

# Lecture 7

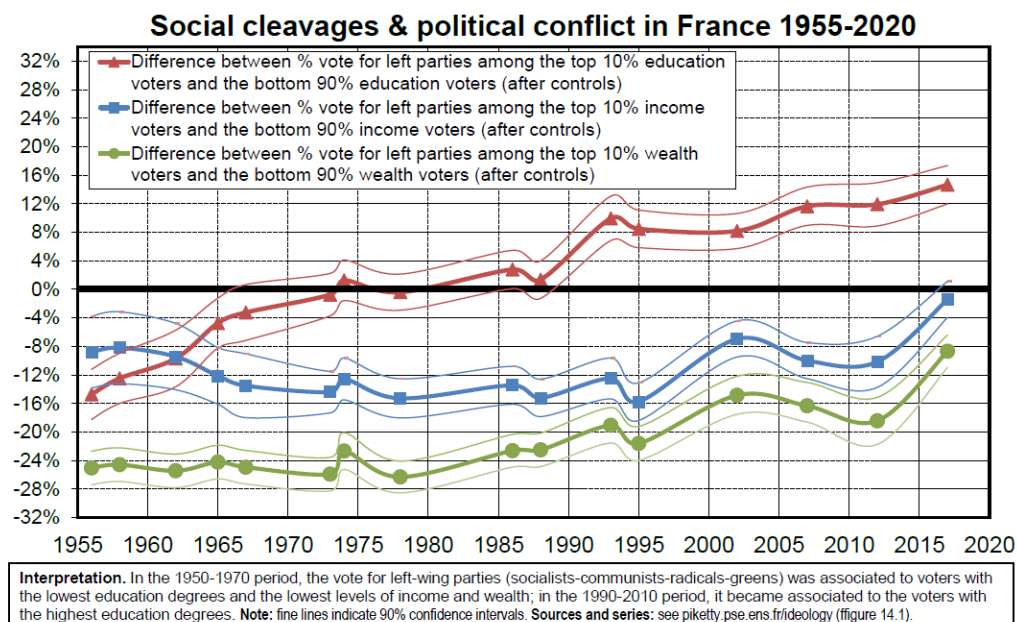
Capital and Ideology chap 14-15

## Social inequality and party systems in historical perspective: Europe versus US

### Beyond left and right: the dimensions of political conflict

- Main lesson from lectures 1-6: **political and ideological changes play a crucial role in the process of socio-economic development & the evolution of inequality structures.** Successful economic development requires a minimal consensus about the level & structure of social inequality.
- **Therefore it is critical to better understand changing political attitudes and beliefs systems about inequality, the fair economy & the just society**
- It is relatively easier to study beliefs systems in electoral democracies, in the sense that these beliefs systems translate into recorded voting attitudes
- **Key question: what forms do the various political parties & coalitions take in different societies and historical periods, and how do they relate to inequality and redistribution?** What are the different dimensions of political conflict and how do they change over time?  
**Was there something unique in 1950-1980 left-right party system & why?**
- On-going comparative research program using post-electoral surveys:
- T. Piketty, Brahmin Left vs Merchant Right: Rising Inequality and the Changing Structure of Political Conflict. Evidence from France, Britain & the US 1948-2017
- A. Gethin, C. Martinez-Tolenado, T. Piketty, Political Cleavages & Inequality. Evidence from Electoral Democracies 1950-2018, WID.world, 2019
- A. Banerjee, A. Gethin, T. Piketty, Growing Cleavages in India? Evidence from the Changing Structure of Electorates 1962-2014, Economic and Political Weekly, 2019 (WID.world WP)
- More countries are currently being studied
- **Unfortunately, there exists no post-electoral survey before the 1940s-1950s. In order to study longer time periods, one needs to use other data sources: local-level election results matched with local-level census & fiscal data.**
- **« Standard » view of the left-right party system:**
  - political conflict is about redistribution between social classes
  - lower socioeconomic groups vote for the left, higher groups vote for the right
- **Pb: this « standard » view may apply to certain societies and historical periods (e.g. 1950-1980 in Western electoral democracies), but it is certainly not universal.**
- **First, the different dimensions of socioeconomic cleavages (education, income, wealth, etc.) may not always be aligned.** E.g. they were aligned in 1950-1980, but in 1990-2020 we observe the rise of a « multiple elites » system: educational elite now votes for the left, while wealth elite keeps voting for the right (though less and less so) (Brahmin Left vs Merchant Right)

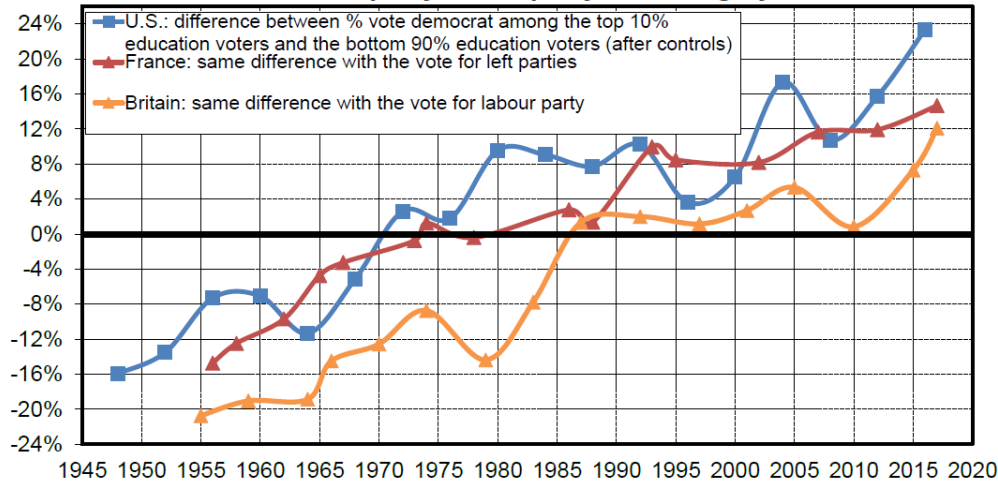
- Next, other dimensions of social cleavages, in particular in relation to ethnic or religious identity and foreign origins, can play a central role, in a way that can vary a lot across societies and over time.



#### The electoral left: from workers' party to the party of the educated

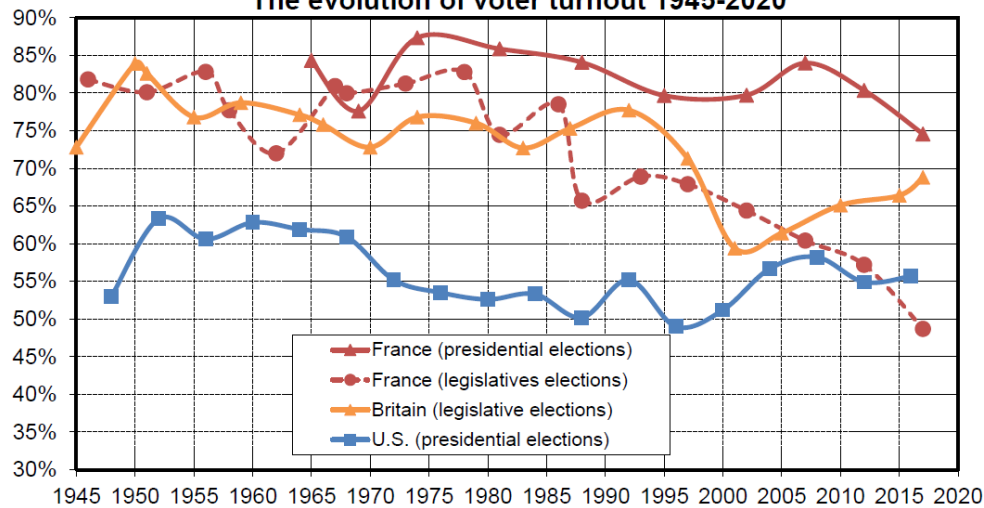
- **Key transformation over the 1950-2020 period: a complete reversal of the education cleavage.**
- I.e. in 1950-1970 period, the less educated voters vote more for the « left » than the more educated. In the 1990-2020 period, it is the opposite.
- Very gradual change happening in all Western electoral democracies over the 1980-2020 period (in particular US, UK, France), in spite of the many historical differences in party systems
- **At the same time, one observes in recent decades a fall in electoral participation among lower socioeconomic groups**

### Electoral left in Europe and the U.S. 1945-2020: from the workers' party to the party of the highly educated

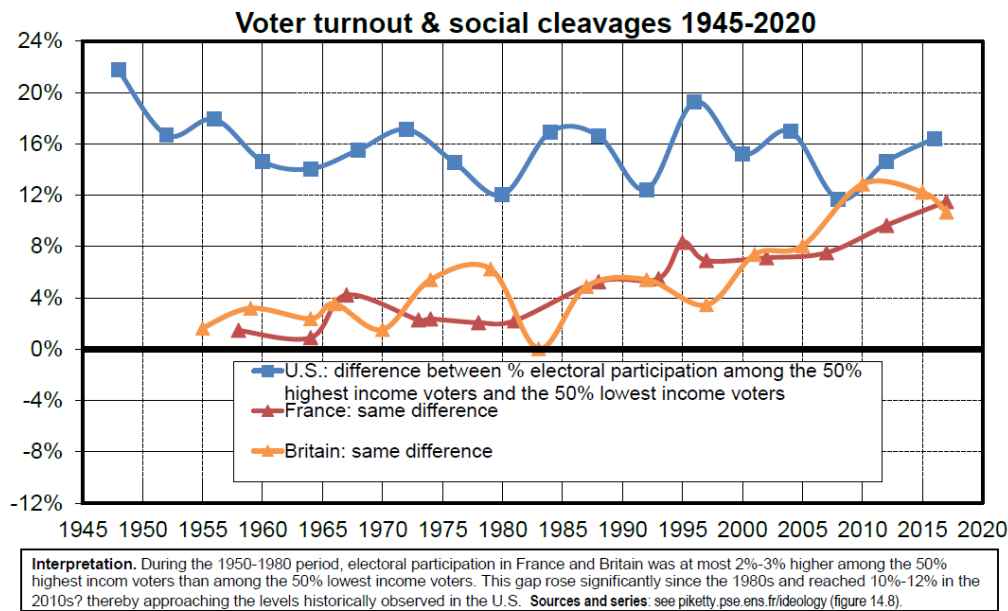


**Interpretation.** In the 1950-1970 period, the vote for the democrats in the U.S., left-wing parties (socialists-communists-radicals-greens) in France and the labour party in Britain was associated to voters with the lowest education; in the 1990-2010 period, it became associated to the voters with the highest education degrees. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](https://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.2).

