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Europe as Evil Empire? Dystopian Visions of the EU in the discourse of the Front National

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The success of the *Front National* (FN) in the 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections, described as an 'earthquake' by French Socialist premier Manuel Valls (Topaloff, 2014: 76), was part of a more general success for populist and/or Eurosceptic parties across the European Union (EU). As Treib, for example, points out, in those elections, 'more voters than ever cast their votes for political parties that advocated radical reforms of the EU, campaigned for an exit of their countries from the EU or even pushed for scrapping the whole project of integration altogether' (Treib, 2014: 1542). In particular, four Eurosceptic parties gained over 20% of the vote in their respective countries. These include, as well as the FN, which won 24 seats and 25% of the vote to make it the largest French party in the EP, the British UK Independence Party (UKIP), the Greek radical left party *Syriza,* and the Italian *Cinque Stelle* (Five Stars movement – 5SM) (BBC, 2014) (Treib, 2014: 1542). However, in addition to the European dimension, it can be argued that FN Euroscepticism is also rooted in a French tradition of Euroscepticism dating back to Charles de Gaulle's support for an intergovernmental *Europe des nations.*

As FN leader Marine Le Pen herself notes, then, the FN is now 'the fourth biggest party group [in the EP] behind the German Christian Democrats, the Italian Democratic Party and the German Social Democrats' (Von Rohr, 2014). More recently, Le Pen has succeeded in forming a group of right-wing Eurosceptic parties in the EP. The group, 'Europe of Nations and Freedoms' (ENF), includes the FN along with Dutch radical-right politician Geert Wilders' PW party, as well as MEPs from other radical right parties including Belgium's *Vlaams Belang* and Italy's Lega Nord (Maurice, 2015). In this context, then, the paper aims to explore FN discourse on the EU using a theoretical framework which includes Foreign Policy Discourse Analysis (FPDA), as well as social constructivist and social psychological theories of identity formation.

2. Theoretical Framework

As noted above, the paper makes use of several theoretical frameworks in its attempt to shed light on FN discourse on the EU, including FPDA, social constructivism and social psychological theories of collective identity formation. The broad framework of the paper is constructivist, in that it understands identities as socially constructed rather than essential in nature, and views discourse, particularly elite discourse as playing an important role in identity construction. Moreover, it conceives of identities as constructed in relation with an Other or Others (Fearon and Laitin, 2000: 853) (Diez, 2004: 321).

Within this framework, FPDA is used in an attempt to place FN Eurosceptic discourse in the broader French discursive context. According to FPDA, a form of discourse analysis based on Foucault's conception of discourse, the discursive constellation of state and nation constrains how Europe can be thought of (Wæver, 2005: 37). Thus, national political discourse on the EU should, in its narrative, present a logic of Europe which is compatible with the state/nation construction. Therefore, the basic codes that frame and constrain the visions of Europe that make discursive sense in France are constituted by the discourses on state, nation and *patrie* (Holm 2004: 473) discussed above, which 'trap' French elites in their discourse on Europe (Schmidt, 2007: 992).

On the one hand, in contrast to the British case, 'Europe' has played a key role in the construction of the French Self, as it occupies a central place in France's national identity narrative, while there is also a strong belief that France can have a decision-making role in Europe (Wæver, 2005: 42-60). On the other hand, as ideas about French citizenship and identity tend to be intertwined, any undermining of the French state is perceived as an attack on identity; any form of supranational institution thus challenges and potentially undermines national identity constructions (Schmidt 2007: 998). In this context, Holm notes, therefore, that the French political elite has two ways of 'imagining' Europe; as a Europe of states and as a state-like Europe, built in the image of France as a 'France-writ-large' (2004: 471). While the idea of Europe as state-like has been arguably dominant since the 1980s in French discourse, the idea of a Europe of states was prevalent in Gaullist discourse, which was heavily critical of European supranationalism.

