

SOMETHING ROTTEN IN THE KINGDOM OF FRANCE

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French paradox: no one wants to give Emmanuel

Macron a majority, but all the projections in seats suggest that he will have a comfortable majority. It has been a long time since France has not been in such an absurd, not to say grotesque, political situation.

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During the pandemic, some facetious people renamed France "Absurdistan" to underline the Kafkaesque nature of the government's health measures.

The pandemic is receding, but France does not seem to have returned to the path of reason. After the presidential election, France deserves more than ever the sobriquet. The folly perpetrated during COVID took on a new dimension the evening of April 24th, when President Emmanuel Macron was re-elected by 58% of the French: apparently, a comfortable majority. However, nobody wants him, and the weeks that go by do not change the situation. The latest opinion polls show that [the majority of French people—56%—want to deprive Emmanuel Macron of the means to fully exercise power](#) by imposing a cohabitation on him, i.e., by giving the majority to an opposition party during the legislative elections to be held in June. This would force him to compose a government with a prime minister who would not come from the ranks of his party La République en Marche—now renamed *Renaissance*. But nobody agrees on who should benefit from this cohabitation. Who really embodies the opposition to Emmanuel Macron? Is it the radical Left, with Jean-Luc Mélenchon, or the national Right, with Marine Le Pen? In this emerging three-way confrontation, the winner is likely to be the current president.

Hence the following paradox: no one wants to give Emmanuel Macron a majority, but all the projections in seats suggest that [he will have a comfortable majority](#), probably more than 300 deputies out of the 577 in the French National Assembly. It has been a long time since France has not been in such an absurd, not to say grotesque, political situation.

In the run-up to the June vote, the disappointed candidate of the left-wing formation La France Insoumise has been working hard to unite the left-wing camp. A complicated acronym and a convoluted union have thus emerged: the NUPES, or Nouvelle Union Populaire Écologique et Sociale, which aims to bring together La France Insoumise, the communists, the ecologists, and the socialists in the same coalition. Jean-Luc Mélenchon boasts of having succeeded in reproducing the great alliance of the Left set up by François Mitterrand in 1972, but this time, to his benefit, by putting to death the Socialist Party which historically represented—since 1905—the pillar of the French Left.

However, this alliance of circumstances is far from self-evident, and rather teeth-crinking. The so-called tenors of the Socialist Party do not easily acquiesce to be executed in silence. The socialist Carole Delga, head of Occitanie, a traditionally left-wing region, is opposed to the alliance of all her forces, and advocates a thorough reform of the Socialist Party. The controversial candidacy of journalist Taha Bouhafs is causing a stir. This character has distinguished himself by [violent and racist statements against white people](#). La France Insoumise had made him one of its standard bearers—before being forced to disown him because of [several complaints of sexual violence](#) made against him.

While the project of a left-wing union remains abstractly attractive on paper, its incarnation in the NUPES is far from any activist's dream. One will search in vain for an ideological coherence of this wobbly and motley coupling of horses where each pulls in its own direction. The ecologists don't want to hear about nuclear power, while Fabien Roussel's communists want to reevaluate it. The Communist party wants to revive "French-style secularism," while La France Insoumise is multiplying its compromises with the Islamists.

Nevertheless, as we criticise this left-wing alliance, it gets credit for existing. For on the

other side, on the Right, what alternative is emerging to challenge the omnipotence of Emmanuel Macron? None. Jean-Luc Mélenchon likes to play the captain, presenting himself with aplomb as the next Prime Minister of France. Excessive in his formulas, with an invasive ego, he has the merit of frankness. He keeps his eyes fixed on the only course that counts: conquering power, and exercising it.