### The evolution of voter turnout 1945-2020



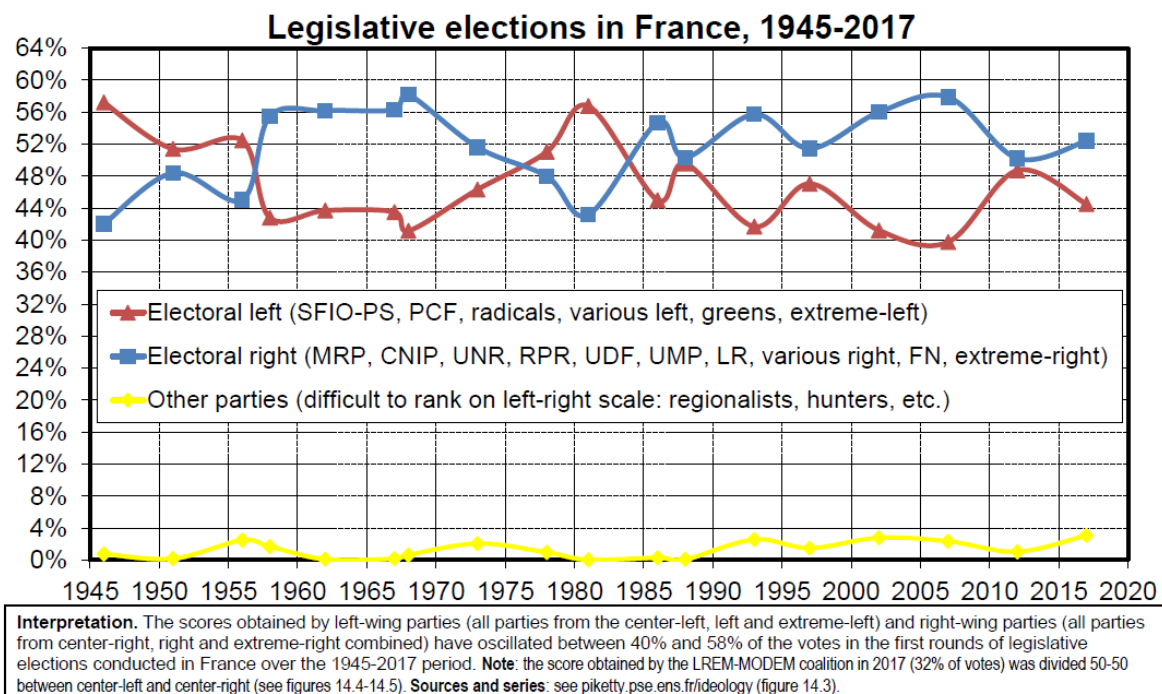
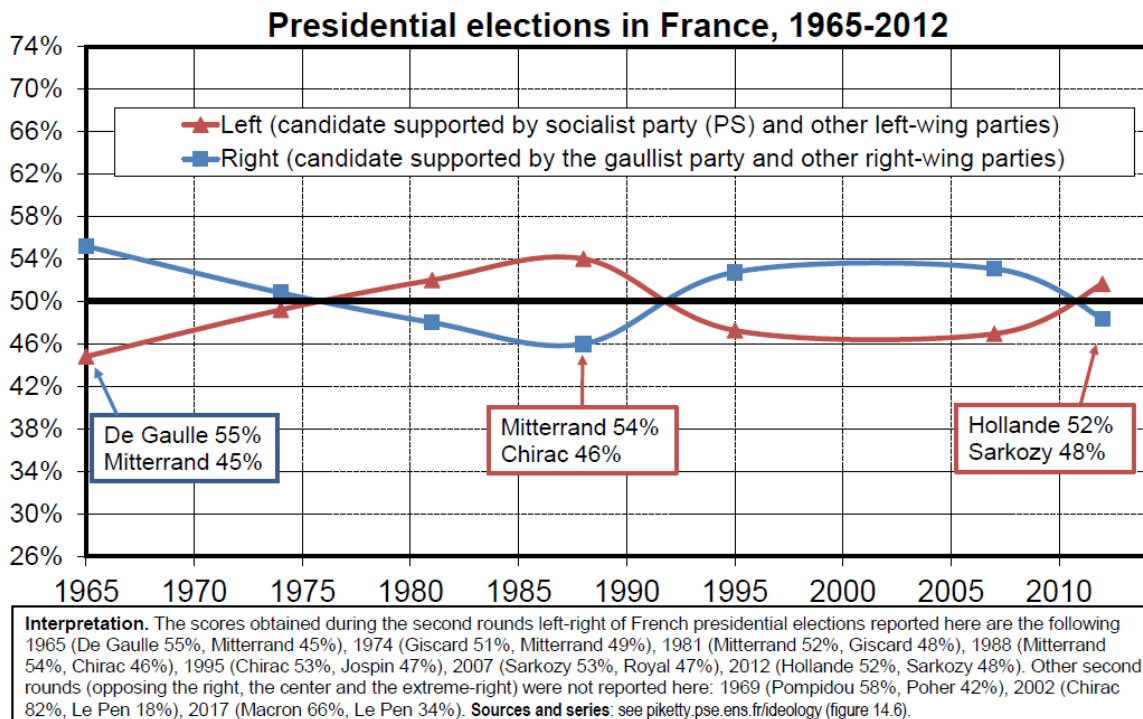
**Interpretation.** Voter turnout has been relatively stable around 80%-85% in French presidential elections since 1965 (with however a small fall to 75% in 2017). The fall has been much stronger in legislative elections, which was around 80% until the 1970s, and was less than 50% in 2017. Electoral participation dropped in Britain before rising again since 2010. In the U.S., it has generally fluctuated around 50%-60%. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](https://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.7).



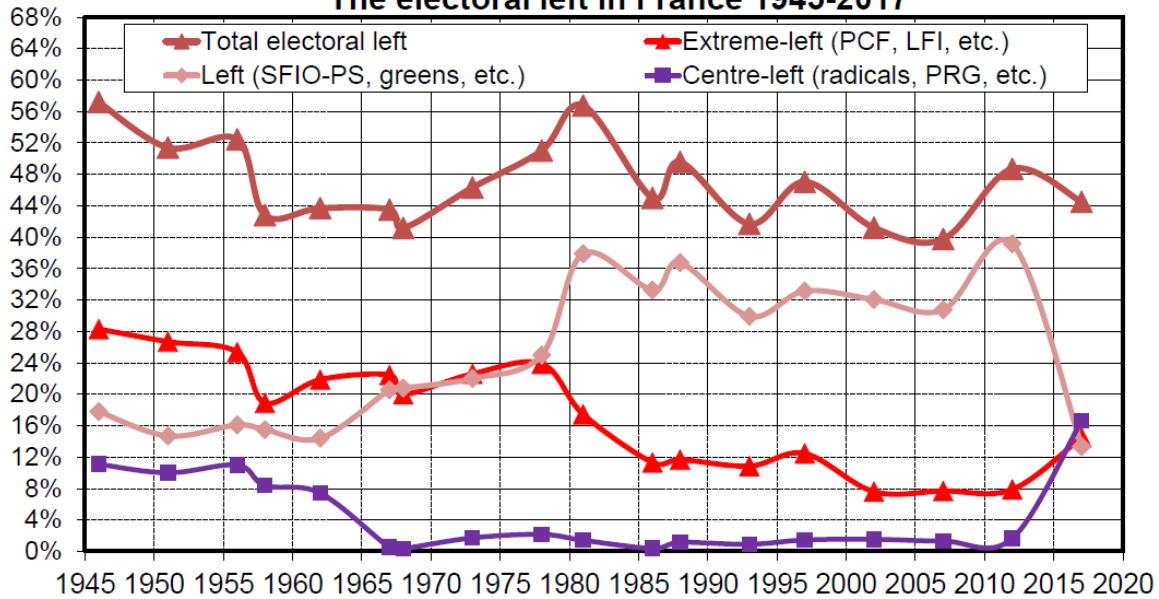
- **Why did lower socioeconomic groups stop voting for the « left »?**
- US-centered explanation: « poor white flight » away from the Democrats following the Civil Rights movement. I.e. the poor racists abandoned the left.
- Problem with this explanation: the same gradual evolution happened in Europe, even though there was no Civil Rights movement in the 1960s
- Potentially more convincing: « **left** » **parties gradually changed their policy platform & abandoned lower socioeconomic groups.** Or, to put it in a more positive way, they were unable to adjust their platform to economic changes.
- **Large and persistent inequalities in access to education.** With the rise of higher education, left parties became the party of the highly educated. Possible explanation: it was easier to design an egalitarian education platform at the time of primary & secondary education than with higher education.
- **Decline in tax progressivity and redistribution since 1980s-1990s:** tax competition, lack of international coordination and financial transparency.
- **Rise of post-colonial identity-based conflict & xenophobic right in Europe & US since 1980s-1990s** reinforced the evolution but was not the primary factor.

#### The reversal of the education cleavage: the case of France

- **Very robust finding**
- True both for presidential and legislative elections
- True all along the primary-secondary-higher education hierarchy
- True before and after controls for other variables: age, gender, income, wealth, etc.

