

THE RISE OF THE *FRONT NATIONAL* (NATIONAL FRONT)
AND THE ROLE OF MARINE LE PEN

by

EMA CANNING

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Political Science and the Robert D. Clark Honors
College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

May 2021

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Emma Canning for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Political Science to be taken June 2021.

Title: The Rise of the *Front national* (National Front) and the Role of Marine Le Pen

Approved: *Professor Craig Parsons*
Primary Thesis Advisor

The trend of rising far right-wing movements has been a trend globally and has been a particularly relevant and ongoing story in France. This thesis examines the role of Marine Le Pen as the leader of the French political party, *Front national* (FN) and seeks to explain and understand the depth of escalating support for the far-right political party, the FN. The research presented seeks to answer who supported the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen and explain why these voters' views have changed under the leadership of Marine Le Pen. In short, this essay both asks and answers the following question: to what extent has the far-right changed under the leadership of Marine Le Pen?

This thesis will examine both the surface-level and underlying ways in which she has changed the party, and it will also present research on the FN's support and how it has changed under Marine Le Pen. In evaluating these components of French revolution and political outcomes, this thesis takes the stance that while Marine Le Pen has certainly transformed some parts of the party and voter support has increased under her leadership, the party fundamentally remains the same. This argument will be systematically explored with reference to the relevant body of existing literature.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my Thesis Committee primary advisor, Professor Craig Parsons, for helping me to fully examine the specific topic and consider the various perspectives and contexts related to this subject matter. I would also like to thank the rest of my Thesis Committee, Professors Fabienne Moore and Nicole Dudukovic. And would like to express my sincerest gratitude for having the privilege of working with excellent, knowledgeable professors who have put in a tremendous amount of time and effort to help guide me through this process. Thirdly, I would like to express my gratitude for the support I received from the Clark Honors College. Again, my appreciation goes out to Professor Parsons, who was able to take on my project last minute. I would like to thank my family and friends for their support and faith in my successful completion of this requirement, in addition to fulfilling requirements in my major.

The creators of this template (CHC Librarian Miriam Rigby & CHC Academic & Thesis Programs Manager Miriam Jordan) would like to thank Reed College for providing their Thesis Template for the inspiration of many elements of this template.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 2: The <i>Front national</i> of Jean-Marie Le Pen | 5 |
| Introduction | 5 |
| Historical Context and the <i>Front national</i> of Jean-Marie Le Pen | 6 |
| 1972-81: The Formative Years | 7 |
| Jean-Marie Le Pen and <i>Front national</i> Political Stances, 1970s | 10 |
| Immigration, Race | 10 |
| Economics | 12 |
| 1981-88: Breakthrough | 13 |
| Consolidation of the Party, 1990s | 19 |
| Jean-Marie Le Pen's Positions and <i>Front national</i> Rhetoric in 2002 | 21 |
| Conclusion | 22 |
| Chapter 3: What Did Marine Le Pen Change? Policy Positions and Discourse | 24 |
| Introduction | 24 |
| <i>Front national</i> in 2011: Marine Le Pen's Take Over | 26 |
| 2012 Presidential Election | 27 |
| 2012 Parliamentary Elections | 29 |
| De-demonization, Public Image, and Rhetoric | 30 |
| 2013-2015: 2014 Municipal and European Elections | 32 |
| The 2017 Presidential Election | 35 |
| 2018 and <i>Les gilets jaunes</i> | 38 |
| 2019: Moving Forward | 39 |
| Macron and the Center Shift | 40 |
| Conclusion | 41 |
| Chapter 4: Voting for the <i>Front national</i> : Continuity or Change | 43 |
| Introduction | 43 |
| Voting Under Jean-Marie Le Pen | 44 |
| Voting Under Marine Le Pen | 45 |
| 2012 Presidential Election Demographics | 47 |
| 2012 Regional Support | 48 |
| 2014 Municipal Elections Demographics | 49 |
| 2014 Regional Support | 50 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 2017 Presidential Election Demographics | 51 |
| 2017 Regional Support | 53 |
| Conclusion | 54 |
| Chapter 5: Conclusion | 55 |
| Moving into the Mainstream, or Still the Radical Right? | 55 |
| Bibliography | 63 |

List of Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: | 10 |
| <i>1 Million Unemployed is 1 Million Immigrants Too Many! France and the French First!</i> , Poster for the FN, 1978. | 10 |
| Figure 2: | 13 |
| “Civilization is in danger. The white race risks being submerged by the Third World and shouldn’t we defend ourselves?” (Germaine Burgaz, vice-president FN) Image from <i>Le Monde Diplomatique</i> , March 1984. | 13 |
| Figure 3: | 19 |
| The immigrants are going to vote...and you’re abstaining?!!, Poster for the FN, 1990s. | 19 |
| Figure 4: | 24 |
| Poster for JMLP’s presidential campaign in 2002 next to poster for MLP’s 2012 campaign in 2012. | 24 |
| Figure 5: | 35 |
| Poster for MLP’s presidential campaign, 2016. | 35 |
| Figure 6: | 43 |
| MLP on stage in Paris, 2012. | 43 |
| Figure 7: | 51 |
| French election second round maps. | 51 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

The rise of far-right movements has become a trend around the world, especially in the most recent decade. This trend has been a relevant and ongoing story in France, where the upcoming 2022 presidential election poses the question: Will France elect a leader from a far-right wing tradition as president? The modern reemergence of the far-right wing party, the *Front national*, (also known as the National Rally or *Rassemblement national*), hereafter referred to as “FN” has been in development for years. Consequently, this topic is essential to research because the modern rise of far-right movements is a trend taking center stage in European politics. Formerly fringe ideas and far-right ideologies are arguably becoming more mainstream, shrinking the space for centrism and traditional ideals. By examining the depth and breadth of the far-right’s influence, we can see the extent of this shift and extent of the influence of the far-right on public political discourse.

The power of the far-right is not only in their ability to get elected as individuals, but also the opportunity for their ideologies to be co-opted by other parties, therefore shifting public rhetoric further right. Recently, President Emmanuel Macron has been accused of pandering to the far-right ahead of the presidential election, which polls show are likely to be a repeat of Macron dueling against Marine Le Pen (MLP). This shows the importance of this topic, and what is truly at stake. Even if MLP loses the election, the impact from her popularized far-right policies remains, and has managed to influence the previous mainstream parties.

This topic is also crucial because it surrounds the conversation regarding populism. Populism has many complicated definitions, and has become an increasingly

popular buzzword in political discourse. Populism can be defined as “the notion that society is divided into two competing groups: the “pure people” versus the “corrupt elite.”¹ Populist leaders not only “claim to represent the will of the morally superior ordinary people,” but also “position themselves as uniquely capable of doing so.”² Another definition of populism describes it as a phenomenon rather than a fixed ideology, a political style or a “way of speaking, acting, and presenting oneself.”³ These flexible definitions allow for the term to be applied to both parties and leaders across the political spectrum, but is usually viewed as far-right.⁴ This is because most examples of successful populism come from leaders like MLP.⁵ When speaking about populism, this project refers to a specifically far-right populism, which influences MLP’s economic policies.

This subject is integral to modern political discourse because of the rise of populism and right-wing parties across Europe during recent years, and France’s significant history involving fascism and right-wing parties since World War II further contextualizes this. Additionally, the 2017 presidential election in which MLP performed at a level much higher than expected took observers by surprise, both nationally and globally. Marine Le Pen has been pivotal for the French far-right wing; she has changed the face of France’s far-right party and increased its popularity by far in comparison to its former leader, her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen (JMLP). After taking control of her father’s political party in 2011, Marine Le Pen has since focused her

¹ Yasmeen Serhan, “‘Populism’ Is Meaningless,” *The Atlantic*, March 14, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/what-is-populism/607600/>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

political goals on three subjects: immigration and its connected social issues, globalization and the European Union, and her economic program of selective welfare reminiscent of fascism. Before Marine Le Pen's leadership, the FN was not seen as a serious opponent in mainstream French politics, in part because of the party's blatant racism, xenophobia, and ties to established conspiracy theories like Holocaust denial. Marine Le Pen essentially transformed the party during a critical moment in French politics, addressing issues like economic decline, globalism, and immigration that appeared to speak to the French white rural working-class. This further revealed the division between the urban areas like Paris and the rural regions in France.

With this background and context established, this thesis project seeks to explain and understand the depth of escalating support for the far-right political party, the FN. The research presented seeks to answer who supported the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen and explain why these voters' views have changed under the leadership of Marine Le Pen. In short, this essay both asks and answers the following question: to what extent has the far-right changed under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, and how can her success be placed in the context of the social, political, and cultural movements in France?

In answering this question, this project will focus on Marine Le Pen's strategies, how the party has (and has not) changed since her father's departure in 2011, and other influences that allowed for the rise of the FN. My thesis will examine both the surface-level and underlying ways in which she has changed the party, and it will also present research on the FN's support and how it has changed under Marine Le Pen. The first section focuses on a summary of the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen, his positions and

rhetoric, and its voter demographic. It also will cover important historical context involving France's history with right-wing parties that is less widely known by the general population. Next, this project discusses Marine Le Pen's leadership and her specific changes to the FN, including her policy positions and discourse. Thirdly, the project examines the voting patterns and demographics for the FN, analyzing who has historically supported the party and what has changed under MLP's leadership. In evaluating these components of French revolution and political outcomes, this thesis takes the stance that while Marine Le Pen has certainly transformed some parts of the party and voter support has increased under her leadership, the party fundamentally remains the same. The concluding section will address the idea that the FN is moving into the political mainstream in France rather than remaining a fringe party deemed too radically right. Lastly, it argues that we will see the results of this dangerous adaptation of far-right ideals into the mainstream in the 2022 presidential election.

Chapter 2: The *Front national* of Jean-Marie Le Pen

Introduction

The rhetoric of Jean-Marie Le Pen and the FN, known since 2018 as the National Rally, developed against the background of a broader historical and political context of right-wing movements and ideology in France. The creation of the FN in 1972 responded to the disorganization and miscommunication between right-wing groups such as neo-fascists and Catholic fundamentalists.⁶ The party achieved electoral breakthrough in the 1980s, due to a multitude of reasons. French identity was evolving in a post-colonial phase, and the far-right had focused their earlier efforts on capitalizing off of colonial nationalism and the struggle surrounding *Algérie française*, or the campaign to keep Algeria under French colonial rule.⁷ Immigration was rising, with nearly six million immigrants by 1985.⁸ Economic crisis also created grievances on which the FN could capitalize.⁹ Jean-Marie Le Pen's charismatic, intense rhetoric and use of media reached out to a socio-economically "hybrid base" and eventually made it one of the leading parties of the working class.¹⁰ To paint a clear picture of the *Front national* and its rise under Le Pen's leadership, it is necessary to start with historical context of right-wing French politics, before moving onto the FN's rise in the

⁶ James Shields, *The extreme right in France : from Pétain to Le Pen* (New York City, NY: Taylor & Francis Books, 2007), 169; While Shields accounts for a large portion of the sources in this project, the author does not emphasize race as much as I believe to be necessary in the conversation surrounding far-right ideologies.

⁷ Jonathan Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1995), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24032-6>, 15.

⁸ "France Immigration Statistics 1960-2021," accessed April 25, 2021, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/FRA/france/immigration-statistics>.

⁹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 169.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

1970s which lead to its eventual breakthrough in the 1980s and Le Pen's notable presidential run in 2002.

Historical Context and the *Front national* of Jean-Marie Le Pen

A variety of broader issues were key to setting up the breakthrough and rise of Le Pen and the FN. French politics and right-wing ideals have been shaped “in close reference to the past”: there is no need to look far into France's history to see its links to both German National Socialism and Italian Fascism. These two ideologically fascist traditions were heavily influenced by both French and broader European trends of fascism during 1919-1939.¹¹ This included the Vichy regime, an ally of Nazi Germany under the leadership of Phillippe Pétain.¹² Additionally, the Vichy regime oversaw the growth of extreme-right ideas and policies, a so-called “laboratory” for this ideology. After this came Poujadism, named after politician Pierre Poujade, which was a “direct and brutal” response to economic modernization in France during the 1950s.¹³ This populist movement featured antisemitism, aggressive nationalism, and other extreme-right elements while combining with left-wing policies such as tax and welfare provisions.¹⁴ Poujadism combined both the tradition of the French revolutionary-republican and conservative nationalism.¹⁵

The development of French nationalism during the post-colonial era also contributed to the rise of right-wing ideology. The independence of Algeria led to the rebranding of French nationalism, as nationalist right-wingers could no longer identify

¹¹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 2.

¹² *Ibid*, 2, 16.

¹³ *Ibid*, 68.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 87.