On the contrary, Marine Le Pen, who nevertheless arrived for the second time in the second round of the presidential election, pretends not to want to arrive at Matignon, so as not to end up as "Macron's valet." The president of the Rassemblement National (RN), [the talented Jordan Bardella, elucidates on the allusion](#): Marine Le Pen does not intend to be Macron's prime minister. We can understand the intention, but the signal sent is disastrous: after the presidential deadline, it seems that she has no intention of continuing to fight and to really, concretely, influence the destiny of the country.

If we add to this his declarations, his sense of accomplishment at forming a group of deputies in the National Assembly (for this to happen, 15 deputies must be gathered), we are left stunned by such a lack of ambition.

The candidate of the Rassemblement National has just taken a few days of holiday; certainly deserved when you know what the challenges of a presidential campaign are. But holidays are silent days. And during this time, Mélenchon was careful not to be silent. He holds the ground and saturates all political communication around the legislative campaign. The RN is now trying to counter-attack by portraying him as the *fourier* of the system—Macron's puppet who calls for him to be defeated even though he helped to get him elected. The argument is correct, but not easily heard.

While the Left is uniting, the right is still locked in its divisions. On several occasions, the Reconquête party and Éric Zemmour have reached out to the Rassemblement National in the hope of increasing the strength of the national camp. They found the door closed. Finding an ally is a vital question for Reconquête: in the French legislative elections, one must reach a threshold of 12.5% of registered voters to be able to stand in the second round. Where Éric Zemmour reached this threshold in two constituencies only during the

presidential election, Marine Le Pen, reached it in 421—which can explain the reluctance of the RN to conclude an alliance with her main challenger on the Right. Marine Le Pen thinks she doesn't need it. She claims to despise the combinations of party apparatuses and explains that she does not want to betray her voters through shoddy arrangements.

Given the vigour of the blows delivered by Zemmourists against Marine Le Pen and the RN, it is not surprising that no alliance has come about. But Marine Le Pen should know that one of the main qualities of the greatest leaders, from Titus to Maria Theresa, is clemency: knowing how to forgive for the greater good of the nation—and in passing, to better serve the country's interests. Trading pettiness and revenge for generosity is the mark of great souls who see far ahead. Unfortunately, this is not on the agenda, and absurd situations are multiplying. The young president of Génération Z, Stanislas Rigault, will thus be opposed in Vaucluse, a traditionally right-wing area, which once carried Marion Maréchal to the Assembly, by a RN candidate, at the risk of turning the constituency to the Left. In Nice, the municipal councillor Philippe Vardon, a pillar of local politics, was disavowed by the RN because he advocated a rapprochement with Reconquête. The Rassemblement National will therefore present a candidate against him. One remains confused in front of such a mess and inability to sense political opportunity.

Now, Zemmour's party struggles even more to make its voice heard and to show itself a credible political partner, as the smell of defeat is detected in its ranks. The atmosphere there is heavy. The invasive personality of Sarah Knafo arouses disapproval, even among the most motivated. The number of departures is increasing: Antoine Diers, the campaign spokesman, gave up his post.

Jean Messiha, who noisily left the Rassemblement National for Reconquête, also left his job. Isabelle Muller, Zemmour's historical press officer, is leaving too. Philippe de Villiers is no longer in the organisation chart. As for Marion Maréchal, she has prudently chosen not to run, arguing that she is pregnant. In front of this field of ruins, one man is rubbing his hands together: it is Emmanuel Macron. Nobody wants him and he has just exhausted in a few weeks several potential prime ministers who have all refused the honour of working for him. No matter: he holds power, enjoys it, and intends to keep it as long as

possible.

There is definitely something rotten in the kingdom of France. But let's keep confident and look forward. France—and more particularly the French Right—is dying from excessive focus on the presidential election, as if the country's entire survival depended on it. It forgets that a country continues to live regardless of the leaders who are at its head, and that an essential part of the political struggle consists of hoeing, weeding, and irrigating the wasteland, day by day, with patience and perseverance, in order to make what is willing to grow, grow and to allow the garden of our fathers to keep its shape and beauty.