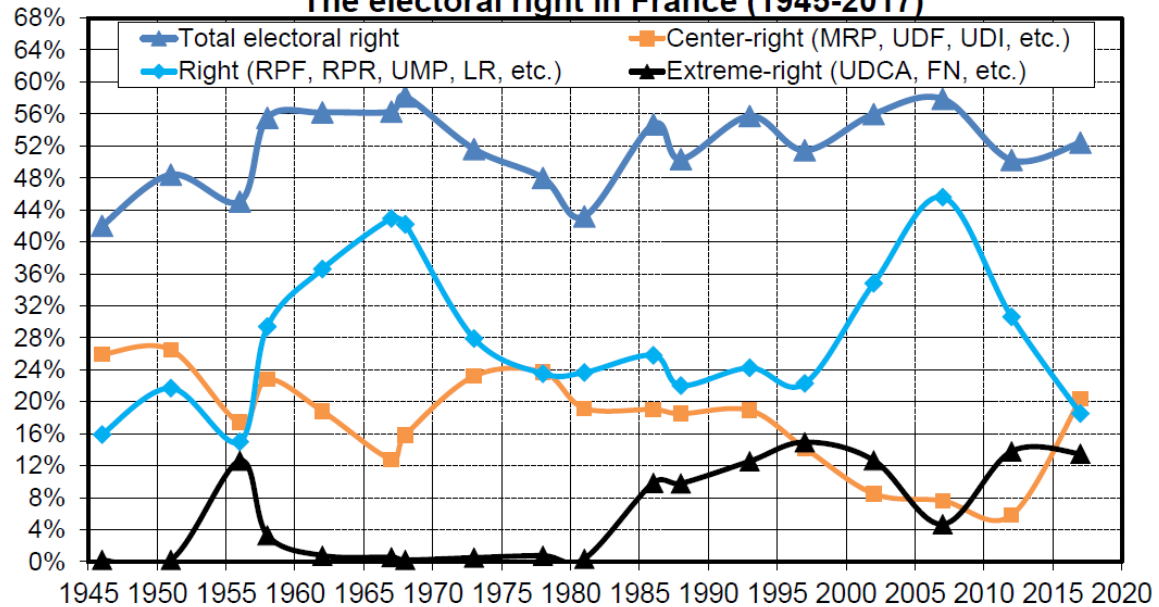


### The electoral left in France 1945-2017

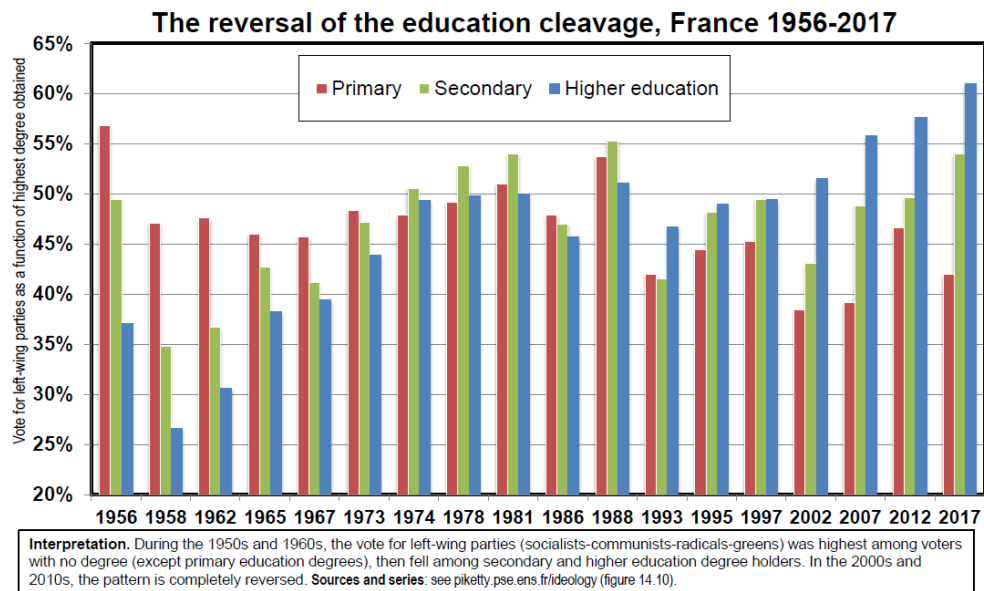
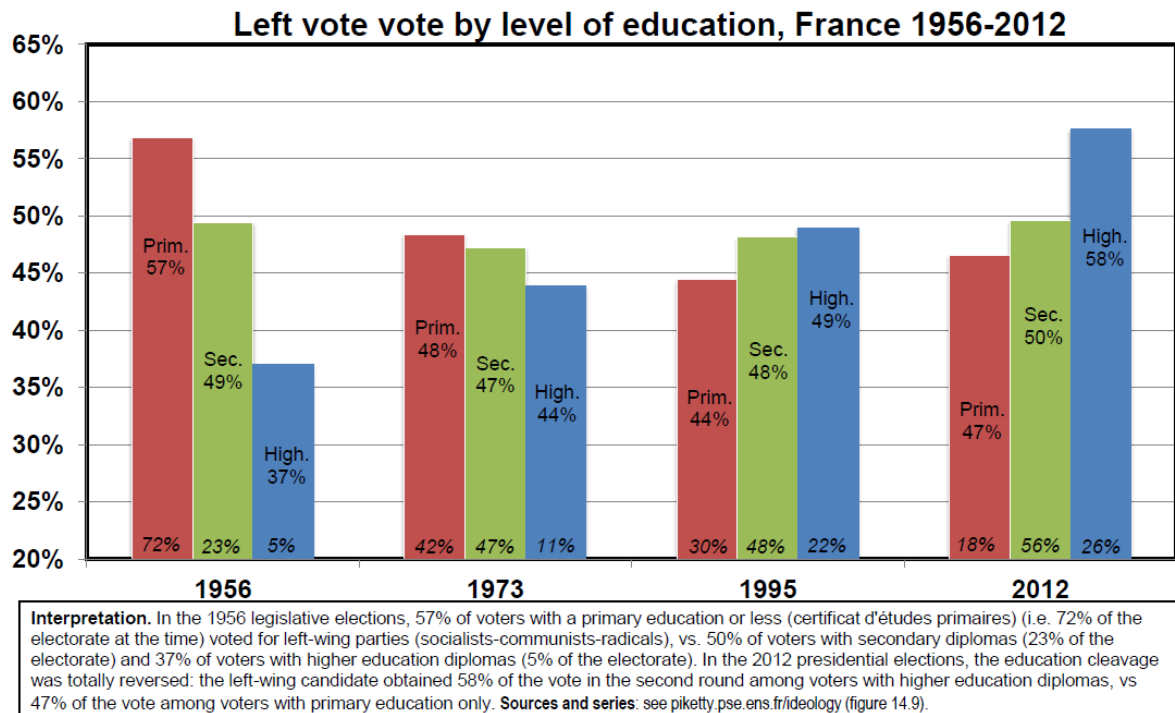


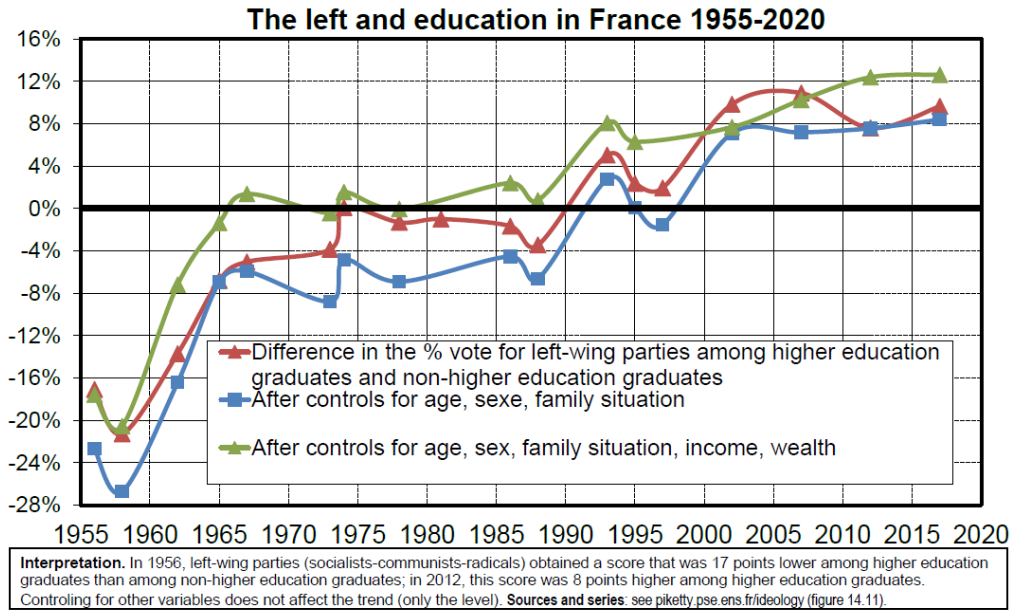
**Interpretation.** The score obtained by left-wing parties (socialistes, communistes, radicals, greens and other parties from the center-left, left and extreme-left) has oscillated between 40% and 57% of the votes in the first rounds of legislative elections conducted in France over the 1945-2017 period. **Note:** the score obtained by the LREM-MODEM coalition in 2017 (32% of votes) was divided 50-50 between center-left and center-right. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.4).

### The electoral right in France (1945-2017)



**Interpretation.** The score obtained by right-wing parties (all parties from the center-right, right and extreme-right combined) varied between 40% and 58% of the votes in the first rounds of legislative elections conducted in France over the 1945-2017 period. **Note:** the score obtained by the LREM-MODEM coalition in 2017 (32% of votes) was divided 50-50 between center-left and center-right. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.5).

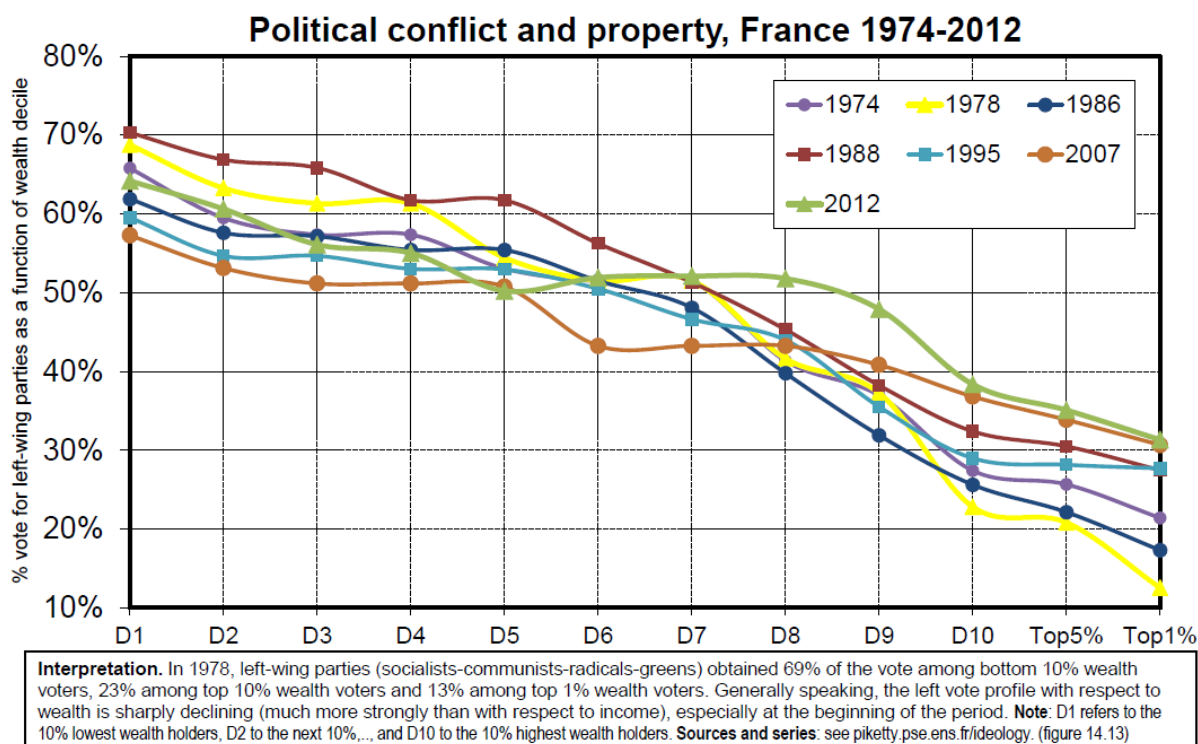
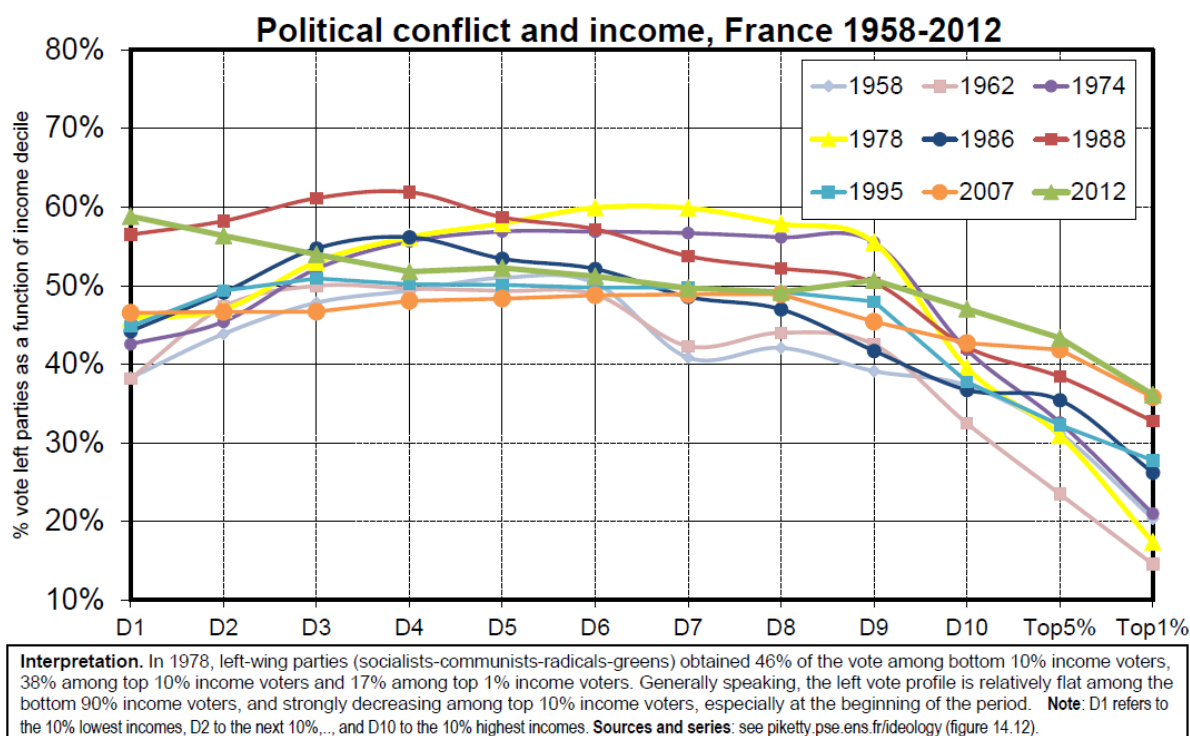