¹⁵ James G. Shields, “The Poujadist Movement: A faux ‘fascism,’” *Modern & Contemporary France* 8, no. 1 (2000): 19-34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/096394800113330>.

nationalism as the equivalent of imperial power, and focused on the emphasis on “European kinship, Western culture, and racial specificity” rather than just France.¹⁶ This shift in right-wing nationalism after the Algerian War also contributed to the growth of anti-Arab hostility and racism against North African immigrants which became prominent features for right-wing policies.¹⁷ The polarization and resentment surrounding the decolonization of Algeria left bitter resentment in the far-right, eventually turning into a more general dissatisfaction with the political establishment which was reflected in the rise of the FN and its anti-European integration, anti-immigrant ideology.¹⁸ The 1970s saw the inauguration of a new political party which attempted to succeed at what the extreme right had failed to do in post-war France: reach out to a broad base of support by uniting the goals of the multitude of far-right political groups.

1972-81: The Formative Years

The FN was formed in 1972, created with the premise in mind of a “large national party” that would standardize and bring together a variety of groups from neo-fascists to Catholics, eliminating the divisions that had plagued extreme right politics in France.¹⁹ In order to accomplish its goal, the FN focused on creating a “respectable public face” and a calculated message to appeal to a larger audience than previous right-wing parties with a modernized vision.²⁰ With Jean-Marie Le Pen as its president, it

¹⁶ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 5.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Steven A. Cook, “How the French Debacle in Algeria Shaped the Rise of Marine Le Pen—and What America Can Learn From It,” May 1, 2017, accessed January 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/how-french-debacle-algeria-shaped-rise-marine-le-pen-and-what-america-can-learn-it>.

¹⁹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 169.

²⁰ Ibid.

forged what vice president François Brigneau described as an “uneasy marriage between Le Pen’s right-wing parliamentary current” and secretary-general Alain Robert’s group Occident, which was described as a movement with “carefully cultivated antisemitism and fascist romanticism.”²¹ It differentiated itself from other right wing parties because the FN emphasized that it was a party of the right: a social, popular, and national right.²² The FN also had a certain public image of maturity and intellect to cultivate, with Le Pen publicly rejecting and condemning methods of violence in order to avoid alienating potential voters.²³

During this time, the FN underwent three distinct phases, each contributing to its eventual breakthrough in the 1980s. From 1972 to 1974, the FN struggled to provide a distinct message with no clear issues to build an audience from.²⁴ Then from 1974 to 1978, the party developed a more cohesive internal structure and a stronger presence in the media with the help of FN co-founder François Duprat, creating a national newspaper that targeted local areas and internal committees that expanded on key policy areas such as education and social problems.²⁵ It was during this evolution that the FN introduced their now-infamous hardline stance on immigration, partly because of Duprat’s continuing radical influence.²⁶ Previously, Le Pen himself had only wanted to focus his message on an anti-communism stance, but eventually came around to the idea as Duprat saw the opportunity to capitalize on an issue which mainstream parties lacked a strong stance on.²⁷ The last phase came after the death of Duprat in 1978 and

²¹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 141, 170.

²² Ibid.

²³ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 171.

²⁴ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 183.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics*, 21.

²⁷ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 186.

the recruitment of Jean-Pierre Stirbois.²⁸ Stirbois, as Le Pen's deputy, demonstrated an "uncompromising" style of party management which centralized the FN's decision-making and emphasized cultivating grassroots support.²⁹ Stirbois also shared Duprat's view on the importance of the issue of immigration, and by the end of the decade, the FN's position on immigration had evolved from brief public references to logistical issues with illegal immigration, assimilation, and the consequences of utilizing foreign, cheap labor to a firm belief that immigration threatened not only French identity, but the French genetic pool as well.³⁰

²⁸ Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics*, 37.

²⁹ Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics*, 35.

³⁰ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 184.

Jean-Marie Le Pen and *Front national* Political Stances, 1970s



Figure 1:

1 Million Unemployed is 1 Million Immigrants Too Many! France and the French First!, Poster for the FN, 1978.³¹

Immigration, Race

JMLP and the FN were infamous for their hardline stance on immigration, frequently using everything from dog-whistle terms to explicitly racist language when addressing this issue. For example, when Socialist politician and French president François Mitterrand proposed Proposition 80, which granted immigrants amnesty and a restricted vote, the FN claimed this would set “France on the road to losing its

³¹ Accessed April 20, 2021, <https://media.nouvelobs.com/ext/uri/ureferentiel.nouvelobs.com/file/15879027.jpg>.

Frenchness.”³² A slogan the FN used in the late 1970s was, “A million unemployed is a million immigrants too many! France and the French First!” This phrase was compared to one the Nazis had used in the 1930s, which “equated numbers of unemployed with numbers of Jewish people.”³³ The FN called for a reduction in foreign workers, specifically focusing on illegal immigrants in France.³⁴ This issue became Le Pen’s main message during the 1978 campaign, where he called for a “Halt to unemployment and work for the French.”³⁵ In 1979, the FN called for an immediate deportation of all illegal immigrants, and additionally gradual deportations of over a million immigrants a year.³⁶ JMLP’s FN was also very concerned with “defense of the west” and the drop in the national birth rate.³⁷ The party claimed that immigration costs were greater than the budget of the armed forces, and that reversing immigration rates would relaunch the economy and stimulate investment, while at the same time revitalizing the birth rate by 20-25 percent.³⁸ JMLP argued in a piece from 1979 that countries of Europe and the West faced a “demographic tidal wave from Asia and Africa” and claimed that the west had a right of self-defense against it, urging “the Whites, the Europeans, and the French” to “recognize their right to exist and to take defense action.”³⁹ The FN and JMLP denounced accusations of racism, claiming that it was not racist to argue that native French people have a greater right to employment than foreigners.⁴⁰

³² Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 203.

³³ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 185.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Pierre Bréchon and Subrata Kumar Mitra, "The National Front in France: The Emergence of an Extreme Right Protest Movement," *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 1 (1992): 63-82, accessed April 13, 2021, doi:10.2307/422097.

³⁶ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 186.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 188.

⁴⁰ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 186.

Economics

The FN developed their economic policies based on Neo-Darwinism of struggle and selection.⁴¹ Originally, the party had very little to say about economics, but expanded by 1978 to a free-market economic stance, although it remained very secondary in their discourse. This allowed the party to distance itself from a traditional fascist policy, while engaging with two key parts of its political philosophy: natural hierarchies, and “maximal opposition” to communism. Le Pen even claimed that the FN’s 1978 economic policies were Reaganomics before Reagan’s election in 1980.⁴²

⁴¹ Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics*, 24.

⁴² Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 189.

1981-88: Breakthrough



Figure 2:

“Civilization is in danger. The white race risks being submerged by the Third World and shouldn’t we defend ourselves?” (Germaine Burgaz, vice-president FN) Image from *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 1984.⁴³

Before the 1984 European elections, the French extreme right had received a meager 1.3 percent of the vote in the 1979 European elections.⁴⁴ The FN had been sidelined, under their alliance with the *Parti des Forces Nouvelles* (PFN), while the PFN continued as the representing party for the far right. In a shocking turn of events, the 1984 European elections revealed unprecedented support for the FN, winning approximately 11 percent of the vote and 10 of 81 French seats in the European Parliament.⁴⁵ This success came from many different variables, including the FN’s

⁴³ *Le Monde Diplomatique*, accessed April 2021, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm%3A978-1-349-24032-6%2F1.pdf>.

⁴⁴ “Election of the President of the European Parliament,” accessed April 25, 2021, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20070109BKG01804>.

⁴⁵ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 192.

ability to recruit supporters from the moderate right, JMLP's popularity in media coverage, and the wider political context of France in the early 1980s, including concerns about what "Europe" meant for nation states and the fear of losing autonomy.

. Three "structural factors" during this time proved to be in the FN's favor as well.⁴⁶ Firstly, the general public viewed the Socialist government's law and order policies unfavorably. President Mitterrand granted amnesty to nearly 14 percent of France's inmates in summer 1981, which was seen as "too generous" by 61 percent of those surveyed.⁴⁷ Secondly, the reality of religious pluralism and immigration from North Africa was emerging in French cities, which did not bode well with conservatives and traditional Catholics.⁴⁸ Lastly, the economic crisis shaped the late 1970s and early 1980s, which left voters extremely dissatisfied with its "intensity and duration."⁴⁹

During this time, the center-right parties in France were struggling to overcome division and adjust to the Socialists' victory in 1980, the emergence of a rising FN appealed to many right-wing politicians and voters and brought important resources and influence.⁵⁰ For example, Bernard Antony defected to the FN from the *Centre National des Indépendants (et Paysans)* (CNIP), and brought a variety of Catholic fundamentalist organizations and their main publication with him.⁵¹ The 1984 FN list included 11 recruits from center-right parties and "token" candidates for diversity, including a Jewish candidate and an Arab candidate, in notably unwinnable positions.⁵² This

⁴⁶Daniel Stockemer, *The Front National in France : Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen* (Cham: Springer, 2017), 13-14.

⁴⁷ Stockemer, *The Front National in France*, 13.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 197.

⁵¹ Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics*, 35.

⁵² Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 107.

recruitment of center right candidates brought huge political benefits to Le Pen and the FN, which gave Le Pen not only political influence in France, but also the ability to extend the FN's ideology throughout Europe with the assistance of other European far-right movements.⁵³ These connections helped the FN continue its growth after the 1984 election, as the FN underwent more changes internally. It consolidated its regional, departmental, and local bases, restructured and refined communications, and received even more support as mainstream right-wing leaders flocked to the party.⁵⁴ While these figureheads lent the FN more credibility and intellectual support, grassroots efforts helped the FN to launch media efforts such as the newspaper *National Hebdo*, and open a training school for FN recruits.⁵⁵

JMLP also boosted his party's popularity with media coverage. He made appearances in magazines and on television, including a significant milestone on public channel Antenne 2's interview program, *L'Heure de vérité* (The Hour of Truth). Later, JMLP would refer to this interview as "the hour that changed everything."⁵⁶ This interview allowed JMLP to present himself as a sophisticated, reasonable politician and a legitimate political force, and opened the doors for even more media coverage with the paradoxical the help of socialist President Mitterrand.⁵⁷ After JMLP sent letters to Mitterrand complaining of a media boycott, Mitterrand aided JMLP and the FN in promotion on the radio and France's three main television channels at the time. With Mitterrand directly reaching out to the heads of the three channels to give an equitable

⁵³ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 198.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 196.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

amount of coverage to the FN, the party received far more coverage than before.⁵⁸ The interview on *L'Heure de vérité* had notably high viewing, and this continued as a pattern for Le Pen's appearances. Applications to membership of the party grew following Le Pen's television appearance, and polling showed that more voters signaled an intention to vote for the FN, rising to 7 percent.⁵⁹ Mitterrand later admitted that he did not realize the extent to which his promotion of JMLP would accelerate his media popularity, and conceded that he had "[dismissed] him as a neo-Poujadist lightweight with no political future."⁶⁰

As mentioned previously, the wider political and economic context in France during the early 1980s contributed to the FN's success in the '84 elections. An economic crisis was persisting, with unemployment since the Socialist administration and François Mitterrand's election in 1981 rising by nearly half.⁶¹ The austerity measures enforced had resulted in steep cuts in public spending, levies on tobacco and alcohol, and higher costs for energy and transportation.⁶² These policies, combined with the rising unemployment, made words like "discipline" and "*rigueur*" the unattractive motto of the time period.⁶³ Violent crime was also rising, and law and order became a main issue of concern for French voters, the recurring theme being "*insécurité*" with the disapproval of the government's record in this issue growing to 59 percent.⁶⁴

The other key issue for certain voters was immigration. Immigrants had been given more opportunity to promote the culture of their communities and defend their

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 200.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 201.

rights under the Socialist government, and became more visible in the media, using radio stations to “articulate the views and cater to” France’s ethnic communities.⁶⁵ Random identity checks had been stopped, and more rights to family reunion granted. The *le regroupement familial* was the approval of women and children to join men who had immigrated first to work in France. The number of mosques built rose, and more hostels welcomed North African migrants.⁶⁶ While unmarried male immigrants previously tended to stay on the fringes of society, this became less common with the arrival of family members. New demands emerged on public services and welfare, and the concentration of low-income immigrant families in subsidized housing projects in the suburbs of large cities like Paris, Marseille, and Lyon saw a correlation racial tensions and rising anti-immigrant crime.⁶⁷ JMLP and the FN linked these issues together: immigration, crime, and unemployment. Then, the party strategically capitalized on the socioeconomic crisis and the public’s dissatisfaction with the establishment. By doing so, JMLP and his party used the political context in France to “advance xenophobic and authoritarian elements that had already become ingrained in the French political fabric.”⁶⁸

The effects of the FN’s strategic political campaign and their media success was aided by their performance in the 1983 municipal elections. JMLP won 11.26% of the vote in the first round, and proved his success in neighborhoods with high unemployment and where immigrants had been unable to assimilate successfully.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Stockemer, *The Front National in France*, 15.