 According to Gaullist discourse, then, there was little need to Europeanise French identity; instead the focus was on an intergovernmental *Europe des nations.* In De Gaulle's view, the state could not be subsumed by Europe because it was sovereign *pour la nation et par la nation* – for and through the nation- and was there to defend Republican values (Schmidt 2007: 998), although opposition became pragmatic acceptance of French EEC membership after De Gaulle's accession to power (Hainsworth, O'Brien and Mitchell 2004: 38). Thus, in Gaullist discourse Europe was not ascribed the qualities of a state in terms of the functions it was to perform; instead, it was seen as a composite of sovereign states of which France was 'first among equals' (Larsen, 1997: 97). De Gaulle's ideas, then, continued to be centred around 'a certain idea of France', stressing national independence, grandeur and unity; French independence, then, was not to be compromised and de Gaulle's favourite *modus operandi* continued to be intergovernmental (Hainsworth, O'Brien and Mitchell, 2004: 39). In this light, then, the FN's Euroscepticism and emphasis on French sovereignty no longer appears to be an anomaly; instead it can be understood in terms of the dominant French discourse on state and nation.

In addition, social psychology theories are used in order to clarify the FN's construction of a French (or even European) popular 'Self' *vis a vis* an elite EU 'Other'. Firstly, Social Identity Theory (SIT) starts with the assumption that there are different levels of self-categorisation and identification, including personal identity, or individuals acting as individuals, and social identity, or a shared identity with others (Mols and Weber, 2013: 506). On this basis, SIT posits that, as far as social identities are concerned, the individual derives positive self-identity from formal membership or emotional attachment to various groups (Ntampoudi, 2013: 3). Such self-categorisation leads to an accentuation of similarities with the other members of their group, and an accentuation of differences with members of other groups (Wenzel, Mummendey and Waldzus, 2010: 334). Thus, according to SIT, individuals tend to partition the world into ingroups and outgroups, and group behaviour can only be understood when considering how individuals perceive their relationship with their own group, and how their own group perceives other groups (Mols and Weber, 2013: 506-507).

Developed from SIT, self-categorisation theory puts forward that the creation of a new in-group can provide the background for comparisons between the lower-order categories they include. Notably, these lower-order categories tend to be compared on dimensions that apply to and define the relevant higher-order category. In addition, the prototypical position, or the ideal-type, on these comparison dimensions is the valued standard and relevant norm. In the case of the EU, then, the 'prototype' may be the so-called 'European values', as defined in the Treaty on European Union (TEU). The preamble to the Treaty, for instance, outlines these values briefly;

> Drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person , freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law. […] Believing that Europe, reunited after bitter experiences, intends to continue along the path of civilisation, progress and prosperity for the good of all its inhabitants […] and that it wishes to deepen the democratic and transparent nature of its public life, and to strive for peace, justice and solidarity throughout the world

Similarly, Article 2 (1a) of the TEU, for instance, affirms that 'the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities'.

Thus, in-group and out-groups are then evaluated positively to the extent to which they are regarded as prototypical for the relevant higher-order category which includes them both. However, the representation of social categories is not objectively given but is rather a social construction from the specific perspective of the perceiver (Wenzel, Mummendey and Waldzus, 2010: 336). In the case of a populist, Eurosceptic party such as the FN, as explored below, 'the people', of France and Europe, are depicted as in tune with 'European values' such as freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, while the EU elites are portrayed as representing the opposite of these values. In this sense, the EU itself becomes the ultimate European out-group or Other; it is depicted as a monstrous, dystopian, totalitarian superstate in the service of ruthless elites which tramples upon the 'natural' rights, freedom and sovereignty of ordinary French people and Europeans.

3. Dystopian Images of the EU in *Front National* discourse
3.1. Rid of its Demons? The FN under Marine Le Pen

The FN, often considered a prototype populist radical right party, was originally little more than a confederation of extreme and radical right *groupuscules* comprising a range of right-wing political views ranging from new right *(nouvelle droite)* think-tanks to 'national solidarists' and orthodox Catholics. These groups, while maintaining their own leaders and organisations, were integrated into the FN under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen (Mudde, 2007: 41-268). FN discourse, like those of other populist radical right parties, rests on 'the myth of a homogenous nation, a romantic and populist ultra-nationalism' (Minkenberg, 2013: 6). In this sense, radical right parties tend to use 'discourses of fear', construing an ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as dangerous, as a threat to 'us' (Wodak, 2013: 28-29).

