

Institution: University College London
Unit of Assessment: 28 – Modern Languages and Linguistics
Title of case study: Deepening public and media understanding of the 2012 French presidential election
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Philippe Marlière's research on social democracy in Europe, and particularly in France, extended the range and quality of information regarding the French presidential election (2012), and thus made an important contribution to public understanding in both the UK and France. This was achieved through a series of high profile press publications in Le Monde, Mediapart, the Guardian, OpenDemocracy and other outlets, which were both widely read and led to substantial debate online and on social media. This, along with an invitation to brief the BBC, led to far more informed coverage of the election and the role of left and far-right parties in its final result.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Philippe Marlière joined UCL as Lecturer of French Politics in April 1994. He became Professor of French and European Politics in September 2010. Since 1994, his scholarly work on French and European politics has been translated into fifteen languages and has appeared in 29 countries. The research specifically underpinning impacts and described here falls into two key areas.</p> <p>In work on <u>Social Democracy and European politics</u> Marlière has particularly considered the question of whether social democracy may be considered an homogeneous 'party family' across Europe, such that it is possible to draw a typology of the New Social Democracy beyond national differences. In a comparative study undertaken between 1997 and 1999, he established that there was, indeed, a movement of ideological and policy convergence across Europe. This was further demonstrated by research undertaken from 1996 on the 'Third Way' in Britain and 'Modern Socialism' in France, in which Marlière showed that the emergence of more consensual relationships between centre-left and centre-right parties would create a political space liable to exploitation by both left-wing and extreme-right parties.</p> <p>With Robert Ladrech (Keele), Marlière co-edited <i>Social Democratic Parties in the European Union. History, Organisation, Policies</i> (Macmillan 1999), a project drawing on the expertise of 16 European specialists on the subject. Following the publication of this seminal volume, and of several peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on the topic, Marlière was awarded the Marcel Liebman Chair of political science at the Université Libre of Brussels (ULB) in 2007, in recognition of his contribution to the study of European social democracy. The lectures took place daily between 19 February and 24 February at ULB and were on the following topics: "From the Labour Party to New Labour: a new type of party"; "The Third Way: theoretical considerations and debates"; "Blairism, from theory to practice: the economy and Europe"; "Is Blairism the future of European social democracy?" Following these lectures Aden Publishers (Brussels) asked him to turn them into a book (<i>La Social-démocratie domestiquée</i>, 2008).</p> <p>In research published in 2009 and 2010 and more specifically focused on <u>French political ideas and party politics</u>, Marlière tracked the convergence of France's two major parties, the centre-right <i>Union pour un mouvement populaire</i> (UMP) and the centre-left <i>Parti socialiste</i> (PS) to the political centre [a]. For instance, in [b] he discussed the French Socialist Party's ambivalent and uneasy relationship to European integration and concluded that despite its ambivalence, the PS's stand on Europe was actually falling in line with the economically 'moderate' and 'pro-market' orientation of mainstream social democracy in Europe. He also documented the rise of parties further to the left or right, for instance, analysing the political results of French political parties at the 2009 elections, and explaining the reasons for the rise of 'smaller' parties on the left and on the right of the political spectrum [c]. This work on political ideologies and conflicts in France enabled him to anticipate the rise of political forces to the left of François Hollande's PS and to the right of Nicolas Sarkozy's UMP in the 2012 presidential election. Notable among the specific research findings supporting his insight were expounded in two co-edited journal issues. The edited issue on the French left [e] showed that the rise of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Left Front was largely responsible for François Hollande's shift to the left during the presidential campaign. The issue on the Sarkozy presidency [f] explained how the incumbent president's shift to the right has enabled Hollande to occupy the</p>

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political centre ground, a winning position in the two-round French presidential election. This analysis is being further developed in current research on the Left Party, to appear from Palgrave-Macmillan in 2014, as *The Left Front and the Revival of Left-Wing Radicalism in France*.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[a] Marlière, P. 'Sarkozysm as an ideological theme park: Nicolas Sarkozy and right-wing political thought', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 17.4, Nov 2009, p. 375–390. DOI: [10.1080/09639480903251597](https://doi.org/10.1080/09639480903251597)

[b] Marlière, P. 'The French Socialist Party and European integration. Faltering Europeanism', in D. Dimitrakopoulos (ed.), *Social Democracy and European Integration*, London, Routledge, 2010, p. 51–82. Available on request.