⁶⁹ Stockemer, *The Front National in France*, 16.

His 1984 interview and a nationwide promotional tour emboldened voters, reflecting in the previously mentioned success in the 1984 European elections: 11.2 percent of the vote (two million voters) went to the FN.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Consolidation of the Party, 1990s



Figure 3:

The immigrants are going to vote...and you're abstaining?!!, Poster for the FN, 1990s.⁷¹

During the 1990s, Le Pen and the FN consolidated their base of support, expanding their electorate from older, wealthier citizens to include support from younger, working-class voters with no college degree.⁷² The base political beliefs of the FN base during this time are difficult to define, making up a “hybrid” of ideologies, from extreme right to some who refused to identify themselves in any political category.

⁷¹ *The Immigrants are going to vote...and you're abstaining?!!*, 1990s, Wikimedia Commons accessed April 20, 2021 https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/7/7a/National_Front.gif.

⁷² Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 253.

The steady support developed against a background of unemployment, high crime rates, and increasing Islamophobia and anti-immigrant xenophobia in France. In 1991, the FN published their “50 Measures” document, their most radical anti-immigrant policy measures since their formation.⁷³ By the mid-90s, the FN had shifted to policies of social welfare to address the issue of unemployment of their supporters in the working class, but struggled to reconcile this with their previous economic liberalism.⁷⁴ The FN also promoted protectionism to the front of their economic policies, turning Europe into the source of “unemployment, excessive taxation, bureaucracy, and recession.”⁷⁵ In late 1998, the FN was damaged by the breakup of JMLP and deputy leader Bruno Mégret, splitting support for the far right.⁷⁶ The relationship between JMLP and Mégret had been deteriorating for years, with Mégret pushing to break out of the FN’s style and language which JMLP had adhered to for years.⁷⁷ Mégret was expelled from the FN following allegations that Mégret was attempting to oust JMLP from his own party and subsequent disciplinary hearings.⁷⁸ Mégret created his own party, the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR), and this power struggle played out in front of the media, something the FN had become notorious for. This split weakened the party and affected their results in the municipal elections of March 2001, with the FN taking 4 percent and MNR winning 3 percent of the vote. This set up to the 2002 presidential elections made the FN’s strong results even more shocking.

⁷³ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 239.

⁷⁴ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 273.

⁷⁵ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 274.

⁷⁶ Paul Webster, “Le Pen Win Cuts Far Right’s Lifeline,” *The Guardian*, May 12, 1999, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/may/12/paulwebster>.

⁷⁷ “World: Europe National Front Faces Split,” *BBC News*, December 11, 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/233213.stm>.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

There were no polls that predicted what happened during the presidential elections in 2002.⁷⁹ For the first time since 1969, there would be no left-wing candidate in a presidential run off, but there would be a candidate of the far right for the first time.⁸⁰ This was mainly due to weakness of the mainstream candidates and dysfunction within the left.⁸¹

Jean-Marie Le Pen's Positions and *Front national* Rhetoric in 2002

JMLP's beginning campaign in 2002 was remarkably uneventful for a political figure made infamous for his radical views, charismatic presence, and controversial (usually racist or xenophobic) comments.⁸² JMLP's campaign outlined themes of law and order, anti-immigration, tax, and family values, and the program went by the name *Pour un avenir français* (For a French future).⁸³ The campaign program included French national sovereignty, "zero tolerance" in law and order, harsher sentencing and increased prison capacity, immigration restrictions and asylum, reduced taxes and public spending, protective measures for the French countryside, and a policy of national preference which would determine who qualified for employment, welfare benefits, and housing.⁸⁴ JMLP focused on anti-Europeanism during this campaign as well, more so than his other right-wing challengers, radically calling for France to leave the EU and reinstate the franc as national currency.⁸⁵ This platform evolved from Le

⁷⁹ The first round of voting resulted in 16.9% of votes for JMLP, and 19.9% of votes for Jacques Chirac. In the second round, Chirac received 82.2% of the vote and JMLP received 17.8%.

⁸⁰ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 282.

⁸¹ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 283-285.

⁸² Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 282.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ James Shields, "The Far Right Vote in France: From Consolidation to Collapse?" *French Politics, Culture & Society* 28, no. 1 (2010): 25-45, Accessed April 6, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42843636>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; the Euro was launched on January 1, 1999.

Pen's previous economic Darwinism, instead calling for support for the unemployed and struggling in order to appeal to working class voters.⁸⁶ The law and order part of the FN's campaign proved to be a success, as the issue topped the lists of primary concerns for voters. The demographics of the election showed the results of Le Pen's efforts. The FN had whittled away at center-right support, garnering votes in traditionally conservative rural areas.⁸⁷ The election marked Le Pen and the FN's transition from their previous base of elderly, middle-class Catholics to a base of mostly male, working class voters without college education.⁸⁸ Despite the FN's internal struggles, the presidential election marked a huge success for the party and JMLP. JMLP received 16.9 percent of the vote in the first round, beating the Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin, who received 16.2 percent.⁸⁹ In the second round, the FN received 17.8 percent of the vote.⁹⁰ This was the best result in the FN's history, and shocked even the members of the party.⁹¹

Conclusion

Overall, JMLP and the *Front national's* rise to power were marked by the economic crisis in the 1970s and a struggling French national identity put in question by a post-World War II, post-colonial world. The party capitalized on resulting issues like high unemployment, high crime rate, and dissatisfaction with the European Union. Despite being notorious for radical political stances, Le Pen broke into mainstream media and managed to expand the FN's electorate beyond the right's traditional

⁸⁶ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 283.

⁸⁷ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 286; rural can be defined as small towns or cities, not urban centers.

⁸⁸ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 287.

⁸⁹ Stockemer, *The Front National in France*, 22.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Catholic, older, business-owning base. The 2002 presidential elections signified the party's evolution into a party of the working-class, and the "seismic shock" of support for the FN showed the results of years of working-class discontent. JMLP's FN took advantage of the political context of France, and "With its anti-communist, anti-tax, anti-immigrant, and strong-arm law and order rhetoric, the FN capitalized on a convergence of issues whose time had come."⁹² This resulted from the new proportional representation system, and the French political concerns surrounding the issues of unemployment, immigration, security, and lacking social services.⁹³ This capitalization on mainstream political issues set up MLP with a foundation for a new era, and marked a shift from the "fringes of politics" to a player with potential in the French partisan system.⁹⁴

⁹² Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 206.

⁹³ Stockemer, *The Front National in France*, 16.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3: What Did Marine Le Pen Change? Policy Positions and Discourse



Figure 4:

Poster for JMLP's presidential campaign in 2002 next to poster for MLP's 2012 campaign in 2012.⁹⁵

Introduction

After the shocking results of the 2002 presidential election for JMLP and his party, the FN struggled to remain at the top of the electoral votes. In 2004, new electoral rules were introduced in the regional elections, which resulted in the FN losing half of their councilors, going from 275 to 156.⁹⁶ This was despite the fact that the FN

⁹⁵ Posters from Jean-Marie Le Pen's 2002 presidential campaign and Marine Le Pen's in 2012, May 7, 2017, Vice accessed April 20, 2021

https://videoimages.vice.com/articles/590de265c9973628d6275eb8/lede/1494172791165-1492782033012-111.jpeg?crop=0.9987654320987654xw:1xh:center:center&resize=1800:*

⁹⁶ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 298.

maintained 12.78 percent of the vote in the second round of these elections.⁹⁷ This support was from 17 regions as it was across 26 regions in 1998, approximately 3.2 million votes.⁹⁸ The 2004 European elections resulted in similar changes under a new system which reduced the FN's influence.⁹⁹ The FN's influence and finances continued in decline in the 2007 presidential elections, losing to Nicolas Sarkozy with JMLP taking 10.4 percent of the vote and Sarkozy receiving 31.2 percent, and Jean-Marie Le Pen announced in September 2008 his intention to retire in 2010.¹⁰⁰ Marine Le Pen received the votes to succeed her father in early 2011. The 2002 presidential election seemed to be the high point of the party's success and JMLP's leadership, and politician Marine Le Pen became the obvious successor to her father's legacy as the FN struggled to find solid footing.

MLP's strategy differed from her father's as she aimed her sights at transitioning the FN into a mainstream political party. Part of her strategy included a term *dédiabolisation* or "de-demonization," a strategy focused on minimizing the xenophobic aspect of JMLP's political party and improving public opinion of the FN by renovating its public image.¹⁰¹ She also softened the FN's rhetoric and JMLP's previous tone and language surrounding race, immigration, and antisemitism. MLP's program included a more developed populist focus than her father's, claiming to be speaking for the people. For example, *au nom du peuple* (in the name of the people) was the tagline for MLP's

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 300.

¹⁰⁰ "Décision n° 2007-139 PDR du 25 avril 2007 | Conseil constitutionnel," accessed February 20, 2021, <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/2007/2007139PDR.htm>.

¹⁰¹ Jim Wolfreys, "The Dangers of Detoxification," *Jacobin*, 20 Apr. 2017, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/04/national-front-detoxification-marine-le-pen-fascism-france-elections/>.

2017 presidential campaign.¹⁰² There has also been a stronger emphasis on her leadership role as head of the party, but “less party-centred and more personalized” than JMLP.¹⁰³ Although MLP softened some of the FN’s traditional policies, specifically stances on gay marriage and abortion, a closer look suggests there are more similarities with JMLP’s FN than differences with strong components of nationalism, anti-immigration, and anti-European Union sentiment.¹⁰⁴

Front national in 2011: Marine Le Pen’s Take Over

The positions of the FN had stayed relatively similar since the 2007 presidential election, in which many of their main issues had been co-opted by candidate Nicolas Sarkozy and his Union for a Popular Movement party (UMP).¹⁰⁵ The UMP focused on law and order and immigration, appropriating the FN’s similar rhetoric into an allegedly center-right party.¹⁰⁶ This is important as it is yet another example of the FN’s power in politics. The party has influenced politics through not only their individual leaders, but also by popularizing their ideology, injecting it into the mainstream.

In an interview with *The Guardian* in 2011, MLP stated her image as a “defender of the Republic, its benefits and welfare state.”¹⁰⁷ She called it, “the state as protector.”¹⁰⁸ She also stated her goal to put French people first, to protect teachers’

¹⁰² Steve Bastow, “The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?” *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 19-37, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Michelle Hale Williams, “A New Era for French Far Right Politics? Comparing the FN under Two Le Pens,” *Analyse Social*, vol. 46, no. 201 (2011): 679–695, *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41494868. Accessed 18 May 2020.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Angelique Chrisafis, “Marine Le Pen emerges from father's shadow,” *The Guardian*, March 21, 2011, accessed February 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/21/marine-lepen-defends-republic>.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

jobs from cuts, but also her more liberal stances favorable to abortion, accepting homosexuality, and intending to return France to the franc.¹⁰⁹ While her program may seem “less shocking” than JMLP’s, arguably the core remained the same at the time of MLP’s take over. She viewed immigration as a threat, wanted to safeguard France and keep its culture intact, protect the welfare state for the “true French,” and to withdraw from the European Union.¹¹⁰ In words reminiscent of JMLP’s, she warns of the “dilution” and “wiping out” of French civilization, claiming it is threatened by “never-ending queues of foreigners.”¹¹¹ The intention of MLP and the FN is clear, as she responded to the question “Is this really a different party than her father’s?” Her answer: Yes, because it now attracts people who were previously scared of the image of the FN and JMLP, but her leadership broke down that barrier of fear.¹¹²

2012 Presidential Election

The 2012 presidential campaign focused on economic inequality and protection of France’s social programs during the recent recession and financial crisis. Critics of Sarkozy labeled him “the president of the rich” and a person of privilege during a time of austerity and increasing inequality.¹¹³ Because of this, MLP focused the campaign initially on economics. The “flagship policy” was to withdraw from the Euro, to recover national sovereignty with the French franc, and to improve border control. MLP also proposed raising wages, restoring retirement at age 60 with fully paid pensions. She also promised to implement a “protectionist agenda of economic patriotism” focusing

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Angelique Chrisafis, “Marine Le Pen emerges from father's shadow.”

