

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article8591>



France

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

- IV Online magazine - 2024 - IV594 - July 2024 -
Publication date: Thursday 11 July 2024

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights
reserved

What are the results of the parliamentary elections in France on 7 July 2024?

In the second round of France's parliamentary elections on 7 July 2024, the National Rally (Rassemblement National -RN-) suffered a political defeat, even though it increased its number of MPs. The wager of the far-right party was to win a majority in the National Assembly (along with its allies who have been expelled from the right-wing party Les Républicains), which would have enabled Jordan Bardella, the party leader alongside Marine Le Pen, to become prime minister. This outcome seemed possible after the European elections on 9 June 2024 and the first round of parliamentary elections on 30 June when the far-right RN had excellent scores and the political bloc behind President Macron was in complete disarray.

Their objective was not achieved because on 7 July voters of the Left mobilized in favour of candidates of the Nouveau Front Populaire that came together in four days after 9 June when Emmanuel Macron dissolved the National Assembly following his rout in the European elections. Indeed his bloc had obtained only half of the votes garnered by the Rassemblement National and half of the votes that had gone to the various parties of the Left, who had competed in scattered fashion.

How can the setback of the Rassemblement national and its allies be explained?

The main reason for the far Right's setback can be found in the decision made by Left-wing forces after the 9 June European elections to build a united bloc under the name Nouveau Front Populaire (New Popular Front – NFP). This new front of the Left brought together La France Insoumise (LFI), the Socialist Party (PS), the Ecologists (LE), the Communist Party (PCF) and NPA-L'Anticapitaliste, with LFI as driving force. The Socialist Party and others soon understood that they had to join even if a number of senior executives were reluctant and some even refused to join. Unity of the Left was of the essence since the French parliamentary election is a majority election with two rounds. Unlike a proportional election in which alliances could be negotiated later, it was important to propose only one candidate of the Left in each constituency to secure the best possible chance of going through to the second round, and winning.

On media coverage of NFP during the campaign see:

Al Jazeera, 8 July 2024, [“The battle for the future of France is only beginning”](#)

–

The Guardian, 3 July 2024 [“France's 'hard left' has been demonised – but its agenda is realistic, not radical”](#) by Julia Cagé and Thomas Piketty

–

Arrêt sur Images, 5 July 2024 [“Violences racistes : pas une minutes dans le JT post-législatives”](#) [Not a word in the media about incidents of racist violence between the two election rounds].

The Right and the major media, including public service media that are more and more closely monitored by the government and are favourable to big capital, harshly criticized the Nouveau Front Populaire, claiming that it included parties – namely the LFI and the NPA – that support “terrorism.” Many commentators even pointed to the alleged anti-Semitism of LFI and NPA. The slurs were extremely violent and outright mendacious. Despite this hateful campaign, the NFP managed to agree on a programme and put forward candidates everywhere. The violence was not only verbal, but included physical attacks by the far Right.

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

Many of the Left's voters were convinced that on this occasion it was necessary to pull together and go into the neighbourhoods, public squares, weekly markets and all places of debate. The awareness of the danger represented by a possible victory for the far Right made it possible for the Left to mobilize in large numbers.

What can be said about the NFP's programme?

[The programme on which the Nouveau Front Populaire stood for election](#) is not anti-capitalist, but it is resolutely anti-neoliberal and pro-working class. It is unambiguously opposed to Macron's policies. It clearly counters the expectations of corporations and the richest 10% of the population. A few of its key measures are: a minimum wage at €1,600 NET, reinstatement of the wealth tax (ISF) cancelled by Macron in 2018, taxes on superprofits, repeal of Emmanuel Macron's pension reform with the aim of reducing the retirement age to 60, repeal of unemployment insurance reforms, automatic indexation of wages to inflation, cancellation of the recent rise in the price of gas on 1 July, a freeze on certain prices, a 32-hour working week "in arduous or night jobs", a more progressive income tax scale (in concrete terms, this would mean a return to a scale with 14 brackets as opposed to the current 5), a moratorium on unnecessary major projects, a move towards completely free schooling and recognition of the State of Palestine.

The NFP's programme is a step back from the programme of the Union de la Gauche (Union of the Left) in France in the early 1980s, but 40 years of the neoliberal offensive have had a profoundly regressive effect.

What were the results of the European elections on 9 June 2024?

The Rassemblement National came in far ahead of any other party, with 31.4% of the vote (over 7.7 million votes), more than double the votes for Emmanuel Macron's list, which obtained just 14.6% (3.6 million votes). In addition, there was another far-Right list featuring Marine Le Pen's niece Marion Maréchal Le Pen and Éric Zemmour. Their list got 5.5% of the vote. There was also a list from the traditional Right, "La droite pour faire entendre la voix de la France en Europe" (the Right to make France's voice heard in Europe), which obtained 7.25% of the vote.

