

= National Front ( France ) =

The National Front ( French : Front national , French pronunciation : ? [ fʁɔ̃ ʁa.sjɔ̃.nal ] , FN ) is a socially conservative , nationalist political party in France . Its major policies include economic protectionism , a zero tolerance approach to law and order issues , and opposition to immigration . A eurosceptic party , the FN has opposed the European Union since its creation in 1993 . Most political commentators place the FN on the right to far right but party representatives reject this and suggest other ways of looking at the left ? right axis . The party was founded in 1972 to unify a variety of French nationalist movements of the time . Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen was the party 's first leader and the undisputed centre of the party from its start until his resignation in 2011 . Marine Le Pen , his daughter , was elected as the current leader . While the party struggled as a marginal force for its first ten years , since 1984 it has been the major force of French nationalism .

The 2002 presidential election was the first in France to include a National Front candidate in the run @-@ off , after Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen beat the Socialist candidate in the first round . In the run @-@ off , he finished a distant second to Jacques Chirac . Due to the French electoral system , the party 's representation in public office has been limited , despite its significant share of the vote .

While her father was nicknamed the " Devil of the Republic " by mainstream media , Marine Le Pen pursued a policy of " de @-@ demonization " of the party by softening its image . She endeavoured to extract it from its far @-@ right cultural roots , and to normalize it by giving it a culture of government , expelling controversial members like her father , who was suspended , and then expelled by his own party in 2015 after he referred , once again , to the Nazi gas chambers as " a point of detail of the history of the Second World War " ; he later set up the Blue , White and Red Rally . Since her election as the leader of the party in 2011 , the popularity of the FN continued to grow apace : the party won several municipalities at the 2014 municipal elections ; it became the first French party at the 2014 European elections with 25 % of the votes ; and again in the last departmental elections in France . They , once again , came out in 1st place in the last regional elections with a historic result of nearly 28 % of the votes . Marine Le Pen would lead the first round of the 2017 presidential elections , according to various polls . As of 2015 , the FN has established itself as one of the largest political forces in France .

= = Background = =

The FN springs from a right @-@ wing tradition in France that dates back to the French Revolution of 1789 , and the party rejects both the revolution and its legacy . One of the primary progenitors of the party was the Action Française , founded at the end of the 19th century , and its descendants in the Restauration Nationale , a pro @-@ monarchy group that supports the claim of the Count of Paris to the French throne . More recently , the party drew from the Poujadism of the 1950s , which started out as an anti @-@ tax movement without relations to the right @-@ wing , but included among its parliamentary deputies " proto @-@ nationalists " such as Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen .

Another conflict that is part of the party 's background was the Algerian War ( many frontistes , including Le Pen , were directly involved in the war ) , and the right @-@ wing dismay over the decision by French President Charles de Gaulle to abandon his promise of holding on to French Algeria . In the 1965 presidential election , Le Pen unsuccessfully attempted to consolidate the right @-@ wing vote around the right @-@ wing presidential candidate Jean @-@ Louis Tixier @-@ Vignancour . During the late 1960s and early 1970s , the French far @-@ right consisted mainly of small extreme movements such as Occident , Groupe Union Défense ( GUD ) , and the Ordre Nouveau ( ON ) .

= = History = =

= = = Early years ( 1972 ? 1981 ) = = =

While the ON had competed in some local elections since 1970 , at its second congress in June 1972 it decided to establish a new political party to contest the 1973 legislative elections . The party was launched on 5 October 1972 under the name National Front for French Unity ( Front national pour l'unité française ) , or Front National . In order to create a broad movement , the ON sought to model the new party ( as it earlier had sought to model itself ) on the more established Italian Social Movement ( MSI ) , which at the time appeared to establish a broad coalition for the Italian right . The FN adopted a French version of the MSI tricolour flame as its logo . It wanted to unite the various French far @-@ right currents , and brought together Le Pen 's nationalist group , Roger Holeindre 's Party of French Unity , Georges Bidault 's Justice and Liberty movement , former Poujadists , Algerian War veterans , and some monarchists , among others . Le Pen was chosen to be the first president of the party , as he was untainted with the militant public image of the ON and was a relatively moderate figure on the far @-@ right .

