
The defeat of Macron and the victory of extremism. Goubert (journalist), "France now needs pacification"

The French Interior Ministry has published the final results of the first round of the snap parliamentary elections held on Sunday 30 June, which show that the Rassemblement National and its far-right allies made historic gains, winning 33.14% of the vote (equivalent to 255-295 potential seats), while on the opposite camp the New Popular Front of the Gauche won 27.99% of the vote (120-140 seats). Situated between the two extremes, the far right and the far left, President Macron's 'Ensemble pour la République' won 20.04% of the vote (90-125 seats). Ironically, French President Emmanuel Macron himself had called for early elections on 9 June following the results of the European elections. He described it as "an essential moment of clarification." But three weeks into the campaign, the results show that "the president's gamble has failed." Séverin Husson, deputy editor of the Catholic newspaper La Croix, writes in today's paper: "The clarification that the Head of State asked the French people for after his defeat in the European elections has backfired on him. The decision to dissolve the National Assembly has only served to boost the far-right vote instead of curbing it." The most surprising result was a "historic" 12 million votes won by the would-be prime minister of the Rassemblement National, Jordan Bardella. That's 15 percentage points more than in 2022. This is an electoral victory that "places him, if not at the threshold of power, at least in a clear position of strength." On Sunday 7 July, the second round will take place in all constituencies that did not elect a candidate in the first round. The runoff will not be between the two strongest candidates in the first round, as is the case in Italy, but between all those who exceeded a certain threshold in the first round, which is in fact a mobile threshold because it changes according to the turnout. So the competition goes on. SIR discussed this issue with journalist **Guillaume Goubert**, former editor of La Croix. **What is your interpretation of the results of this morning's first round of the elections?** The Rassemblement National's overwhelming result is certainly the first indication. In the European elections, the French vote for this political camp could be explained as an expression of frustration on the part of French citizens, a way of expressing their dissatisfaction, but without any direct political consequences, since it was a question of electing MEPs. This is certainly what Emmanuel Macron had in mind when he dissolved the National Assembly, in the belief that many National Front voters would cast a more centrist, rational and realistic vote in an election that directly concerned the French government. This gamble has now proved to be a complete failure, with the National Front winning almost as many votes as it did in the European elections. Another factor is the very high turnout in last Sunday's elections. It was the highest turnout since 1978. This very high turnout benefited all political parties almost equally. **What message do you think the voters have sent out in this first round?** The rejection of Emmanuel Macron and his way of governing the country is the first and most obvious message. In fact, what we are seeing is the victory of the political forces that oppose Emmanuel Macron, whether on the right or on the left. Another very obvious fact is the rise of the extremists in this country. While the far right made more gains than the far left, it is the extremist forces that are gaining ground. The first consequence of this is the country's rejection of the Macron government. **Looking ahead, Bardella has already started addressing the nation as 'Prime Minister'. What will happen next?** Let me start with an observation. It gives me great pleasure to hear Bardella speak with a distinct Italian accent. It reminds us that this political figure, who has taken a very hard line on French citizens of foreign origin, is himself a member of a family of foreign origin. I end this digression. He is not yet Prime Minister. And even the first polls do not give the National Front a clear absolute majority. Without an absolute majority of seats in the National Assembly, he risks finding himself in a situation of relative majority. So a lot can happen in the coming days and it's difficult to predict the final outcome at the moment. **What does France need now?** The answer is, of course, linked to my own personal beliefs. I think France needs to be pacified. We have a far right, a far left and an extremist centre. And communication between these extremist camps, including the

centre, is difficult. The challenge today is to find the time - despite belonging to different political forces - to discuss and initiate government processes that the country urgently needs. This might somehow be possible, but unfortunately the level of verbal violence that has been reached in the French political debate makes it extremely difficult.

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