

Towards A Coup d'état in France? With Macron Refusing to Honor Election Results

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Imagine you are a head of state facing a domestic crisis. You bypass vote in the parliament to force unpopular measures through questionable methods (amid major protests), then use excessive violence against the demonstrations. Next, you call snap elections to neutralize radical political dissidents, and lose it. Then, you use a major international sports event to gain more time and just ignore the election results by refusing to name a Prime Minister from the winning coalition.

What are you, then? Some would certainly use the word “dictator” even. It would be hard indeed to describe such a peculiar state of affairs as anything other than a kind of a coup d'état, right? In this case, the international community would certainly denounce the authoritarian head of state and pressure him or her into complying with election results, right? Well, not necessarily so if you are Emmanuel Macron. A quick look at the events may offer a glimpse of the depth of the trouble the French are in.

First, Macron [dissolved](#) the Assemblée Nationale and decided to call new legislative elections, on June 30 (and on July 7, for the second round). This was a response to the fact that the right-wing populist party Rassemblement National's (RN) won the European elections, which in itself was a defeat for the President. RN, formerly known as Front national (until 2018) is the party of Marine Le Pen, who, bear in mind, [vowed to pull France out of NATO's military command](#) in 2022, when she was a (defeated) presidential candidate. Macron won the election back then, but Le Pen was promising this while heading to the second round and certainly raised many eyebrows among Paris' political Establishment.

As I [wrote](#) before, describing the RN party or European populist parties in general as pure and simple “fascism” is not accurate. The French President's measure in June was in any case a daring move to crush a political group which is seen as a threat. Senator François Patriat, who is an ally of Macron, at the time [said](#): “The president's back in control. Now he's taking action. It's the end of Marine Le Pen.” Many criticized the decision and feared it could backfire and result in France having a “far-right” Prime Minister. This did not happen. But the result was certainly not what Macron was hoping for.

The snap elections, as mentioned, were described as a risky political gamble. Macron lost it. Even though the result was a “hung parliament”, the New Popular Front or Nouveau Front populaire (NFP) did [win the larger number of parliamentary seats](#), which was a humiliating political defeat for the President. Macron himself, however, begs to differ: “no one won”, he has [stated](#). According to him, “The blocs or coalitions that emerged from these elections all represent a minority.” The NFP [disputes](#) this: “The New Popular Front is without contest the first force in the new National Assembly”

The new coalition's programme promises, among other things, to fight the cost-of-living crisis with a price cap, to raise the minimum wage, and to lower the retirement age besides bringing back the wealth tax Macron had abolished.

Keep in mind that last year Macron resorted to quite unorthodox methods to sign his controversial pension reform bill into law, prompting demonstrations nationwide. The government responded with a massive crackdown on demonstrators and journalists, which was [denounced](#) by the Council of Europe and by Reporters Without Borders and France's Human Rights League, among others. The political maneuver to go ahead with the pension reform was described as an intricate constitutional coup, which consisted in [forcing the bill](#) (which increased the retirement age) through the Parliament with no vote in the lower house.

France has been under a caretaker administration since the aforementioned July general election, which arguably failed to produce a working majority in the country's national assembly. This has been a deadlock. And there seems to be no way out of it. On August 26 a Elysée press release said that the President would not name the NFP candidate because: "Institutional stability dictates that this option should not be retained." The reasoning is that by appointing a Prime Minister that the President supposedly "knows" would "fall", the head of state would then be "in breach of the Constitution, which requires him to ensure the stability and independence of the country." The intricacies of the French semi-presidentialist system part, one can clearly see a pattern here.

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Macron, if one remembers, called the Paris Olympics a "[truce](#)" and used the international event to gain time, but could now be running out of excuses. On Saturday, Jean-Luc Mélenchon (leader of far-left party La France Insoumise - LFI) announced LFI members shall not join any NFP government - a scenario including the LFI was supposedly keeping the President from naming Lucie Castets (the NFP candidate) for Prime Minister. Macron's outgoing Prime Minister has responded by saying that the "unilateral application" of the NFP's policy platform "would lead to an unprecedented fiscal bludgeoning," and even to "the economic collapse of our country." The Elysée is just not having it. The truth is that there seems to be no way Macron is accepting a left-wing government. Meanwhile, the political crisis goes on.

One is left then with the puzzling fact that such a peculiar situation taking place in a G7 country is not getting that much press coverage – or that much criticism for that matter. Comparing it with the ongoing political crisis in Venezuela is enough to make the case that the French affair is indeed being underreported. The double standard in any case goes beyond journalism: Western political leaders coming from all across the political spectrum have denounced Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro over the recent presidential election controversy and many are urging the Venezuelan government to come forward with more transparency about the results and so on. No major Western political leaders thus far have pressured the French head of state into honoring the election’s results by naming a Prime Minister from the winning left-wing coalition. It goes without saying that if Macron were a Global South leader pursuing energy projects in his country or if he were a “pro-China” or “pro-Russian” European head of state, then things would be quite different.

Be it as it may, things are expected to get harder for the French President. The left-wing is now threatening Macron with impeachment [procedures](#) no one believes will succeed, but, more importantly, the country faces a political and economic crisis and demonstrations are expected to spread and to become increasingly violent, as is the case in other European countries today. As I [wrote](#), Macron has been pursuing bold foreign policy shifts, but it seems domestic issues may get on the way.

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