

Emmanuel Macron's Victory and the Fragility of the European Union

En Marche candidate prevails with support of world financial system

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*Leading European Union (EU) politicians expressed their jubilation in the wake of the substantial victory of **Emmanuel Macron** over National Front candidate **Marine Le Pen**.*

This episode in French politics was hailed as a major defeat of "populism" in Europe and the Western capitalist world where in the last year right-wing parties and political initiatives have made headway.

There was the vote to leave the EU by the British voters in June 2016. Later in the November presidential elections in the United States billionaire right-wing demagogue **Donald J. Trump** landed in the White House through a sweeping Electoral College victory over Democratic Party stalwart **Hillary Clinton**.

Macron, an investment banker and former minister of economic planning in the Socialist government of departing **President Francois Hollande**, was favored by the corporate media and the European banking institutions.

Official results say that Macron won 66.1 percent of the vote to 33.9 for Le Pen. However, 33 percent, one-third, of the electorate either stayed at home or turned in ballots that were uncountable indicating a strong rejection of both of the dominant tendencies in French politics. Neither party projected any viable solutions to the high unemployment rate and increasing poverty inside the country.

The British Independent newspaper said of the results:

"Mr. Macron earned over 20.8 million votes in the election, while Ms. Le Pen gained a record 10.6 million votes for Front National. But while France had 47.5 million registered voters, a near-record 25 per cent abstained from casting their ballot in this year's election. A further 8.6 per cent of people who did vote spoiled their ballot or left it blank. The number of people who abstained from voting totaled 12.1 million, already outnumbering the amount of people who chose to vote for Ms. Le Pen."

Although the En Marche candidate was portrayed as a voice of reason and tolerance the program advanced by the president-elect calls for the elimination of guarantees for working people. Similar reforms in previous years appeared to be aimed at transforming labor relations in France to more closely mirror the U.S.



The EU welcomed the results of the vote as an indication of the stability of the regional system of governance and economic restructuring. Le Pen had suggested that under her presidency a referendum on the future of French membership in the continental body along with the Eurozone would be put before the electorate. This could have continued the disintegration of the European monetary zone and parliament which largely serves as a barometer of what constitutes stability in the region.

Both the Conservative (Les Republicains) and Socialist parties which have dominated the French parliamentary and presidential system for the last six decades did not win enough votes in the first round to qualify for run off status on May 7. An alienation from mainstream political parties in Europe has created a huge electoral vacuum where ultra-right wing parties have made gains.

Results of the elections in France will provide some relief for the German political system where **Chancellor Angela Merkel** is facing re-election later in the year. In a state election overshadowed by the events in France, Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party won a decisive victory in the northern Schleswig-Holstein gaining 33 percent of the electorate.

The CDU performed better than what was projected in the opinion polls which indicated a greater margin of the vote going to the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the far right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD). The SPD won only 26 percent of the vote which will prevent it from leading the state government in Schleswig-Holstein.

Moreover, the status of the AfD continued to deteriorate with the party barely gaining enough votes to earn seats in the Schleswig-Holstein state government. AfD won 5.5 percent just above the necessary 5 percent threshold to enable its presence in the state legislative body.

At present with the weakening of the SPD and AfD, Merkel could very well win an unprecedented fourth term in office as German Chancellor. Her approval rating had declined during 2016 amid the escalating tensions over the huge influx of migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia fleeing the wars initiated by the U.S. and NATO and the economic downturn due in part to instability fueled by conflict and the decline in commodity prices particularly in the energy sector.

France to Maintain Globalist Model of Development

Although the electorate did reject the far right political program of Le Pen which advocated the drastic curbing of immigration from non-European states, the erecting of trade tariffs to ostensibly enhance local production, the withdrawal of France from the Eurozone and the demonization of Islam, many of those who cast their ballots in favor of Macron did so in order to prevent the National Front from winning the presidency.

The political platform of En Marche is a classic neo-liberal approach to the modern-day capitalist crisis. Macron wants to limit the guarantees of employment benefits for French workers, the scaling back of the pension system and large-scale tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy.

These programs have been tried in numerous western capitalist states leaving a trail on joblessness, increasing poverty, national debt and massive bailouts of the financial

institutions to prevent total economic collapse as was the situation throughout Western Europe and the U.S. beginning in 2007. Workers are less secure in their employment prospects while real wages have been in decline for decades.

Reuters press agency reported on a survey of voters which demonstrated the lack of enthusiasm for the Macron emphasizing that:

“A poll of nearly 7,000 voters on Sunday by Harris Interactive found that 59 percent of Macron’s voters had chosen him primarily to stop Le Pen becoming president, reflecting the distaste that still clings to a party long considered a pariah in France for its xenophobic associations. The poll, for M6 television, also found Le Pen’s supporters to be far more convinced by their candidate’s policies and qualities: 56 percent of Le Pen voters found that she spoke to their concerns, while only 21 percent of Macron voters said the same of him.” (May 8)

Trade unions demonstrated under the banner of the “Social Front” on May 8 just one day after the presidential elections against the proposed neo-liberal and pro-banker reforms advocated by Macron. Workers are saying that the government should not be administered as if it were a corporation evoking the background of Macron as a banker and economy minister with close ties to finance capital. Similar protests occurred even prior to the elections on May Day where workers objected to the candidates of both En Marche and the National Front.



According to an article published by Local France, the General Confederation of Labor (CGT), a left-leaning union which is one of the largest in the country, led the demonstrations. The media group noted that these actions involving thousands of workers took place “not long after the news was announced on Sunday night (May 7) that the pro-free market, pro-globalization candidate Emmanuel Macron had been elected France’s president with 66 percent of the vote. Organizers had urged people ‘to take part in the first social mobilization of Macron’s term in office.’” (May 8).

Although the traditional dominant parties did not do well in the presidential races, they are

hoping to play a more prominent role in the upcoming two-stage parliamentary contest on June 11 and 18. Pro-Macron candidates will change their name to La Republique en Marche for the lower house elections in an effort to appeal to the both the center-left and center-right constituencies.

One survey indicated that En Marche could win as many as many as 250 of the 290 seats in the overall 577-member chamber of the National Assembly. Any candidate gaining 12.5 percent of the vote will be eligible to continue to the runoff election.

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