to members of the government by issuing written questions. These questions are directed to a single minister and must remain precise and concise. More importantly, they can be issued at any time even outside official legislative sessions. Their simplicity and flexibility has made them very successful, and their number has grown exponentially, from about 3,700 questions issued over the year 1959 to more than 20,000 in 2015.

Representatives can also ask oral questions directly to a member of the government in two different settings: questions without debate must be asked by a single representative and are sent in advance to the government; questions with debate are more spontaneous and can be asked by one or several representatives from a same partisan group during sessions where all

\[47\] https://programme-candidats.interieur.gouv.fr/

\[48\] https://github.com/regardscitoyens/professions-foi-candidats

\[49\] http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/role-et-pouvoirs-de-l-assemblee-nationale/les-fonctions-de-l-assemblee-nationale/les-fonctions-de-controle-et-l-information-des-deputes/les-questions
members of the government are in attendance. In practice, oral questions without debate are
dedicated to local issues, while questions with debate focus on more general policy issues. As
oral questions can only be asked during public sessions, their overall quantity remains limited
to a few thousand per legislature. But they may attract a large audience as well as media
attention.

I collect the content of questions to the government and bill descriptions in two ways.

**AN website**  First, starting from the ninth legislature (1988-1993), written questions are all
available in text format on the AN’s website. The content of each question was scraped and
their authors were linked to both electoral results and campaign manifestos’ content, leading

The same strategy was followed for oral questions starting from the 7th legislature
(1981-1986), with one caveat: the full text of those questions is not available, except for the oral
questions without debate issued between 1993 and 1997. Instead, the preamble of each
question—which lists the subject and key words—is used, giving us 500, 799, and 1290 oral
questions without debate for the 7th, 9th, and 10th legislatures (respectively) versus 1,180,
1,350, and 2,157 oral questions with debate.

Finally, the AN website also provides a list of bills introduced during the 9th and 10th
legislatures\(^\text{50}\) with a short description for each bill. These descriptions were scraped and the
representative who worked on the bill as primary author was identified for each of them,
leading to a total sample of 1,084 bills for the 9th and 1,500 bills for the 10th legislature.

**Archived official records**  For the earlier legislatures, I was able to extract the content of
written questions by collecting archived copies of the *journal officiel*\(^\text{51}\) in PDF format. An
example of a page of the official record for the 7th legislature (1981-1986) is shown in
Appendix Figure A5. I first apply optical character recognition to each document to convert it
to machine-readable text. I then use a parsing algorithm\(^\text{52}\) to extract the name of the author,
date of publication, and content of each question from the unstructured text. Finally, I use
fuzzy string matching to link each identified author’s name with electoral data. I encounter a
few difficulties worth noting. First, questions located at the bottom of a page are cut in two

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\(^{50}\)http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/9/documents/index-dossier.asp
\(^{51}\)http://archives.assemblee-nationale.fr/
\(^{52}\)Written by Paul Vertier.
and can be erroneously mixed with another question. Second, some questions have an answer attached to them, and some do not. To avoid including words that were not part of the original question, I choose to keep the first 75% of each question’s tokens and drop the remaining ones. Lastly, the official records prior to the fifth legislature include both written and oral questions, so that if the vast majority of identified questions were issued in written form, some may have been asked orally. In subsequent analyses I treat questions issued after the first four elections in the sample as a bundle of questions from all types, without differentiating between types. This leaves a final sample of 8,719 author-identified questions for 1958-1962; 14,409 for 1962-67; 5,001 for 1967-68; 17,340 for 1968-1973; 35,071 for 1973-1978; and 44,240 for 1981.

Examples of both written and oral questions can be found below:

**Examples of written questions** Question 1 of the 10th legislature\(^\text{53}\) (1993-1997): Francis Delattre (Val d’Oise) asks the Minister of the Interior about existing differences in benefits received by personnel of the state working in local administration (prefecture) and personnel working in police stations. He argues that these public agents should be under the same pay scheme and asks if the Minister is planning to fix this.

Question 51139 of the 10th legislature\(^\text{54}\) (1993-1997): Martin Malvy (Lot) asks the Minister of the Education about the future of the high school of Font-Romeu. Some high-level athletes like Colette Besson and Philippe Candeloro were trained there, and many local sport associations use the campus over winter. He asks if the Minister is planning to maintain the high-school training activity.

**Examples of oral questions** Without debate:

Question 1 of the 10th legislature\(^\text{55}\) (1993-1997): Jean-Louis Masson (Moselle) asks the Minister of land-use planning about three issues regarding the eastern part of France. First, he wants confirmation that the prestigious Ecole nationale d’administration will indeed be transferred from Paris to Strasbourg. Second, he inquires whether the new government is planning to construct the entire Paris-Braudecourt (in Moselle) TGV section that was promised by the former government. Third, he asks whether the government would be ready

\(^{53}\) [http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-1QE.htm](http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-1QE.htm)

\(^{54}\) [http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-51139QE.htm](http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-51139QE.htm)

\(^{55}\) [http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-1QOSD.htm](http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-1QOSD.htm)
to finance the construction of a new highway that would link Nancy, Metz, and Thionville to lighten traffic on the existing A31 highway.

With debate:

Question 1 of the 10th legislature (1993-1997): (Full text not available) Jacques Godfrain (Aveyron) asks the Minister of land-use planning about access to public services in rural areas.

**Examples of bill description**  Bill 3204 of the 10th legislature, proposed by Jacques Masdeu-Arus, asks employers to pay for their employees’ highway toll fees.

## C Scaling methodology

### C.1 Text pre-processing

I pre-process manifestos’ content following standard steps from the literature: removing stopwords and special characters, tokenizing documents at the single-word level, and lemmatizing each word using Spacy’s French model (which, despite being often described as top-of-the-art, yields mixed results in this context). In addition, I restrict the vocabulary to words used by at least 0.5% and at most 50% of the first round-manifestos, for each election year separately. This reduces vocabulary to an average of about 4,800 unique words per election and 234 tokens per manifesto.