The National Front fared poorly in the 1973 legislative elections , receiving 0 @.@ 5 % of the national vote ( although Le Pen won 5 % in his Paris constituency ) . In 1973 the party created a youth movement , the Front national de la jeunesse ( National Front of the Youth , FNJ ) . The rhetoric used in the campaign stressed old far @-@ right themes and was largely uninspiring to the electorate at the time . Otherwise , its official program at this point was relatively moderate , differing little from the mainstream right . Le Pen sought the " total fusion " of the currents in the party , and warned against crude activism . The more radical elements of the ON were not persuaded , and reverted to hard activism . They were banned from the party later that year . Le Pen soon became the undisputed leader of the party , although this cost it many leading members and much of its militant base .

In the 1974 presidential election , Le Pen failed to find a mobilising theme for his campaign . Many of its major issues , such as anti @-@ communism , were shared by most of the mainstream right . Other FN issues included calls for increased French birth rates , immigration reduction ( although this was downplayed ) , establishment of a professional army , abrogation of the Évian Accords , and generally the creation of a " French and European renaissance . " Despite being the only nationalist candidate , he failed to gain the support of a united far @-@ right , as the various groups either rallied behind other candidates or called for voter abstention . The campaign further lost ground when the Revolutionary Communist League published a denunciation of Le Pen 's alleged involvement in torture during his time in Algeria . In his first presidential election , Le Pen gained only 0 @.@ 8 % of the national vote .

===== FN ? PFN rivalry =====

Following the 1974 election , the FN was obscured by the appearance of the Party of New Forces ( PFN ) , founded by FN dissidents ( largely from the ON ) . Their competition weakened both parties throughout the 1970s . During the same time , the FN gained several new groups of supporters , including François Duprat and his " revolutionary nationalists " , Jean @-@ Pierre Stirbois and his " solidarists " , the Nouvelle Droite , and Bernard Anthony . Following the death of Duprat in a bomb attack , the revolutionary nationalists left the party , while Stirbois became Le Pen 's deputy as his solidarists effectively ousted the neo @-@ fascist tendency in the party leadership . The far @-@ right was marginalised altogether in the 1978 legislative elections , although the PFN was better off . For the first election for the European Parliament in 1979 , the PFN had become part of an attempt to build a " Euro @-@ Right " alliance of European far @-@ right parties , and was in the end the only one of the two that contested the election . It fielded Jean @-@ Louis Tixier @-@ Vignancour as its primary candidate , while Le Pen called for voter abstention .

For the 1981 presidential election , both Le Pen and Pascal Gauchon of the PFN declared their intentions to run . However , an increased requirement on support by elected officials had been introduced for the election , which left both Le Pen and Gauchon unable to stand for the election . ( In France , parties have to secure support from a specific number of elected officials , from a specific number of departments , in order to be eligible to run for election . In 1976 , the number of required elected officials was increased fivefold , and the number of departments threefold . ) The election

was won by François Mitterrand of the Socialist Party ( PS ) , which gave the political left national power for the first time in the Fifth Republic ; he then dissolved the National Assembly to call a snap legislative election . The PS attained its best ever result with an absolute majority in the 1981 legislative election . This " socialist takeover " led to a radicalisation in centre @-@ right , anti @-@ communist , and anti @-@ socialist voters . With only three weeks to prepare its campaign , the FN fielded only a limited number of candidates and won only 0 @.@ 2 % of the national vote . The PFN was even worse off , and the election marked the effective end of competition from the party .

= = = Electoral breakthrough ( 1982 ? 1988 ) = = =

While the French party system had been dominated by polarisation and competition between the clear @-@ cut ideological alternatives of two political blocs in the 1970s , the two blocs had largely moved towards the centre by the mid @-@ 1980s . This led many voters to perceive the blocs as more or less indistinguishable , in turn inciting them to seek out to new political alternatives . By October 1982 , Le Pen supported the prospect of deals with the mainstream right , provided that the FN did not have to soften its position on key issues . In the 1983 municipal elections , the centre @-@ right Rally for the Republic ( RPR ) and centrist Union for French Democracy ( UDF ) formed alliances with the FN in a number of towns . The most notable result came in the 20th arrondissement of Paris , where Le Pen was elected to the local council with 11 % of the vote . Later by @-@ elections kept media attention on the party , and it was for the first time allowed to pose as a viable component of the broader right . In a by @-@ election in Dreux in October , the FN won 17 % of the vote . With the choice of defeat to the political left or dealing with the FN , the local RPR and UDF , to a minor national sensation , agreed to form an alliance with the FN , and together won the second round with 55 % of the vote . The events in Dreux were a monumental factor for the rise of the FN .