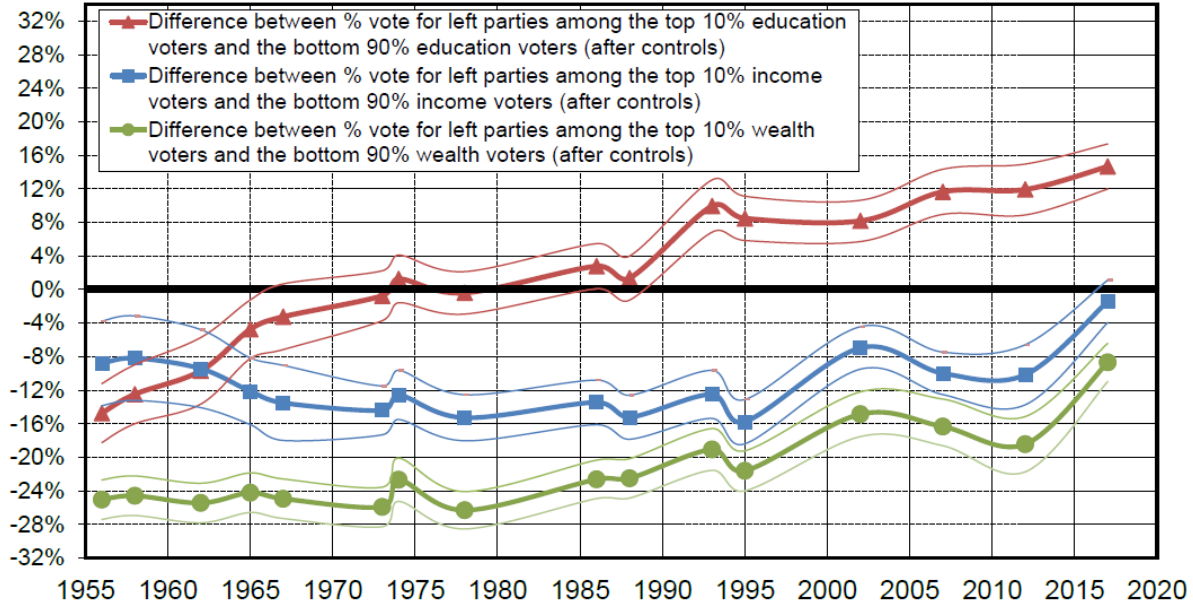
#### Political conflict: education, income, property and identity

- Unlike high education groups (which have turned to the left), high wealth groups have kept voting for the right (though less and less so). High income groups are between the two: human capital and financial capital have opposite effects and are not fully correlated.
- New cleavages based upon ethnic-religious identity and foreign origins have started to play a more important role since the 1980s-1990s



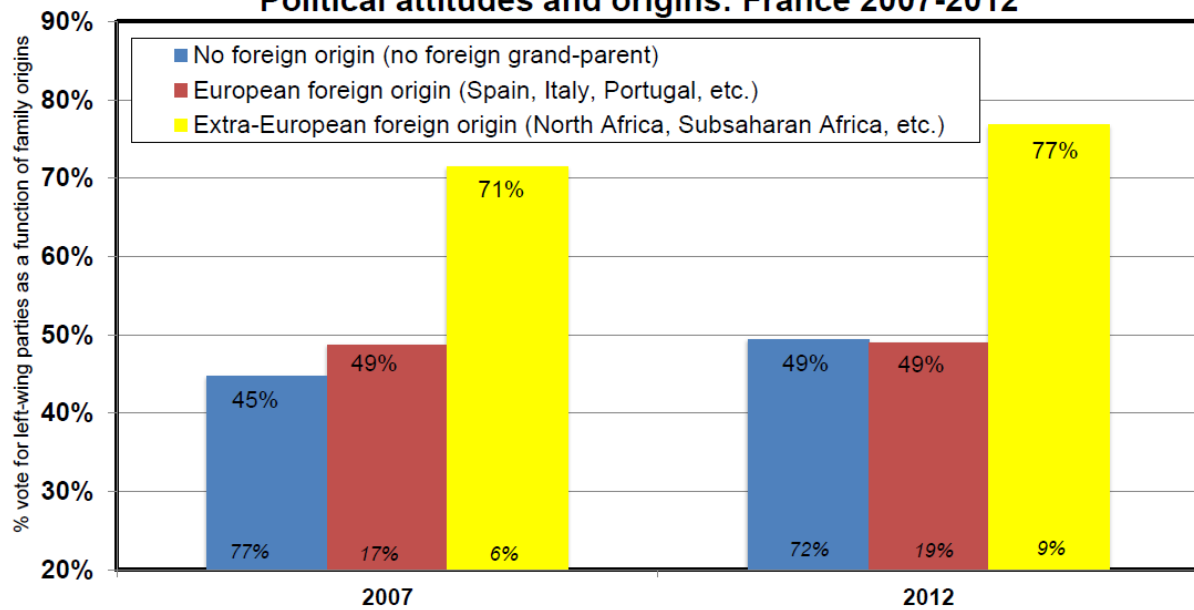


## Social cleavages & political conflict in France 1955-2020



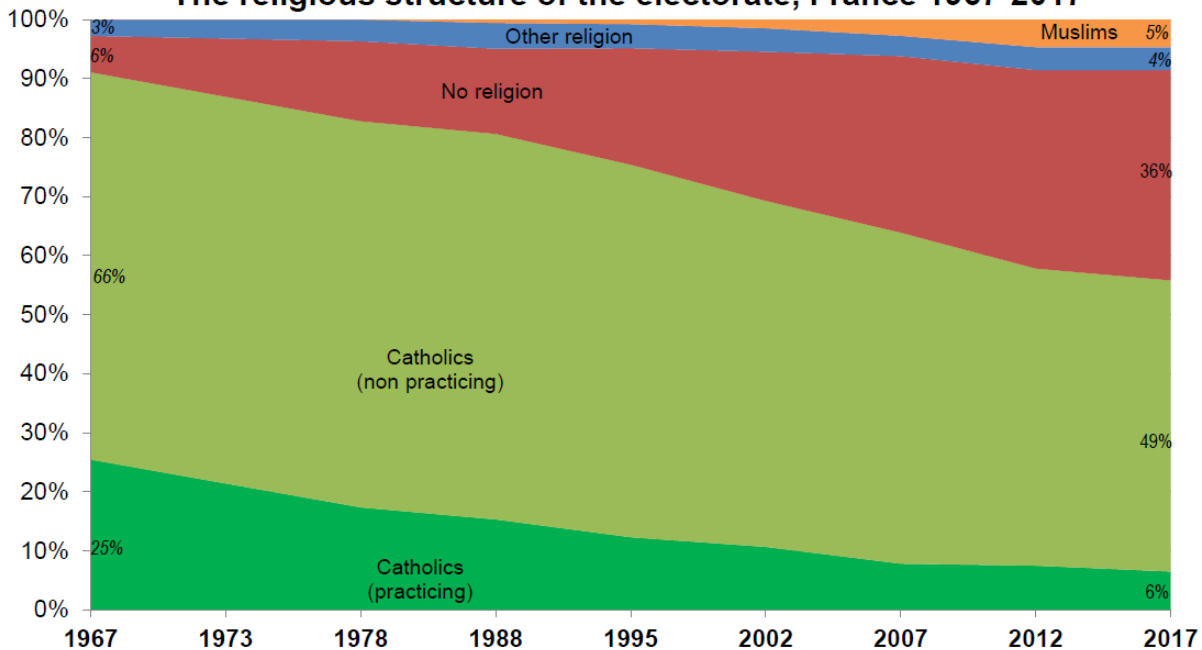
**Interpretation.** In the 1950-1970 period, the vote for left-wing parties (socialists-communists-radicals-greens) was associated to voters with the lowest education degrees and the lowest levels of income and wealth; in the 1990-2010 period, it became associated to the voters with the highest education degrees. **Note:** fine lines indicate 90% confidence intervals. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.1).

## Political attitudes and origins: France 2007-2012



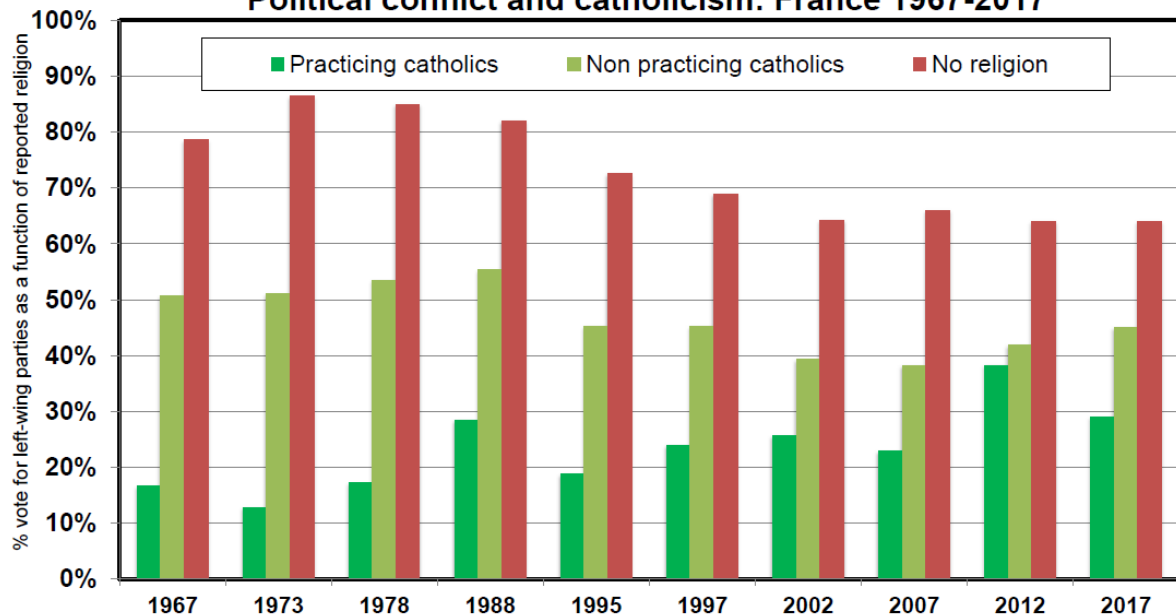
**Interpretation.** In 2012, the socialist candidate received 49% of the vote among voters with no foreign origin (no foreign grand-parent), 49% of the vote among voters with European foreign origin (in practice mostly Spain, Italy, Portugal) and 77% of the vote among voters with extra-European foreign origins (in practice mostly North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa). **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.18).