### C.2 Principal Component Analysis

I perform a principal component analysis on the document-term matrix representation of the corpus of manifestos in the first round for each election separately. The ratio of variance in word count explained by each of the first five components is shown in Figure A3. The first principal component explains close to twice as much variance as the second does in each election year, except for 1993, where both first and second principal components explain close to the same share of overall variance.

I then project each observation onto the first principal component and construct a bin scatter plot of the first PC score by political orientation, from far right to far left. Figure A6 shows these plots for each election year separately. The color scheme suggests that the dimension spanned

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56 [http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-1QG.htm](http://questions.assemblee-nationale.fr/q10/10-1QG.htm)

57 A document-term matrix displays the frequency of each word in each document, where each word is a column and each document a row.
by the first principal component is close to the left-right axis. For 1993 (Figure A6i) I plot projection onto the second principal component against the first and see that while the first PC (horizontal) still corresponds to a left-right scale, the second (vertical) separates the extreme far-right and far-left candidates from the more mainstream ones.

C.3 Alternative scaling: MNIR

I raise two concerns about the validity of the main Wordscores approach (see Section 3) to construct partisan scores. First, this simple approach has been criticized for not being grounded into any explicit theoretical model of speech (Lowe 2008). Second, and more importantly, it may suffer from severe bias in a finite sample and provide measures too sensitive to infrequent words (Gentzkow et al. 2019b). Intuitively, some words may appear very polarized because they happen to be used only by right-wing or left-wing candidates in this particular corpus, even though they do not carry any meaningful partisan weight. To alleviate these concerns, I test alternative Wordscores specifications and find that both the partisan score and subsequent results are robust to changes in the reference scale (see Appendix D), sample, or vocabulary. Additionally, I adopt a second scaling approach that explicitly provides an estimation fix for bias in a finite sample.

**Multinomial Inverse Regression** I describe here the framework introduced by Taddy (2013). The frequency of word \( w \) in document \( j \) - \( c_{wj} \) - is derived from a discrete choice model over the vocabulary of size \( W \) and is assumed to follow a multinomial distribution of the form

\[
c_{wj} \sim MN(q_{wj}, m_j)
\]

where \( m_j \) is the number of words in document \( j \) and

\[
q_{wj} = \frac{\exp(\alpha_w + \phi_w D_j)}{\sum_{k=1}^{W} \exp(\alpha_k + \phi_k D_j)}
\]

\( D_j \) is equal to 1 \((-1)\) if \( j \) is issued by a right-wing (left-wing) candidate. \( \phi_w \) is a word loading that measures sensitivity to party affiliation or the gain in utility from using this word for a right-wing candidate over a left-wing one. A sufficient reduction (Cook et al. 2007) for \( j \)’s partisanship given the observed vector of word frequencies is the following projection:

\[
Z_j = \sum_{w=1}^{W} \phi_w \cdot \frac{c_{wj}}{m_j}
\]

which works as an alternative to the initial partisan score \( \text{Score}_j \).
The parameters of interest $\alpha_w$ and $\phi_w$ are estimated through distributed multinomial regression (Taddy et al. 2015), where a Poisson approximation for the distribution of $c_{wj}$ allows for faster and more efficient distributed computing. The implied negative log-likelihood for each word is proportional to:

$$l(\alpha_w, \phi_w) = \sum_{j=1}^{N} [m_j \exp(\alpha_w + \phi_w D_j) - c_{wj}(\alpha_w + \phi_w D_j)]$$

Following Gentzkow et al. (2019b), I control bias through penalization. In particular, I apply the gamma-lasso procedure described in Taddy (2017) so that the preferred estimator is:

$$\hat{\alpha}_w, \hat{\phi}_w = \arg\min_{\alpha_w, \phi_w} [l(\alpha_w, \phi_w) + N\lambda \gamma^{-1} \log(1 + \gamma |\phi_w|)]$$

where $N$ is the number of documents in the corpus, $\lambda$ is a standard Lasso penalty, and $\gamma$ is the penalty scale.\(^{58}\) This penalized estimator shrinks noisy loadings to zero, resulting in a sparse solution that downweights the artificially high influence of rare words in the corpus.

Figure A7 shows bin scatter plots of the obtained sufficient reduction projection $Z_j$ against the Wordscores partisan score $S_j$ by political orientation for each election separately. It shows a striking correlation that suggests differences in discourse partisanship as measured by each method are negligible. More specifically, the ranking of candidates from most extreme on the left to most extreme on the right is well preserved.

### D Robustness checks

I first test for the robustness of the results in Table 2 to including the number of tokens in the manifesto as additional control in equation 2, to ensure that discourse moderation is not entirely driven by a reduction in manifesto length and instead reflects a deeper change in textual content. Estimates are shown in Appendix Table A4.

Next, I test the robustness of within-candidate discourse moderation to alternative scaling methods on the main sample in Appendix Table A5a. Column 1 shows the baseline estimate using Wordscores, as displayed in column 2 of Table 2. To facilitate the comparison across different methods, I divide the outcome by its overall standard deviation in the first round.

\(^{58}\)For detail on the advantages of concave regularization and Gamma Lasso versus Lasso penalization, see Taddy (2017)
Hence the estimate in column 1 shows that extremeness decreases by 34% of a standard deviation between election rounds. In column 2, I apply the Wordscores approach described in Section 4.1 in the main text to the pooled vocabulary of manifestos from both first and second election rounds. This may reduce the influence of words that are used in first round, but only very rarely in the second. This change in word usage is an endogenous mechanism that plays a role in discourse moderation, but it can also increase noise if there is little overlap between first- and second-round vocabulary. I overcome this potential concern by pooling the manifestos from both rounds when constructing word scores. The estimated decrease in extremeness is smaller in magnitude (17% of a standard deviation) but still significant at the 1% level.

Next, in column 3, I expand the left-right scale to give more negative weight to words used relatively more by the far left and more positive weight to words used relatively more by the far right. The estimate is still negative and significant at the 1% level, corresponding to a decrease in extremeness of 16% of a standard deviation.