Le Pen protested the media boycott against his party by sending letters to President Mitterrand in mid @-@ 1982 . After some letter exchanges , Mitterrand instructed the heads of the main television channels to give equitable coverage to the FN . In January 1984 , the party made its first appearance in a monthly poll of political popularity , in which 9 % of respondents held a " positive opinion " of the FN and some support for Le Pen . The next month , Le Pen was for the first time invited to a prime @-@ time television interview program , which he himself later deemed " the hour that changed everything " . The 1984 European elections in June came as a shock , as the FN won 11 % of the vote and ten seats . Notably , the election used proportional representation and had a low level of importance , which played to the party 's advantage . The FN made inroads in constituencies of both the right and left , and finished second in a number of towns . While many Socialists had arguably exploited the party in order to divide the right , Mitterrand later conceded that he had underestimated Le Pen . By July , 17 % of opinion poll respondents held a positive opinion of the FN .

By the early 1980s , the FN featured a mosaic of ideological tendencies and attracted figures who were previously resistant to the party . The party managed to draw supporters from the mainstream right , including some high @-@ profile defectors from the RPR , UDF , and National Centre of Independents and Peasants ( CNIP ) . In the 1984 European elections , eleven of the 81 FN candidates came from these parties , and the party 's list also included an Arab and a Jew ( although in unwinnable positions ) . Former collaborators were also accepted in the party , as Le Pen urged the need for " reconciliation " , arguing that forty years after the war the only important question was whether or not " they wish to serve their country " . The FN won 8 @.@ 7 % overall support in the 1985 cantonal elections , and over 30 % in some areas .

For the 1986 legislative elections the FN took advantage of a new proportional representation system that had been imposed by Mitterrand in order to moderate a foreseeable defeat for his PS . In the election , the FN won 9 @.@ 8 % of the vote and 35 seats in the National Assembly . Many of its seats could be filled by a new wave of respectable political operatives , notables , who had joined the party after its 1984 success . The RPR won a majority with smaller centre @-@ right parties , and thus avoided the need to deal with the FN . Although it was unable to exercise any real political

influence , the party could project an image of political legitimacy . The party 's time in the National Assembly effectively came to an end when Jacques Chirac reinstated the two @-@ round system of majority voting for the next election . In the regional elections held on the same day , it won 137 seats , and gained representation in 21 of the 22 French regional councils . The RPR depended on FN support to win presidencies in some regional councils , and the FN won vice @-@ presidential posts in four regions .

= = = Consolidation ( 1988 ? 1995 ) = = =

Le Pen 's campaign for the upcoming presidential election unofficially began in the months following the 1986 election . To promote his statesmanship credentials , he made trips to South East Asia , the United States , and Africa . The management of the formal campaign , launched in April 1987 , was entrusted to Bruno Mégret , one of the new notables . With his entourage , Le Pen traversed France for the entire period and , helped by Mégret , employed an American @-@ style campaign . Le Pen 's presidential campaign was highly successful ; no candidates came close to rival his ability to excite audiences at rallies and boost ratings at television appearances . Using a populist tone , Le Pen presented himself as the representative of the people against the " gang of four " ( RPR , UDF , PS , Communist Party ) , while the central theme of his campaign was " national preference " . In the 1988 presidential election , Le Pen won an unprecedented 14 @.@ 4 % of the vote , and double the votes from 1984 .

The FN was hurt in the snap 1988 legislative elections by the return two @-@ ballot majority voting , by the limited campaign period , and by the departure of many notables . In the election the party retained its 9 @.@ 8 % support from the previous legislative election , but was reduced to a single seat in the National Assembly . Following some anti @-@ Semitic comments made by Le Pen and the FN newspaper National Hebdo in the late 1980s , some valuable FN politicians left the party . Other quarrels soon also left the party without its remaining member of the National Assembly . In November 1988 , general secretary Jean @-@ Pierre Stirbois , who , together with his wife Marie @-@ France , had been instrumental in the FN 's early electoral successes , died in a car accident , leaving Bruno Mégret as the unrivalled de facto FN deputy leader . The FN only got 5 % in the 1988 cantonal elections , while the RPR announced it would reject any alliance with the FN , now including at local level . In the 1989 European elections , the FN held on to its ten seats as it won 11 @.@ 7 % of the vote .