When she took over the party leadership in 2011, Marine Le Pen, Jean Marine Le Pen's youngest daughter, decided to push it in a radically new direction, carrying out programmatic and organisational reform designed to *dédiabolise* the party, by distancing herself from her father's overt antisemitism and Holocaust denial[i], in an attempt to improve its public image and attract a wider variety of voters (Betz, 2015: 75). As a consequence of her reforms, despite the party's continuing antl-immigration focus, in Betz' view she has managed to turn the FN from an extreme right party into a populist party, a 'genuine catch-all party of protest' (Betz, 2013b: 2-3)[ii].

According to Mudde, a common denominator among populist parties is that they consider 'society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite' (2004: 543). Indeed, as Alduy and Wahnich point out, the word 'people' is 'omnipresent' in Marine Le Pen's speeches; in 2013, for instance, she argued that the FN was 'the voice of the people against unjust power' (2015: 50). n this sense, the FN puts itself forward as the voice of 'invisible, the forgotten and the voiceless' in the face of elites, considered corrupt and out of touch with the public. The FN views the national elite, composed of both politicians and journalists, as in collusion with European and international elites in a plot to 'sell-out' France (Barthelet, 2013: 260).

The programme of today's *Front National* emphasises two main issues; European integration and immigration, both of which are understood as negative effects of uncontrolled globalisation. In particular, the FN's EU policy focuses on the reintroduction of the franc, the suppression of the principle of primacy of European law over

national law, the renegociation of the EU treaties with a view to renationalising certain policies, the removal of the EU flag from public buildings and the abolition of the Schengen agreements (Berthelet, 2013: 258). Moreover, European integration and immigration are seen as inextricably linked in FN discourse, and both are seen as a threat to a 'pure' national identity, and thus to French national cohesion, public policies, values, political institutions and public services (Berthelet, 2013: 259) (Fligstein *et al*, 2012: 115).

While it is a harsh critic of the EU, however, the FN, like most contemporary radical right parties, claims to support 'basic EU principles' and hence promotes itself as a defender of liberal democracy (Fligstein *et al*, 2012: 115). In FN discourse, then, a corrupt EU no longer represents such values; they can only be fully expressed and developed once the Member States regain their sovereignty. In this sense, the FN has much in common with the UK Independence Party (UKIP). As Tournier-Sol points out, both parties belong to the sovereignty type of Euroscepticism in that they want to recover full national sovereignty by leaving the EU. Similarly, both UKIP and the FN display an anti-immigration stance, and link immigration to EU policies (Tournier-Sol, 2015: 140)[iii]. Indeed, while dissatisfaction with domestic politics is a major explanation for the increase in support for the FN, it also has a strong European dimension, with an overwhelming majority of FN supporters displaying hard Eurosceptic attitudes, and agreeing that their vote for the FN expressed dissatisfaction with the way the EU was currently being run. In particular, a majority of FN voters agreed that the EU was a bad thing, supported French exit from the Eurozone and return to the franc, and were in favour of scrapping the EU integration process altogether (Trieb, 2014: 1548).

3.2. The EU as the FN's Dystopian Nightmare: Ghosts of Europes Past?

FN discourse on the EU has much in common not only with UKIP discourse but also with that of the Eurosceptic British press, which presents the EU as an "imperial" power which aims to undermine national independence and sovereignty. Such discourse can, thus, be understood as the 'horrific' dimension of the fantasmatic narrative, which is structured around ideas of repression and victimhood (Hawkins, 2015: 150). In particular, then, FN discourse aims to counter the EU's (self) image as a 'normative power', or as a quasi-Utopian society built on 'European' values such as democracy, freedom the rule of law, human rights and solidarity. Instead, in FN discourse, the EU is characterised as a dystopian society which represents the opposite of the 'European values' discussed above.

A dystopia, which derives from the Greek for 'bad place', such as those depicted in Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World* can be described as a society which is in some way undesirable or even frightening. It is important to note, however, that a dystopia is not simply the opposite of a utopia; rather it is a utopian society with at least one fatal flaw; a utopia that has gone wrong, or functions for only a part of society (Gordin, 2010: 1-2). It is also important to note that, like the concept of utopia, the dystopian idea is not merely confined to literature but is closely connected to political and even everyday life. Indeed, literary dystopias, like dystopian political discourse, can be understood as a *warning* on the part of the author who 'depicts a dark future building on the systematic amplification of current trends and features' (Claisse and Delvenne, 2015: 155).