## The religious structure of the electorate, France 1967-2017

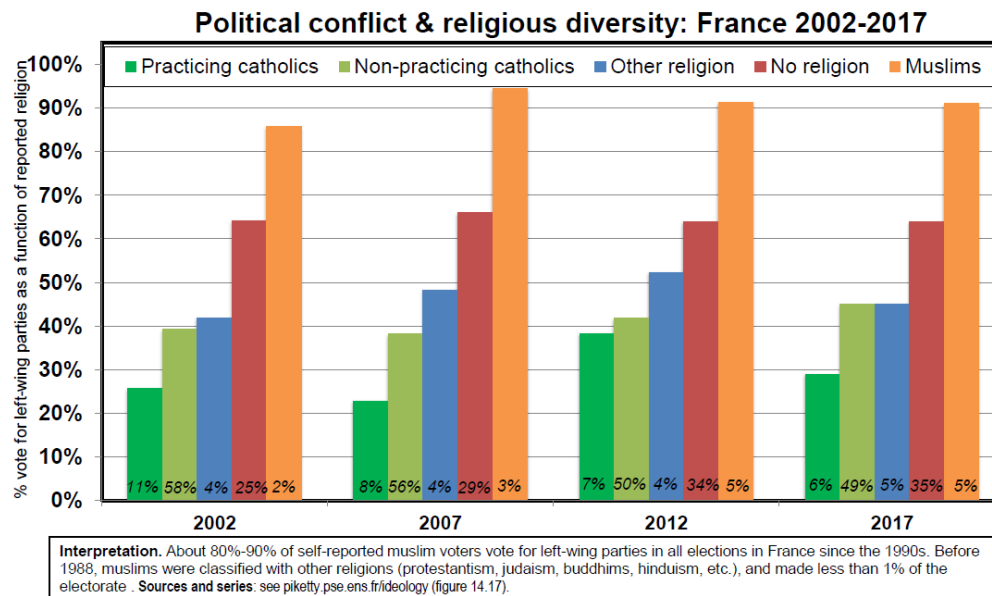
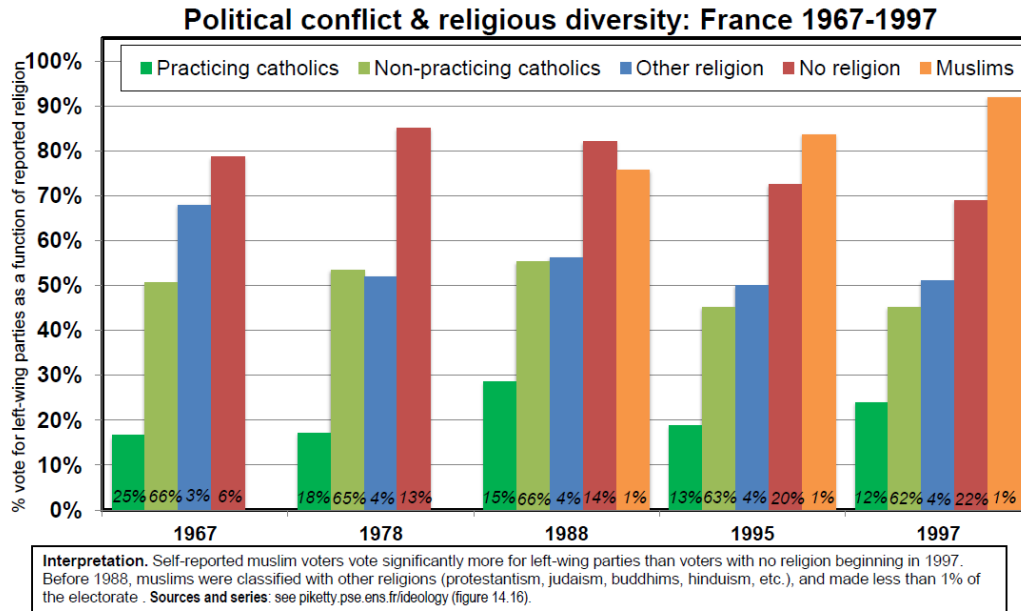


**Interpretation.** Between 1967 and 2017, the proportion of the electorate reporting to be practicing catholic (going to the church at least once per month) dropped from 25% to 6%. Non practicing catholics dropped from 66% to 49%, those reporting no religion increased from 6% to 36%, other religions (protestantism, judaism, buddhism, etc., except islam) from 3% to 4%, and muslims from less than 1% to about 5% of the electorate. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.14).

## Political conflict and catholicism: France 1967-2017



**Interpretation.** Self-reported practicing and non-practicing catholic voters have always voted less strongly for left-wing parties than voters reporting no religion, but the gap has reduced over time. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 14.15).



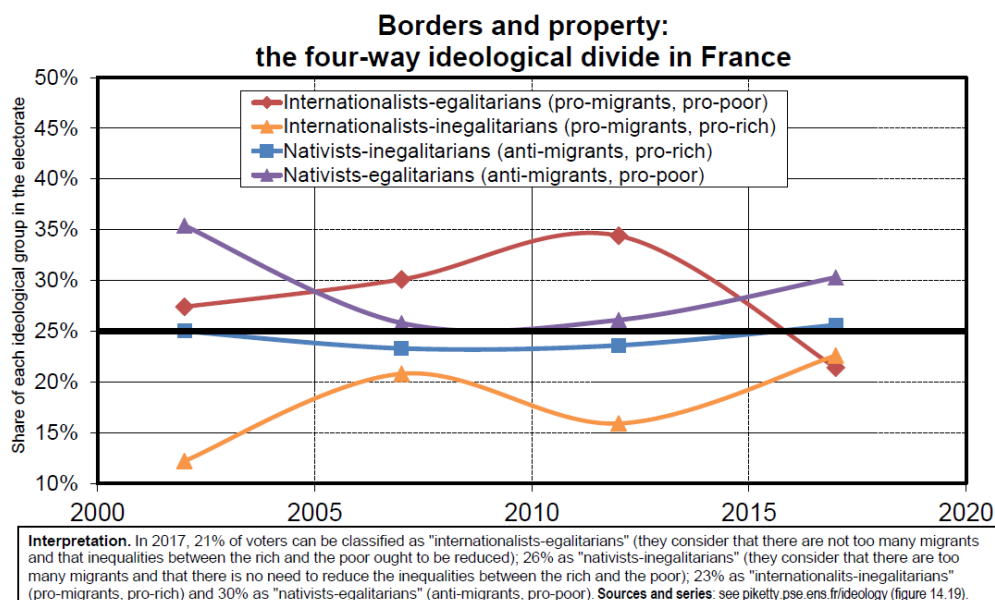
### Borders and property: the four-way electorate in France

- The current political conflict in France can be summarized with two main dimensions: **support or hostility to redistribution** between rich and poor, and **support or hostility to migrants**.
- I.e. conflict about wealth vs conflict about borders.
- The striking point is that these two dimensions have little correlation in the distribution of voters preferences, so that in effect the electorate is divided between four quarters of comparable size.
- → **very unstable situation** (as exemplified by first round of presidential election 2017: very tight race between four candidates)

- **Future evolution will depend on which of the two dimensions will appear to matter the most:** if redistribution is considered to be impossible (e.g. due to tax competition), then the conflict will be mostly about borders

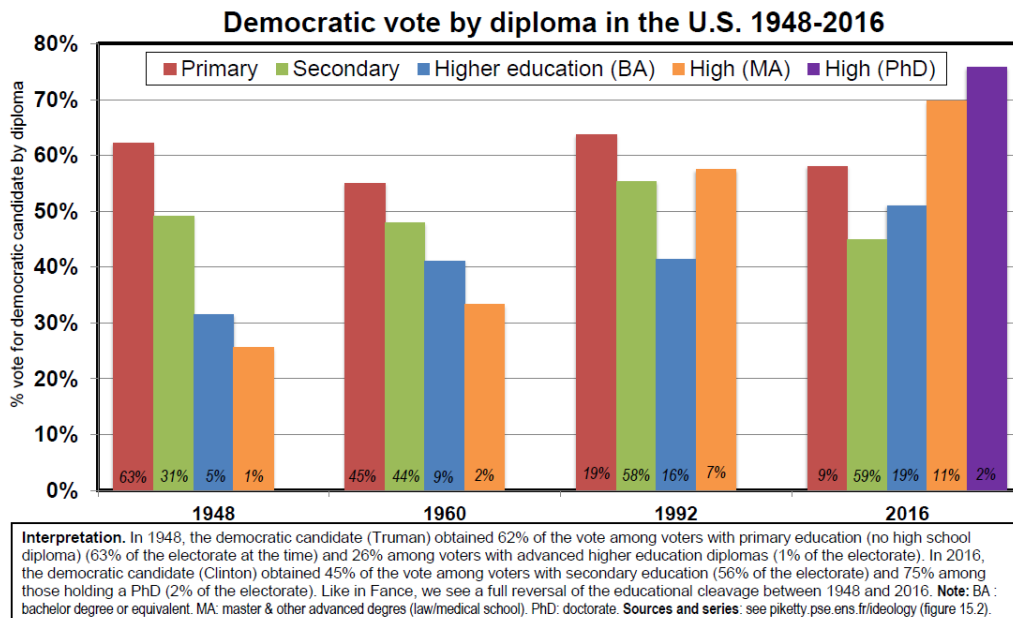
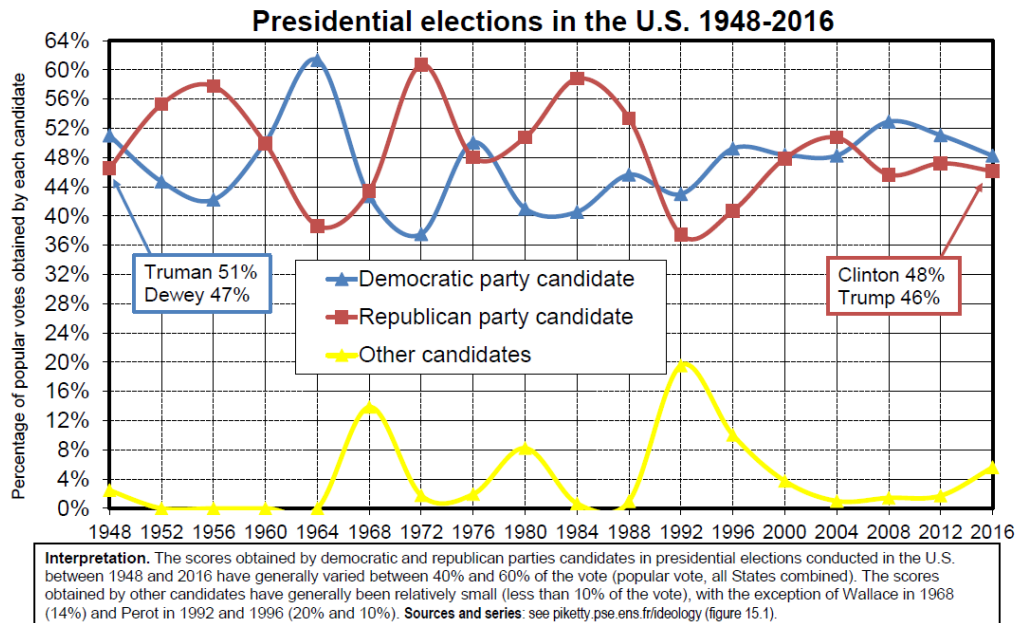
Politico-ideological conflict in France 2017: an electorate divided into four quarters					
Presidential election 2017 (1 <sup>st</sup> round)	All voters	Melenchon /Hamon (vote "egalitarian-internationalist")	Macron (vote "inegalitarian-internationalist")	Fillon (vote "inegalitarian-nativist")	Le Pen /Dupont-Aignan (vote "egalitarian-nativist")
	100%	28%	24%	22%	26%
"There are too many migrants in France" (% agree)	56%	32%	39%	62%	91%
"In order to achieve social justice, one should take to the rich and give to the poor" (% agree)	51%	67%	46%	27%	61%
Higher education graduates (%)	33%	39%	41%	36%	16%
Monthly income > 4000€ (%)	15%	9%	20%	26%	8%
Home owners (%)	60%	48%	69%	78%	51%

**Interpretation.** In 2017, 28% of first-round voters voted for Melenchon-Hamon; 32% of them considered that there are too many migrants in France (vs 56% on average among all voters) and 67% that we should take from the rich and give to the poor (vs 51% on average). In that sense this electorate is ideologically "egalitarian-internationalist", while the Macron electorate is "inegalitarian-internationalist" (pro-migrants, pro-rich), the Fillon electorate "inegalitarian-nativist" (anti-migrants, pro-rich) and the Le Pen/Dupont Aignan electorate "egalitarian-nativist" (anti-migrants, pro-poor). **Note:** the votes for Arthaud/Poutou (2%) and Asselineau/Cheminade/Lassale (2%) were added to Melenchon/Hamon and Fillon. **Sources and series:** see piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology (table 14.1).