Then I restrict the vocabulary to the most distinctive words using Tf-Idf weights. Tf-Idf is defined as the product of a term (word) frequency and its inverse document frequency, which gives more weight to words used frequently by some documents but not all. More precisely, I shrink to zero the frequency of words below the median non-zero Tf-Idf score and construct word scores as described in Section 4.1 from the new document-term matrix. This reduces the vocabulary size and increases the influence of words that are more document specific. Column 4 shows that this restriction yields an almost identical estimate of -35%, significant at the 1% level.

In column 5, I construct partisan scores from an alternative measure of word polarization: the Pearson’s Chi-square statistic. This approach has been used by various researchers (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2010; Jensen et al. 2012; Ash et al. 2017) to measure discourse polarization or divisiveness, as it provides a test for the null hypothesis that a word is being used equally often by left-wing and right-wing manifestos. I construct the statistic for each word (positive if being used more often by the aggregate of right-wing manifestos, negative if being used more often by the left-wing ones) and average it within the document to get an alternative partisan score for each manifesto. The estimates displayed in column 5 of Table A5a suggest that using this alternative measure as an outcome yields a similar moderation pattern, with a significant decrease of 5% of a standard deviation in extremeness.
Finally, I use the absolute value of the sufficient reduction projection from the multinomial inverse regression defined in Appendix C.3 as alternative outcome in column 6. The result is similar to the main estimate from column 1 (-33% of a standard deviation).

In column 7, I construct out-of-sample word scores. More precisely, the partisan scores of candidates who make it to the runoff in a given election are constructed using word scores from candidates who do not make it to the runoff. The point estimate is still negative (-26% of a standard deviation) and significant at the 1% level.

Appendix Table A5b shows that discourse moderation is robust to the alternative scaling approaches described above in the additional 2017 sample as well. In column 8, I test a different out-of-sample construction of word scores: I leverage the availability of party manifestos for all main parties in the Manifesto Project, from far left to far right, to construct candidate partisan scores using word scores from these party manifestos. The estimated coefficient reflects an even bigger moderation effect, corresponding to a decrease in extremeness of 40% of a standard deviation.

E Regression discontinuity estimations

E.1 Impact of the qualifying a third candidate

I closely follow the empirical strategy described in Pons and Tricaud (2018a) to estimate the causal impact of the runoff qualification of a third candidate on discourse moderation among first- and second-ranked candidates. The outcome is defined as (minus) the change in absolute partisan score between election rounds. I use a non-parametric approach as in Imbens and Lemieux (2008) and Calonico et al. (2014) with MSERD bandwidths (Calonico et al. 2018). I choose to focus on elections held in 1978 or later, when the qualifying threshold is higher and so only a third candidate ever qualifies for the runoff. In the previous years, the threshold is lower, so multiple candidates can qualify, often leading qualified candidates to drop out of the race. Hence, the predictions of how qualifying a third candidate might affect discourse moderation among the first two are unclear. In addition, I only report reduced form estimates from the sharp RD design, where treatment is defined as competing in a runoff to which a

While this approach corresponds more closely to the method described in Laver et al. (2003), I limit its application to the 2017 corpus, as the collection of party manifestos provided by the Manifesto Project over the 1958-1993 period is incomplete and does not cover the full left-right ideological scale for any of the years. In particular, many manifestos from right-wing parties are missing, as well as all manifestos from the far right.
third candidate qualified—without necessarily staying in the race. Indeed, the decision to stay on the ballot or not is endogenous and may impact the first two-ranked candidates’ campaign strategies in different ways beyond the impact of having a third candidate in the competition. Hence, the exclusion restriction required to interpret the estimates from a fuzzy RD design as the causal impact of the number of candidates in the race may be violated. Instead, reduced form estimates are informative of the direction in which the number of candidates on the ballot is likely to impact discourse moderation.

Appendix Figure A10a shows a tiny discontinuity at the qualifying threshold, where average discourse moderation decreases on the right of the third-ranked candidate qualifying margin. The corresponding estimate is displayed in column 1 of Appendix Table A8. The negative point estimate of -0.053 is consistent with the prediction that first- and second-ranked candidates moderate their discourse less often when a third candidate is likely to stay in the race, and when there are fewer opportunities to attract voters whose preferred ideological candidate is no longer on the ballot by signaling quality. However, this estimate is not significant at any conventional level.

I find a larger effect of -0.165, significant at the 5% level, when restricting the sample to first or second-ranked candidates who face a main opponent from the opposite political orientation and a third-ranked candidate from the same orientation\(^{60}\) (column 3) and a much smaller insignificant negative effect when restricting the sample to candidates facing both a main opponent and a third-ranked candidate from the same orientation (column 5). These estimates are consistent with what one would expect (see Section 4.2 in the main text). In addition, using IK optimal bandwidths yields estimates that are smaller in magnitude and insignificant but whose interpretation is consistent with the prediction as well (columns 2, 4, and 6).

There are two reasons why these estimates may only be marginally significant, despite pointing in the right direction: first, sample sizes are fairly small, with only a few hundred observations around the threshold, and the estimates may suffer from insufficient statistical power. Second, the outcome is quite noisy by nature, as discourse moderation is itself constructed from estimated word scores, which may inflate standard errors even more. This is why I interpret these RD results with caution and prefer to use them as supportive evidence for strategic discourse moderation, as opposed to a main finding.

\(^{60}\)Excluding non-classified candidates whose ideological orientation is unclear.
E.2 Impact of facing an extreme candidate in the runoff

I test for the impact of facing an extreme opponent as opposed to a moderate opponent on the discourse moderation pattern of (moderate) first-ranked candidates in the runoff. To do so, I restrict the sample to districts where a runoff needs to be held because the first-ranked candidate did not get an absolute majority of votes or because participation was too low, and where the second-ranked candidate did not pass the qualifying threshold of 5% (in 1958 or 1962), 10% (from 1967 to 1973), or 12.5% (in 1978 and later). In these districts, the two candidates who got the highest vote shares qualify for the runoff. I exploit the fact that when the second- and third-ranked candidates are from different political orientations and receive very close vote shares in the runoff, the orientation of the candidate that gets to compete against the first-ranked candidate in the runoff is "as good as random." Hence, the first-ranked candidate may be quasi-randomly assigned an opponent who is an extreme candidate, as opposed to a moderate one.