Dystopian narratives, then, portray an oppressive society characterised by a lack of individual freedom as a result of excessive social control. This control may be exerted using a variety of measures, which may include propaganda, constant surveillance, terror, restriction of information, the discouragement of independent thought and the worship of a figurehead or concept. While such control may be weilded by a totalitarian government it may also be exerted, for instance, by a mindless bureaucracy or by large corporations (Purkar, 2013: 1-4). As the following sections show, FN discourse has frequently attributed such dystopian ideas to the EU.

3.2.1: Kafkaesque Eurocracy, a New USSR or the Return of the German Reich?

As has been noted above, according to the FN, in contrast to the "EUtopian" ideal of democracy, human rights, peace and prosperity, the EU is a dystopian society characterised by totalitarianism and a lack of freedom and individuality. Furthermore, for the FN, EU integration, or 'Europeanist fanaticism', is undemocratic in that it has been imposed by the elites on the unwilling peoples of Europe (Berthelet, 2013: 160). In Marine Le Pen's view, then, the EU 'is the gravedigger of the independence and identity of the European nations'(Guttman, 2015), and is 'an infernal machine, whose work of destroying the nation states continues without pause' (Berthelet, 2013: 260). Most notably, Le Pen makes a distinction between Europe which is 'a civilisation, a territory' and states 'I am European', while she considers that the EU 'is a structure which I consider totalitarian, it's the Soviet European Union' (Cacciotto, 2011)

Moreover, for the FN, this system is backed up by a mindless bureacracy, and is characterised by increased impoverishment as a result of misguided, quasi-Socialist economic dictatorship. According to the FN website, the EU is run by unelected technocrats, in the form of the European Commission and the European Central Bank;

The Commission, an unelected organ, procures considerable powers to technocrats, as well as the monopoly on legislative initiative. At least 80% of our important national laws and rules are nothing more than the transposition of its laws and directives. The same *enlightened despotism* is applied to the European Central Bank, whose monetary decisions are imposed on the Euro countries, who have become, at best, one-legged when it comes to their economic policies (Front National, 2015).

For Le Pen, the EU is comparable to a 'sect', which, like a totalitarian regime, uses 'blackmail, threats and brainwashing' (Le Figaro, 2015). Similarly, in the following extract, Le Pen depicts the EU as an undemocratic 'utopia gone wrong', from which 'The French' want to escape;

> The French want to regain control of their own country. They want to determine the course of their own economy and their immigration policies. They want their own laws to take precedence over those of the European Union. The French have understood that the EU does not live up to the utopia they were sold. It has distanced itself significantly from a democratic mode of operation (Von Rohr, 2014).

On this basis, then, in Le Pen's discourse the EU is a dystopia in which the freedom and democracy of 'the people' are smothered by a totalitarian elite backed up by a mindless, Kafkaesque Eurocracy;

> The idea of European cooperation has turned into a bureaucratic nightmare of a federalist and centralized character within globalization, which is the very opposite of liberalism … EU citizens seemed to be living in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (Prague Post, 2015).

In particular, Le Pen is a strong opponent of the Euro, which she argues 'was created by Germany, for Germany' (Von Rohr, 2014), and which she blames for a rise in prices and, generally, for poor economic performance in terms of growth and unemployment. While Le Pen advocates French withdrawal from the Euro, and is in favour of the return of all the Eurozone members to their national currencies (Le Figaro, 2015), she anticipates instead a 'total economic federalisation of the Eurozone'. In her view, this option, 'favoured by the European technostructure' would lead to a 'simulacrum of democracy'; it would, again, resemble a dystopia in that it 'presents all the features of a totalitarian utopia' in which a 'monstrous superstructure, already named the "European ministry of finance" would decide in the opaqueness our policies of education, health and security' (Le Pen, 2015).

Similarly, in the following extract from an interview with *Spiegel*, Le Pen compares the EU to an anti-democratic monster, which she would like to tame, if not kill;

> The EU is deeply harmful, it is an anti-democratic monster. I want to prevent it from becoming fatter, from continuing to breathe, from grabbing everything with its paws and from extending its tentacles into all areas of our legislation. In our glorious history, millions have died to ensure that our country remains free. Today, we are simply allowing our right to self-determination to be stolen from us (Von Rohr, 2014).