The Left was dispersed during the EU parliamentary elections. The list supported by the Socialist Party (PS) obtained 13.8% of the vote, that of La France Insoumise (LFI) 9.9% and that of the Ecologists (LE) 5.5%. In all, the Left won less than 30%. Voter turnout was low: 51.5%.

In light of the resounding defeat of the presidential camp's list, Macron dissolved the National Assembly and called early elections. The constitution allows the president to continue in office until his term expires in 2027, even if he has to cohabit with a government that opposes him.

What were the results of the first round of the snap legislative elections on 30 June 2024?

The Rassemblement National, which after the EU elections had succeeded in splitting the traditional right-wing party Les Républicains (LR) by forming an alliance with its president, Éric Ciotti, scored 33.22%, better than its score on 9 June. It won 10.6 million votes. The presidential camp obtained only 23% of the vote. The Nouveau Front Populaire (New Popular Front – NFP), which formed immediately in the wake of the European elections, united the majority of the Left and obtained 28% of the vote, not counting the votes won by various left-wing candidates sidelined by the LFI's leadership, as well as PS dissidents and others. The LR, which had expelled its president Éric Ciotti, obtained 6.6%. Voter turnout was very high: 66.7%.

The huge success of the Rassemblement National list and its allies came as a shock. There was a real risk of the far

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

Right running the government (in cohabitation with President Macron). Young people and activists of the Left who began mobilizing on the evening of the European elections on 9 June stepped up their level of activity to avoid the worst happening. Not only is the programme promoted by the Rassemblement National inherently racist, but if the party came to power there would have been an increase in racist acts and attacks by far-right activists and the police, a majority of whom vote for the far Right.

In the minutes following the results of the first round on 30 June, the leadership of La France Insoumise, with Jean-Luc Mélenchon as their spokesperson, followed very quickly by the whole of the Nouveau Front Populaire, announced that in order to beat the far Right in the second round, it would withdraw its NFP candidate in every constituency where the NFP came third and the Rassemblement National came first.

The same was not true of the presidential camp, as a series of Macron allies, and even ministers like Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin, said that they would never withdraw in favour of an LFI candidate to beat the far-right RN. The Prime Minister, Gabriel Attal, finally took the initiative of calling for a "republican front" to beat the far Right, but it did not lead to unanimity in the presidential camp or in the rest of the traditional Right.

Only seven days remained in which to avoid a takeover by the far Right. Many intellectuals of the Left, and the overwhelming majority of its social movements and citizens, issued numerous statements and held rallies calling for a "roadblock" against the extreme Right. The CGT labour federation union was very active, as was Sud Solidaires. The leadership of the moderate CFDT federation also got involved.

But at the same time, the majority of commentators with access to the major private and public media continued their attacks on La France Insoumise and the NFP, which included the NPA (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste), led by Philippe Poutou, which they accused of being "pro-terrorist" and "anti-police". Moreover, the RN continued to be invited on all the media platforms, and many prominent journalists displayed empathy with them, whether actual or prompted by circumstances. The polls predicted victory for the RN. And admittedly, a significant proportion of the popular classes and the traditional working class had voted for the RN and were going to do so again. Nor was there any guarantee that, in order to block the far Right, left-wing voters would be prepared to vote for a candidate from the presidential camp or from the rest of the Right, whose actions had in fact encouraged the rise of the RN and who had passed anti-immigrant laws with the RN's support. Similarly, there was no guarantee that voters on the Right would vote for an LFI or far-left candidate to prevent the election of a candidate from the RN. In the working class camp, the desire to inflict another defeat on Macron's camp might well continue to take the form of a vote for the RN and not only for the NFP.

What were the results of the second round of legislative elections on 7 July?

- The big winner of the second round was the Nouveau Front Populaire, which won 182 legislative seats, plus 14 other MPs from various parties of the Left, for a total of 196 seats. In the interest of simplicity we can round the figure up to 200.
- The minority presidential camp was second with 168 MPs, a loss of 95 seats.
- In the end, the far-right camp won 143 seats (126 for the Rassemblement National and 17 for its allies, including Éric Ciotti and the other LR members who followed him and who were also expelled from the party). The RN gained 37 seats compared to 2022.
- Les Républicains (LR), the traditional right-wing party which is in fact closer to the rhetoric of the far Right, won 45 seats (a loss of around twenty seats compared to 2022).

Within the New Popular Front bloc, how is the weight of the different political forces distributed?