In the wake of FN electoral success , the immigration debate , growing concerns over Islamic fundamentalism , and the fatwa against Salman Rushdie by Ayatollah Khomeini , the 1989 affaire du foulard was the first major test of the relations between the values of the French Republic and Islam . Following the event , surveys found that French public opinion was largely negative towards Islam . In a 1989 legislative by @-@ election in Dreux , FN candidate Marie @-@ France Stirbois , campaigning on an anti @-@ Islamism platform , returned a symbolic FN presence to the National Assembly . By the early 1990s , some mainstream politicians began employing anti @-@ immigration rhetoric . In the first round of the 1993 legislative elections the FN soared to 12 @.@ 7 % of the overall vote , but did not win a single seat due to the nature of the electoral system ( if the election had used proportional representation , it would have won 64 seats ) . In the 1995 presidential election , Le Pen rose slightly to 15 % of the vote .

= = = 1995 municipal elections = = =

The FN won an absolute majority ( and thus the mayorship ) in three cities in the 1995 municipal elections : Toulon , Marignane , and Orange . ( It had won a mayorship only once before , in the small town of Saint @-@ Gilles @-@ du @-@ Gard in 1989 . ) Le Pen then declared that his party would implement its " national preference " policy , with the risk of provoking the central government and being at odds with the laws of the Republic . The FN pursued interventionist policies with regards to the new cultural complexion of their towns by directly influencing artistic events , cinema schedules , and library holdings , as well as cutting or halting subsidies for multicultural associations

. The party won Vitrolles , its fourth town , in a 1997 by @-@ election , where similar policies were pursued . Vitrolles ' new mayor Catherine Mégret ( fr ) ( who ran in place of her husband Bruno ) went further in one significant measure , introducing a special 5 @,@ 000 franc allowance for babies born to at least one parent of French ( or EU ) nationality . The measure was ruled illegal by a court , also giving her a suspended prison sentence , a fine , and a two @-@ year ban from public office .

= = = Turmoil , split of MNR ( 1997 ? 2002 ) = = =

In the 1997 legislative elections the FN polled its best @-@ ever result with 15 @.@ 3 % support in metropolitan France , confirming its position as the third most important political force in France . It also showed that the party had become established enough to compete without its leader , who decided not to run to focus on the 2002 presidential election . Although it won only one seat in the National Assembly ( Toulon ) , thanks to a good communication director , it advanced to the second round in 132 constituencies . The FN was arguably more influential now than it had been in 1986 with its 35 seats . While Bruno Mégret and Bruno Gollnisch , in an unusual display of dissent , favoured tactical cooperation with a weakened centre @-@ right following the left 's victory , Le Pen rejected any such compromise . In the tenth FN national congress in 1997 , Mégret stepped up his position in the party as its rising star and a potential leader following Le Pen . Le Pen however refused to designate Mégret as his successor @-@ elect , and instead made his wife Jany the leader of the FN list for the upcoming European election .

Mégret and his faction left the FN in January 1999 and founded the National Republican Movement ( MNR ) , effectively splitting the FN in half at most levels . Many of those who joined the new MNR had joined the FN in the mid @-@ 1980s , in part from the Nouvelle Droite , with a vision of building bridges to the parliamentary right . Many had also been particularly influential in intellectualising the FN 's policies on immigration , identity and " national preference " , and , following the split , Le Pen denounced them as " extremist " and " racist " . Support for the parties was almost equal in the 1999 European election , as the FN polled its lowest national score since 1984 with just 5 @.@ 7 % , and the MNR won 3 @.@ 3 % . The effects of the split , and competition from more moderate nationalists , had left their combined support lower than the FN result in 1984 .

= = = 2002 presidential election = = =

For the 2002 presidential election , opinion polls had predicted a run @-@ off between incumbent President Chirac and PS candidate Lionel Jospin . The shock was thus great when Le Pen unexpectedly beat Jospin ( by 0 @.@ 7 % ) in the first round . This resulted in the first presidential run @-@ off since 1969 without a leftist candidate , and the first ever with a candidate of the far @-@ right . To Le Pen 's advantage , the election campaign had increasingly focused on law and order issues , helped by media attention on a number of violent incidents . Jospin had also been weakened due to the competition between an exceptional number of leftist parties . Nevertheless , Chirac did not even have to campaign in the second round , as widespread anti @-@ Le Pen protests from the media and public opinion culminated on May Day , with an estimated 1 @.@ 5 million demonstrators across France . Chirac also refused to debate with Le Pen , and the traditional televised debate was cancelled . In the end , Chirac won the presidential run @-@ off with an unprecedented 82 @.@ 2 % of the vote and with 71 % of his votes ? according to polls ? cast simply " to block Le Pen " . Following the presidential election , the main centre @-@ right parties merged to form the broad @-@ based Union for a Popular Movement ( UMP ) . The FN failed to hold on to Le Pen 's support for the 2002 legislative elections , in which it got 11 @.@ 3 % of the vote . It nevertheless outpolled Mégret 's MNR , which won a mere 1 @.@ 1 % support , even though it had fielded the same number of candidates .