In the latter part of the extract, she implicitly seeks to create a 'heroic' persona by comparing herself to the millions who died for freedom in France's 'glorious history'. Strikingly, and perhaps ironically given her party's fascist origins, Le Pen implies a comparison between France's EU membership and the Nazi occupation during World War 2, and between herself and the French Resistance[iv]. This is particularly striking as Europe's own barbaric, war-torn past, particularly the Nazi era and World War 2, has been an important 'Other' of the EU. In fact, as Diez (2004: 325) and Wæver (1998: 90) have argued, such 'temporal Othering' has, at least until recently been particularly pervasive in EU discourse. Hinting at earlier eras of German domination of Europe, FN discourse often refers to Germany's supposed 'hegemonic' role in the EU. German rule is alluded to, for example, when Le Pen argues that 'the European Union has ruined us, has destroyed our security and is trying to impose its *diktat*' (Le Pen, 2015).

Similarly, on the occasion of a joint visit of French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel to the European Parliament, Le Pen accused President Hollande of being 'towed along' by Germany, and suggested that France was no more than a 'province' of Germany; 'Thank you Mrs Merkel for coming with your vice-Chancellor, the administrator of the province of France' (Paris Match, 2015). For Le Pen, German dominance results not only in the imposition of austerity policies but also forces France to open its doors to immigration; as she argued, 'Germany seeks not only to rule our economy, it wants to force us to accept hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers'. In addition, she argued that Germany's motivation in opening its doors to migrants and asylum seekers was to lower wages through importing 'slaves' (De La Hamaide and Rosnoblet, 2015).

More generally, the EU, which was, of course, originally founded with the goal of promoting peace and security in Europe following World War II, has been attacked in FN discourse as representing just the opposite; in particular, in Le Pen's discourse, the recent Eurozone crisis has provoked hostile relations among EU countries;

> Europe is war. Economic war. It is the increase of hostilities between the countries. Germans are denigrated as being cruel, the Greeks as fraudsters, the French as lazy. Ms. Merkel can't travel to any European country without being protected by hundreds of police. That is not brotherhood (Von Rohr, 2014).

Another totalitarian regime of the past which Le Pen has compared the EU to is the Soviet Union; indeed, she has been known to refer to it as the 'Soviet European Union' (Le Figaro, 2015). In a 2014 interview, for instance, Le Pen argued that;

> I want to destroy the EU, not Europe! I believe in a Europe of nation-states. I believe in Airbus and Ariane, in a Europe based on cooperation. But I don't want this European Soviet Union Von Rohr, 2014).

The FN website, for instance, states that the EU is like the USSR in that both are 'unreformable, as they are built on the ideology of the pure state' (Front National, 2015). For Le Pen, then, the 'unreformable' EU will meet a

similar end to the USSR; 'I believe that the EU is like the Soviet Union now: it is not improvable. The EU will collapse like the Soviet Union collapsed.'

3.2.2. The EU and Immigration in FN Discourse: Herald of a Fundamentalist 'EUrabia'?

While the FN is, then, undoubtedly Eurosceptic, it does, like many other radical right parties in Europe, put forward a vision of Europe as 'a collection of ethnic communities bound by a common European civilization', somewhat similar to De Gaulle's 'Europe of the Fatherlands' (Fligstein *et al,* 2015). In this sense, Europe as a 'value-based community' based upon a 'thicker' cultural identity, often perceived as being founded in Christianity, the classical civilisations and later events such as the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Thus, in this view Christian heritage, along with the inheritance of classical Greece and Rome, is considered to be the basis of some secular European values, including the separation of religion and the state, the idea of the natural rights of man and even the culture of capitalism (Yılmaz, 2007: 298). In this sense, then, such views have much in common with Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' thesis, which view such rights both as uniquely Western in origin and as incompatible with other 'civilisations' (Huntington, 1993).