¹¹³ James Shields, “Marine Le Pen and the ‘New’ FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?” *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no 1 (2013): 179–196, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss076>.

on a “Buy French” obligation and factories for producing French goods in France.¹¹⁴ MLP, like her father in 2002, proposed policy to appeal to the rural voter, prioritizing small farms and promising to “defend the French countryside...against the contempt of the Parisian elite,” an echo of her father’s voice and Poujadism as well—*les petits* (the have-nots) against *les gros* (the haves).¹¹⁵

However, as the campaign progressed, MLP returned to the FN’s staple issues of law and order, anti-European Union and anti-globalism, anti-immigration, and pro-national identity, entitling her presidential manifesto: *Oui, la France*. First, the manifesto pledged to adopt a “zero tolerance” policy when it came to criminality, cutting welfare benefits for repeat offenders.¹¹⁶ Her program also promised to cut legal immigration (a sharp drop from 200,000 to 10,000 immigrants per year), deport illegal immigrants and all foreigners convicted of criminal offenses.¹¹⁷ She defended “Republican secularism” and promised to combat “radical Islam” by imposing the teaching of “authority, moral and civic values, and the history of France” in schools.¹¹⁸ MLP blamed the usual suspects in her presidential manifesto for the “disastrous state of France”: the global elite, liberals, and profiteers.¹¹⁹

MLP and the FN’s presidential program called *Mon projet pour la France et les Français* (My project for France and the French) expanded upon these staple themes of the FN, the name itself representing secularism, republic, and nationalism. This signified a greater focus on populism. The program focused on preference for French

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

citizens, a traditional FN policy called “national preference” renamed “national priority.”¹²⁰ This meant that all welfare programs would favor French citizens over immigrants and foreigners in terms of housing, education, health care, jobs, and other social benefits. It would restrict family allowances (*les allocations familiales*) to French citizens only and would extend the list of jobs only available to French nationals. The FN also pledged to remove the path to French citizenship through residency (*droit du sol*) and to encourage unemployed immigrants to return to their countries of origin.¹²¹ She received 17.9% of the vote in the first round of voting, coming in third place, a strong performance considering the plateau of the party in previous years.¹²²

2012 Parliamentary Elections

MLP’s performance in the presidential elections, together with some development of the party described below, suggested that the FN could perform similarly in the parliamentary elections. The parliamentary campaign was thus treated as an extension of MLP’s presidential campaign, under a new label, not the party name: *Rassemblement bleu Marine* (Marine Blue Rally).¹²³ Only five weeks after the presidential elections, the parliamentary elections maintained MLP’s and FN’s previous positions and attempted to reach out to the center-right.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “*Résultats de l’élection présidentielle 2011*,” accessed February 2021, https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Presidentielles/electresult_PR2012/%28path%29/PR2012/FE.html.

¹²³ Shields, “Marine Le Pen and the ‘New’ FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?”; This is a pun with Marine’s name: *marine* in French translates to dark blue, here she is using her name to emphasize the color.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

De-demonization, Public Image, and Rhetoric

The main strategy of MLP and the FN during her leadership has been the term de-demonization. This involved changing the previous public image of the party as racist, antisemitic, and homophobic, and focusing on secularism, defense of the Republic, and feminism in order to reposition the party into the mainstream.¹²⁵ MLP appointed Florian Philippot as vice president of strategy and communication, an openly gay politician.¹²⁶ The FN, under MLP's influence, has also softened its stance of opposition to abortion, gender equality, and the *Pacte civil de solidarité* (PACS) which recognizes same-sex civil partnerships.¹²⁷ However, the party remains opposed to same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples.¹²⁸

MLP frequently redirected accusations of antisemitism and bigotry to the FN's focus on secularism. By doing so, secularism has "mutated into a tool of bigotry" used to justify racism and Islamophobia.¹²⁹ For example, MLP's inaugural speech stresses *laïcité* (secularism) and her 2017 presidential program called for the defense of rights of women to protect the Republic, which was used to justify the FN's anti-immigration platform.¹³⁰ She denounced the "Islamisation" of France rather than explicitly Muslim immigrants to give a "more respectable" tone to her policies.¹³¹

¹²⁵ Angelique Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen emerges from father's shadow."

¹²⁶ Shane Burley and Alexander Reid Ross, "Nothing New Under the Sun," *Jacobin*, 5 June 2017, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/06/national-front-le-pen-fascist-france-trump-alt-right>.

¹²⁷ Shields, "Marine Le Pen and the 'New' FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no 1 (2013): 179–196.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Wolfreys, "The Dangers of Detoxification."

¹³⁰ Steve Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?" *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 19-37, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7>.

¹³¹ James Shields, "Marine Le Pen and the 'New' FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?"

MLP also changed the party's rhetoric surrounding the French Jewish population in contrast to her father's infamous antisemitic remarks, claiming she wanted to remove any antisemitism or Holocaust denial from the party.¹³² In January 2016, the FN's general secretary, Nicolas Bay, visited Israel to "erase every ambiguity about accusations of antisemitism against [the] party by emphasizing its special attentions for Jewish people."¹³³ She also claimed to that the FN would be the greatest protector for France's Jewish population, arguing that the FN is "without a doubt the best shield to protect you against the one true enemy, Islamic fundamentalism."¹³⁴ She has a less eccentric presence than her father, who was notorious for engaging in negationist rhetoric such as the gas chambers were a "detail" of the Holocaust.¹³⁵ Overall, this strategy of de-demonization has paid off for the FN, with their success in the 2012 presidential election (MLP won 17.9% of the vote in the first round) and improved public image, according to Jean-Yves Camus, a political scientist who specializes in far-right movements. He argues that it "was frowned upon for right-wing voters, especially upper-middle class ones, to vote for Jean-Marie Le Pen. He went too far," but that "Marine is more acceptable."¹³⁶

MLP has also changed key points in the FN's rhetoric. The language used in speeches and campaigns has been toned down from her father's extreme choices, with her speeches notably missing references to World War II, French colonial wars,

¹³² Angelique Chrisafis, "Marine Le Pen emerges from father's shadow."

¹³³ Amanda Taub, "France's Far Right, Once Known for Anti-Semitism, Courts Jews," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2017, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/world/europe/france-jews-marine-le-pen-national-front-anti-semitism.html>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Jon Frosch, "Far-right's Marine Le Pen leads in shock new poll," July 3, 2011, accessed February 2021. <https://www.france24.com/en/20110307-new-poll-far-right-marine-le-pen-presidential-frontrunner>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

“invocations of Christianity,” and a withdrawn position on the death penalty on her program. She has also “watered down” themes such as fear of racial mixing and anticommunism. This change in rhetoric is “perhaps best exemplified by MLP being the first major figure in the FN ever to stigmatize an opponent by calling him a ‘Nazi.’”¹³⁷

Despite these attempts to mask the antisemitic and racist roots of the FN, Bruno Gollsnich, who MLP beat out for the leadership of the FN in 2011, said in 2016 of the FN: “Nothing new under the sun...at the National Front, if the form has changed, the background remained the same under the presidency of Marine Le Pen.”¹³⁸ Camus seems to agree: “She is more modern simply because she was born in another era. But I don’t see the moderation,” agreeing that the FN “has a platform that is clear, unchanging, and very consistent.”¹³⁹

2013-2015: 2014 Municipal and European Elections

MLP’s de-demonization strategy and changes to the FN, specifically her economic nationalism, paid off in the 2014 municipal and European elections where the FN had newfound success. In the 2014 European elections, the party made history as the first party with a quarter of the popular vote and 24 Members of European Parliament (MEPs), and this was seen as shocking both nationally and internationally.¹⁴⁰ The internal changes associated with de-demonization caused an increase in public opinion and popularity for the FN since MLP’s take over in 2011,

¹³⁷ Steve Bastow, “The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?” *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 19-37.

¹³⁸ Shane Burley and Alexander Reid Ross, “Nothing New Under the Sun.”

¹³⁹ Jon Frosch, “Far-right's Marine Le Pen leads in shock new poll.”

¹⁴⁰ Gilles Ivaldi, “Towards the Median Economic Crisis Voter? The New Leftist Economic Agenda of the Front National in France.”

lowering the gender gap in support for the party and allowing the party to reach beyond its core voters.¹⁴¹ The economic crisis, resulting in unemployment, low economic growth, higher taxes, and austerity created appeal for the FN's populist agenda and public discontent with the government.¹⁴²

The 2014 FN program included the economy, social protection, and France's economic crises at the center.¹⁴³ Economic nationalism was the "cornerstone" of the FN's program, emphasizing anti-globalization and protectionist policies.¹⁴⁴ The program also included stopping French contribution to the European budget and EU bailout plans, taxes at France's borders, regulation of the banking system, and voting against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.¹⁴⁵ The FN also promoted policies like wage increases for people of low socio-economic status, the reindustrialization of France, and the "defense of the public service."¹⁴⁶ These policies were presented in opposition to what MLP described as a "total, global, supranational state which threatened France."¹⁴⁷

The success of the 2014 municipal elections can also be attributed to the party's reorganizing grassroots efforts.¹⁴⁸ In previous years, under JMLP's leadership, the party remained largely on the fringe and satisfied to do so, but also failed to build local

¹⁴¹ Gilles Ivaldi, "Towards the Median Economic Crisis Voter? The New Leftist Economic Agenda of the Front National in France," *French Politics* 13 (2015): 346–369. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fp.2015.17>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Jon Frosch, "Far-right's Marine Le Pen leads in shock new poll."

¹⁴⁴ Gilles Ivaldi, "Towards the Median Economic Crisis Voter? The New Leftist Economic Agenda of the Front National in France," *French Politics* 13 (2015): 346–369.

¹⁴⁵ Steve Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?"

¹⁴⁶ Steve Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?"

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Gabriel Goodliffe, "From political fringe to political mainstream: the front national and the 2014 municipal elections in France." *French Politics, Culture and Society* 34, no. 3 (2016): 126+. *Gale Academic OneFile* (accessed February 16, 2021).

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A475225859/AONE?u=euge94201&sid=AONE&xid=c72a5b7f>.

leadership and structure.¹⁴⁹ MLP sought to create a sense of community in local areas hit hard by the economic crisis, and to create a party with “a cadre of candidates capable of assuming power.”¹⁵⁰ This has resulted in the FN’s efforts to build “an extensive and effective networks of grassroots activists at the local level.”¹⁵¹ This *Frontisme municipal* focuses on three key factors: targeting local communities hit hard economically and in cultural crisis, providing a renewed sense of both identity and community, and providing them with vital local services such as housing, employment, and financial assistance.¹⁵²

As mentioned, the 2014 municipal elections marked “significant advances” for the FN, winning 11 city councils and over 1500 local councilors.¹⁵³ This included winning the town of Hénin-Beaumont with 50.3 percent of the vote, which MLP had lost in during the 2012 presidential elections, signifying a step towards MLP’s goal of making the FN the majority party of the right.¹⁵⁴ This success capitalized on high abstention rates which were over 36 percent in both rounds.¹⁵⁵ The FN received 4.76 percent of the vote in the first round, and 6.75 percent in the second.¹⁵⁶ This success continued into the 2015 departmental elections, with the FN winning 25.2% of the vote nationally.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Gilles Ivaldi, “Towards the Median Economic Crisis Voter? The New Leftist Economic Agenda of the Front National in France.”

¹⁵⁴ Raymond Kuhn, “The French Municipal and European Elections, 2014,” *Representation* 50, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 405–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2014.953803>, 6-7.

¹⁵⁵ Goodliffe, “From political fringe to political mainstream,” 127.

¹⁵⁶ Kuhn, “The French Municipal and European Elections, 2014,” *Representation* 50, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 405–17, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2014.953803>, 8, 6.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

The 2017 Presidential Election



Figure 5:

Poster for MLP's presidential campaign, 2016.¹⁵⁸

The results of the 2017 presidential election marked MLP's breakout success. This election was a test of her rising support and her leadership, but also a test of the FN's political program.¹⁵⁹ The program included the foundational key themes the FN is known for: reducing immigration to 10,000 annually, instituting a national preference by reserving employment, housing, and family allowances for French citizens, tightening immigration restrictions, denying illegal immigrants access to healthcare, and strengthening law and order through "zero tolerance" and increased funding for the

¹⁵⁸ Eric Gaillard, *Marine Le Pen, France's National Front Leader*, November 2016, accessed April 2021 https://i.guim.co.uk/img/media/6a8daab149992ed3104290e48a76acb4eadbd9a9/951_1566_3470_2082/master/3470.jpg?width=1200&height=900&quality=85&auto=format&fit=crop&s=ef67af69b14cf75fba222fb26dc27be2.