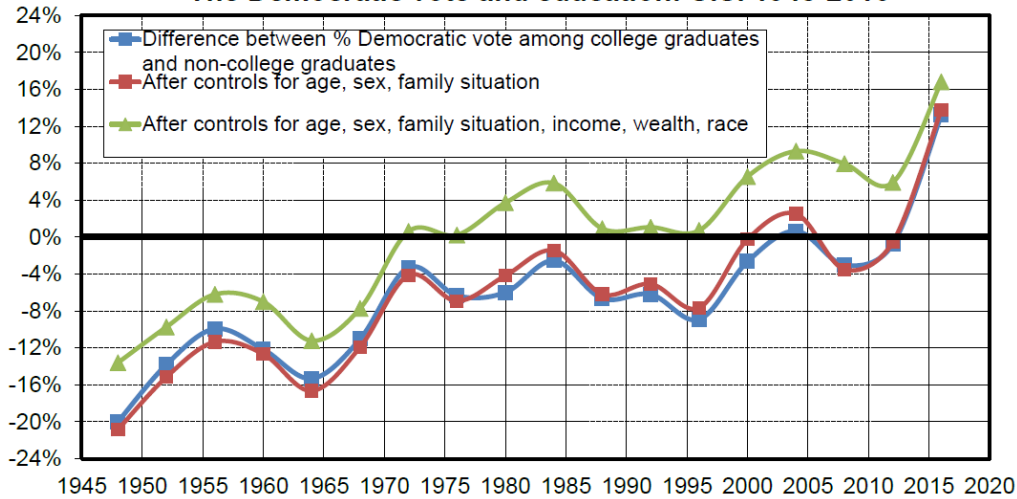


### Changing political cleavages in the United States

- **Unlike France, US formally has a two-party system:** Democrats vs Republicans (partly due to electoral system)
- **But in practice each party is also divided by major conflicts about redistribution** (some Dems are strongly pro-redistribution, some not) & **migration/ethnicity** (some Reps are strongly anti-minority, some not)
- In the end, the general evolution of the structure of political conflict in recent decades bears a lot of similarity with that of France, including the unstablity of the four-way electorate

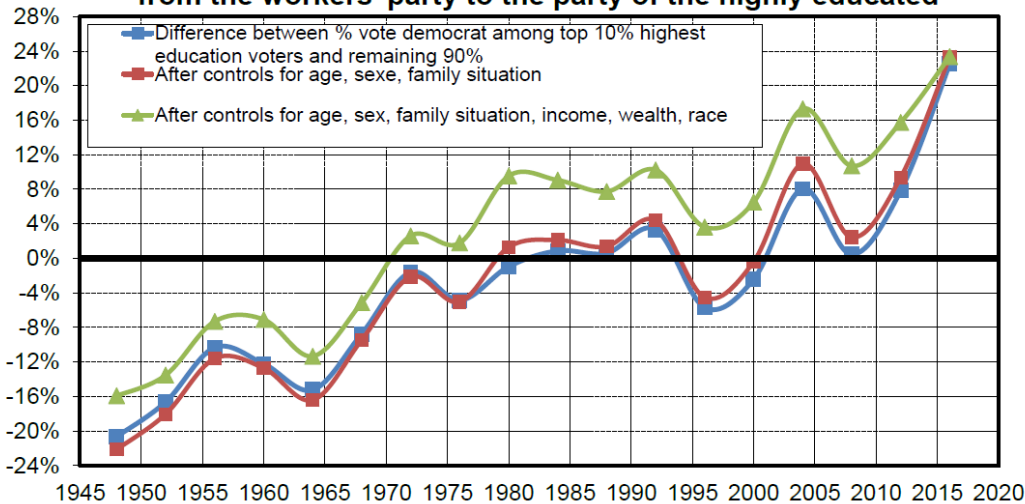


### The Democratic vote and education: U.S. 1948-2016



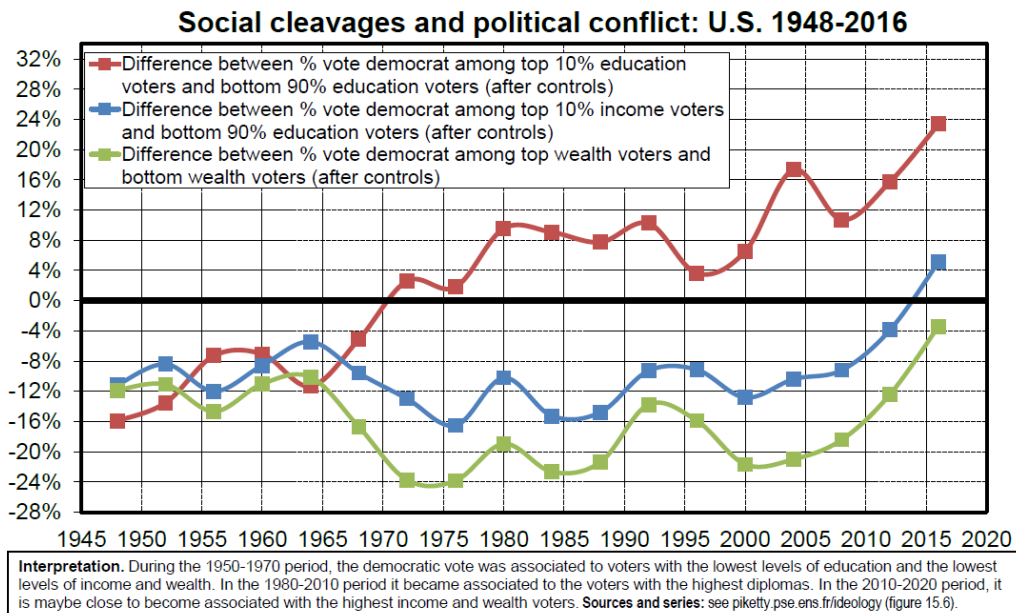
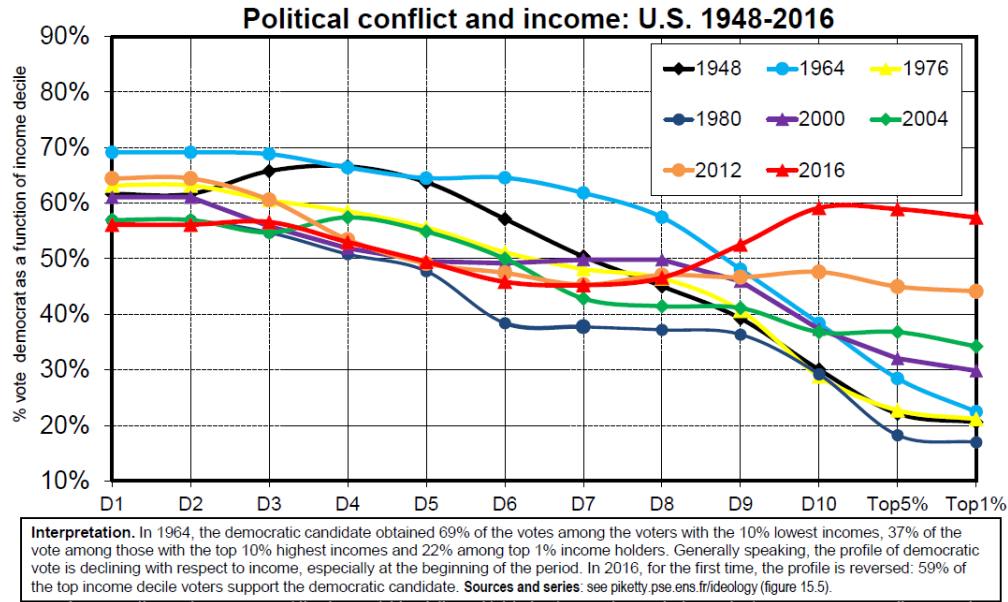
**Interpretation.** In 1948, the democratic candidate obtained a score that was 20 points smaller among college graduates than among college graduates; in 2016, this score is 14 points higher among college graduates. Controlling for other variables ("other things equal") does not affect the trend (only the levels). **Sources and series:** see piketty pse.ens.fr/ideology (figure 15.3).

### Democratic vote in the U.S. 1948-2016: from the workers' party to the party of the highly educated



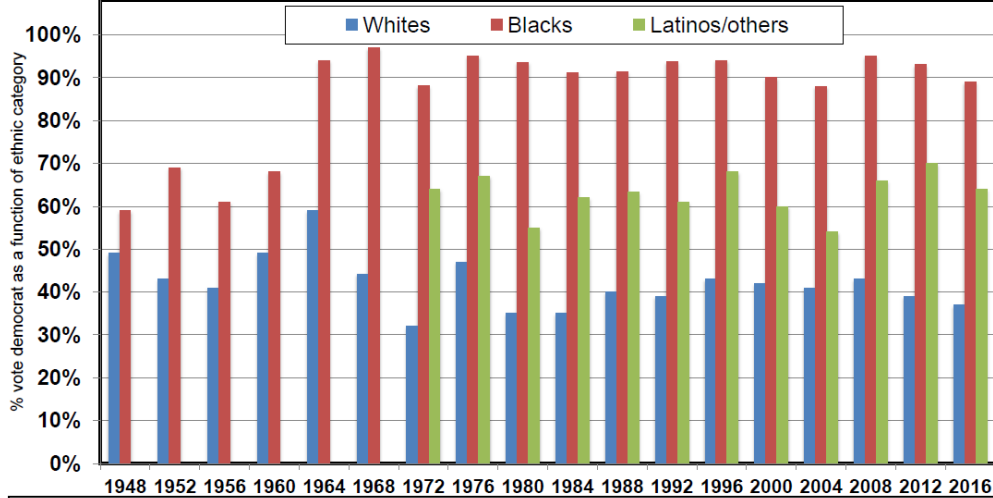
**Interpretation.** In 1948, the democratic candidate obtained a score that was 21 points smaller among the top 10% highest-education voters than among the remaining 90%; in 2016, this score is 23 points higher among the top 10% highest-education voters. Controlling for other variables ("other things equal") does not affect the trend (only the levels). **Sources and series:** see piketty pse.ens.fr/ideology (figure 15.4).