I use the empirical strategy described in Appendix E.1, where the running variable is defined as the difference in vote shares between the second and the third-ranked candidate if the second candidate is extreme (far left or far right) and the third is moderate (left, center, or right), or the difference in vote shares between the third and second candidate when the third is extreme and the second is moderate. Figure A11a shows a visible discontinuity: the average discourse moderation of moderate first-ranked candidates drops down at the right of the threshold, when they are facing an extreme candidate as opposed to a moderate one. The corresponding estimate, shown in column 1 of Table A9, is negative and quite large (-0.04) but not significant at all, probably due to the extremely small number of available observations (116 in total). The point estimate is larger when measuring the impact of facing an extreme candidate from the same political orientation as opposed to a moderate candidate from the opposite orientation (column 3)—but still insignificant. Results are similar when using IK optimal bandwidths (columns 2 and 4).

F Case study: Jean-Marie Le Pen vs. Dominique Baille

To better illustrate the moderation and personalization patterns described in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, I provide and compare two concrete examples. First, I examine the first and second round manifestos of Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1993, whom I chose because he is the greatest "moderator"
in that year and stands among the top 20 moderators across all years. Jean-Marie Le Pen is a controversial politician who founded the anti-immigration National Front party in 1972 and ran for office—including in presidential elections—multiple times after that. In 1993, he was a candidate for a legislative seat in the 3rd district of Alpes-Maritimes. He made it to the runoff but lost to a moderate right-wing candidate, Rudy Salles. The two pages of his manifesto issued before the first round are shown in Appendix Figure A1, while the two pages of his manifesto issued before the second round are shown in Appendix Figure A2.

In the first round, the manifesto is very dense and provides a lot of content. The first page contains a short paragraph from the candidate addressing the voters directly, to inform them of the "grim future ahead of them" and present the National Front as "a beacon of hope to restore France's strength and glory." The rest of the page displays three blocks, each of them attacking a different mainstream party with numbers and facts that speak against their policy platforms. The second page is a template used by the quasi-universe of National Front's candidates in that year, which describes the twenty policy priorities for the party. The key issues are displayed in large and bold font at the top of the page: "immigration," "unemployment," "taxation," "insecurity," "injustice," "corruption." Overall, this manifesto is as close as a candidate manifesto can get to a pure party platform.

The second-round manifesto looks very different. The first page displays a huge colored picture of Jean-Marie Le Pen and no text besides the invitation to vote for him. The second page is a rather short letter addressing the voters directly, signed by his hand. The letter thanks those who voted for him in the first round, asks them to keep mobilized in the second round, mentions that the incumbent representative is entangled in personal and family scandals, and finally reminds voters who did not support him in the first round that he is the candidate of "integrity and honor." There is not a single mention of the policy issues discussed at length in the first round manifesto.

Jean-Marie Le Pen’s strategy in that election seems quite clear: campaign on detailed policy elements in the first round—emphasizing the most polarizing ones such as immigration and elite corruption, and using a template common to all candidates in the party—but switch to a much shorter and more general statement about his own consensus-based qualities ("integrity and honor") in the second round. These qualitative observations are consistent with previous findings: candidates who moderate their discourse in the runoff do so by moving away from
a common party platform and its policy issues to campaign on more neutral, personalized content instead.

Second, I analyze the manifestos of Dominique Paille, a moderate right-wing candidate (Union for French Democracy) running in the 4th district of Deux-Sevres. He won in a landslide in the runoff because his opponent, another moderate right-wing candidate (running under the banner of Rally for the Republic), dropped out of the race. Unlike Le Pen, Dominique Paille’s estimated discourse moderation between rounds is close to zero. Paille’s manifestos issued in each round are shown in Appendix Figures A3 and A4. Both documents look strikingly similar to one another, with identical structure and pictures. On the first page, the candidate addresses the voters directly to emphasize his commitment to the party values (“economic liberalism,” “social progress,” “individual responsibility”) as well as to local politics. The second page lists the national party platform and the candidate’s propositions to address local issues. The differences between manifestos are marginal and meaningless.
Figure A1: Jean-Marie Le Pen’s manifesto in 1993 in the first round

Source: Electoral archives of CEVIPOF SciencesPo, EL189L199303006031PPdfmasterocr—https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof
IMMIGRATION, CHÔMAGE, IMPÔTS
INSÉCURITÉ, INJUSTICES, CORRUPTION...
ÇA SUFFIT!

AVEC JEAN-MARIE LE PEN
LE COURAGE DE DIRE, LA VOLONTE D’AGIR...

1. ORGANISER LE RETOUR DES IMMIGRES CHEZ EUX
   en abrogeant la carte de séjour du 10 ans renouvelable.

2. REFORMER LE CODE DE LA NATIONALITÉ
   en supprimant l’acquisition automatique de la nationalité française.

3. ACCORDER LA PRIORITÉ AUX FRANÇAIS
   pour les emplois, l’âge scolaire, les logements.

4. DONNER DU TRAVAIL AUX FRANÇAIS
   en maintenant les travailleurs français dans leur emploi en cas de difficultés économiques et en organisant le retour des immigrés chez eux.

5. LIBERER LES PME-PME DES CONTRAINTES
   qui entraînent l’embrasement.

6. ALLÉGER LES CHARGES
   qui pèsent sur les entreprises.

7. RETABLIR LA PEINE DE MORT
   et la condamnation à la sanction pour tous les délits stupréfiant et cimetières.

8. EXPULSER LES DELINQUANTS
   ET CLANDESTINS ÉTRANGERS

9. CRÉER LE REVENU PARENTAL
   POUR LES FAMILLES FRANÇAISES
   par le versement d’un salaire de 6.000 F avec un droit élevé dès les enfants à âge de raison.