= = = Late 2000s decline = = =

A new electoral system of two @-@ round voting had been introduced for the 2004 regional

elections , in part in an attempt to reduce the FN 's influence in regional councils . The FN won 15 @. @ 1 % of the vote in metropolitan France , almost the same as in 1998 , but its number of councillors was almost halved due to the new electoral system . For the 2004 European elections too , a new system less favourable to the FN had been introduced . The party regained some of its strength from 1999 , earning 9 @. @ 8 % of the vote and seven seats .

For the 2007 presidential election , Le Pen and Mégret agreed to join forces . Le Pen came fourth in the election with 11 % of the vote , and the party won no seats in the legislative election of the same year . The party 's 4 @. @ 3 % support was the lowest score since the 1981 election and only one candidate , Marine Le Pen in Pas de Calais , reached the runoff ( where she was defeated by the Socialist incumbent ) . These electoral defeats partly accounted for the party 's financial problems . Le Pen announced the sale of the FN headquarters in Saint @-@ Cloud , Le Paquebot , and of his personal armoured car . Twenty permanent employees of the FN were also dismissed in 2008 . In the 2010 regional elections the FN appeared to have re @-@ emerged on the political scene after surprisingly winning almost 12 % of the overall vote and 118 seats .

= = = Marine Le Pen ( 2011 ? present ) = = =

Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen announced in September 2008 that he would retire as FN president in 2010 . Le Pen 's daughter Marine Le Pen and FN executive vice @-@ president Bruno Gollnisch campaigned for the presidency to succeed Le Pen , with Marine 's candidacy backed by her father . On 15 January 2011 , it was announced that Marine Le Pen had received the two @-@ thirds vote needed to become the new leader of the FN . She sought to transform the FN into a mainstream party by softening its xenophobic image . Opinion polls showed the party 's popularity increase under Marine Le Pen , and in the 2011 cantonal elections the party won 15 % of the overall vote ( up from 4 @. @ 5 % in 2008 ) . However , due to the French electoral system , the party only won 2 of the 2 @, @ 026 seats up for election .

For the 2012 presidential election , opinion polls showed Marine Le Pen as a serious challenger , with a few polls even suggesting that she could win the first round of the election . In the event , Le Pen came third in the first round , scoring 17 @. @ 9 % ? the best showing ever for the FN .

In the 2012 legislative election , the National Front won two seats ; Gilbert Collard and Marion Maréchal @-@ Le Pen .

In two polls about presidential favourites in April and May 2013 , Marine le Pen polled ahead of president François Hollande but behind Nicolas Sarkozy .

= = = = 2014 ? 15 electoral successes = = = =

In the municipal elections held on 23 and 30 March 2014 , lists officially supported by National Front won mayoralties in 12 cities : Beaucaire , Cogolin , Fréjus , Hayange , Hénin @-@ Beaumont , Le Luc , Le Pontet , Mantes @-@ la @-@ Ville , Marseille 7th sector , Villers @-@ Cotterêts , Béziers and Camaret @-@ sur @-@ Aigues . Following the municipal elections , the National Front has , in cities of over 1 @, @ 000 inhabitants , 1 @, @ 546 and 459 councilors at two different levels of local government . The international media described the results as " historic " , and " impressive " , although the International Business Times suggested that " hopes for real political power remain a fantasy " for the National Front .

The National Front received 4 @, @ 712 @, @ 461 votes in the 2014 European Parliament election , finishing first with 24 @. @ 86 % of the vote and 24 of France 's 74 seats . " It was the first time the anti @-@ immigrant , anti @-@ EU party had won a nationwide election in its four @-@ decade history . " The party 's success came as a shock in France and the EU . The next year , the National Front went on to win another victory in the first round of the 2015 regional elections on December 6 , placing first in 6 of the 13 newly redrawn regions and emerging ahead of both major establishment parties overall . In Nord @-@ Pas @-@ de @-@ Calais @-@ Picardie , Marine Le Pen won 40 @. @ 6 % of the vote .