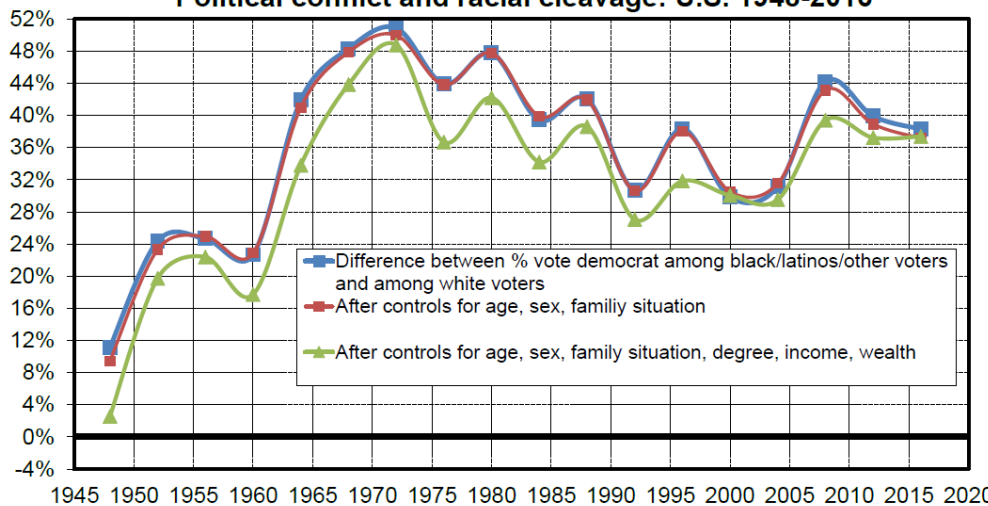


### Political conflict and ethnic identity: U.S. 1948-2016

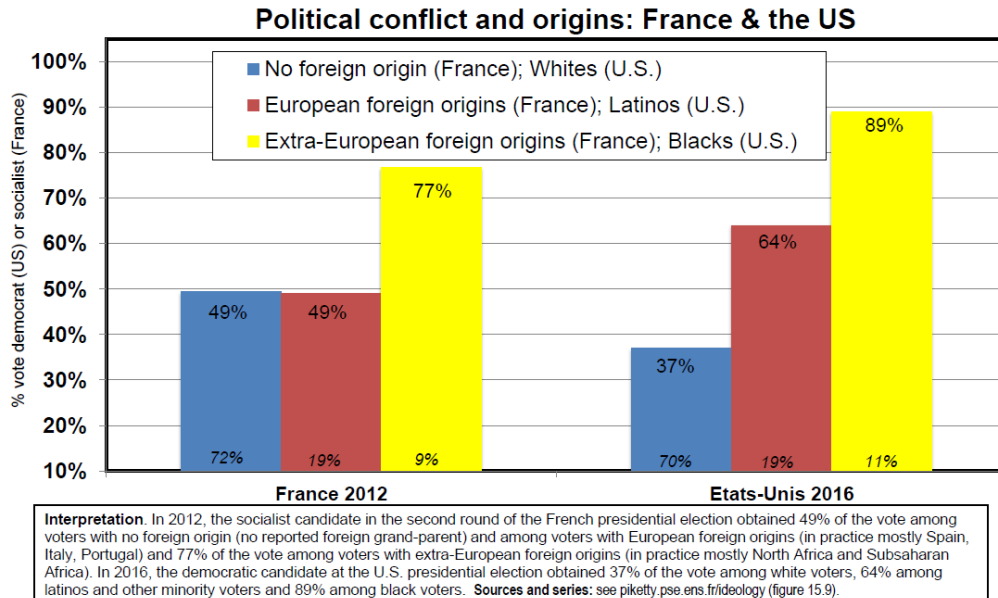


**Interpretation.** In 2016, the democratic candidate obtained 37% of the vote among white voters (70% of the electorate), 89% of the vote among black voters (11% of the electorate) and 64% of the vote among Latinos and other non-whites (19% of the electorate, including 16% for Latinos). In 1972, the democratic candidate obtained 32% of the vote among whites (89% of the electorate), 82% among blacks (10% of the electorate) and 64% among Latinos and other categories (1% of the electorate). **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 15.7).

### Political conflict and racial cleavage: U.S. 1948-2016

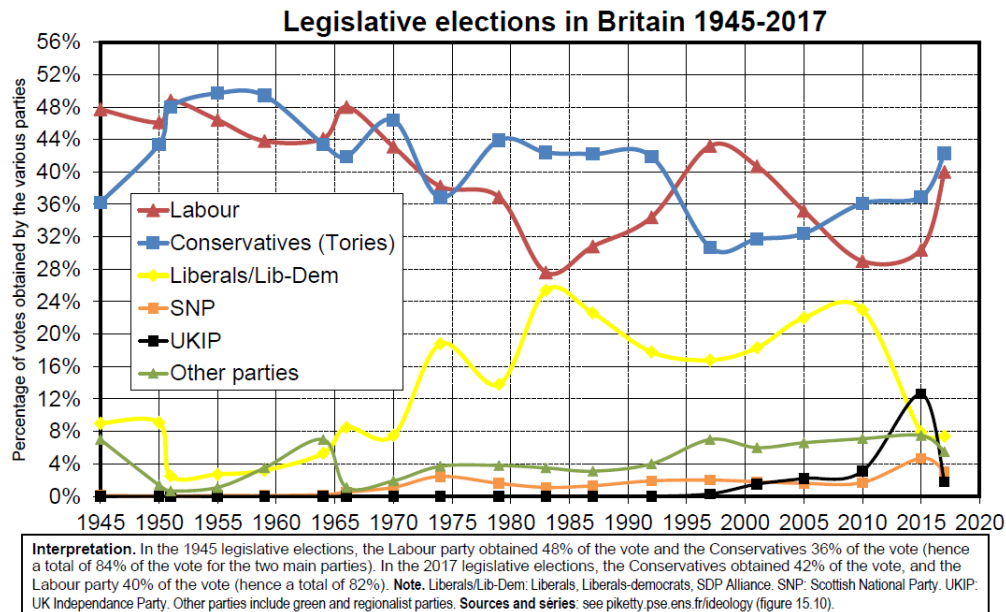


**Interpretation.** In 1948, the democratic vote was 11 points higher among black and other minority voters (9% of the electorate) than among white voters (91% of the electorate). In 2016, the democratic vote was 39 points higher among black and other minority voters (30% of the electorate) than among white voters (70% of the electorate). Taking into account control variables has a limited impact on this gap. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](http://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 15.8).

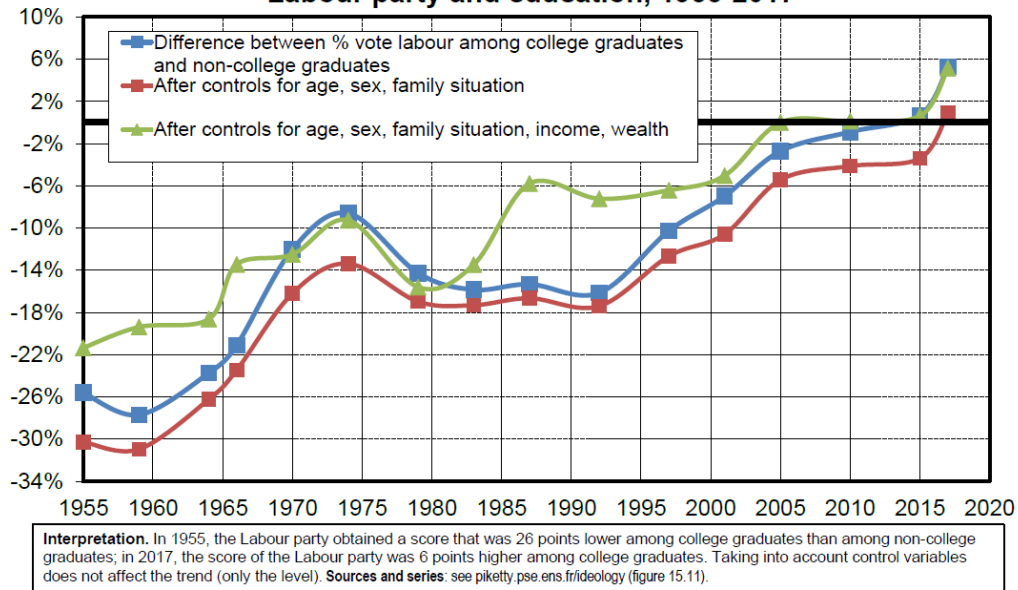


### Changing political cleavages in the United Kingdom

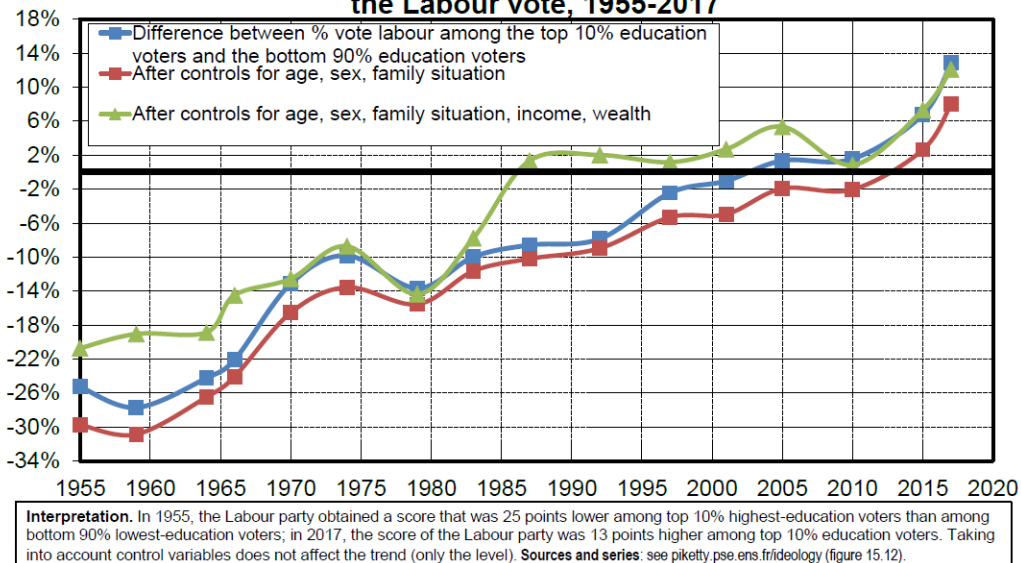
- Despite the UK, US and French party systems, it is striking to see relatively similar evolutions in all three countries
- This expresses the fact that Western electoral democracies have gone through comparable challenges and limitations: large & persistent educational inequalities (higher education challenge); tax competition & globalization; post-communist hyper-capitalism; post-colonial
- But there are also UK specificities: shifts in Labour party leadership; rising role of the conflict over Brexit



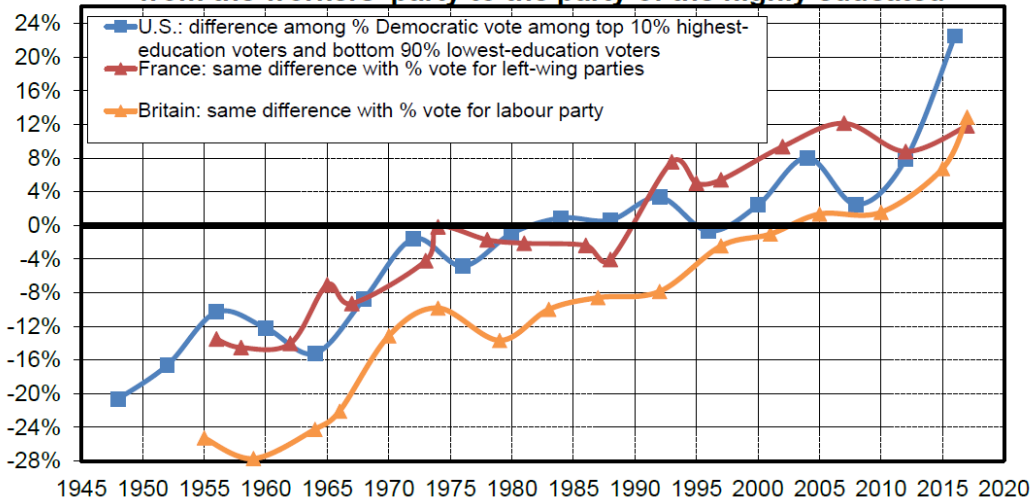
### Labour party and education, 1955-2017