10. ATRIBUIER AUX FAMILLES FRANÇAISES
    UN CHEQUE SCOLAIRE
    afin d’assurer le libre choix de l’école.

11. LUTTER CONTRE LA PAUVRETÉ
    DES FRANÇAIS
    en créant une allocation nationale de solidarité.

12. REEVALUER LES BAS SALAIRES
    en luttant contre l’utilisation de la main d’œuvre immigrée à bas prix.

13. PROTEGER NOTRE ÉCONOMIE
    en concourant de la concurrence suisse en rétablissant les tarifs.

14. SI VOUS VOULEZ UN DÉPUTÉ...
    1. Qui ait les mains propres.
    2. Qui soit patriote, libre
       et indépendant des lobbies
       et des mafias.
    3. Qui vous dise la vérité.
    4. Qui remet de l’ordre
       dans les affaires de la France.
    5. Qui combatte l’immigration,
       le chômage, l’insécurité
       et les excès fiscaux.

15. GARANTIR LES RETRAITES
    ET LES INDÉCENNENS
    en limitant la retraite à la carte et
    la retraite par capitalisation.

16. SAUVER L’AGRICULTURE
    FRANÇAISE
    en supprimant la taxe sur le fromage
    et en établissant la pétition
    pour la préservation
    de l’agriculture française.

17. RENDRE LA PAROLE
    AUX FRANÇAIS
    en instituant le référendum
    d’initiative populaire.

18. PROTEGER NOTRE ENVIRONNEMENT
    en défendant notre patrimoine
    naturel et culturel.

19. RESTAURER NOTRE DÉFENSE NATIONALE
    par l’augmentation de ses moyens
    budgétaires et l’embauche des
    combattants de guerre.

20. VOTEZ UTILE!
    UNE VOIX RPR/UDF DE PLUS NE
    CHANGERA RIEN...

En prévision, une loi FN de plus, c’est vraiment utile :
- À la démocratie, pour éviter que des milieux deFrançais s’empressent de toute représentation à l’Assemblée Nationale
- À la France, pour permettre que soient enfin les voix de ceux qui disent tout haut.

VOTEZ JEAN-MARIE LE PEN

VOTEZ FRONT NATIONAL
LES FRANÇAIS D’ABORD!

Source: Electoral archives of CEVIPOF SciencesPo, EL189L19930306031FPdfmasterocr—https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof
Figure A2: Jean-Marie Le Pen’s manifesto in 1993 in the second round

Source: Electoral archives of CEVIPOF SciencesPo, EL189L199303006032PFPdfmasterocr—https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof
Chers Niçoises et Niçois,

Permettez moi tout d'abord de remercier les électrices et électeurs qui m'ont témoigné leur confiance en me plaçant largement en tête de tous les candidats dès le premier tour.

Je leur demande instamment de ne pas se démobiliser et au contraire de voter et faire voter le 28 mars pour ma candidature et celle de Madame Pastorel, ma suppléante.

Le député sortant, Rudy Salles, empêché dans des affaires douteuses, tant personnelles que familiales, n'a pas obtenu, et de loin, son quittus électoral. Il n'est pas digne de représenter Nice au Parlement.

A tous les électeurs qui n'ont pas voté au premier tour ou qui ont voté pour un autre candidat, je demande de manifester clairement un choix qui ne peut être, bien sûr, que celui de l'intégrité et de l'honneur.

Ils pourront ainsi corriger les résultats du premier tour et donner une voix à l'Assemblée Nationale aux millions d'électeurs qui en sont privés, par un scrutin injuste et brutal.

Très cordialement à vous,

Jean-Marie Le Pen
Figure A3: Dominique Paille’s manifesto in 1993 in the first round

Source: Electoral archives of CEVIPOF SciencesPo, EL196L199303079041PPdfmasterocr—https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesduevipof
AUCUNE PROMESSE MAIS LA VOLONTE D’ABOUTIR

Nos priorités pour la France :

■ l’emploi par la réduction des charges, une autre politique éducative et l’amélioration de la formation professionnelle.
■ un encouragement à l’investissement des P.M.E. - P.M.I. par un soutien fiscal à l’épargne investie dans les fonds propres et la création d’entreprises.
■ l’aménagement du territoire au profit des zones rurales pour enrayer la désertification.
■ la défense et la promotion de notre agriculture par la renégociation de la PAC, le refus du pré-accord GATT et la mise en place de vraies mesures nationales de diminution des charges fiscales et sociales qui pèsent sur nos exploitations.
■ un traitement des problèmes sociaux qui fasse appel à la responsabilité de chacun pour préserver et améliorer notre système de protection.
■ une véritable décentralisation des moyens culturels pour que la région parisienne ne soit pas la seule à bénéficier de toutes les actions.

Mes priorités pour le Nord Deux-Sèvres :

■ offrir sur place à nos jeunes des formations diversifiées et de haute qualité.
■ accélérer le développement de nos voies de communication afin qu’autour de notre seul axe national (la N 149) en maillage de voies secondaires puisse rapidement être réalisé.
■ obtenir des liaisons ferroviaires entre Thouars et Tours permettant des correspondances pratiques avec le TGV.
■ imposer le Nord Deux-Sèvres dans les zones d’aides européennes aux régions défavorisées ou en situation difficile.
■ développer nos productions agricoles de qualité, accompagner leur mise sur le marché et soutenir les industries agro-alimentaires.
■ maintenir le petit commerce, implanter harmonieusement l’habitat social dans notre campagne et promouvoir les actions touristiques complémentaires à l’activité économique et qui peuvent mettre en valeur notre environnement.

Le 21 MARS, vous choisissez un député :

■ efficace, à la compétence nationale reconnue
■ disponible parce qu’il ne cumule pas les mandats
■ simple, accessible parce qu’il conçoit autrement la politique.