= = Political profile = =

The party 's ideology has been broadly described by scholars such as Shields as authoritarian , nationalist , and populist The FN has changed considerably since its foundation , as it has pursued the principles of modernisation and pragmatism , adapting to the changing political climate . At the same time , its message has increasingly influenced mainstream political parties , although the FN too has moved somewhat closer towards the centre @-@ right . While some have denounced its policies as " fascist " , some features that are integral to historical ( and generic ) fascism are absent in the party and others are prominent .

= = = Law and order = = =

In 2002 , Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen campaigned on a law @-@ and @-@ order platform of zero tolerance , harsher sentencing , increased prison capacity , and a referendum on re @-@ introducing the death penalty . In its 2001 program , the party linked the breakdown of law and order to immigration , deeming immigration a " mortal threat to civil peace in France . "

= = = Immigration = = =

In the early years of the FN , immigration policy was only a minor issue for the party , although it did call for immigration to be reduced . Themes of exclusion of non @-@ European immigrants was largely brought into the party in 1978 , with the arrival of Jean @-@ Pierre Stirbois and his " solidarist " group . The topic subsequently became increasingly important in the early 1980s .

In more recent popular and even academic press , the party 's program has often been reduced to the single issue of immigration . The party opposes immigration , particularly Muslim immigration from North Africa , West Africa and the Middle East . Over the years , and especially since the 1999 split , the FN has cultivated a more moderate image on issues of immigration and Islam , at least compared to some of the proposals of Mégret 's MNR or Philippe de Villiers 's Movement for France . It no longer expressly supports the systematic repatriation of legal immigrants , although it supports Islamophobic activities as well as the deportation of illegal , criminal , or unemployed immigrants .

Since becoming leader of the party in 2011 , Marine Le Pen has focused mostly on the perceived threat against the secular value system of the French Republic . She has criticised Muslims , for what she perceives as their alleged intents to impose their own values on the country . Following the Arab Spring rebellions in several countries , she has been active in campaigning on halting the migration to Europe of Tunisian and Libyan immigrants .

= = = Economy = = =

At the end of the 1970s , Le Pen refurbished his party 's appeal , by breaking away from the anticapitalist heritage of Poujadism . He instead made an unambiguous commitment to popular capitalism , and started espousing an extremely market liberal and antistatist program . Issues included lower taxes , reducing state intervention , and dissolving the bureaucracy . Some scholars have even considered that the FN 's 1978 program may be regarded as " Reaganite before Reagan " .

The party 's economic policy shifted from the 1980s to the 1990s from neoliberalism to protectionism . This should be seen within the framework of a changed international environment , from a battle between the Free World and communism , to one between nationalism and globalization . During the 1980s , Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen complained about the rising number of " social parasites " , and called for deregulation , tax cuts , and the phasing @-@ out of the welfare state . As the party gained growing support from the economically vulnerable , it converted towards politics of social welfare and economic protectionism . This was part of its shift away from its former claim of being the " social , popular and national right " to its claim of being " neither right nor left ? French ! " Increasingly , the party 's program became an amalgam of free market and welfarist

policies , which some political commentators have claimed are left @-@ wing economic policies .

Under her leadership , Marine Le Pen has been more clear in her support for protectionism , while she has criticised globalism and capitalism for certain industries . She has been characterised as a proponent of letting the government take care of health , education , transportation , banking and energy .

= = = Foreign policy = = =

From the 1980s to the 1990s , the party 's policy shifted from favouring the European Union to turning against it . In 2002 , Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen campaigned on pulling France out of the EU and re @-@ introducing the franc as national currency . In the early 2000s the party denounced the Schengen , Maastricht , and Amsterdam treaties as foundations for " a supranational entity spelling the end of France . " In 2004 , the party criticised the EU as " the last stage on the road to world government " , likening it to a " puppet of the New World Order . " It also proposed breaking all institutional ties back to the Treaty of Rome , while it returned to supporting a common European currency to rival the United States dollar . Further , it rejected the possible accession of Turkey to the EU . The FN was also one of several parties that backed France 's 2005 rejection of the Treaty for a European Constitution . In other issues , Le Pen opposed the invasions of Iraq , led by the United States , both in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq War . He visited Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 1990 , and subsequently considered him a friend .

