

# Rigging Democracy in Western Europe? Probing the Elections in France and Great Britain

Interview with Diana Johnstone and Graham Vanbergen. Global Research News Hour Episode 182

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*"We have now the ability to manipulate public opinion on a level we have never seen before. And the current framework is weak and helpless."* -Damian Tambini, director of the media policy project at the London School of Economics [1]

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The first round of elections in France took place April 23rd. None of the candidates received more than 50% of the vote, and so by convention, a run-off was called.



During that run-off, Emmanuel Macron faced Marine Le Pen. Macron is a former banker, Economy Minister, and self-described centrist committed to keeping France within the European Union. [2] Marine Le Pen of the National Front ran on a campaign of safeguarding the national interest, the banning of GMOs and shale gas exploration and the holding a referendum on EU membership. [3] Le Pen made international headlines with remarks she made tapping voter concerns about Islamist terrorism, security and immigration. [4][5]

Macron emerged triumphant, however just before voters went to the polls, news of a cyber-attack on his campaign began to circulate. With a campaign black-out going into effect, neither campaign had an opportunity to comment before the election. [6]

With M. Macron now having officially assumed the office of the President of France, we examine evidence of manipulation during the campaign and what this means for the future of France. Our guest for the first half hour is **Diana Johnstone**.



On the other side of the English Channel, Theresa May surprised observers with a snap election call on April 18th. This election comes only two years into her government's mandate. [7]

The Prime Minister had promised for months that she would not call an early election however, she claimed when she made the announcement on the steps of 10 Downing Street that she needed a decisive victory against the opposition in order to prevent them from derailing her Brexit plan as she enters negotiations with the EU. [8]

**Graham Vanbergen** is convinced that there is more at stake than Brexit in this election. In fact, he sees the same 'dark money' forces at work in the campaign as those which affected the outcomes of the US Presidential campaign and the Brexit referendum. [9] He joins the Global Research News Hour in the second half to share his thoughts about these dynamics, what it all means for democracy in Great Britain, and the future of the EU and NATO.

**Diana Johnstone** is an American political writer based in Paris. Best known for her book, [Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO and Western Delusions](#), Johnstone is also the author of [Queen of Chaos: The Misadventures of Hillary Clinton](#). She is a regular contributor to Global Research.

**Graham Vanbergen** is the contributing editor of [TruePublica.Org](#). - an Independent research media organisation whose aims are to publish news, analysis, commentary and research on public affairs and of public interest. His work is also published at Global Research.

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#### Notes:

1. Carole Cadwalladr (April 1, 2017) "'Dark money' is threat to integrity of UK elections, say leading academics", *The Guardian*; <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/01/dark-money-threat-to-uk-elections-integrity>
2. Michael Birnbaum and James McAuley (April 23, 2017) "Right-wing Le Pen claims victory alongside centrist Macron for French presidential runoff, with E.U. future at stake", *Washington Post*; [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/french-citizens-vote-in-an-uncertain-race-that-could-determine-europes-future/2017/04/23/fd3759ce-1fa4-11e7-bb59-a74ccaf1d02f\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.3602202e17da](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/french-citizens-vote-in-an-uncertain-race-that-could-determine-europes-future/2017/04/23/fd3759ce-1fa4-11e7-bb59-a74ccaf1d02f_story.html?utm_term=.3602202e17da)
3. Helene Fouquet (February 4, 2017) "France's Marine Le Pen Unveils Presidential Platform Measures", *Bloomberg*; <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-02-04/france-s-marine-le-pen-unveils-presidential-platform-measures>
4. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-election-lepen-idUSKBN17Q0TW>
5. Adam Nossiter (April 20, 2017) "Marine Le Pen Leads Far-Right Fight to Make France 'More French'", *The New York Times*; <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/20/world/europe/france-election-marine-le-pen.html>
6. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/05/06/527154146/french-candidate-emmanuel-macron-says-campaign-has-been-hacked-hours-before-election>
7. Joe Watts (April 18, 2017) "Theresa May shocks Brexit Britain with snap election she said she'd never call for", *Independent*; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-election-2017-uk-pm-shocks-nation-with-promise-breaking-vote-a7689911.html>
8. *ibid*
9. <http://truepublica.org.uk/united-kingdom/link-brexit-us-election-mi6-fake-news-dark-money/>

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