[c] Marlière, P. 'The 2009 Euro Election in France', in J. Lodge (ed.), *The 2009 Euro Elections*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2012, p. 114–123: Submitted to REF 2.

[d] Marlière, P. *La Mémoire socialiste. Sociologie du souvenir politique en milieu partisan*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007. Available on request. Positive reviews in the French scholarly press including: *Mouvements Social* 2008 <http://bit.ly/19UB26S>; *Dissidences* <http://bit.ly/1g2WUTX>; Office Universitaire de Recherche Socialiste, No 382, November 2008.

[e] Marlière, P. 'A quoi sert le Parti socialiste?' In *Mouvements* 69, March 2012, pp. 86–92 'Changer la vie, changer la gauche', co-edited with S. Zappi. Available on request.

[f] Marlière, P. 'The Sarkozy presidency: from rupture to crisis?', *Modern & Contemporary France* 17.4, Nov 2009, co-edited with Joseph Szarka. DOI: [10.1080/09639480903251589](https://doi.org/10.1080/09639480903251589) (to introduction)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Philippe Marlière's research and analysis of the 2012 French presidential election extended the range and improved the quality of evidence about this important election, notably through his contributions to media coverage of that election in Britain and France. It provided the vital contextualisation required for the British media – especially the BBC – to present a more nuanced and informed picture of the changing French political landscape in their coverage of the presidential election and, in turn, helped to inform the British public of likely electoral and political outcomes and the social and political contexts in which they would occur. In particular, his research facilitated an improved public and media understanding of the role of third party candidates in both the election itself and the political landscape thereafter.

Contributions to French coverage of the 2012 presidential election: The first round of the presidential election was held in France on 22 April 2012. Nicolas Sarkozy, the incumbent and leader of the centre-right *Union pour un mouvement populaire* (UMP), sought re-election to a second five-year term against a presidential challenge from François Hollande of the increasingly centre-left *Parti socialiste* (PS). The election was widely held to be a two-horse race between these candidates, and was treated almost exclusively as such by the UK media. However Marlière argued, on the basis of the research outlined above, that Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Left Front) and Marine Le Pen (National Front) would also perform well. In 2010–2011, he shared these insights with a broad non-academic audience through a series of articles for *Le Monde*, the world's principal French language daily with a circulation of some 340,000 copies per issue, 35,000 of which are distributed outside of France [1]. In those articles, Marlière analysed Mélenchon's potential to be an important figure in the 2012 election, the PS's transformation into a de-ideologised 'catch-all' party, and the likelihood that the left would defeat Sarkozy. He also contributed regular blog posts to Mediapart, a major left-leaning French journal. These posts, which commented on the French elections and were likewise informed by the research outlined above typically attracted over 20 comments each, with analyses of Mélenchon and the socialist primaries garnering 118 and 154 respectively [2].

Transfer of expert knowledge informing British media coverage and UK public understanding of the presidential election: In the British press, Mélenchon's campaign went virtually unreported until the *Guardian's* publication in April 2012 of two lengthy opinion articles – one by Marlière, the other by Seumas Milne. Both argued that the popularity of Mélenchon's ideas and policies was attributable to the fact that no other major candidate was engaging working-class