VOTEZ UTILE DÈS LE 1er TOUR
VOTEZ et FAITES VOTER
D. PAILLE

Vu, le Candidat,
Dominique PAILLE
Maire des Aubiers,

Suppléant :
Albert BROCHARD
Député sortant.

Source: Electoral archives of CEVIPOF SciencesPo, EL196L199303079041PFPdfmasterocr—https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof
Figure A4: Dominique Paille’s manifesto in 1993 in the second round

Source: Electoral archives of CEVIPOF SciencesPo, EL196L199303079042PFPdfmasterocr—https://archive.org/details/archiveselectoralesducevipof
AUCUNE PROMESSE MAIS LA VOLONTE D'ABOUTIR

Nos priorités pour la France :

• l'emploi par la réduction des charges, une autre politique éducative et l'amélioration de la formation professionnelle.
• un encouragement à l'investissement des P.M.E. – P.M.I par un soutien fiscal à l'épargne investie dans les fonds propres et la création d'entreprises.
• l'aménagement du territoire au profit des zones rurales pour enrayer la désertification.
• la défense et la promotion de notre agriculture par la renégociation de la PAC, le refus du pré-accord GATT et la mise en place de vraies mesures nationales de diminution des charges fiscales et sociales qui pesent sur nos exploitations.
• un traitement des problèmes sociaux qui fasse appel à la responsabilité de chacun pour préserver et améliorer notre système de protection.
• une véritable décentralisation des moyens culturaux pour que la région parisienne ne soit pas la seule à bénéficier de toutes les actions.

Mes priorités pour le Nord Deux-Sèvres :

• offrir sur place à nos jeunes des formations diversifiées et de haute qualité.
• accélérer le développement de nos voies de communication afin qu'autour de notre seul axe national (la N 149), un maillage de voies secondaires puisse rapidement être réalisé.
• obtenir des liaisons ferroviaires entre Thouars et Tours permettant des correspondances pratiques avec le TGV.
• imposer le Nord Deux-Sèvres dans les zones d'aides européennes aux régions défavorisées où en situation difficile.
• développer nos productions agricoles de qualité, accompagner leur mise sur le marché et soutenir les industries agro-alimentaires.
• maintenir le petit commerce, implanter harmonieusement l'habitat social dans notre campagne et promouvoir les actions touristiques complémentaires à l'activité économique et qui peuvent mettre en valeur notre environnement.

LE 28 MARS, vous élirez un député :

• efficace, à la compétence nationale reconnue.
• simple, accessible parce qu'il conçoit autrement la politique.
• déterminé à participer activement à la politique de redressement national souhaitée par une majorité des Français.

AU 2ème TOUR, RASSEMBLEZ-VOUS AUTOUR DE LA CANDIDATURE DE DOMINIQUE PAILLÉ

Vu, le Candidat,
Dominique PAILLÉ
Maire des Aubiers.

Suppléant,
Albert BROCHARD
Député sortant.
6 Juillet 1981

Questions et Réponses

Mme Dupont pose le problème de la sécurité de l'eau usée. Elle demande des informations sur les mesures prises pour garantir la sécurité de l'eau usée. Elle souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.

M. Dupont, député, souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.

M. Dupont, député, souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.

M. Dupont, député, souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.

M. Dupont, député, souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.

M. Dupont, député, souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.

M. Dupont, député, souligne l'importance de cette question pour la santé publique et demande des informations détaillées sur les mesures prises pour assurer une eau potable de qualité.
Figure A6 shows bin scatter plots of the first round manifesto’s projection onto the first principal component from a principal component analysis, by political orientation and for each election separately. In Figure A6i the projection onto the second principal component is plotted against the projection onto the first one.

Notes: Figure A6 shows bin scatter plots of the first round manifesto’s projection onto the first principal component from a principal component analysis, by political orientation and for each election separately. In Figure A6i the projection onto the second principal component is plotted against the projection onto the first one.
Figure A7: Sufficient reduction projection and partisan score by political orientation

Notes: Figure A7 shows scatter plots, binned by political orientation, of the sufficient reduction projection $Z_j$ from estimating a multinomial inverse regression of word frequency on partisan affiliation, against the partisan score $Score_j$ constructed with the Wordscores approach.
Figure A8: Kernel density of partisan score in each round by election year

(a) 1958

(b) 1962

(c) 1967

(d) 1968

(e) 1973

(f) 1978

(g) 1981

(h) 1988

(i) 1993

Notes: Same notes as in Figure 3. Observations in each election year are pooled across political orientations.
Figure A9: Correlation between discourse moderation and content personalization

(a) Raw correlation

(b) Residualized

Notes: Same notes as in Figure 4. Personalization is defined as (minus) the change in Levenshtein distance between the candidate manifesto and the party manifesto from the Manifesto Project between election rounds. N=3,876.
Figure A10: Impact of qualification of a third candidate to the runoff

(a) Any third candidate

(b) Third candidate from the same orientation

(c) Third candidate from the opposite orientation

Notes: Dots represent the local averages of discourse moderation (defined as minus the change in absolute partisan score between election rounds) for the first and second-ranked candidates, calculated within 1-percentage-point-wide bins of the qualifying margin of the third-ranked candidate in the first round. Continuous lines are a linear fit. The sample is restricted to candidates ranked first or second in 1978 or later (N=2,990) in Figure A10a and further restricted to candidates facing a main opponent from the opposite orientation and a third-ranked candidate from the same orientation in Figure A10b (N=1,251), and to candidates facing a main opponent from the same orientation but a third-ranked candidate from another orientation as well in Figure A10c (N=1,253).
Figure A11: Impact of facing an extreme candidate in the runoff

(a) Any extreme vs any moderate

(b) Extreme from the same orientation vs moderate from the opposite orientation

Notes: Dots represent the local averages of discourse moderation for the first-ranked candidate, calculated within 1 percentage-point-wide bins of the runoff qualifying margin of an extreme candidate in the first round. In Figure A11a, the sample is restricted to moderate candidates ranked first in districts where the second-ranked candidate did not pass the runoff qualifying threshold and where the second or third-ranked candidate is extreme while the other is moderate (N=116). In Figure A11b, the sample is further restricted to districts where the second or third-ranked candidate is extreme from the same orientation as the moderate first-ranked candidate while the other is moderate from the opposite orientation (N=106). Other notes as in Appendix Figure A10.
Table A1: Characteristics of runoff candidates and sample selection