Marine Le Pen has advocated that France should leave the euro ( along with Spain , Greece and Portugal ) . She also wants to reintroduce customs borders and has campaigned against allowing dual citizenship . During both the 2010 ? 2011 Ivorian crisis and the 2011 Libyan civil war , she opposed the French military involvements . She has recast the party 's image towards Israel , after affirming Israel 's right to secure itself from terrorism , and criticising the leadership of Iran .

= = = = Russia and Ukraine = = = =

Marine Le Pen described Russian President Vladimir Putin as a " defender of the Christian heritage of European civilisation . " The National Front considers that Ukraine has been subjugated by the United States , through the Ukrainian crisis . The National Front denounces anti @-@ Russian feelings in Eastern Europe and the submission of Western Europe to NATO 's interests in the region . Marine Le Pen is very critical against the threats of sanctions directed by the international community against Russia : " European countries should seek a solution through diplomacy rather than making threats that could lead to an escalation . " She argues that the United States are leading a new Cold War against Russia . She sees no other solution for peace in Ukraine than to organize a kind of federation that would allow each region to have a large degree of autonomy . She thinks Ukraine should be sovereign and free as any other nations .

Luke Harding wrote in The Guardian that the National Front 's MEPs were a " pro @-@ Russian bloc . " In 2014 , the Nouvel Observateur said that the Russian government considered the National Front " capable of seizing power in France and changing the course of European history in Moscow 's favour . " According to the French media , party leaders had frequent contact with Russian ambassador Alexander Orlov and Marine Le Pen made multiple trips to Moscow . In May 2015 , one of her advisers , Emmanuel Leroy , attended an event in Donetsk marking the " independence " of the self @-@ proclaimed Donetsk People 's Republic .

= = = = = Russian bank loan = = = = =

In November 2014 , Marine Le Pen confirmed that the party had received a ? 9 million loan from the First Czech Russian Bank ( FCRB ) in Moscow to the National Front . Senior FN officials from the party 's political bureau informed Mediapart that this was the first installment of a ? 40 million loan , although Marine Le Pen has disputed this . The Independent said the loans " take Moscow 's attempt to influence the internal politics of the EU to a new level . " Reinhard Bütikofer stated , " It 's



remarkable that a political party from the motherland of freedom can be funded by Putin 's sphere - the largest European enemy of freedom . " Marine Le Pen argued that it was not a donation from the Russian government but a loan from a private Russian bank because no other bank would give her a loan . This loan is meant to prepare future electoral campaigns and to be repaid progressively . Marine Le Pen has publicly disclosed all the rejection letters that French banks have sent to her concerning her loan requests . Since November 2014 , she insists that if a French bank agrees to give her a loan , she would break her contract with the FCBR , but she has not received any other counter @-@ propositions . Le Pen accused the banks of collusion with the current government In April 2015 , a Russian hacker group published texts and emails between Timur Prokopenko , a member of Putin 's administration , and Konstantin Rykov , a former Duma deputy with ties to France , discussing Russian financial support to the National Front in exchange for its support of Russia 's annexation of Crimea .

= = = View on Nazi history and relations with Jewish groups = = =

In 2005 , Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen wrote in the far @-@ right weekly magazine Rivarol that the German occupation of France " was not particularly inhumane , even if there were a few blunders , inevitable in a country of [ 220 @,@ 000 square miles ] " and in 1987 referred to the Nazi gas chambers as " a point of detail of the history of the Second World War . " He has repeated the latter claim several times . Also in 2004 , Bruno Gollnisch said " I do not question the existence of concentration camps but historians could discuss the number of deaths . As to the existence of gas chambers , it is up to historians to speak their minds " ( de se déterminer ) . Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen received fines for this sentence , Bruno Gollnisch was found not guilty by the courts of cassation . The current leader of the party , Marine Le Pen distanced herself for a time from the party machine in protest against her father 's comment . During the 2012 presidential elections , Marine Le Pen sought the support of Jewish people in France , as her father did in 1988 when he went to see the World Jewish Congress .