¹⁵⁹ Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 3 (2018): 538–557, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx041>

police, the army, border guards, and prisons.¹⁶⁰ MLP's program also had policies regarding the fight against terrorism: ban all organizations with links to Islamic fundamentalism, shut down mosques that had been identified as "radical", "preventative detention" for those suspected of having links to organizations "hostile to France," and deportation of all foreigners with jihadist links or on security watch lists.¹⁶¹

However, the 2017 program also marked two points of evolution for the FN. The first was explicit inclusion of and support for "the values of the Republic."¹⁶² This point was also linked to MLP's de-demonization strategy, by using heritage and symbolism to invoke "Republican values."¹⁶³ The program made the Republic "the touchstone" for issues in schools, rule of law, and even Republican assimilation by immigrants.¹⁶⁴ This was shown in MLP's proposal of strengthened *laïcité* or secularism, by extending the ban of religious symbols and dress across the public sphere, although typically MLP's use of *laïcité* is "intended to better justify discriminatory measures she proposes to take with regard to the Muslim populace."¹⁶⁵

The second evolution confirmed the FN's development of left-leaning economic policy.¹⁶⁶ Unlike the 1980s, where JMLP's FN focused on a laissez-faire approach and austerity, the 2017 program argued for *État-stratège*, with state intervention for key industries, protectionism against globalization, higher welfare spending, and provision

¹⁶⁰ Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 3 (2018): 538–557.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?" *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 22, 26; secularism meaning neutrality and separation from religion and state institutions.

¹⁶⁶ Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," 538-557.

of public services particularly in rural locations.¹⁶⁷ It also proposed to abolish 2016 labor law reforms which eased employer regulations, to retain the 35-hours work week, to offer a living allowance for those in poverty and to cut their income tax, retain the wealth tax, reduce utility bills, lower housing taxes, raise state pension, increase disability benefits, lower the retirement age, and to reinvest in public services.¹⁶⁸ These proposals all reached out to the newer demographic of the FN including working class voters, but appealed less to the traditional base of support including small business owners, so the FN attempted to reach out to both.¹⁶⁹ The 2017 program also included tax cuts for small business owners, no increase in minimum wage, improved social security of the self-employed, tighter oversight of trade unions and social security fraud, and a tax on imports to protect French companies against foreign competition, all to reach out to right-leaning middle-class voters.¹⁷⁰ These policies were combined with other proposals that sought to target affluent elderly voters, like a less strict inheritance tax, and these appeals to right-leaning voters accounted for one-third of the 2017 program, higher than in 2012 (over a fifth of the program).¹⁷¹

MLP's economic policies in 2017 show an example of her role as a populist leader. While far-right traditionally and in most places on her political program, these economic policies involving state intervention and welfare are more left-wing. These policies are paradoxical, because MLP maintains a far-right wing ideology but utilized

¹⁶⁷ Yves Mény, "A Tale of Party Primaries and Outsider Candidates: The 2017 French Presidential Election," *French Politics* 15, no. 3 (September 2017): 265–78, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0038-5>.

¹⁶⁸ James Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," 538-557.

¹⁶⁹ Mény, "A Tale of Party Primaries and Outsider Candidates: The 2017 French Presidential Election," *French Politics* 15, no. 3 (September 2017): 274-275.

¹⁷⁰ James Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," 538-557.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

left-wing economic policy to appeal to the ordinary people. This ties into MLP's role as a populist leader because it demonstrates her ability to appeal to the morally superior, ordinary people, against the societal elites.

The 2017 program also scaled back the anti-EU proposals and capital punishment because of a lack of public support.¹⁷² Instead, the program proposed negotiations with EU partners for the restoration of national sovereignties, and dropped the restoration of capital punishment from the program.¹⁷³ While the 2017 parliamentary elections brought in mixed results for the FN, Marine Le Pen saw marked success by coming in second to Emmanuel Macron with 21.3 percent of the vote in the first round. Though she lost to him in the second round, her high score was 33.9 percent of the vote. This result showed that despite a loss, MLP had improved the FN's voter turnout, even more so than the "seismic shock" of her father. The 2017 presidential election demonstrated that the FN was becoming a significant political force and a legitimate contender for the presidency.

2018 and *Les gilets jaunes*

The *gilets jaunes* protests (yellow vest protests) began in October 2018, beginning as a grassroots movement with a petition from a woman named Priscilla Ludosky.¹⁷⁴ Many of these protests called for the resignation of Macron, demonstrating against his increase of the fuel tax.¹⁷⁵ Although the protestors spanned across the political spectrum, from far-right to far-left, the protests were described as a populist-

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ John Lichfield, "Just Who Are the Gilets Jaunes?" *The Guardian*, February 9, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/09/who-really-are-the-gilets-jaunes>.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

type movement against the French elites.¹⁷⁶ Macron and responded with a stance to stay on his plan to “liberalize” the French economy through cuts to the wealth tax, promised “significant” tax breaks for low wage earners, but also corporate tax breaks and cutting public spending, instances which MLP has attempted to capitalize on.¹⁷⁷ In response, MLP argued that she represented the real yellow vests: single moms, pensioners, and poor workers.¹⁷⁸ This protest movement remains important for MLP and the FN because it is a large constituency which she may attempt to reach out to during the 2022 presidential campaign. Although the protests have died down during the current COVID-19 pandemic, this movement may be crucial for MLP and the FN and the methods they utilize to reach out to the *Gilets jaunes*.

2019: Moving Forward

The 2019 European elections brought more success for the FN and MLP. The FN received about 23.5 percent of the vote, beating Macron, whose party received about 22.5 percent of the vote.¹⁷⁹ The party made gains in suburbs around Paris, new areas of Brittany, and the south west.¹⁸⁰ MLP doubled down on the FN’s populist rhetoric, calling it “a victory for the people.”¹⁸¹ The 2019 campaign was headed by Jordan Bardella, a 23-year-old at the time and one of the youngest elected members of

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Angelique Chrisafis, “Macron Responds to Gilets Jaunes Protests with €5bn Tax Cuts,” *The Guardian*, April 25, 2019, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/25/emmanuel-macron-significant-tax-cut-gilets-jaunes-speech>.

¹⁷⁸ Catherine Rickman, “Marine Le Pen Tries to Rally the Gilets Jaunes,” *Frenchly* (blog), January 15, 2019, <https://frenchly.us/marine-le-pen-tries-to-rally-the-gilets-jaunes/>.

¹⁷⁹ Angelique Chrisafis, “Marine Le Pen Ahead of Macron’s Centrist Party, Say French Exit Polls,” *The Guardian*, May 26, 2019, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/26/marine-le-pen-national-rally-ahead-of-macron-centrist-party-french-exit-polls>.

¹⁸⁰ Angelique Chrisafis, “EU Vote Confirms French Far Right as Macron’s Main Opposition,” *The Guardian*, May 27, 2019, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/27/eu-vote-confirms-french-far-right-marine-le-pen-national-rally-as-emmanuel-macron-main-opposition>.

¹⁸¹ Chrisafis, “Marine Le Pen Ahead of Macron’s Centrist Party, Say French Exit Polls.”

European Parliament.¹⁸² Bardella, a new, fresh face, helped the FN's success during these elections and represented a future for the party, perhaps even beyond MLP. These results seemed to confirm that the "main line of battle of French politics remained between Macron's centrists and the far-right" of MLP.¹⁸³ Bardella's role also hinted at the possibility of the youth takeover of the FN after MLP's retirement as party chief, but with a continuation of MLP's message of de-demonization.¹⁸⁴

Macron and the Center Shift

Macron has recently been accused by critics of pandering to the far-right ahead of the presidential elections in 2022, specifically with *islamogauchisme* and the hijab ban, both being examples of islamophobia and racism. *Islamogauchisme* is translated as "Islam-leftism" and makes a connection between Islam and politically left beliefs.¹⁸⁵ However, this link and definition is very unclear. It is frequently used to accuse people of being too concerned with race and identity, and unconcerned with Islamic extremism. Recently, Macron's minister for higher education, Frédérique Vidal, used the term as a concern in French universities. Vidal "announced a probe into islamo-leftism in French universities," arguing that *islamogauchisme* was eating away at society, and accusing left-wing academics of trying to fracture and divide French people.¹⁸⁶ This issue shows

¹⁸² Rym Momtaz, "France's Far-Right Boy Wonder," POLITICO, April 24, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-french-far-rights-boy-wonder-leads-european-charge-jordan-bardella-marine-le-pen-national-rally/>.

¹⁸³ Chrisafis, "EU Vote Confirms French Far Right as Macron's Main Opposition."

¹⁸⁴ "Marine Le Pen: French Far-Right Leader to Quit as Party Chief | DW | 02.04.2021," DW, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/marine-le-pen-french-far-right-leader-to-quit-as-party-chief/a-57086907>.

¹⁸⁵ "Islamo-Gauchisme – What Does It Mean and Why Is It Controversial in France?" *The Local*, February 17, 2021, <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210217/islamo-gauchisme-what-does-it-mean-and-why-is-it-controversial-in-france/>.

¹⁸⁶ Ishaan Tharoor, "France and the Spectral Menace of 'Islamo-Leftism,'" *Washington Post*, February 21, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/02/22/france-macron-islamo-leftism/>.

how far-right ideals purported by the FN have influenced the center party to move to the right. MLP and the FN have created a political environment in which it is far too easy to win over voters by appropriating a similar rhetoric to that of the far-right.

Another example of this is with a measure that banned minors wearing hijabs in public passed in the French Senate in April 2021.¹⁸⁷ While unlikely to become law, it demonstrated the FN's ability to shift the country's political discourse towards their agenda. This measure was proposed by France's main conservative party, *Les Républicains*, and potentially served as a way to win back voters from MLP.¹⁸⁸ Many of their previous voters have turned to the FN, and in order to take back these votes, they continue to propose xenophobic legislation.¹⁸⁹ *Islamogauchisme* and the proposed hijab ban are two examples of the FN's influence on mainstream politics. These examples show the potential power the FN has to continue to swing the country's political conversation further to the right, not only on the center, but the conservatives as well.

Conclusion

Overall, despite MLP's best efforts and strategic planning of de-demonization, "the ideological position of the *mariniste* FN has a high degree of continuity with that of the party under Jean-Marie Le Pen."¹⁹⁰ MLP has changed the message by softening the party's image, adjusting certain PR statements, with the goal of appealing to a larger audience and creating a new, mainstream right-wing political party. Despite her changes in rhetoric and language, MLP's FN fundamentally differs very little from her father's

¹⁸⁷ Eleanor Beardsley, "French Senate Voted To Ban The Hijab For Minors In A Plea By The Conservative Right," NPR.org, April 8, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/08/985475584/french-senate-voted-to-ban-the-hijab-for-minors-in-a-plea-by-the-conservative-ri>.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ James Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," 538-557.

party. The same central values of nationalism, anti-immigration, xenophobia, and anti-EU discourse remain part of the FN under MLP. Anti-EU policy increased its relevancy under MLP because of the EU's increase in both size and power during her leadership, as well as the impact from the financial, refugee, and Brexit crises in Europe.

It is necessary to examine not only the strategy behind the rise of the FN and MLP, but also their ability to influence and “bleed” into other center and right-wing parties. What is crucial is the fact that the FN clearly has had a powerful influence on the political agenda, actions, and language across the political spectrum.

Islamogauchisme and the hijab ban are examples of the type of policies that the FN could continue to promote not even through their own program, but by their common ground with other center or right-wing parties. The risk here is not only the rise of the extreme right, but also in the way other parties incorporate the FN's views.

Chapter 4: Voting for the *Front national*: Continuity or Change



Figure 6:

MLP on stage in Paris, 2012.¹⁹¹

Introduction

Under MLP, the voting demographic has continued to shift towards younger, male, non-college educated, working class voters, even drawing in some previous supporters for far-left wing candidates. MLP has also strengthened voter support in rural regions and among younger voters and women, where previously under JMLP an age and gender gap persisted. In general, under MLP the party's support had increased so much that political commentators argued that the FN could no longer be considered a fringe party, rather that while the FN remained ideologically part of the extreme right, the party was integrated in the French political mainstream.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Benoit Tessier, *Marine Le Pen waves on stage in Paris*, May 7, 2012, ABC News accessed April 20, 2021 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-05-08/marine-le-pen-waves-on-stage-in-paris/3998142?nw=0>.

¹⁹² Steve Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?"

Voting Under Jean-Marie Le Pen

The peak support of the FN under JMLP was during the 2002 presidential elections, where JMLP demonstrated his and the FN's ability to maintain a solid foundation of support from previous FN voters and to attract new voters who were not part of the FN's base. This included Mediterranean coastal areas, which included voters like *pied-noir* communities and a "strong tradition of right wing voting."¹⁹³ Evidence of a strong "bedrock" of FN support included the fact that 83 percent of 1995 FN voters returned to vote for the party in 2002.¹⁹⁴ This election demonstrated the FN's geographical support concentrated "east of a line from Caen through Lyon to Montpellier, peaking in the south of Alpes-Maritimes and Vaucluse."¹⁹⁵ Vaucluse, a region with high poverty, low opportunity, and traditionally center-right, continued a shift towards the far-right in this election.¹⁹⁶

Under JMLP, the FN was able to build up a consistent, strong base for electoral support, and by doing so won significant representation in European Parliament.¹⁹⁷ By 2004, the FN was established as a significant political force, recording over 8 percent in each of France's 21 mainland regions during the regional elections.¹⁹⁸

This development showed that no region was beyond the FN's influence.