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<th>All runoff candidates</th>
<th>Included in sample</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Left</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>0.50</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0.82</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Vote share 2</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># obs.</td>
<td>8048</td>
<td>6793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table A1 shows the mean of the following variables among all runoff candidates, and among runoff candidates whose first- and second-round manifestos are available: dummy variables for each political orientation, vote share in the first round, vote share in the second round, a dummy for being the incumbent and a dummy for being elected. Standard deviations are shown in italic.
Table A2: District-level summary statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election year</th>
<th># registered voters</th>
<th># candidates at round 1</th>
<th>Turnout at round 1</th>
<th>Runoff</th>
<th># candidates at round 2</th>
<th>Turnout at round 2</th>
<th># districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58203.40</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9434.47</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>59225.60</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10356.90</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>60242.40</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12566.00</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>59888.90</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12758.60</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>65174.90</td>
<td>6.54</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15679.20</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>72932.50</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21288.50</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>74957.80</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23817.00</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>67415.20</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23817.00</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>68269.40</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11140.70</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>65211.20</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>4224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15985.50</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table A2 shows the mean of the following variables across districts, for each election year separately: the number of registered voters, the number of candidates who run in the first round, turnout in the first round, the probability of holding a runoff election, the number of candidates who run and turnout in the second round (conditional on having a second round). Standard deviations are shown in italic.
Table A3: Ratio of explained variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>PC1</th>
<th>PC2</th>
<th>PC3</th>
<th>PC4</th>
<th>PC5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table A3 shows the ratio of the variance in word count explained by each of the first five principal components over the total variance in word count.
Table A4: Discourse moderation when controlling for text length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runoff</td>
<td>-0.324***</td>
<td>-0.190***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>30,879</td>
<td>13,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-sq (within)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean at round 1</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>0.736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table A4 shows the results from a regression of discourse extremeness on a dummy for being a manifesto issued in the runoff, controlling for the number of tokens in the manifesto. Other notes as in Table 2.
Table A5: Discourse moderation and robustness checks

(a) Main sample: 1958-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wordscores (1)</th>
<th>Pooled (2)</th>
<th>Fullscale (3)</th>
<th>Tf-Idf (4)</th>
<th>Pearson X2 (5)</th>
<th>SR Proj (6)</th>
<th>Other cand. (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runoff</td>
<td>-0.342***</td>
<td>-0.173***</td>
<td>-0.158***</td>
<td>-0.351***</td>
<td>-0.046***</td>
<td>-0.327***</td>
<td>-0.256***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-sq (within)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean at round 1</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Additional sample: 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wordscores (1)</th>
<th>Pooled (2)</th>
<th>Fullscale (3)</th>
<th>Tf-Idf (4)</th>
<th>Pearson X2 (5)</th>
<th>SR Proj (6)</th>
<th>Other cand. (7)</th>
<th>Party manifesto (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runoff</td>
<td>-0.365***</td>
<td>-0.221***</td>
<td>-0.417***</td>
<td>-0.500***</td>
<td>-0.222***</td>
<td>-0.309***</td>
<td>-0.419***</td>
<td>-0.391***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.026)</td>
<td>(0.029)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
<td>1,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-sq (within)</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean at round 1</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.252</td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>0.359</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>0.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table A5a shows results similar to column 2 of Table 2 using alternative definitions of extremeness. In each specification, the outcome is divided by its standard deviation in the first round. The partisan score is constructed using Wordscores on first round vocabulary (columns 1), Wordscores on the pooled vocabulary across rounds (columns 2), Wordscores with a scale extended to far right and far left (column 3), Wordscores on vocabulary restricted to large Tf-Idf weights (column 4), Pearson Chi2 statistic (column 5), the sufficient reduction projection from a multinomial inverse regression (column 6), Wordscores from previous election (column 7), and Wordscores from non-runoff candidates only (column 8). Figure A5b shows results similar to column 4 of Table 2, using the alternative definitions of extremeness described above. In column 7, the partisan score is constructed using Wordscores from party manifestos of the Manifesto Project. All specifications control for candidate×year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered by district×year and shown in parentheses. Statistical significance: *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.
Table A6: Mean party cohesion by political orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political orientation</th>
<th>Mean pairwise cohesiveness</th>
<th># pairs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Far Left</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>98183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.290</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>0.060</td>
<td>1959335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.082</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>205238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>700953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.023</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far Right</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>280080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Table A6 shows the mean party cohesion across years for each political orientation separately. Party cohesion is defined as one minus the mean edit distance between two candidate manifestos, across all possible pairs of candidates within the same party. These pairwise edit distances are constructed for each party and election year separately, then averaged over all parties and elections by political orientation. Independent candidates without clear party affiliation are excluded. Standard errors are shown in italic.
Table A7: Twenty left- and right-wing words dropped/added the most

(a) Left-wing candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dropped</th>
<th>Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original word</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduction</td>
<td>decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooperation</td>
<td>cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semaine</td>
<td>week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profit</td>
<td>profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sante</td>
<td>health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collectif</td>
<td>collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>population</td>
<td>population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gros</td>
<td>big</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>riche</td>
<td>wealthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>payeur</td>
<td>pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patronat</td>
<td>employers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>miller</td>
<td>activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usiner</td>
<td>factory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banque</td>
<td>bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hausser</td>
<td>increase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>capital</td>
<td>capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspiration</td>
<td>hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>millier</td>
<td>thousand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ressource</td>
<td>resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>richesse</td>
<td>wealth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Right-wing candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dropped</th>
<th>Added</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original word</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professionnel</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effort</td>
<td>effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiscal</td>
<td>tax policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monnayer</td>
<td>currency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>europeen</td>
<td>europeen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monder</td>
<td>world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reclaitir</td>
<td>reinstate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profession</td>
<td>occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>redressement</td>
<td>recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rural</td>
<td>rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poursuivre</td>
<td>continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>commencer</td>
<td>trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equilibrer</td>
<td>balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>familial</td>
<td>family</td>
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<tr>
<td>administratif</td>
<td>administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amenagement</td>
<td>amenities</td>
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<tr>
<td>etranger</td>
<td>foreign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mission</td>
<td>mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combattant</td>
<td>fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ameliorer</td>
<td>improve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: In Table A7 I weight the normalized frequency of each word between election rounds by their word score and show which words are dropped and added the most for left and right separately. Other notes as in Table 4.
Table A8: Impact of the qualification of a third candidate to the runoff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RD Estimate</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.165**</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td>(0.038)</td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.051)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>962</td>
<td>1220</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of clusters</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>659</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust p-value</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>0.110</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>0.860</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyn. order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandwidth</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band. method</td>
<td>MSERD</td>
<td>IK</td>
<td>MSERD</td>
<td>IK</td>
<td>MSERD</td>
<td>IK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean, left of the threshold</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The outcome is discourse moderation: (minus) the change in manifesto’s extremeness between election rounds. The assignment variable is a dummy equal to 1 if the vote share of the third-ranked candidate in the first round is above the 12.5% qualifying margin. The sample is restricted to candidates ranked first or second after the first round in 1978 or later in columns 1 and 2, to candidates facing a main opponent from the opposite orientation but a third-ranked candidate from the same orientation in columns 3 and 4, and to candidates facing both a main opponent and a third-ranked candidate from the opposite orientation in columns 5 and 6. Separate polynomials of order 1 are fitted on each side of the threshold. The optimal bandwidths are derived under the MSERD (columns 1, 3 and 5) and IK optimal procedures (columns 2, 4, and 6). Standard errors are in parentheses and adjusted for clustering by district×year in columns 1 and 2. Statistical significance is computed based on the robust p-value: *p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.
Table A9: Impact of facing an extreme candidate in the runoff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>(1) Any extreme</th>
<th>(2) Any extreme</th>
<th>(3) Extreme same orient.</th>
<th>(4) Extreme same orient.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RD Estimate</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>-0.064</td>
<td>-0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.085)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robust p-value</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.884</td>
<td>0.610</td>
<td>0.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyn. order</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandwidth</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band. method</td>
<td>MSERD</td>
<td>IK</td>
<td>MSERD</td>
<td>IK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean, left of the threshold</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The outcome is discourse moderation: (minus) the change in manifesto’s extremeness between election rounds. The assignment variable is a dummy equal to 1 if a second- or third-ranked extreme candidate qualifies for the runoff against a moderate candidate. In columns 1 and 2, the sample is restricted to moderate candidates ranked first in districts where the second candidate did not pass the runoff qualifying threshold and where the second or third-ranked candidate is extreme while the other is moderate. In columns 3 and 4, the sample is further restricted to districts where the second or third-ranked candidate is from the same orientation as the first-ranked candidate while the other is moderate from the opposite orientation. Other notes as in Appendix Table A8.
Table A10: Discourse moderation and electoral success within candidate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elected (1)</th>
<th>Vote share gain (2)</th>
<th>Election margin (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>-0.020</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>4494</td>
<td>4494</td>
<td>2061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nb of Elections</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean outcome</td>
<td>0.570</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department*Year FE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The sample is restricted to candidates who run and qualify for the runoff multiple times. I additionally control for candidate fixed effects across elections and cluster standard errors two ways, by district×year and candidate (columns 1 and 2), or one way, by candidate (column 3). Other notes as in Table 6.
Table A11: Discourse moderation and legislative activity controlling for election margin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Z-score</th>
<th>Bill Authorship</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>All questions</th>
<th>Written questions</th>
<th>OQ without debate</th>
<th>OQ with debate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>0.073**</td>
<td>0.067*</td>
<td>0.168*</td>
<td>0.018</td>
<td>1.957**</td>
<td>3.128**</td>
<td>0.078*</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>(0.036)</td>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
<td>(0.963)</td>
<td>(1.516)</td>
<td>(0.045)</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2891</td>
<td>2742</td>
<td>1845</td>
<td>1117</td>
<td>1117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nb of Elections</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean outcome</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.573</td>
<td>2.988</td>
<td>0.500</td>
<td>20.733</td>
<td>26.015</td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td>0.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep*Year FE</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra controls</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Same notes as in Table 7, with the election margin as additional control.
Table A12: Discourse moderation and legislative activity by electoral advantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.100)</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.160)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation*VoteShare1</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.260)</td>
<td>(0.371)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation*Incumbent</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>(0.046)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation*PredictedVoteGain</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.195)</td>
<td>(0.332)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation*ElectionMargin</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.183)</td>
<td>(0.222)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2897</td>
<td>2897</td>
<td>2897</td>
<td>2897</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nb of Elections</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean outcome</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The outcome is the legislative activity mean Z-score. Discourse moderation is interacted with each measure of ex ante electoral advantage and the vote share margin of victory, which are also included in the regression. Other notes as in Tables 6 and 7.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Z-score</th>
<th>Bill Authorship</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>All questions</th>
<th>Written questions</th>
<th>OQ without debate</th>
<th>OQ with debate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>-0.008</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>1.142</td>
<td>0.984</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.049)</td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.048)</td>
<td>(1.123)</td>
<td>(1.805)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1917</td>
<td>1780</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>478</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nb of Elections</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean outcome</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>0.631</td>
<td>2.992</td>
<td>0.485</td>
<td>21.831</td>
<td>27.709</td>
<td>0.419</td>
<td>0.771</td>
</tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dep*Year FE</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate FE</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The sample is restricted to candidates who are elected after competing in two election rounds multiple times. I additionally control for candidate fixed effects across elections and cluster standard errors by candidate. Other notes as in Table 7.