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

La France Insoumise was first with 74 seats (compared with 75 in 2022), followed by the Socialist Party with 59 seats (up sharply compared to its poor result in 2022, when it won just 31 seats), the Ecologists with 28 seats (compared with 23 in 2022) and the Communists (PCF) with 9 parliamentary seats (whereas with its allies in 2022 it had 22). [1] A further 12 NFP MPs are not members of any of the parties mentioned above. The NPA, whose candidate was Philippe Poutou in the Aude department, won no seats.

Within the NFP, the LFI members are clearly the farthest on the left. There are also a few MPs of the Left who had been excluded from the official NFP lists by the LFI leadership and who were still elected on 7 July.

But within the NFP, even though the LFI is the leading force, the PS has made significant gains. What effect will that have?

It is important to consider what is ahead in the light of the gains made by the PS, because that party bears heavy responsibility for the social disaster and the disillusionment of the past ten years (and also the period that preceded). One of the new PS MPs is former president François Hollande, who personifies those heavy negative responsibilities. Recall that he was elected president in 2012 against the incumbent Nicolas Sarkozy on the promise to put an end to neoliberal policies. He had said that “his enemy was Finance.” But in fact his action was only a continuation of those of the presidents of the Right who preceded him and of their neoliberal policies. He made gift after gift to the major banks, to “Finance” and to the wealthiest segment of the population. It was Hollande who recruited Emmanuel Macron into his government from the Rothschild bank. In 2015, when the Greek people voted Syriza (a coalition of the radical Left) to power, François Hollande and his government joined with Angela Merkel’s rightist government and with the Troika [2] to make sure that austerity policies were kept in place, against the will of Greece’s people.

In the end, in the 2017 elections that brought Macron to the presidency, the PS suffered a crushing political defeat. The party lost 286 legislative seats and was left with only 45 MPs. In terms of votes, in the second round of the 2017 legislative elections the PS took only 7.5% of the vote, whereas the Macron bloc won 49.1% of the vote and 349 seats. In the 2022 legislative election the PS lost even more seats and was left with only 31. At that time it was part of the NUPES coalition, formed at the initiative of LFI, which won a total of 151 seats, 75 of which were for Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s LFI itself.

By comparison the 2024 results are a comeback for the PS, since it now has 59 seats.

Regarding the appointment of the prime minister, there is talk of an “unwritten rule” in the constitution of the Fifth Republic. What is it?

Normally, according to unwritten rule and customary practice under the Fifth Republic, the president appoints a prime minister from among the members of the bloc who came in first in the legislative elections. In this case the Nouveau Front Populaire came in first, and within the NFP coalition La France Insoumise was by far the leading political group. Therefore a member of LFI should become prime minister.

But that is precisely where all kinds of manoeuvres can take place.

Big capital wants to avoid having a member of LFI lead the government and determine the agenda. From their point of view, the lesser evil would be for a member of the Socialists to be appointed PM, which would provide more guarantees that the privileges of the wealthiest 1% and the major private corporations would be preserved. So it is more than obvious that the leaders of the Macron bloc want to split off the NFP and seek a compromise with the political forces that are closer to them and more “responsible” – meaning the PS and perhaps certain Ecologists.

Other possible developments from other quarters will also need to be taken into account.

Under these conditions, since the NFP did not win an absolute majority in the Assemblée, it would be well advised not to take on governmental responsibilities, since the situation will not allow it to apply its programme. Their entering the government could cause new divisions and disappointments which could contribute further to abstention or to more votes for the RN. It is better to make a priority of building a social and political front on a foundation of unity in the popular neighbourhoods, in workplaces, etc. A social and political front capable of empowering mobilizations to build a favourable balance of power and use it to win victories, and in any case to push back against the offensive of the Right and Far Right.

Has the fact that France has already seen major social mobilizations in recent years, in particular against the (counter-) reform of retirement in 2022–2023, but also against police violence against racialized persons, played a role in the failure of the Rassemblement National?

There's no doubt that the fact that in recent years hundreds of thousands and even millions of people have mobilized against Macron's anti-social, anti-immigrant and repressive policies has helped to create a climate conducive to fighting back against the danger of the far Right.

During the major social mobilizations that have lasted over time without achieving victory, there has not only been frustration and disillusionment; an ability to debate, to organize protests collectively and to develop a collective spirit has also developed. This did not affect the whole population, which explains the real success of the RN, which won votes in some sections of the working classes, particularly in rural areas and in urban areas most affected by deindustrialisation, as is the case in Northern France. In most urban areas, there is greater resistance to the penetration of the ideas of the RN, the far Right and the Right in general. This is also clearly the case in urban areas with a high proportion of racialized persons. The fact that LFI and other social forces were not afraid to express their deep solidarity with the Palestinian people and their rejection of racist and anti-immigrant policies convinced sectors of the population to vote for the NFP and against the RN as well as against Macron and the traditional Right.

Is the issue of public debt returning to the centre of the debate?