However, the peak performance of the FN occurred in 2002, during the "seismic shock"

¹⁹³ James Shields, "Marine Le Pen and the 'New' FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no 1 (2013): 179–196, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss076>; *pied-noirs* are people of European descent who were born in Algeria under French colonial rule from 1830-1962.

¹⁹⁴ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 288.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 285.

¹⁹⁶ "National Front Seeks to Exploit Poverty in Provence | DW | 10.06.2017," DW.com, accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/national-front-seeks-to-exploit-poverty-in-provence/a-39187533>.

¹⁹⁷ Shields, *The extreme right in France*, 316.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 301.

that was the presidential election. JMLP made gains mostly in rural areas, where the FN previously lacked support, and also where support from the center right had dropped and switched to the FN instead.¹⁹⁹ The overall voter demographic was dominated by working-class, non-religious men without college degrees.²⁰⁰ In some polls, the support for JMLP was as high as 30 percent among blue-collar workers, and 38 percent among the unemployed.²⁰¹ In general, MLP inherited a party with working class support, with an estimated 23 percent of the working class supporting the FN in 2002.²⁰²

Voting Under Marine Le Pen

Voters of the FN in general and especially under MLP stand out for their far right-wing values and placement on the ideological spectrum.²⁰³ Although MLP has attracted a small number of far-left voters in the past (Leftist Lepinists) they are in the minority. She started off with right-wingers consisting of 80 percent of her support and extreme right voters 31 percent in the 2012 electorate.²⁰⁴ This has solidified the ideals of FN voters to be mostly ethnocentric and authoritarian.²⁰⁵ For example, 70 percent of her first-round voters in 2012 wanted to restore the death penalty, and 88 percent found “the number of immigrants in France to be excessive.”²⁰⁶ Only a third of FN voters

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 286.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 287.

²⁰¹ Ibid; blue-collar and working-class workers do not necessarily live in rural areas. Additionally, blue-collar and working-class are not necessarily the same thing, working-class meaning people who do wage or salaried labor, comprising of both white- and blue-collar work. Blue-collar work refers to those who manual labor.

²⁰² Nonna Mayer, “From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 160–78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss071>.

²⁰³ James Shields, “Marine Le Pen and the ‘New’ FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?” *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no 1 (2013): 179–196, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss076>.

²⁰⁴ Nonna Mayer, “From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 160–78, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss071>.

²⁰⁵ Nonna Mayer, “From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right,” 164.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

under MLP “agree with giving foreigners who have been living in France for several years the right to vote” and likely to suppress social benefits to families of delinquent minors.²⁰⁷

MLP voters are also likely to have a radical stance on anti-EU policy.²⁰⁸ While many right wing voters are critical of globalization and the EU and its policies, the majority of MLP’s voters in 2012 wanted to leave the EU and return to the franc.²⁰⁹ The European issue is emphasized and more radical under MLP than JMLP, and her voters care about this issue more than her father’s voters because the European Union increased its size and power since JMLP’s leadership.²¹⁰ FN voters also identify themselves as victims of globalization, affected by high rates of unemployment and poverty.²¹¹ Europe’s three crises since 2008 (financial, refugee, and Brexit) have essentially been absorbed into the FN’s ideology, and have allowed for anti-EU sentiment to be popularized.²¹² The 2008 financial crisis allowed for the FN to make arguments against the euro, the single European currency. In addition, the FN capitalized on Euroscepticism in the 2017 presidential campaign by criticizing “financial and corrupt globalism, of which the European Union, the finance and most of a domesticated political class are zealous servants.”²¹³ Furthermore, the FN has fueled

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 165.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 167-168.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 167.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Gilles Ivaldi, “Contesting the EU in Times of Crisis: The Front National and Politics of Euroscepticism in France,” *Politics* 38, no. 3 (August 2018): 278–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395718766787>.

²¹³ Ibid; This also shows how the FN uses these crises as a tactic to appear populist. The party criticizes the political elite while maintaining their own political party as for the common people.

xenophobia and nativist arguments with their framing of the EU refugee crisis and Islamophobia.

According to the same poll, MLP voters have increased the gap of intolerance since her father, since the poll took place from 1988 to 2012, calling ethnocentric-authoritarian attitudes a staple of FN supporters.²¹⁴ Despite MLP's strategy of demonization and a strategically arranged public persona, the FN has become increasingly more radical than even under JMLP, given the examples above.²¹⁵

2012 Presidential Election Demographics

The demographics of MLP's voters has changed from JMLP's by widening the education gap but lessening the gender gap. Under JMLP, the FN always had a large following from voters without college degrees, which has a historical precedent set by other political parties with similar ethnocentric-authoritarian values.²¹⁶ In 2012, the percentage difference between her college-educated voters and non-college educated supporters increased even more than her father's.²¹⁷ This correlates with the theme of the voter demographic under MLP vs. JMLP: similar demographics, with the trends amplified, with the example of the gap between her college educated and non-college educated voters widening.²¹⁸ Post-2008 financial crisis, MLP attracted even more support from working class voters than her father, in 2012 making up 33 percent of her voters.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Ibid, 165.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 169.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 169.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 171.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

MLP has also managed to lessen the gender gap that previously persisted among FN voters under her father's leadership. In the first round of voting, MLP minimized the gender gap to only two percentage points and religion as well. MLP received the same amount of support from elderly Catholic voters, men and women, and the same from young women as young men.²²⁰ The support for MLP from employed, working class women is nearly the same as among men (37 percent compared to 43 percent).²²¹ The support for MLP among women would be the largest change from her father's party, especially if this support continues and progresses.

2012 Regional Support

The regional support of MLP in the 2012 presidential election showed the expected foundation of the FN's votes from her father's leadership, but also expanded into some areas previously held by the left. The highest points of support were in the south-east, north and the north-east (all areas characterized by high rates of unemployment) where MLP reached 20 percent or more of the votes in "11 of France's 22 metropolitan regions and 43 of 96 departments" and exceeded 25 percent in ten of these departments including Vaucluse in the south-east and Gard.²²² Traditional areas of FN support which brought in strong numbers were Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and Languedoc-Roussillon.²²³ FN support under MLP also flourished in the Mediterranean coastal departments with *ped-noir* communities.²²⁴ However, the main growth happened in previously industrialized areas in north and north-east France, which used

²²⁰ Ibid, 172.

²²¹ Ibid, 174.

²²² Shields, "Marine Le Pen and the 'New' FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?" 185.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

to be considered strongholds of the left.²²⁵ This included areas like Bruay-sur-l'Escaut, Anzin, and Vieux-Condé in the north.²²⁶ MLP also received the top votes in the first round in Nord-Pas-de-Calais towns, where the FN was the top opposition against Socialist and Communist parties in towns which once “thrived on iron, steel, and coal.”²²⁷ The numbers from these regions seems to support the FN’s description as “a symptom of an ailing France” because MLP attracted the votes of those affected by industrial recession, urban decay, rising unemployment, and poverty.²²⁸ This election was marked by the new support for MLP and the FN in areas which had no previous history of strong FN support and exceeded support for JMLP in other areas.²²⁹

2014 Municipal Elections Demographics

2014 yielded some of the strongest results for the FN in the municipal elections.²³⁰ The demographics of these elections revealed a pronounced class division in FN voters. The majority of FN voters during these elections came from working class backgrounds, both in traditional FN and conservative strongholds and areas with less historically significant support.²³¹ The support came from mostly industrial workers and service employees, and in cities such as Bordeaux, Rouen, Grenoble, as well as left-leaning towns in Val-de-Marne.²³² The FN came in first among blue collar workers in

²²⁵ Ibid, 186.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Goodliffe, Gabriel. “From Political Fringe to Political Mainstream: The Front National and the 2014 Municipal Elections in France.” *French Politics Culture & Society* 34, no. 3 (2016): 126-147.

DOI: [10.3167/fpcs.2016.340307](https://doi.org/10.3167/fpcs.2016.340307).

²³¹ Ibid, 128.

²³² Ibid.

the first round in 2012, and the 2014 municipal elections confirmed the trend.²³³ These voters were located in peri-urban areas, outside of city centers on “the margins of metropolitan areas” where most service and industrial workers have migrated to in recent years.²³⁴ These demographics show the frustrations of white, non-urban communities against the growing, ethnically diverse urban centers.²³⁵

2014 Regional Support

The FN won mayoralties in eleven cities, and came in at the top during the first round of elections in 17 cities, winning Hénin-Beaumont in Pas-de-Calais.²³⁶ Although the majority of the cities (ten out of eleven cities) won by the FN were in the north or the southern bastions, areas typically full of FN support, there was also notable growth of support in areas of previous weakness.²³⁷ There was noted support in Brittany and the west.²³⁸ The FN gained power in towns like Beziers and Frejus in the south, Hénin-Beaumont in the north, and Villers-Cotterets, north-east of Paris. The FN also won the seventh district of the southern city of Marseille with a population of around 150,000, making it the party’s largest win in the 2014 regional elections.²³⁹

The results demonstrated a consolidation of the FN’s traditional support from departments east of a line which runs from Cherbourg, to Valence, and to Perpignan.²⁴⁰

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid, 127.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Palash Ghosh, “French Municipal Elections: Far-Right National Front Scores Impressive Gains, But Hopes For Real Political Power Remain A Fantasy,” *International Business Times*, March 31, 2014, <https://www.ibtimes.com/french-municipal-elections-far-right-national-front-scores-impressive-gains-hopes-real-political>; Marseille is a port city and so its demographics include a large multicultural influence. It has high rates of Eastern European, Armenian, and Maghrebi immigrants.

²⁴⁰ Gabriel Goodliffe, “From Political Fringe to Political Mainstream: The Front National and the 2014 Municipal Elections in France,” 127.

There was also growth in numbers from traditionally more left-leaning areas in the west of the country.²⁴¹ This pattern suggested that FN support was a growing national trend, not just in conservative, rural towns.²⁴²

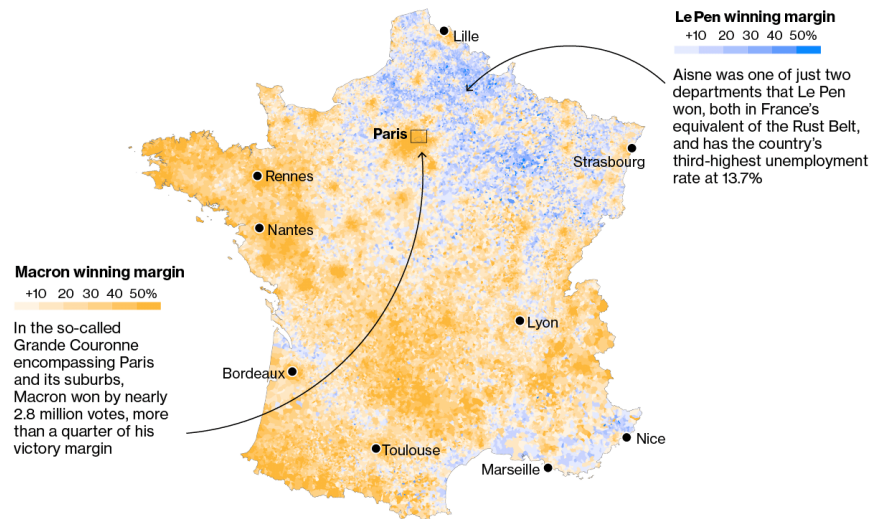


Figure 7:

French election second round maps.²⁴³

2017 Presidential Election Demographics

The 2017 presidential election showed the remarkable consistency from MLP and FN voters. This can be attributed to the “progressive structuring of FN support” along class lines: the FN consistently received high support from working class, blue-collar workers.²⁴⁴ This was called *fidélisation*, the “relative solidity of the MLP electorate.”²⁴⁵ The results in the first round were better than in previous years, with MLP winning 21.3 percent of the vote, a gain of 4.4 percent over 15 years since JMLP’s

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid, 127-128.

²⁴³ Andre Tartar, Cedric Sam, and Samuel Dodge, Five Maps That Show Why Macron Beat Le Pen, Bloomberg.com, May 8, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2017-french-election-maps/img/2017-french-election-maps-facebook.png?v=1>.

²⁴⁴ James Shields, “Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National,” *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 3 (2018): 538–557, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx041>

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 540.