Immigration from outside Europe, therefore, is perceived as a threat to this European identity and 'civilisation', and the EU is depicted as a kind of 'Trojan horse' which allows and promotes this immigration. In FN discourse, then, the EU is directly connected to uncontrolled immigration, due to perceived pro-immigration policies, the lack of internal frontiers in the Schengen space and insufficient controls at external borders. In the context of the Arab Spring, for instance, Le Pen denounced what she terms 'the EU's inability to face these emergency situations and to effectively control migration flows'. In this sense, as a consequence of its 'porous borders' the EU is framed as directly responsible for allowing waves of immigration that include terrorists and criminals as well as economic migrants (Berthelet, 2013. 260). As she argued in 2012,

> How many Mohamed Merahs[v] are there in the planes, the boats which arrive in France full of immigrants every day? How many Mohamed Merahs among the 300 illegal immigrants who, every day, arrive in Greece via Turkey, the first stop of their European odyssey? (cited in Berthelet, 2013: 261).

In particular, Marine Le Pen has especially focused on immigration from Muslim countries, departing from her father's more ambiguous position on Islam[vi]. In this focus on Islam, Le Pen was perhaps influenced by other parties of the European radical right. In right-wing discourse, then, as for Huntington, Muslim 'civilisation' is seen as particularly incompatible with European 'civilisation', and its values of democracy, liberty and the rule of law. In this context, many academics have argued that 'Muslims' have replaced 'Jews' as 'the new transnational Other' in European right wing discourse (Zuquete, 2008: 329). As Demes, for instance, notes, 'there is evidence of an 'anti-Muslim Europeanism … gradually acquiring convergent traction as symbols, alignments and tactics are collectively devised in an emergent space of exchange' (Demes, 2012: 297-298).

As Marine Le Pen argued in 2010, for instance, 'The progressive Islamisation of our country and the increase in political-religious demands are calling into question the survival of our civilisation' (Daily Telegraph, 2010). According to Le Pen, 'If we go on like this, Europe will no longer be Europe [but] will turn into an Islamic republic […] We are at a turning point, and if we don't protect our civilization it will disappear' (Zuquete, 2008: 338).

As Wodak notes, many debates on migration explicitly or implicitly rely on historical arguments, what she calls the *topos of history,* based on the idea of 'if X happened in the past, Y will happen now in the same or a similar way (Wodak, 2013: 31). In this sense, Muslim immigrants are compared to earlier 'barbaric' invasions and regimes in FN discourse. In the context of the current refugee crisis, for instance, alluding to the invasion of the Western Roman Empire by the barbarian tribes, Le Pen argued that the 'migratory influx will be like the barbarian invasion of the IV century, and the consequences will be the same' (Reuters, 2015). In addition, Le Pen has frequently used the 'Islamofascist' discourse, in which Islam is compared to a fascist regime, thus emphasising its supposed incompatibility with 'civilised' European principles such as freedom and democracy. Most notably, she compared Muslim street prayers to the Nazi occupation of France (Betz, 2013: 76). In this context, Le Pen has promoted her party as the only true defender of secularism and the republic, calling, in terms of the Spanish *reconquista* from Moorish rule, for the 'reconquest' of its values (Betz, 2013a: 76).

3.3: Out of the EU Abyss?: The FN as (Self-Designated) Dystopian Hero

For Le Pen, then, the current political situation is 'really the battle between a form of totalitarianism from the EU and the sovereignty of the people, who don't want to lose the mastery of their destiny' (Holehouse and Riley-Smith, 2015).In this context, then, Le Pen depicts herself and her party as the 'dystopian hero' who will lead the rebellion against the 'totalitarian' EU; as Barthelet points out, for example, FN leaders frame themselves as 'the defenders of the nation from danger, both global or European' (2013: 261). While, in dystopian narratives, the citizens of the dystopia generally live in a dehumanised state, the dystopian hero, such as *1984's* Winston Smith, often questions and rebels against the existing society; feeling trapped he/she struggles to escape from the confines of the stifling regime.

In this sense, as has been explored above, Le Pen has implicitly compared her party's anti EU policies to the French resistance against Nazi occupation during World War II. Le Pen thus portrays herself as 'Madame Frexit', willing to lead the French people, through referendum, towards a supposedly brighter future outside the EU;

> I will be Madame Frexit if the European Union doesn't give us back our monetary, legislative, territorial and budget sovereignty. I believe that sovereignty is the twin sister of democracy. If there's no sovereignty, there's no democracy. I'm a democrat, I will fight until the end to defend democracy and the will of the people. If I don't manage to negotiate with the European Union, something I wish, then I will ask the French to leave the European Union. And then you'll be able to call me Madame Frexit (Holehouse and Riley-Smith, 2015).