### From the workers' party to the party of the highly educated: the Labour vote, 1955-2017

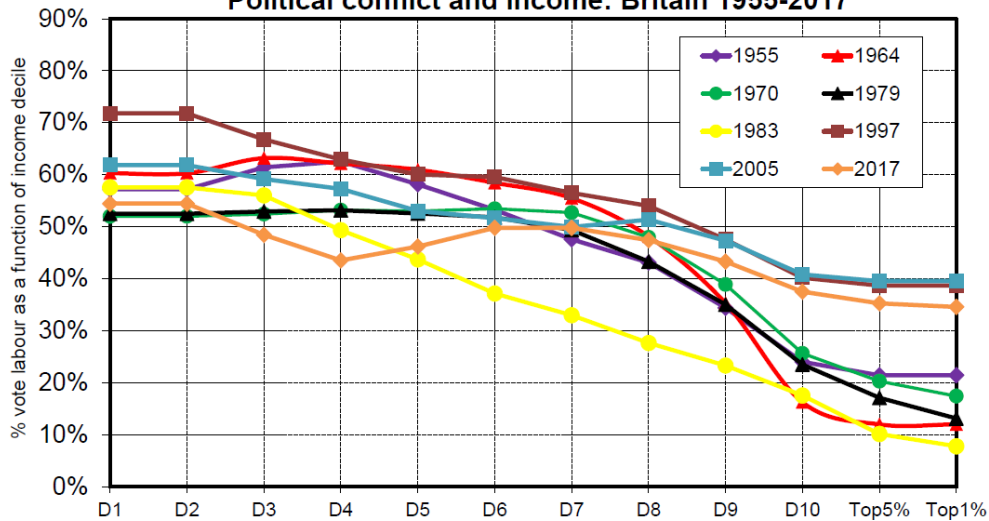


### The electoral left in Europe & the US, 1945-2020: from the workers' party to the party of the highly educated

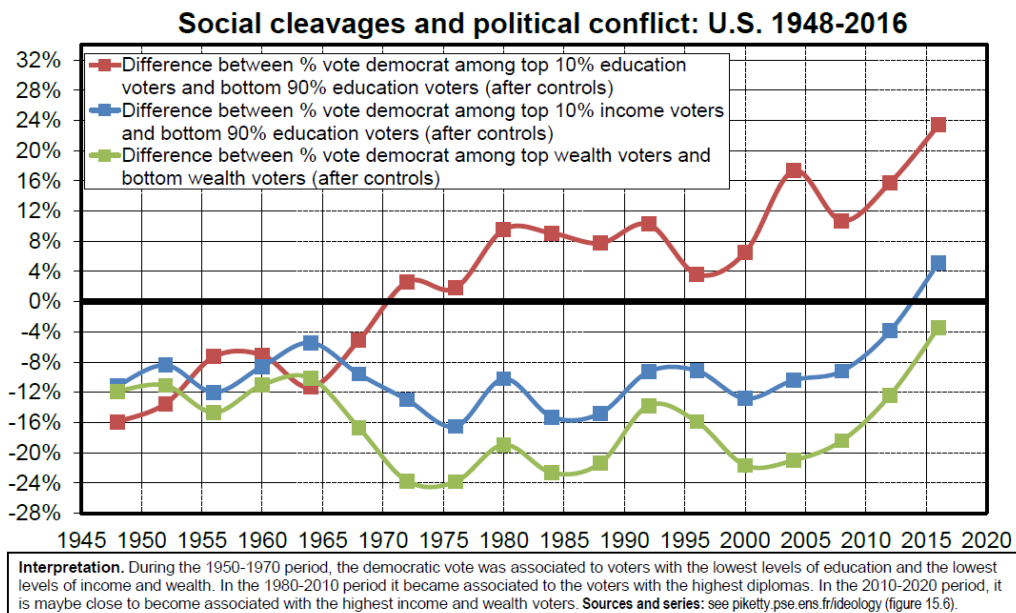
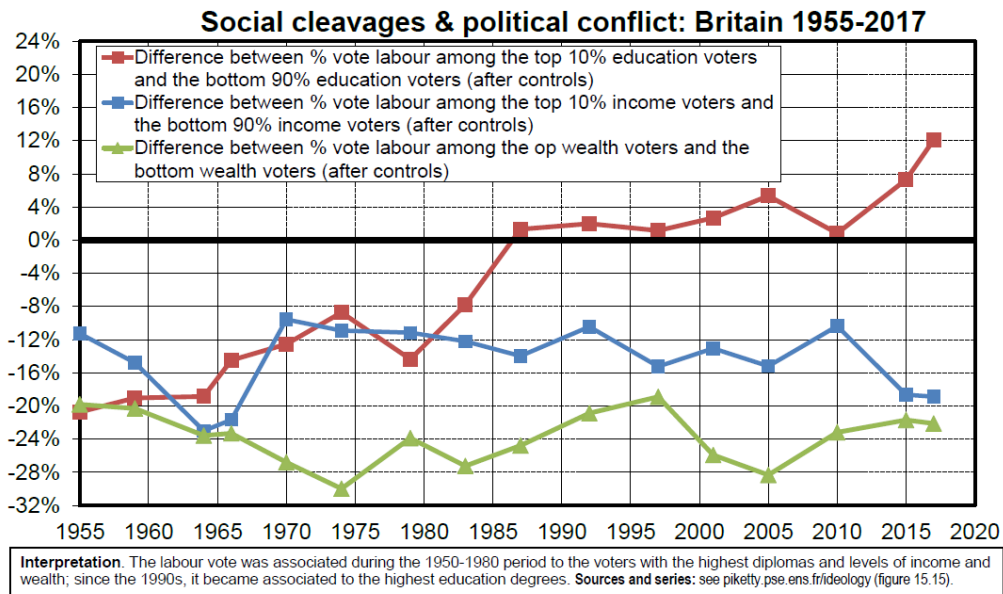


**Interpretation.** During the 1950-1970 period, the vote for the democratic party in the U.S., left-wing parties in France (socialists-communists-radicals-greens) in France and the labour party in Britain was associated with the voters with the lowest educational diplomas; in the 1990-2010 period it became associated with the voters with the highest education diplomas. The British evolution is slightly lagging behind the French and U.S. evolutions but goes in the same direction. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](https://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 15.13)

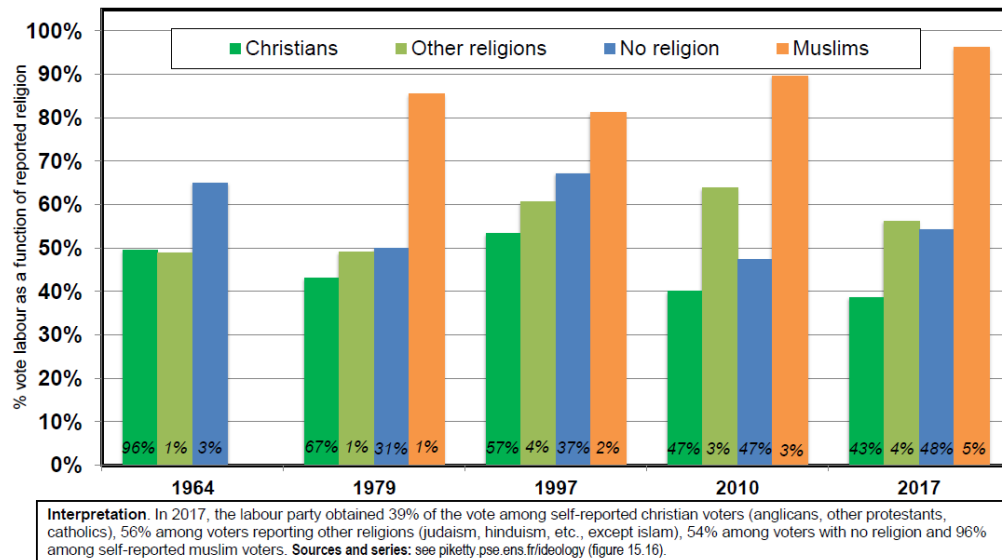
### Political conflict and income: Britain 1955-2017



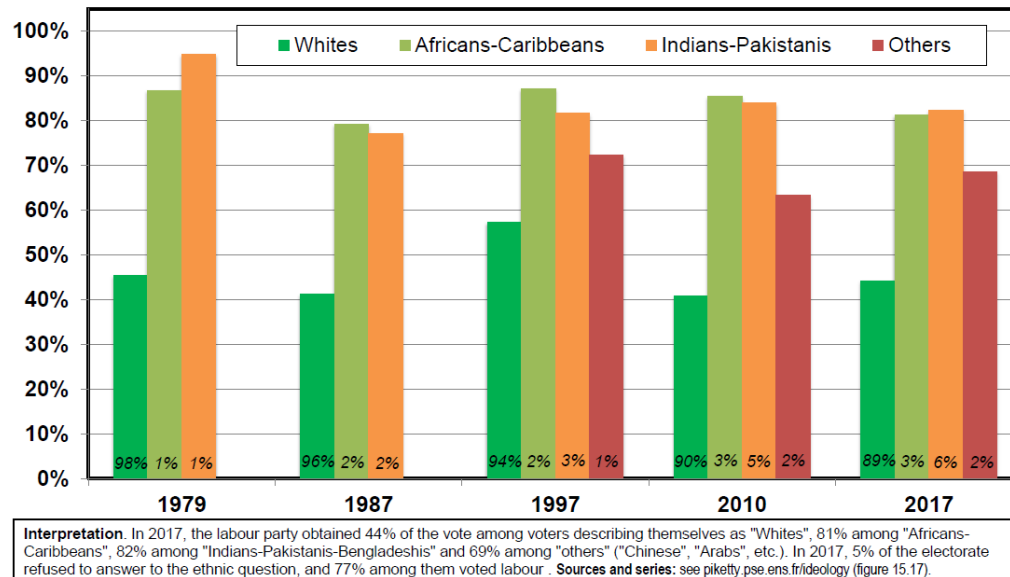
**Interpretation.** The profile of the vote for the labour party as a function of income decile has generally been strongly decreasing, particularly at the level of the 10% highest incomes, and especially from the 1950s to the 1980s. **Sources and series:** see [piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology](https://piketty.pse.ens.fr/ideology) (figure 15.14).



### Political conflict & religious diversity: Britain 1964-2017



### Political conflict & ethnic categories, Britain 1979-2017



### The cleavage about Europe and globalization

- In the UK, but also in France and in most European countries, the conflict about European integration has played a more & more important role in recent decades
- **Referendum about Europe in UK 2016 and in France 1992 & 2005: in all cases, only top socioeconomic deciles support European Union**
- **Conflict about EU cuts across « standard » left-right lines because it is a transnational conflict that is both about redistribution between rich and poor (EU and the free mobility of capital and goods and services are perceived to favour the most mobile and wealthiest economic actors) and about borders, identity and migration (EU membership implies free labor mobility)**

- Without some fundamental changes to EU functioning and some form of « **social-federalism** » (common social policies to reduce inequalities: tax justice, education, wages, environment, etc.), it is difficult to see why this will change