= = International relations = =

The FN has been part of several groups in the European Parliament . The first group it helped co @-@ establish was the European Right after the 1984 election , which also consisted of the Italian Social Movement ( MSI ) , its early inspiration , and the Greek National Political Union . Following the 1989 election , it teamed up with the German Republicans and the Belgian Vlaams Blok in a new European Right group , while the MSI left due to the Germans ' arrival . As the MSI evolved into the National Alliance , it chose to distance itself from the FN . From 1999 to 2001 , the FN was a member of the Technical Group of Independents . In 2007 , it was part of the short @-@ lived Identity , Tradition , Sovereignty group . Between the mentioned groups , the party sat among the non @-@ affiliated Non @-@ Inscrits . Currently , it leads the Europe of Nations and Freedom group , which also includes the Freedom Party of Austria , Polish Congress of the New Right , Italian Northern League , Vlaams Belang , the German AfD , the Dutch Freedom Party , a former member of the UK Independence Party and a former member of Romania 's Conservative Party . They 're also part of the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom since 2014 .

During Jean @-@ Marie Le Pen 's presidency , the party has also been active in establishing extra @-@ parliamentary confederations . During the FN 's 1997 national congress , the FN established the loose Euronat group , which consisted of a variety of European right @-@ wing parties . Having failed to cooperate in the European Parliament , Le Pen sought in the mid @-@ 1990s to initiate contacts with other far @-@ right parties , including from non @-@ EU countries . The FN drew most support in Central and Eastern Europe , and Le Pen visited the Turkish Welfare Party . The significant Freedom Party of Austria ( FPÖ ) refused to join the efforts , as Jörg Haider sought to distance himself from Le Pen , and later attempted to build a separate group . In 2009 , the FN joined the Alliance of European National Movements , it left the alliance since . Along with some other European parties , the FN in 2010 visited Japan 's Issaikai movement and the Yasukuni Shrine

At a conference in 2011, the two new leaders of the FN and the FPÖ, Marine Le Pen and Heinz-Christian Strache, announced deeper cooperation between their parties. Pursuing her de-demonization policy, Marine Le Pen as new president of the National Front joined the European Alliance for Freedom in October 2011. A pan-European sovereigntist platform founded late 2010 and recognized by the European Parliament. The EAF has individual members linked to the Austrian Freedom Party of Heinz-Christian Strache, the British UK Independence Party of Nigel Farage, and other movements such as the Sweden Democrats, Vlaams Belang (Belgian Flanders) and from Malta, Germany (Bürger in Wut), Slovakia (Slovak National Party), etc.

During her visit to the United States, Marine Le Pen met two US Republican members of the U.S House of Representatives associated with the Tea Party movement, Joe Walsh, who is known for his strong Islamophobic stance, and three-time presidential candidate Ron Paul, whom Le Pen complimented for his stance on the gold standard.

Apart from the party's cooperations in the Europe of Nations and Freedom parliamentary group and its European party MENL, the FN also cooperates with Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia and Czech Republic's SPD.

== Leadership ==

=== Party leaders ===

Jean-Marie Le Pen (1972 ? 2011)

Marine Le Pen (2011 ? present)

=== Vice presidents ===

The party has had five vice presidents since 12 July 2012 (against three previously).

Alain Jamet, 1st vice president (2011 ? present)

Louis Aliot, in charge of training and demonstrations (2011 ? present)

Marie-Cristine Arnautu, in charge of social affairs (2011 ? present)

Jean-François Jalkh, in charge of elections and electoral litigations (2012 ? present)

Florian Philippot, in charge of strategy and communication (2012 ? present)

Steeve Briois, in charge of local executives and supervision (2014 ? present)

=== General secretaries ===

Jean-Pierre Stirbois (1981 ? 1988)

Carl Lang (1988 ? 1995)

Bruno Gollnisch (1995 ? 2005)

Louis Aliot (2005 ? 2010)

Jean-François Jalkh (2010 ? 2011 : interim period during the internal campaign)

Steeve Briois (2011 ? 2014)

== Election results ==

The National Front was a marginal party from 1973, the first election it participated in, until its breakthrough in the 1984 European elections, where it won 11 % of the vote and ten MEPs. Following this election, the party's support mostly ranged from around 10 to 15 %, although it saw a drop to around 5 % in some late 2000s elections. Since 2010, the party's support seems to have increased towards its former heights. The party managed to advance to the final round of the presidential elections in 2002, although it failed to attract much more support after the initial first

round vote .

=== National Assembly ===

=== Presidential ===

=== Regional councils ===

=== European Parliament ===

=== In French ===

Bertrand Joly , Nationalistes et Conservateurs en France , 1885 @-@ 1902 ( Les Indes Savantes , 2008 )

Winock , Michel ( dir . ) , Histoire de l 'extrême droite en France ( 1993 )