16.9 percent won in 2002.²⁴⁶ However, the lack of “dynamic momentum” in the FN’s ability to increase its votes in the first round from previous years raised questions as to the FN’s ability under MLP to increase its support, and the FN’s longevity for the future.²⁴⁷ Despite this, MLP was still able to increase her 2012 votes by 1.25 million votes.²⁴⁸

The first round showed the consolidation of FN support in rural communities and semi-rural communities. MLP also received high votes in less rural zones, like 41.6 percent in Liévin in northern France.²⁴⁹ In the first round of voting, MLP received the highest proportion of blue collar workers (39 percent), routine non-manual employees (30 percent), and people with low or no educational qualifications (31 percent).²⁵⁰ Those who voted for the FN were more likely to identify with the label “losers of globalization” and more likely to have decided upon their first choice candidate than other voters.²⁵¹ The age range of MLP’s highest support was 35-49.²⁵²

Although MLP and the FN lost to Macron and his *En Marche!* party in the second round, she made significant progress in comparison to her father’s performance in 2002. In the first round, MLP won 21.3 percent of the vote with approximately 7.7 million votes, compared to her father’s 16.9 percent of the vote with 4.8 million votes in 2002.²⁵³ In the second round, JMLP increased his votes by 0.9 percent, adding only

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 541.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 543.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Gregor Aisch, Matthew Bloch, K. K. Rebecca Lai, and Benoît Morenne, “How France Voted,” *The New York Times*, May 7, 2017, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/07/world/europe/france-election-results-maps.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/07/world/europe/france-election-results-maps.html>.

720,000 votes, whereas MLP added nearly 3 million votes, increasing her vote share by 12.6 percent for a total of 10.6 million votes.²⁵⁴ This showed MLP's ability to "tap into a new reservoir of voters," a place where the FN historically struggled to add votes during the second round of the presidential election, specifically in areas with high unemployment and low wages.²⁵⁵

2017 Regional Support

Out of 101 departments of France, the FN won 47 in the first round, with the majority of strong support coming in from rural departments and industrialized departments in the north, northeast, and the Mediterranean coastline.²⁵⁶ This map of support is extremely similar to the FN's support since the 1980s, but although the general outline was the same, there were differences in the depth of FN support and the "distribution of peaks."²⁵⁷ MLP received over 30 percent of the vote in 12 of 47 departments where she came in first, with notable percentages of 35.7 percent in Aisne and 34.3 percent in northern Pas-de-Calais. This can be compared to 2012 where MLP came in first in only one department, Gard, and reached her peak in Vaucluse with 27 percent.²⁵⁸ The results of the 2017 presidential election showed a shift away from the peak support in south, instead receiving its strongest support in the north.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid ; Gregor Aisch, Matthew Bloch, K. K. Rebecca Lai, and Benoît Morenne, "How France Voted."

²⁵⁶ Shields, "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National," 542.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

In general, MLP was able to receive a greater number of votes than her father, even in areas with already-strong FN and right-wing support. She also raised support among a younger demographic and lessened the gender gap which plagued the FN's voters under JMLP. Under MLP, the FN has increased their depth and breadth of support, expanding beyond their traditional borders of rural communities, and receiving voters from areas previously untouched by the far right. The results of the elections show that not only has the FN proven their support to be among some of the most consistent of the parties', but also MLP's ability to draw up support in new areas. This can be attributed to her ability to capitalize on the three crises mentioned previously: financial, refugee, and Brexit (anti-EU sentiment), in addition to the general unrest caused by these political events.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Moving into the Mainstream, or Still the Radical Right?

This conclusion summarizes the overall findings of this thesis in order to present cohesive deductions about the potential future of the FN and its possible weaknesses. First, on the reasons for the initial rise of the FN, we have seen that residual resentment from the decolonization of Algeria, a strong history of the far-right stemming from WWII, and general political dissatisfaction with institutions contributed to its establishment as a significant political force under JMLP. Second, it reached even greater success under MLP, mainly because of MLP's de-demonization strategy, recent recession, and financial crisis, and MLP and the FN's ability to take advantage of the resulting polarization and bitterness among specific demographics of voters. Thirdly, the current state of the FN—now known as the RN—suggests that MLP might have another, stronger shot at the presidency in the 2022 election, and to prevent this from happening, it is necessary to examine the potential weaknesses in the party. As of April 2021, twelve opinion polls have been published that suggest Macron and Le Pen would be “head-to-head” in the second round of the presidential election.²⁶⁰ Although early, these polls emphasize the strengths we have come to know about the FN—their ability to maintain a stronghold of key voters, and to capitalize on the cracks within political parties and discontent with establishment. In particular, the FN is exploiting Macron's lowered ratings due to COVID-19 infections rising and a delayed vaccination campaign,

²⁶⁰ Kim Willsher, “Could Marine Le Pen Finally Triumph with Her Third Tilt at French Presidency?” *The Guardian*, April 18, 2021, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/18/could-marine-le-pen-finally-triumph-with-her-third-tilt-at-french-presidency>.

as well as the left's apathy with Macron.²⁶¹ In fact, some polls suggest a very narrow margin in a run-off election between Macron and MLP, ranging from 52-53 percent for Macron to 47-48 percent for MLP.²⁶²

However, the FN's ability to bring the right together also has the potential for failure. Already, there are challengers from the right who openly criticize MLP, based on "worries about Marine Le Pen's fitness to govern."²⁶³ Xavier Bertrand, president of the regional council of the Hauts-de-France region, has announced a presidential run, and Valérie Pécresse, president of the regional council of Île-de-France may run as well.²⁶⁴ The challenge to MLP's competence will be crucial in the second round of the presidential election, where Macron is still likely to narrowly win. Focusing on MLP's incompetence and doubt in her ability to fulfill her promises of improvement may prove successful for Macron and his party. An additional pressing issue, and perhaps the most significant, is where Macron and other political parties have incorporated MLP and the FN's views in order to win over voters, shifting political discourse further right. Examples like *islamogauchisme* and the ban on hijabs demonstrate the FN's ability to bleed into the "center" or conservative political programs. While the FN certainly could maintain power by having a shot at the presidency through MLP, a more hidden aspect to their influence could simply be the appropriation of their ideas into more mainstream parties' policies, and the acceptance of far-right political beliefs across the country.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ "Emmanuel Macron's Troubles Open up Space for Marine Le Pen," *The Economist*, April 10, 2021, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/04/10/emmanuel-macrons-troubles-open-up-space-for-marine-le-pen>.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Further research is needed to diagnose this phenomenon (the drifting of the center towards the radical right) specifically and accurately. Is it appropriation, influence, adoption?

Marine Le Pen inherited a legacy from Jean-Marie Le Pen born out of the economic crisis of the 1970s, and France's struggling national identity in the post-colonial and post-WWII era. JMLP took advantage of the discontent of the middle class and culminated (with assistance from a disjointed left) in a breakthrough to the mainstream French political landscape in 2002. Section one focuses on this because it is crucial to understand the historical background that went into the creation of the FN and the influences behind it.

JMLP took advantage of issues such as unemployment and a high crime rate with racist and xenophobic policies to reach out to a wider demographic. He transformed his base from older, Catholic, business-owning voters to a party of the working class, which became the signature for the party under his daughter. Jean-Marie Le Pen and the FN's rhetoric did not develop single-handedly but drew upon a broader history of right-wing ideology and movements in France, from Poujadism to Catholic fundamentalism. JMLP's rhetoric and the political context of economic crisis helped him appeal to the working-class white voters who held negative sentiments against previous political elites and administrations. Le Pen's policies and appeal to the working-class led to his breakthrough in the 1980s and concluded with his "seismic shock" presidential election in 2002.

Although Marine Le Pen's political strategy differed from her father's in multiple ways, the resulting ideology and policies she ran on were largely similar to his. This superficial change focused on *dédiabolisation* or de-demonization, shifting public perception of the FN into more favorable opinion, while moving the FN into a role as a

mainstream political party.²⁶⁶ This involved a general softening in tone of the FN on issues involving race, immigration, and antisemitism compared to her father's. MLP also took a stronger emphasis on her role as the leader of her party, and her policies were created with a larger emphasis on populism. Despite her relaxing the FN's stances on gay marriage and abortion, the FN stayed true to its roots of nationalism, anti-immigration, and anti-EU sentiment, except this time with tweaks and rephrasing. Bastow puts it quite succinctly that "the ideological position of the *mariniste* FN has a high degree of continuity with that of the party under Jean-Marie Le Pen."²⁶⁷

Regardless of MLP's consistency with her father's ideology, under her leadership the FN drew in more voters than under JMLP. As a woman herself, MLP has used her gender and her role as a leader to shrink the gender gap issue, with more working-class women voting for the FN. An analysis of the 2012 results for the FN revealed that MLP had "virtually eliminated" the voting gender gap for her party, and utilized her feminization as a tactic during her 2017 presidential campaign.²⁶⁸ This feminization was part of a larger strategy to attract more female voters and to soften the FN's public image, and was part of the reason the FN gained ground compared to JMLP.²⁶⁹ Under MLP, the depth and breadth of the FN's voting base expanded, even into areas previously untouched by the far right movement. As a result of this, some

²⁶⁶ Jim Wolfreys, "The Dangers of Detoxification," *Jacobin*, 20 Apr. 2017, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/04/national-front-detoxification-marine-le-pen-fascism-france-elections/>.

²⁶⁷ Steve Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?" *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 19-37, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7>.

²⁶⁸ Susan Chira, "Marine Le Pen's Canny Use of Gender in Her Campaign," *The New York Times*, May 4, 2017, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/world/europe/le-pens-campaign-strategy-shift-strong-but-soft.html>.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

even argued that although the FN maintained their far-right beliefs, the party itself was integrated within the mainstream.²⁷⁰

At large, MLP's FN received a greater number of votes than her father and raised support within the younger demographic. The support stretched beyond previous expectations for the FN, reaching more voters in FN-dominated areas, and also in less traditional, non-rural communities. The FN voters under MLP proved to consistently loyal to the party, and MLP showed an ability to drum up support from new voters, despite a change in rhetoric from her father's party.

Overall, the previous sections show that the FN can no longer be considered a fringe party and has instead grown successfully into a legitimate political threat under MLP. These findings demonstrate that MLP and the FN still fall under the category of far-right wing ideology, but with a superficial layer of protection through better optics and some targeted changes to public rhetoric. The key for MLP was her rebranding and de-demonization of the party, which has seemed to be successful based on the voting results. At the same time, she has also influenced the overlap of center parties with traditional FN ideologies.

Since 2017, there have been some areas of concern the FN. Former vice president Florian Philippot left the FN and started a new political party, splintering the support among remaining members.²⁷¹ The FN officially changed their name to *Rassemblement national* (National Rally or RN) in 2018, signaling another way of

²⁷⁰ Steve Bastow, "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?" *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 19-37, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7>.

²⁷¹ Louise Nordstrom, "Les Patriotes: How Le Pen's Ex-Protégé Hopes to Win over French Far Right," *France 24*, December 18, 2017, <https://www.france24.com/en/20171218-france-philippot-les-patriotes-le-pen-ex-protege-win-over-french-far-right-party>.

rebranding for the party under Marine Le Pen.²⁷² Additionally, new voices like Marion Maréchal, Marine Le Pen's niece, added new aspects to the far right movement. While MLP remains focused on a populist vision, Maréchal emphasizes the importance of unifying all right wing parties in France.²⁷³ Although Maréchal retired from politics in 2017 and therefore eliminated her chances for a presidential run in 2022, her beliefs have created rifts in the far right and the FN.²⁷⁴ Instead, she runs the Institute of Social Sciences, Economics, and Politics (ISSEP) a “Sciences Po of the right.”²⁷⁵ While Maréchal holds similar beliefs when it comes to political ideology and policy, her positions differ from MLP's, because some consider her to be harsher on immigration and identity.²⁷⁶ Whether their methodology shifts from the manifests of JMLP's time to Facebook videos of MLP to an institution for the right under Maréchal, their ideals remain very similar regarding law and order and immigration.

In regard to future leadership, MLP announced in April 2021 that she will be stepping down as the leader of the RN.²⁷⁷ Although she did not name a successor to her role as leader, Jordan Bardella could be considered as a possibility. This could be yet another attempt at continuing the de-demonization strategy, directing the public's

²⁷² “Retrouvez Le Discours de Marine Le Pen Lors Du Congrès Du Front National,” *Le Monde*, https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/live/2018/03/11/congres-du-front-national-suivez-en-direct-le-discours-de-marine-le-pen_5269149_823448.html.

²⁷³ Simon Carraud, “France's Far-Right Marion Marechal Convinced of Rising to Power One Day,” *Reuters*, September 28, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-politics-marechal-idUSKBN1WD0N8>.

²⁷⁴ Paul-Pierre Bermingham, “Niece of Marine Le Pen Launches Think Tank,” *POLITICO*, December 8, 2020, <https://www.politico.eu/article/marion-marechal-marine-le-pen-think-tank-front-national-elections/>.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ David Keohane, “‘More Dangerous’ than Le Pen: Marion Maréchal Eyes Long Game,” *The Irish Times*, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/more-dangerous-than-le-pen-marion-mar%C3%A9chal-eyes-long-game-1.3950112>.