In this context, then, perhaps alluding to the Arab Spring[vii], the FN website declares that it will 'make the most of the Springtime of the European peoples, to move towards a Europe of free, sovereign, prosperous and proud peoples' (Front National, 2015). In this sense, she identifies with other Eurosceptic leaders across the EU, who are also, in her view, trying to lead their peoples to freedom. In particular, admiring the Eurosceptic British, she depicts herself as the counterpart of British Prime Minister David Cameron, who has also promised to hold a referendum on 'Brexit', or British exit, from the EU (Holehouse and Riley-Smith, 2015).

In addition, and perhaps surprisingly given the right-wing orientation of her party, Le Pen has also expressed her support for left-wing Eurosceptic parties, including Syriza and Podemos. In the context of Syriza's victory, for instance, she noted that; 'There is a fracturing in Europe, which is seeing the people taking power against the totalitarianism of the European Union and their accomplices, the financial markets', while she described Podemos as 'very interesting' in that the party's rise encouraged debate 'on the Euro, on austerity and on anti-democratic parties' (Siraud, 2015)

Conclusion

The FN's Eurosceptic discourse can be understood in the French discursive context as a more extreme version of Gaullist intergovernmentalist discourse. In this context, the FN portrays itself as the representative of the French people which, along with the other European peoples, are portrayed as the 'in-group' according to social psychology theories. It is 'the people', then, and the FN along with other Eurosceptic populist parties, who are depicted as the real bearers of 'European civilisation' based on values such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In contrast, the EU is framed as the 'out-group', in effect the 'anti-Europe', which is described as a corrupt elite organisation, despotic and totalitarian in nature and hence the potential destroyer of European values and civilisation.
It is depicted as doing this, on the one hand, through the weakening of national sovereignty and the imposition of polcies such as the Euro, and on the other through facilitating and encouraging immigration, especially from Muslim countries, which in itself is seen as weakening European civilisational values in FN discourse.

Moreover, it can be argued that the FN aims to get its message across as strongly as possible and to 'scare' voters into voting for it by creating an atmosphere of horror and terror in its depiction of the EU through comparing it, both directly and indirectly, to a dystopian society likened to other common 'out-groups' of European identity such as Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. In this sense, then, Le Pen depicts herself and her party, along with other Eurosceptic parties across Europe, as the 'dystopian hero' who bravely leads a rebellion against the regime. In this sense, FN discourse can be likened to that of other Eurosceptic parties, notably UKIP, which also paints the EU in dystopian terms (MacMillan, 2015).

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[i] Jean-Marie Le Pen famously described the Nazi gas-chambers as 'a detail of history' (Chrisafis, 2015).

[ii] Like UKIP, the *Front National* principally draws its support from poorly-educated, working class voters, although its voters are more evenly spread according to age and gender compared to UKIP voters, who tend to be male and over 55 years old (Trieb, 2014: 1550).

[iii] As Tournier-Sol points out, there are also significant differences between UKIP and the FN, notably in their economic policies; while UKIP advocates liberalism, the FN economic approach is protectionist and statist. In addition, although there have been recurrent racist outbursts by individual UKIP politicians, UKIP's heritage is not fascist or racist like that of the FN, and, despite its anti-immigration stance, the 'official' UKIP line rejects racism and 'blood and soil' nationalism (Tournier-Sol, 2015: 140-141).

[iv] Such language has also been used by Geert Wilders, whose party, the PVV, is the other major member of the ENF group in the EP. On the inauguration of the group, he argued that 'Today is D-Day, today is the beginning of our liberation … We are the voice of the European resistance' (Maurice, 2015).

[v] Mohamed Morah, a French citizen of Algerian descent, was the perpetrator of a series of three gun attacks on French soldiers and Jewish civilians in the cities of Toulouse and Montauban in March 2012 (Alduy and Wahnich, 2013: 224).

[vi] This earlier ambiguity on the part of the FN regarding Islam can be partly explained by Jean-Marie Le Pen's concern that over-emphasis on Islam would detract from the issue of immigration, which he saw as the party's main priority (Betz, 2013a: 76).

[vii] Given the numerous comparisons between the EU and the Soviet Union in FN discourse, the allusion may also be towards the Prague Spring of 1968.