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voters. Marlière further suggested that although Mélenchon's policy proposals might be described as 'radical' they were sufficiently coherent to be taken seriously [3]. Both articles, in a newspaper with a print and online readership approaching 2m [3], received a great deal of attention: Marlière's attracted 320 comments, and Milne's 562, most of them sympathetic to this view. The electronic version of Marlière's article was tweeted over 200 times, and shared over 1,800 times on Facebook [3]. Those impacts were compounded by Marlière's production of an election diary, which appeared in 11 instalments between 23 April and 4 May 2012 on OpenDemocracy, a leading UK news website with over 3.5m unique views per year. Here, Marlière used research findings to demonstrate the potential for 'small' candidates to capitalise on both negative factors (the unpopularity of the main candidates and their very similar policy proposals) and positive factors (good campaigning by the Left Front and an improved image for the National Front) [5].

Recognising and seeking to redress the imbalance and gaps in its own coverage, the BBC's Analysis and Research Unit invited Marlière to brief journalists during the run-up to the election. This off-the-record briefing was delivered to some 50 journalists, anchors, UK and Europe reporters, programme editors and researchers on 4 April 2012 at White City Television Centre (London), a month before the first round of the election. It comprised a forty-minute talk providing context on developing issues and contacts for further insights, followed by questions from the floor. Explaining that his analysis showed no strong political momentum for the main candidates (Sarkozy, Hollande and Bayrou, a centrist), Marlière predicted rises that both the left-wing candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the extreme-right candidate Marine le Pen would rise in the polls and eventually come in third and fourth position.

This intervention helped BBC journalists understand the major issues at stake in the election and significantly increased the attention they paid to the 'smaller' candidates who, as Marlière predicted, did eventually fare better than had been suggested by the media at the start of the campaign [10]. The event organiser noted the very positive feedback from journalists, who had found it 'useful', 'interesting', 'relevant' and 'well-timed'. Marlière himself received personal thanks from several journalists, who said that they would take his advice on board when reporting the election. Indeed, such was its usefulness that the BBC used the original briefing as the basis for its development of digitalised resources for use by its journalist: thus the College of Journalism, which oversees training for BBC editorial staff, filmed two clips for an internal website accessible only to BBC journalists. The briefing organiser also made an audio recording and transcription of the session. These valuable information and resources were subsequently accessed at least 100 times by journalists working on the election [10]. Coverage of the election on the BBC's website, which had previously almost entirely excluded consideration of Mélenchon's election prospects, showed a markedly increased inclination after Marlière's briefing to provide much fuller treatment [6].

Marlière's analysis proved accurate, and thus instrumental in ensuring that BBC journalists covered the election fairly and accurately. Le Pen eventually received over 15% of the share of the votes nationally and came third, while Mélenchon received over 11%.

The value of the briefing to BBC journalists is further suggested by the numerous requests for interviews and comment from Marlière. Media appearances during the election run-up included:

- **BBC Radio 4 Westminster Hour**, 22 April 2012. On the 2012 French presidential results (first round), reaching over 10.5 million (RAJAR all regions, 3 months ending June 2012).
- **BBC Radio 5, Breakfast Programme**, 2 May and 7 May 2012. On the television debate between Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande, and on the second round of the French presidential election, reaching over 6 million (RAJAR all regions, 3 months ending June 2012).
- **BBC World**, 6 May and 15 May 2012. Special programme on the election (including live coverage of election results), and contribution to coverage of Hollande's inaugural ceremony (on air 9am–12.30pm): BBC World TV attracts a global audience of 97m [7].

These led, in turn, led to appearances on other international news outlets, notably including Sky (on 'Adam Boulton and Co', 15 May 2012) and the American public broadcaster NPR (on Background Briefing Production: thirty-minute interviews on 23 April and 6 May 2012). Meanwhile, Mélenchon himself was invited to a series of media appearances, reflecting the new recognition in the UK of his role as a left-wing player in French politics. These included a video interview with the

Guardian (416 viewer comments [8]), and interviews for the *New Statesman* and OpenDemocracy.