In all the statements from the Right and the Macronist camp, in a multitude of comments in the media, the argument of the unsustainable level reached by the public debt and the need for new budgetary austerity is constantly recurring. They stress the need to comply with the European Commission's injunctions to reduce the public deficit. The supposed threat posed by the arrival of the Left in government and the supposed dangers in the NFP's programme is constantly being brandished, along with the idea that any implementation of that programme would cause markets to panic, the cost of debt to soar and capital to flee. In other words, the same refrain we hear every time the Left is on the doorstep of government; and the aim is not only to frighten public opinion but also to convince the Left's representatives to abandon any desire not to continue bowing to the dictatorship of the markets and therefore of big business.

In the battle of ideas, it will be important to explain that governments, the Commission and the ECB were willing to increase public debt in order to finance expenditures in the face of the Coronavirus pandemic and the economic and social crisis that it exacerbated. The Macron government and European leaders have been unwilling to tax the super-profits of the big pharmaceutical companies – in particular vaccines producers – which have made scandalous profits at the expense of society. The same goes for retail companies – particularly those specializing in online sales and IT services – which have also made huge profits. Then, when gas prices rocketed in the wake of Russia's offensive in Ukraine, Macron's government and those of other countries were unwilling to control energy prices and freeze them, allowing fossil fuel and energy companies to also make huge profits at the expense of society. Lastly, when food prices soared as a result of the war in Ukraine and speculation on cereals, cereal companies made super-profits. Just like the major retail chains, which have increased retail food prices disproportionately and abusively,

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

causing a sharp rise in inflation and a loss of purchasing power for the working classes. The Macron government has refused to impose extraordinary taxes on their profits. Arms production companies are also reaping yet more profits from the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, with the full support of leaders of the NATO member countries.

Conclusion

In this situation, and with this refusal to levy taxes on the companies that benefited from the crisis and on the richest segment of the population, the States have increasingly resorted to debt financing instead of financing themselves via tax revenues, except for those from indirect taxes on consumption (Value Added Tax - VAT), which are extremely damaging for the vast majority of the population and in particular for the lowest income sectors.

In the battle of ideas, we need to show that for these reasons, a large part of the public debt is illegitimate and must be audited and cancelled.

The migration policies of European leaders and national governments will also be hardened, and human-rights abuses will increase. Human-rights violations will increase, despite denunciations by the European Court of Human Rights and human rights associations. We will need to mobilize. If a powerful social and political front can be put in place from the base to the summit, resistance is possible and victories can be won.

The climate inaction of President Macron and the European institutions will also worsen. A powerful social movement is indispensable for the adoption of genuine measures to combat the environmental crisis.

Rearmament will accelerate. We must also succeed in launching a movement to oppose it.

We must also mobilize in defence of the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ persons.

The rhetoric of the far Right and policies that support it are likely to continue to spread.

As a result, the antifascist struggle and protest actions against the rise of the Far Right will become increasingly important.

Post scriptum:

In the EU parliament, a new legislative group has just been formed, called "[Patriots for Europe](#)," and will be headed by [Jordan Bardella](#). It includes, on the one hand, MEPs from the party of Hungarian President Viktor Orbán and of the two far-right Czech parties ANO and [Oath and Motorists](#), who number 20, and the former EU Parliament group led by Marine Le Pen, Identity and Democracy, which had 58 MEPs, plus the 6 members from Spain's Vox, who have left the other far-right parliamentary group ECR (European Conservatives and Reformists), led by Italian PM Giorgia Meloni. The new "Patriots for Europe" group will total 84 MEPs. The ECR group led by Meloni has been reduced with the exit of the Vox members and now totals 78 seats. The updated breakdown of legislative groups can be seen on the EU Parliament's Web site at: <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/tools/comparative-tool/>

During the parliamentary term that has just ended, the two far-right groups in the European Parliament totalled 118, whereas in the new EP, the two parliamentary groups have 162 members, to which should be added the 15 members of the German AfD, who are not currently part of any group. Breakdown of the Patriots for Europe EP group in order of importance: — Rassemblement national: 30; — Fidesz-KDNP: 11; — Lega: 8; — ANO: 7

Thanks to a massive mobilization of the Left the Far Right cannot control the government in France

— FPÖ: 6; — Vox: 6; — PVV: 6; — Vlaams Belang: 3; — Oath and Motorists: 2;
— Chega: 2; — Danish People's Party: 1; — Latvia First: 1; — Voice of Reason: 1

**The author thanks Maxime Perriot for proofreading.
Translated by Snake Arbusto and Christine Pagnoulle.**

Source [CADTM](#).

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: [Donate](#) then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of [this article](#) for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

[1] It remains to be seen how the number of MPs allied with or affiliated with the PCF will evolve.

[2] The "Troika" is the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank.