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Elections monitor

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## Analysis

## French President Emmanuel Macron on the quest for a parliamentary majority

The French are being called to ballot on 11th and 18th June to renew the 577 members of the National Assembly, the lower house in parliament. After being elected as President of the Republic on 7th May last Emmanuel Macron (La République en Marche, LREM) now has to assert himself in the general election so that he has the necessary majority to implement his programme. In France the head of State plays an important role in terms of foreign policy, but he shares his powers with the Prime Minister and his government regarding everything related to domestic policy.

On 15th May Emmanuel Macron appointed Edouard Philippe (The Republicans, LR) as Prime Minister. The latter formed his government on 17th May. The new team that is now leading France is, as Emmanuel Macron had promised, strictly equal in terms of gender, comprising people from all walks of life. From the left: four ministers from the Socialist Party (PS) and two from the far left (PRG) and the right: three come from the Republicans and three from the Democratic Movement (MoDem). Nicolas Hulot, who until now had refused to take part in government, is representing the ecologist trend. Finally, 11 of the 22 members of government come from civil society.

The government is responsible for implementing the new president's programme and of course for the campaign in the general elections. The choice of Edouard Philippe as Prime Minister can be explained by Emmanuel Macron's wish to divide and weaken the right just before the election, since the collapse of the left took place during the presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May. Hence, the new head of State gave the Ministry of the Economy to Bruno Le Maire and the Ministry for Action and Public Accounts to Gérald Darmanin, two Republican party members, to show that in no way could he be deemed to be the successor to François Hollande (PS).

La République en marche (LREM), the new name of the movement created by Emmanuel Macron (he gave the leadership of this to Catherine Barbaroux until the next party congress that will take place during the summer), is presenting candidates in 522 constituencies. Indeed, several politicians, both men and women, have said they want to work with the

new team, such as for example former Prime Minister Manuel Valls (2014-2016); Stéphane Le Foll, former Agriculture, Foodstuffs and Forestry Minister (2012-2017); Marisol Touraine, former Social Affairs and Healthcare Minister (2012-2017), and Myriam el Khomri, former Labour, Employment, Vocational Training and Social Dialogue Minister (2015-2017) on the left, but also outgoing MPs Thierry Solère (LR) and Franck Riester (LR) on the right. More than half (52%) of the 522 LREM candidates have never had an elective mandate.

The members of government who are standing for election will have to resign from their positions if they are beaten in June. Six of them are concerned by this. Moreover the Ministers and Secretaries of State must also resign from the local executives that they lead in the month to come.

Just three weeks before the general election the question is: after having elected Emmanuel Macron as head of State by a wide majority, will the French do the same now or will membership of a political party take the upper hand and prove crucial in the voters' choice?

The most recent poll by Opinion Way, undertaken between 16th and 18th May last, credits LREM with 27% of the vote, ahead of the Republicans (LR) allied with the Democrats and Independents (UDI), a centrist party led by Jean-Christophe Lagarde, which is due to win 20% of the vote just like the Front National led by Marine Le Pen. On the left the Socialist Party (PS) allied to Europe Ecology-The Greens (EELV), led by David Cormand, is due to win 11% of the vote and come out ahead

of France insoumise (FI) led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who is due to win 14% of the vote.

The Republicans want to believe in victory on 18th June next. On the right the Republicans are battling for victory. Led by François Baroin, LR is refusing to believe that France's political future can be reduced to a standoff between Emmanuel Macron, accused of being the representatives of a new Socialist Party and the Front National. The Republicans, who know that the French would like to see political leaders on the left and right work together, and that they hope for national unity, maintain that they take a constructive stance in the face of the new Head of State. "The country would not understand that we were engaging in a systematic type of opposition," declared former Prime Minister (1995-1997) and present Mayor of Bordeaux, Alain Juppé (LR).

François Baroin wants to respond to the French population's feeling of fracture and abandonment and is defending a moderate line of action. Amongst the Republicans, some members, like Laurent Wauquiez, have chosen a harder stance. Many voters on the right feel that they were robbed during the presidential election, not only of victory but also of the basic debate they were expecting, due to the scandals, which made the campaign of their candidate, François Fillon inaudible, but this was also due to the latter's programme, deemed too hard and of having frightened off the electorate from the popular and also the middle classes. The programme defended by LR in the general elections has therefore been amended and modified.

LR is still planning to do away with 500,000 civil servants' posts, but now over 7 year period, i.e. 300,000 posts over the next five years, without affecting hospital and security staff (10 000 additional police and gendarme posts would be created). The party wants to bring public spending down by half of the GDP (this represents 57% at present) saving 100 billion €, reduce income tax and achieve budgetary balance in five years. LR wants to raise the lowest retirement pensions by 300€ and increase modest survivors' pensions by 10%.

What is the opposition saying?

In the Front National, defeat on 7th May was painful and the consequences were to be felt, notably the challenge made to the anti-euro stance defended by Florian Philippot, the party's Vice-President. Moreover, to everyone's general surprise

Marion Maréchal Le Pen, Marine Le Pen's niece, and one of the two FN MPs and also the youngest member of the outgoing Assemblée Nationale decided not to stand in the election. She is leaving politics for the time being. After several days of hesitation Marine Le Pen decided to run in the election.

The latter brought the FN to its highest level ever on 7th May last (after having dominated the by-elections between the two presidential elections) but she seemed weakened after her defeat. Something sufficiently rare to be noted in this party in which self-criticism is uncommon, Marine Le Pen admitted that she had "failed" in the TV debate as she faced Emmanuel Macron between the two rounds: "too fiery, too passionate" she said.

The FN Chair came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election in 216 constituencies. On 7th May she won 45 constituencies and won more than 45% of the vote in 66 others. The party, 86% of whose candidates are new in these general elections, is counting cashing in on these results.

The FN claims to be the leading opposition group to the project of the new President Emmanuel Macron and hopes to win at least 15 seats in the Assemblée nationale so that it can form a parliamentary group. However, the general elections are a test for the FN, since staying in the second round this time will be more difficult than in the presidential election. Indeed a candidate has to win the vote of at least 12.5% of those registered in the first round to be able to stay in the second, which, with an average abstention rate of 35%, is equivalent to around 20% of the votes cast.

On the left the Socialist Party (PS) is caught between the radicals of France insoumise led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the Social Liberals of La République en Marche (LREM). Division on the left is damaging, since only agreements between the parties and withdrawals enabled some, and notably the members of the "smallest" parties in this political trend, to be elected. "Just a few days ago, in the field, citizens were telling us to give the new President Emmanuel Macron a chance, but since the appointment of Edouard Philippe as Prime Minister, many find that the president of the Republic is overly influenced by the right" suggests the socialist leader Jean-Christophe Cambadélis.

The PS candidates seem to be disenchanted. They are

campaigning without any real programme or strategy, each in his own corner, under his own name and are claiming their identity as socialists as little as possible.

The socialist candidate in the recent presidential election, Benoît Hamon, announced that he would be launching a movement "to rebuild a creative left, which would rise above all political labels" as of July 1st. Likewise the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo (PS), declared that she would be launching "Dès Demain" with former Employment and Solidarity Minister (1997-2000), Martine Aubry (PS), and former Justice Minister (2012-2016), Christiane Taubira, Dès demain, "an innovative movement open to all humanists who still believe in action."

Finally, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the other unfortunate candidate in the presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May last decided to do without the support of the Communist Party (PC) and is standing under the France insoumise banner alone. "After a vote of rejection and fear, the time has come to make a positive choice, that of a joint future," he declared. He will be standing in the country's second biggest city, Marseille, against outgoing MP Patrick Menucci (PS) and Corinne Versini (LREM) in the constituency in which Marine Le Pen achieved her weakest result in the region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur in the presidential election. "Jean-Luc Mélenchon will try to eliminate everyone on his left and right from the PS to the PC, as well as the EELV, so that he appears as the only force on the left," indicates Frédéric Dabi, Deputy Director of the pollster IFOP.

The French political system

The bicameral parliament is made up of the Assemblée nationale, the lower house, which comprises 577 MPs elected by direct universal suffrage for five years, and the Senate, the upper house, whose 348 members are elected for 6 years by indirect universal suffrage.

MPs are elected according to a single majority list in two rounds within 577 constituencies (556 in the departments of mainland France, 1 in the overseas departments and the territorial communities and 11 by the French who do not live in France itself). To be elected in the first round of the election a candidate has to win an absolute majority of the votes cast and this figure has to be the equivalent to at least one quarter of the voters registered. If no candidate is elected in the first round a second round is organised a week later.

All of the candidates who win at least 12.5% of the vote in the constituency in the first round are allowed to stay for the second. If only one of the candidates fulfils this criteria, the one having won the second highest number of votes in the first round is then allowed to remain.

In France, political parties received a subsidy from the State which is attributed proportionally to the number of votes won by each of them in the general elections in terms of any candidate who has won at least 1% of the vote in at least 5 constituencies (or in all of those in which the party's candidates were standing in the case of the overseas departments). On average each vote cast earns 1.42€. The parties also receive a subsidy that is proportional to the number of parliamentarians (MPs and Senators). An elected representative is equivalent to 37,280€. The electoral law obliges political parties to put forward at least 50% women candidates (give or take 2%). The parties which do not respect this principle have their subsidies reduced by a percentage that is equal to half of the difference between the number of candidates of each sex in comparison with the total number of candidates.

Finally, the bill of 16th February 2104 prohibits the accumulation of a parliamentary mandate with that of a local executive post. Many outgoing MPs are not standing because of this.

10 political parties won seats in the Assemblée nationale in the last general elections on 10th and 17th June 2012:

- the Socialist Party (PS), led by Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, has 302 seats;
- the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), now the Republicans (LR) led by Bernard Accoyer, with 203 seats;
- Europe Ecology-The Greens (EE-LV), led by David Cormand, 18 seats ;
- the New Centre (NC) 13 seats;
- the Radical Left Party (PRG) has 13 seats;
- the Left Front (FG), alliance of the Left Party led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the Communist Party (PC) led by Pierre Laurent, with 10 seats;
- the Radical Valois Party (PRV) 6 seats;
- the Centre for France has 2 seats;
- the Front national (FN), led by Marine Le Pen, with 2 seats;
- the Centrist Alliance has one seat.

The 15th legislature of the V Republic will start on 27th June next.

**Reminder of the general election results of 10th June and 17th June 2012 in France**

Turnout: 57.22% in the first round and 55.4% in the second round

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Political Parties	Number of votes won (first round)	% of votes won (first round)	Number of votes won (second round)	% of votes won (second round)	Number of seats
Far Left	253 386	0,98			0
Left Front (FG)	1 793 192	6,91	249 498	1,08	10
Socialist Party (PS)	7 618 326	29,35	9 420 889	40,91	280
Europe Ecology-The Greens (EE-LV)	1 418 264	5,46	829 036	3,60	17
Various Left	881 555	3,40	709 395	3,08	22
Radical Left Party (PRG)	428 898	1,65	538 331	2,34	12
The Centre for France	458 098	1,77	113 196	0,49	2
Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)	7 037 268	27,12	8 740 628	37,95	194
Various Right	910 034	3,51	417 940	1,82	15
New Centre	569 897	2,20	568 319	2,47	12
Radical Valois Party (PRV)	321 124	1,24	311 199	1,35	6
Centrist Alliance	156 026	0,60	123 132	0,53	2
Front National (FN)	3 528 663	13,60	842 695	3,66	2
Far Right	49 499	0,19	29 738	0,13	1
Ecologists	249 068	0,96			0
Regionalists	145 809	0,56	135 312	0,59	2
Others	133 752	0,52			0

 Source: Home Affairs Ministry [http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Legislatives/elecresult\\_\\_LG2012/\(path\)/LG2012/FE.html](http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Elections/Les-resultats/Legislatives/elecresult__LG2012/(path)/LG2012/FE.html)

## La République en marche (LREM) led by President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron easily in the lead in the first round of the French

### Results 1st round

La République en Marche (LREM), the new party formed by the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron and led by Catherine Barbaroux, easily drew ahead in the first round of the general election on 11th June in France with 28.21% of the vote. Its ally, the Democratic Movement (MoDem) chaired by Justice Minister François Bayrou, won 4.11% of the vote. LREM drew ahead of the Republicans (LR) led by Bernard Accoyer, which won 15.77% of the vote. Their partners in the Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI), a centrist party led by Jean-Christophe Lagarde, won 3.03% of the vote. "Emmanuel Macron and his movement are following a strategy of hegemonic domination" repeated François Baroin, the leader of LR

The Front National (FN), a populist party led by Marine Le Pen, came third and lost all hope of becoming the main opposition party to Emmanuel Macron. It won 13.2% of the vote. France Unbowed (FI) led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, which came fourth with 11.02% of the vote. Both populist leaders did not succeed in achieving for their respective parties a result equivalent to that won in the first round of the presidential election on 23rd April last (21.53% and 19.64% of the vote respectively).

For the Socialist Party (PS), led by Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, it was total defeat. The PS, which in 2012,

reigned supreme over French political life (Presidency of the Republic, a majority in Parliament, in the regions, the departments and the town halls) won 7.44% of the vote. Its future now hangs in the balance.

An extremely low turnout was the other striking feature of this, the first round of the general elections on 11th June: fewer than half of the electorate (48.71%, - 8.51 in comparison with the first round of the general election on 10th and 17th June 2012) went to vote, i.e. the lowest turnout since the beginning of the V Republic in 1958, and more widely in the country's entire history.

**Results of the first round of the general election on 11th June 2017 in France**

Turnout: 48.71%

Political Parties	Number of votes won	% of votes won
<b>Far left</b>	175 387	0.77
<b>Communist Party (PCF)</b>	615 503	2.72
<b>France Unbowed (FI)</b>	2 497 661	11.02
<b>Socialist Party (PS)</b>	1 685 773	7.44
<b>Radical Left Party (PRG)</b>	106 287	0.47
<b>Various Left</b>	362 328	1.60
<b>La République en marche (LREM)</b>	6 390 797	28.21
<b>Democratic Movement (MoDem)</b>	932 229	4.11
<b>Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI)</b>	687 219	3.03
<b>The Republicans (LR)</b>	3 573 366	15.77
<b>Various Right</b>	625 395	2.76
<b>Debout la France (DLF)</b>	265 433	1.17
<b>Front National (FN)</b>	2 990 592	13.20
<b>Far Right</b>	68 319	0.30
<b>Ecologists</b>	973 739	4.30
<b>Regionalists</b>	204 078	0.90
<b>Others</b>	500 458	2.21

Source: French Home Affairs Ministry <http://elections.interieur.gouv.fr/legislatives-2017/FE.html>

Once again the institutional rationale was respected and the French confirmed in the first round of the general election their vote of the presidential election offering the new head of State the majority he needs to govern.

A yellow wave was expected (LREM's colour), but it was a true tidal wave. Voters largely gave their vote to candidates who were still unknown to the man in the

street just a few weeks ago (we recall that 40% of the outgoing MPs were not standing again) and this has pushed many senior members of political life towards the exit door. Personalities on the left in office over the last five years were the most in number to fall victim to what is now being called 'dégagisme' (clearing out), the rejection of the professional politicians, finding themselves eliminated in the first round: the leader of the PS Jean-Christophe Cambadélis; the unfortunate

candidate of the PS in the presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May last (6.35% of the vote), Benoît Hamon; the former socialist ministers Matthias Fekl (2014-2017) and Aurélie Filippetti (2012-2014) and the ecologists Emmanuelle Cosse (2016-2017) and Cécile Duflot (2012-2014), not forgetting the former special advisor to the President of the Republic, Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012) Henri Guaino (LR), and outgoing MP. Many others are due to follow suit in the second round on 18th June.

Indeed the centrist positioning of LREM provides it with major reserves of votes. In the second round its candidates should benefit from the transfer of votes on the part of supporters on the left, whilst they were against right wing candidates and the transfer of votes on the part of those close to the right, when they were against left wing candidates.

LREM's success in the first round of the general election, a political party created just one year ago, is undeniable even though it has to be relativized given the low turn-out, a mark of electoral fatigue

and a feeling on the part of many French citizens that everything is decided in the presidential election, but also a sign of deep division in French society (we recall that one voter in two – 49.99% – chose a populist candidate in the first round of the presidential election on 23rd April last. This victory owes a great deal to the talent of the forces who have rallied around Emmanuel Macron, but it can also be explained by the weakness of their rivals, notably the political parties, both on the right and the left, which have dominated French political life over the most recent decades.

Even though a certain amount of re-balancing might take place in the second round of the election LREM is due to win an absolute majority in the National Assembly, the lower house of the French parliament on 18th June next and enjoy the necessary majority to implement its programme and push through its reforms.

Only 4 MPs were elected in the first round out of 577 seats.

## La République en Marche win the absolute majority in the general elections in France

### Results 2nd round

La République en Marche (LREM), (Republic on the Move!) the party of the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron led by Catherine Barbaroux easily won the general election in France in the second round of voting on 18th June in which LREM won 43.06% of the vote and 306 seats, i.e. the absolute majority (289 seats). Its partner MoDem, won 6.06% of the vote and 42 seats. The six ministers in Edouard Philippe's government, who were also candidates, were all elected.

On 18th June a slight rebalancing took place and the defeat of the traditional parties, which had been humiliating in the first round on 11th June, was attenuated somewhat. The Republicans (LR) won 22.23% of the vote and 113 seats (-81 in comparison with the previous general elections on 10th and 17th June 2012). Their allies in the Democratic and Independent Union (UDI) won 3.04% of the vote and 17 seats. The right will therefore be the main opposition force against the LREM within the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament in France.

The Front National (FN) won 8.75% of the vote and 8 seats (+ 6), including Marine Le Pen (who will now leave the European Parliament). It is the first time that the populist party, which is disadvantaged by the majority system, has won seats in electoral duels, and it also is the first time that its leader has won in an election. The Front National, which since 2015, has enjoyed good results in each election and liked to proclaim itself France's leading party, has failed however in its bid to become the major opposition party to the head of State, which it had indeed dreamed of becoming.

France Unbowed (LFI) won 4.86% of the vote, taking 17 seats including Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who will also leave the European Parliament. It will therefore form a parliamentary group without the support of its ally the Communist Party (PCF). The latter, led by Pierre Laurent won 1.20% of the vote and 10 seats. Together, under the banner of the Left Front (FG),

the two parties won 10 seats during the previous elections in June 2012 – this year they have 27. Jean-Luc Mélenchon failed however to take over the Socialist Party (PS) and assert himself as the main leader on the left.

The Socialist Party (PS) for its part is on its knees. With 5.68% of the vote and 29 seats (- 251), it has suffered the worst defeat in its history.

As in the presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May last when each of them witnessed the elimination of their candidate in the first round, the PS and the LR each won the lowest number of seats in their history after this election.

Turnout was also at an historical low: only 42.64% of the electorate went to ballot (- 12.76 points in comparison with the second round of the election in 2012). "*The electorate felt that everything had already been decided after the presidential election and wondered what the point of going to vote was,*" analyses Frédéric Dabi, Deputy Director of the opinion pollster IFOP. This fact that is inherent to the electoral system came in addition to electoral fatigue: the high abstention rate bears witness also to the gulf that exists between the electorate and the country's leaders. Many voters who were against Macron undoubtedly abstained because in the right wing opposition, as well as on the left, they found no alternative that might encourage them to turn out.