Subsequent contributions to UK public understanding of the French political landscape:

The contribution made by the research to enhancing UK public understanding of the French political landscape continued even after the election ended. On 6 December 2012, in collaboration with the European Institute at UCL, Marlière invited Mélenchon to present his ideas as a prominent French politician to a mixed audience of some 440 students, academics, ambassadors, politicians, trade-unionists, journalists and members of the public. Marlière was responsible for deciding the terms of the event and, in his introduction, presented an analysis of the role of left wing politics in France in austerity Europe. The event gave UK journalists and the public a rare opportunity to hear at first hand the views of a French leftist politician; the academic contextualisation of those views provided a nuanced assessment of the French political landscape.

The event was extremely successful: though organised at short notice all tickets, in three separate issues, sold out immediately. In total 440 people attended, though emails received by the European Institute suggest that as many as 650 ticket requests were made [11]. The benefits from this presentation of information and analysis were maximised by its live streaming, and the development of information and learning resources whose online accessibility extended the reach of the original benefits to a much wider public. More than 2,500 viewers watched the live stream and the video on UCL's Vimeo account showed it had been played over 7,000 times by 31 July 2013, including over 3,000 from Facebook alone [12]. Partly thanks to the increased understanding of Mélenchon's position among British media professionals, the event was well attended by journalists, including representatives from the *Independent*, *Guardian*, *OpenDemocracy*, the *New Statesman* and the *Morning Star*. Although Mélenchon's speech was delivered in French, OpenDemocracy recognised its importance and had it transcribed and translated for its own website (15/1/13); it also published an interview with the candidate (11/1/13), as did the *New Statesmen* (12/12/12), the UK's biggest political website, with over 1.1m unique users [13].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- [1] Marlière's *Le Monde* articles: 'Le PS peut enfin tourner la page Strauss-Kahn', 20 May 11, p. 24; <http://bit.ly/19gTyLH>; and 'L'effet Mélenchon, un risque pour l'avenir de la gauche', 20 Nov 10, p. 23 <http://bit.ly/1g2V19F> Circulation: <http://bit.ly/17770iT>.
- [2] Mediapart posts and comments: <http://bit.ly/15y2RRc>; see e.g., 30/9/11, 29/3/12, 5/4/12.
- [3] Marlière's *Guardian* article, 'Jean-Luc Mélenchon's policies are no left-wing fantasy', 15/4/12: <http://bit.ly/1ftYDE5>. Readership figures from National Readership Survey-Padd (<http://www.nrs.co.uk/nrs-padd/>). Daily readership figures for adult readers June 2012–July 2013 are 2.2 million: we assume that in April 2012 the figure was lower but not significantly so.
- [4] Social media share reports from Topsy and Facebook Share Counter available on request.
- [5] OpenDemocracy blog series: <http://bit.ly/1777WDT>. Readership: <http://bit.ly/197m1hc>
- [6] A Google search analysis on www.bbc.co.uk found twice as many articles (24) mentioning Mélenchon in the fortnight between Marlière's briefing and the first round of the election (6–22 April 2012) than in the entire year preceding it (12). Available on request.
- [7] BBC World audience numbers: <http://bbc.in/19EGCLY>. UK radio figures from RAJAR http://www.rajar.co.uk/listening/quarterly_listening.php.
- [8] Mélenchon's video interview with the *Guardian* and viewer comments: <http://bit.ly/192BsNE>
- [10] Statement about the number of attendees at Marlière's briefing for the BBC's Analysis and Research Unit, and feedback received from the BBC's Foreign Affairs Manager.
- [11] Statement about the attendees and value of Mélenchon's public appearance on 6 December from the Deputy Director, UCL European Institute.
- [12] UCL Vimeo video stats; also available on request. <http://vimeo.com/55621150>.
- [13] OpenDemocracy transcript: <http://bit.ly/1bKS6Cp> and interview: <http://bit.ly/15zyyyX>. *New Statesmen* article: <http://bit.ly/1ftZiFi> Web traffic figures for Jan 2013: <http://bit.ly/15y3Y3m>