²⁷⁷ “Marine Le Pen: French Far-Right Leader to Quit as Party Chief | DW | 02.04.2021,” *DW*, accessed April 23, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/marine-le-pen-french-far-right-leader-to-quit-as-party-chief/a-57086907>.

attention away from MLP and her potential issues with competency. Many still remember MLP's blunders during the 2017 debates against Macron, "when he calmly reminded her that she had confused a firm that makes telephones with one that makes industrial turbines."²⁷⁸ This issue with MLP's competency, as mentioned previously, could be a motivating factor for her stepping down, as well as the de-demonization strategy.

The 2022 presidential election and the electoral future of the FN rely on the party and MLP's ability to have successfully persuaded the French public to view both the party and leader as respectable. The main issue in the second round of voting remains that voters may feel that they only have a singular acceptable choice in Macron. The fate of the FN will depend on MLP and the FN's ability to successfully "de-demonize" themselves. While there is evidence she has succeeded to a certain degree, it is unknown as to what extent, or if she will maintain this growth during the 2022 campaign. If Macron manages to reattach the label of the FN as far-right extremism, this could cause considerable damage to the FN's progress under MLP.

The FN is arguably now a mainstream political party. If the definition of mainstream is one of the two major political parties in France expected to be in the second round of voting in a presidential election (not for the first time), a serious contender for the presidency, and a worryingly strong influence on the political stage, the FN has certainly broken into the mainstream. Even if the FN cannot be considered a mainstream political party, the FN's ability to easily slide public rhetoric and voters

²⁷⁸ "Emmanuel Macron's Troubles Open up Space for Marine Le Pen," *The Economist*, April 10, 2021, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/04/10/emmanuel-macrons-troubles-open-up-space-for-marine-le-pen>.

towards the far-right is worth noting. The party has powerful, influential beliefs, such that the previously mainstream parties are adopting their rhetoric, and the polls are in agreement, the FN's ideologies are certainly mainstream. While this argument is controversial, it is supported by the recent polls and evidence of the FN's influence on French politics.

The FN and the far right in France remain consistent with their intergenerational ideals of nationalism, xenophobia, and racism. In studying the historical background, political context, and political strategy behind the rise of the *Front national* and Marine Le Pen, we can trace the impact of the far-right on French politics. Even if Macron wins over MLP in the 2022 presidential election, the political shift the FN has triggered remains a threat. The FN, JMLP, and MLP have given ground to insidious, radically right beliefs that will not vanish from modern political discourse. The fact that these ideas have bled into the forefront of French politics remains, and it is crucial to study this topic further. To contain or reverse the shift of mainstream politics towards the far-right, it is necessary to address the root of the ongoing issues the FN has capitalized upon for decades.

Bibliography

- Aisch, Gregor, Matthew Block, K.K. Rebecca Lai, and Benoît Morenne. "How France Voted." *The New York Times*. May 7, 2017, sec. World.
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/07/world/europe/france-election-results-maps.html>.
- "Aux Etats-Unis, la pénurie de boba affole la Californie." *Le Monde.fr*. April 22, 2021.
https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2021/04/22/la-penurie-de-boba-affole-la-californie_6077619_3234.html.
- Bastow, Steve. "The Front National under Marine Le Pen: a mainstream political party?" *French Politics* 16, no. 1 (2018): 19-37. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0052-7>.
- Beardsley, Eleanor. "French Senate Voted To Ban The Hijab For Minors In A Plea By The Conservative Right." NPR.org, April 8, 2021.
<https://www.npr.org/2021/04/08/985475584/french-senate-voted-to-ban-the-hijab-for-minors-in-a-plea-by-the-conservative-ri>.
- Bermingham, Pierre-Paul. "Niece of Marine Le Pen Launches Think Tank." *POLITICO*, December 8, 2020. <https://www.politico.eu/article/marion-marechal-marine-le-pen-think-tank-front-national-elections/>.
- Bréchon, Pierre, and Subrata Kumar Mitra. "The National Front in France: The Emergence of an Extreme Right Protest Movement." *Comparative Politics* 25, no. 1 (1992): 63-82. Accessed April 13, 2021. doi:10.2307/422097.
- Burley, Shane, and Alexander Reid Ross. "Nothing New Under the Sun." *Jacobin*. 5 June 2017. <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/06/national-front-le-pen-fascist-france-trump-alt-right>.
- Carraud, Simon. "France's Far-Right Marion Marechal Convinced of Rising to Power One Day." *Reuters*. September 28, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-politics-marechal-idUSKBN1WD0N8>.
- Chira, Susan. "Marine Le Pen's Canny Use of Gender in Her Campaign." *The New York Times*, May 4, 2017, sec. World.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/04/world/europe/le-pens-campaign-strategy-shift-strong-but-soft.html>.
- Chrisafis, Angelique. "EU Vote Confirms French Far Right as Macron's Main Opposition." *The Guardian*. May 27, 2019.
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/27/eu-vote-confirms-french-far-right-marine-le-pen-national-rally-as-emmanuel-macron-main-opposition>.

- Chrisafis, Angelique. “Macron Responds to Gilets Jaunes Protests with €5bn Tax Cuts.” *The Guardian*, April 25, 2019. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/25/emmanuel-macron-significant-tax-cut-gilets-jaunes-speech>.
- Chrisafis, Angelique. “Marine Le Pen Ahead of Macron’s Centrist Party, Say French Exit Polls.” *The Guardian*. May 26, 2019. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/may/26/marine-le-pen-national-rally-ahead-of-macron-centrist-party-french-exit-polls>.
- Chrisafis, Angelique. “Marine Le Pen emerges from father's shadow.” *The Guardian*. March 21, 2011. Accessed February 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/21/marine-lepen-defends-republic>.
- Cook, Steven A. “How the French Debacle in Algeria Shaped the Rise of Marine Le Pen – and What America Can Learn From It.” May 1, 2017. Accessed January 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/how-french-debacle-algeria-shaped-rise-marien-le-pen-and-what-america-can-learn-it>.
- “Décision n° 2007-139 PDR du 25 avril 2007 | Conseil constitutionnel.” Accessed February 20, 2021. <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/decision/2007/2007139PDR.htm>.
- “Election of the President of the European Parliament.” Accessed April 26, 2021. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&type=IM-PRESS&reference=20070109BKG01804>.
- “Emmanuel Macron’s Troubles Open up Space for Marine Le Pen.” *The Economist*, April 10, 2021. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/04/10/emmanuel-macrons-troubles-open-up-space-for-marine-le-pen>.
- “France Immigration Statistics 1960-2021.” Accessed April 25, 2021. <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/FRA/france/immigration-statistics>.
- Frosch, Jon. “Far-right's Marine Le Pen leads in shock new poll.” July 3, 2011. Accessed February 2021. <https://www.france24.com/en/20110307-new-poll-far-right-marine-le-pen-presidential-frontrunner>.
- Goodliffe, Gabriel. “From Political Fringe to Political Mainstream: The Front National and the 2014 Municipal Elections in France.” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 34, no. 3 (2016): 126-147. DOI: [10.3167/fpcs.2016.340307](https://doi.org/10.3167/fpcs.2016.340307).
- “Islamismo-Gauchisme – What Does It Mean and Why Is It Controversial in France?” *The Local*. February 17, 2021. <https://www.thelocal.fr/20210217/islamo-gauchisme-what-does-it-mean-and-why-is-it-controversial-in-france/>.

- Ivaldi, Gilles. “Contesting the EU in Times of Crisis: The Front National and Politics of Euroscepticism in France.” *Politics* 38, no. 3 (August 2018): 278–94. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395718766787>.
- Ivaldi, Gilles. “Towards the Median Economic Crisis Voter? The New Leftist Economic Agenda of the Front National in France.” *French Politics* 13 (2015): 346–369.
- Keohane, David. “‘More Dangerous’ than Le Pen: Marion Maréchal Eyes Long Game.” *The Irish Times*. Accessed April 23, 2021. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/more-dangerous-than-le-pen-marion-mar%C3%A9chal-eyes-long-game-1.3950112>.
- Kuhn, Raymond. “The French Municipal and European Elections, 2014.” *Representation* 50, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 405–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2014.953803>.
- Lichfield, John. “Just Who Are the Gilets Jaunes?” *The Guardian*, February 9, 2019. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/09/who-really-are-the-gilets-jaunes>.
- Marcus, Jonathan. *The National Front and French Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1995. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-24032-6>.
- “Marine Le Pen: French Far-Right Leader to Quit as Party Chief | DW | 02.04.2021.” DW. Accessed April 23, 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/marine-le-pen-french-far-right-leader-to-quit-as-party-chief/a-57086907>.
- Mayer, Nonna. “From Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Electoral Change on the Far Right.” *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 160–78. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss071>.
- Mény, Yves. “A Tale of Party Primaries and Outsider Candidates: The 2017 French Presidential Election.” *French Politics* 15, no. 3 (September 2017): 265–78. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41253-017-0038-5>.
- Momtaz, Rym. “France’s Far-Right Boy Wonder.” *POLITICO*. April 24, 2019. <https://www.politico.eu/article/france-french-far-rights-boy-wonder-leads-european-charge-jordan-bardella-marine-le-pen-national-rally/>.
- “National Front Seeks to Exploit Poverty in Provence | DW | 10.06.2017.” DW.com. Accessed April 26, 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/national-front-seeks-to-exploit-poverty-in-provence/a-39187533>.
- Nordstrom, Louise. “Les Patriotes: How Le Pen’s Ex-Protégé Hopes to Win over French Far Right.” *France 24*, December 18, 2017.

<https://www.france24.com/en/20171218-france-philippot-les-patriotes-le-pen-ex-protege-win-over-french-far-right-party>.

Palash Ghosh, "French Municipal Elections: Far-Right National Front Scores Impressive Gains, But Hopes For Real Political Power Remain A Fantasy," *International Business Times*, March 31, 2014, <https://www.ibtimes.com/french-municipal-elections-far-right-national-front-scores-impressive-gains-hopes-real-political>.

"*Résultats de l'élection présidentielle 2012.*" Accessed February 2021. https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Presidentielles/elecresult_PR2012/%28path%29/PR2012/FE.html.

"Retrouvez Le Discours de Marine Le Pen Lors Du Congrès Du Front National." *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/live/2018/03/11/congres-du-front-national-suivez-en-direct-le-discours-de-marine-le-pen_5269149_823448.html.

Rickman, Catherine. "Marine Le Pen Tries to Rally the Gilets Jaunes." *Frenchly* (blog), January 15, 2019. <https://frenchly.us/marine-le-pen-tries-to-rally-the-gilets-jaunes/>.

Serhan, Yasmeeen. "'Populism' Is Meaningless." *The Atlantic*. March 14, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/what-is-populism/607600/>.

Shields, James. *The extreme right in France : from Pétain to Le Pen* (New York City, NY: Taylor & Francis Books, 2007).

Shields, James. "Electoral Performance and Policy Choices in the Front National." *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 3 (2018): 538–557. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx041>

Shields, James. "The Far Right Vote in France: From Consolidation to Collapse?" *French Politics, Culture & Society* 28, no. 1 (2010): 25-45. Accessed April 6, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42843636>.

Shields, James. "Marine Le Pen and the 'New' FN: A Change of Style or of Substance?" *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no. 1 (2013): 179–196, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gss076>.

Shields, James G. "The Poujadist Movement: A faux 'fascism'." *Modern & Contemporary France* 8, no. 1 (2000): 19-34.

Stockemer, Daniel. *The Front National in France : Continuity and Change Under Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen*. Cham: Springer, 2017.

- Taub, Amanda. "France's Far Right, Once Known for Anti-Semitism, Courts Jews." *The New York Times*. April 5, 2017, sec. World.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/world/europe/france-jews-marine-le-pen-national-front-anti-semitism.html>.
- Tharoor, Ishaan. "France and the Spectral Menace of 'Islam-Leftism.'" *Washington Post*. February 21, 2021.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/02/22/france-macron-islam-leftism/>.
- Webster, Paul. "Le Pen Win Cuts Far Right's Lifeline." *The Guardian*. May 12, 1999.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/may/12/paulwebster>
- Williams, Michelle Hale. "A New Era for French Far Right Politics? Comparing the FN under Two Le Pens." *Análise Social* 46, no. 201 (2011): 679-95. Accessed January 5, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41494868>.
- Willsher, Kim, "Could Marine Le Pen Finally Triumph with Her Third Tilt at French Presidency?" *The Guardian*. April 18, 2021.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/18/could-marine-le-pen-finally-triumph-with-her-third-tilt-at-french-presidency>.
- Wolfreys, Jim. "The Dangers of Detoxification." *Jacobin*. 20 Apr. 2017.
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2017/04/national-front-detoxification-marine-le-pen-fascism-france-elections/>.
- "World: Europe National Front Faces Split." *BBC News*. December 11, 1998.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/233213.stm>.