**Results of the general elections on 11th and 18th June 2017 in France**

Turnout: 48.71% (1st round) and 42.64% (2nd round)

Political Parties	Number of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	Number of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)	Number of seats
<b>Far left</b>	1 75 387	0,77	0	0	0
<b>Communist Party (PCF)</b>	615 503	2,72	217 833	1,20	10
<b>France Unbowed (FI)</b>	2 497 661	11,02	883 786	4,86	17
<b>Socialist Party (PS)</b>	1 685 773	7,44	1 032 885	5,68	29
<b>Radical Left Party (PRG)</b>	106 287	0,47	64 860	0,36	3
<b>Various Left</b>	362 328	1,60	263 619	1,45	12
<b>La République en marche (LREM)</b>	6 390 797	28,21	7 826 432	43,06	308
<b>Democratic Movement (MoDem)</b>	932 229	4,11	1 100 790	6,06	42
<b>Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI)</b>	687 219	3,03	551 760	3,04	18
<b>The Republicans (LR)</b>	3 573 366	15,77	4 040 016	22,23	113
<b>Various right</b>	625 395	2,76	306 240	1,68	6
<b>Debout la France (DLF)</b>	265 433	1,17	17 344	0,10	1
<b>Front National (FN)</b>	2 990 592	13,20	1 590 858	8,75	8
<b>Far right</b>	68 319	0,30	19 030	0,10	1
<b>Ecologists</b>	973 739	4,30	23 197	0,13	1
<b>Regionalists</b>	204 078	0,90	137 453	0,76	5
<b>Others</b>	500 458	2,21	100 574	0,55	3

Source: Home Affairs Ministry <http://elections.interieur.gouv.fr/legislatives-2017/FE.html>

LREM's victory is an unprecedented event in French political history. After these general elections the National Assembly finds itself totally renewed: three quarters of the MPs are newcomers. It has to be said that 40% of the outgoing MPs (50 LR and 80 PS) did not stand for re-election.

La République en Marche that was created just one year

ago won the absolute majority. We might see a knock-on effect in this due to Emmanuel Macron's success in the presidential election on 23rd April and 7th May last - success that has led to the parliamentary over representation of the new President of the Republic, which was simply amplified by the simultaneous elimination in the first round of the presidential election of the candidates from the two main parties in the

## General elections in France 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2017

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French political arena (LR and PS).

LREM's success also bears witness to a strong wish on the electorate's part for something completely new, and pitilessly, they have swept out the old. *"If the new president of the Republic wins the absolute majority, it will be a total political exploit. This would mean, for a time in all events, the destruction of the traditional parties,"* declared Dominique Rousseau, professor of constitutional law, just days before the election.

It is now up to Emmanuel Macron to take this majority, made up of new MPs, forward – some are even total newcomers to politics (260 candidates LREM belonged to no political party before the election), and to manage the diversity of their profiles. The result of the elections brings good news: the next National Assembly will comprise 224 women out of the 577 MPs, i.e. 39% of all of those elected, which is another record. The representation of MPs from the private sector has also increased sharply: many new MPs are independent workers. Moreover many are actively involved in civil society.

It is however difficult to speak of a popular movement after these general elections, firstly because of the high abstention rate, which involved the majority of the citizens, but also because of the great share of the

electorate, which is not represented in the National Assembly. Emmanuel Macron is the leader of a divided country: more than one French person in two did not vote in the general election and one voter in two (49.99%) voted for a populist candidate in the first round of the presidential election on 23rd April last.

With 136 MPs, the Republicans and their UDI allies will be able to play a true role in the opposition. It remains to be seen which position will be adopted by the MPs on the right as they face Edouard Philippe's government – a Prime Minister who transferred over from their camp. Some of the Republicans – called the "Constructives" have already said that they are ready to participate in the presidential majority and that they will give their vote of confidence to the government on 4th July next, the day when the head of government will deliver his general policy speech to the National Assembly (this is followed by a vote by the MPs).

The president of the Republic Emmanuel Macron now has all of the cards in hand to undertake his policy and start the reforms he wishes to implement to transform the country. The first of these is due to be that of the Labour Code – which will be revised to ensure greater flexibility on the job market. To do this the government is to employ the "directives method".

The 15th legislature will start on 27th June next.

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