

The French Elections of 2022: Features, Results, and Consequences

Y. I. Rubinskiy* (ORCID: 0000-0003-1343-9963) and S. M. Fedorov** (ORCID: 0000-0001-6735-9139)#

Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

*e-mail: yuri.rubinski@mail.ru

**e-mail: smfedorov@list.ru

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Abstract—The results of the presidential and parliamentary elections in France in 2022, which took place in specific conditions caused by the increase in energy and socio-economic problems in the country against the background of military operations in Ukraine, are analyzed. Despite the re-election of President E. Macron for a second term, the loss of an absolute pro-government majority in the National Assembly (the lower house of the French Parliament) following the parliamentary elections significantly complicated the implementation of his election program. In particular, the inability, as before, constantly to use article 49-3 of the Constitution of the country to adopt laws, in fact contrary to the opinion of deputies, required the President and the government to start searching for compromises and possible allies, as well as to adjust the political course. However, the significant strengthening of nonsystemic political forces in the lower house of Parliament, both the far-left Unconquered France and, especially, the far-right National Rally, coupled with the reluctance of The Republicans to enter into a coalition with the presidential majority, complicates the plans of the Head of State. The prospects of further evolution of the country's party-political system, as well as the preparation of the main political forces of the country for the next electoral cycle of 2027, are considered.

Keywords: France, President E. Macron, presidential and parliamentary elections in 2022, political parties of France, the party-political system of France

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Due to the specifics of the political structure of the Fifth Republic, in which the president is endowed with special powers, including the right to dissolve early the lower house of parliament, the National Assembly, parliamentary elections in France, despite their importance, are traditionally still noticeably inferior in importance to the election of the head of state. This is also evidenced by the calendar of these important electoral events. Beginning in 2002, in order to avoid a repetition of so-called “cohabitation” (when the president and the prime minister represent different political forces), it was decided to synchronize both election campaigns; however, the first in time (end of April and beginning of May) was the election of the head of state, while the election of deputies took place in the first half of June.

Despite the specifics noted above, one of the important features of the past election cycle was the fact that the results of the parliamentary elections, in terms of their consequences and their influence on the

political processes in the country, turned out to be more significant than the election of the head of state.

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: SURPRISES NOT EXPECTED

The re-election of Emmanuel Macron, according to all sociological polls conducted during the election campaign, did not cause much doubt. His rating during the presidential marathon fluctuated around 25%, which provided him with an automatic exit to the second round. The main intrigue, perhaps, was who would become his rival in the second stage of voting. At one time, it seemed that Marine Le Pen's chances of reaching the final were not obvious against the backdrop of the unexpected popularity of the far-right Eric Zemmour and the consolidation of The Republicans, who managed to nominate the candidacy of the head of the Île-de-France region, Valerie Pécresse. According to one of the polls, conducted immediately after the representatives of the right-centrists entered the struggle for the Élysée Palace, she was even ahead of M. Le Pen, which promised an exit to the second round. However, the failed campaign of Pécresse, which actually went wrong from her first big election

Yuri Ilyich Rubinskiy, Dr. Sci. (Hist.), is a Professor and Head of the Center for French Studies in the Department of Country Studies, RAS Institute of Europe. Sergey Matveevich Fedorov, Cand. Sci. (Polit.), is a Leading Researcher in the Department of Social and Political Research of the same institute.

rally, naturally ended in a crushing defeat: she managed to enlist the support of only 4.6% of voters. Such a low result had never before occurred in the entire history of the neo-Gaullist party. Ephemeral was also the popularity of E. Zemmour, who received 7% of the vote; his electoral rating fell by half during the presidential race. The surprise of the presidential elections was not so much the very high percentage of votes that M. Le Pen received (41.45%), which was expected, but the unexpected success of Jean-Luc Mélenchon (21.95%), the leader of the far-left Unbowed France, who almost made it to the final round, only barely losing to the leader of the National Rally (NR) in the first round of elections.

It should be noted that, against the background of the beginning of the “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine, the growing energy crisis spurred on by the introduction of unprecedented economic and financial sanctions against Russia, and sharp geopolitical changes, the past presidential campaign turned out to be indistinct and pale. It was this impression that the pre-election debates produced, to which the main contender for the highest public office joined already at the finish line; Macron delayed to the last moment his official statement about participation in the presidential race, referring to special employment due to the tense international situation. The initial ideas of Macron’s entourage to link his election campaign with the French presidency of the EU Council and the further promotion of the ideas of “strategic autonomy for Europe” also failed.

It is impossible not to pay attention to another important aspect, the significant difference between the program of Macron in 2017, imbued with the enthusiasm of a young “start-up” politician ready for almost revolutionary transformations of the country, and President Macron’s program proposals of 2022, clearly “reformatted” by the tests of the preceding five years, marked by the most severe crises of the “yellow vests” and the COVID-19 pandemic, who realized the difficulties of modernizing France.

An important feature of the presidential elections in 2022 was the high support of the French who came to the polls for “protest candidates.” Le Pen, Melenchon, and Zemmour together scored 52.17% of the vote in the first round. For comparison, in 2002, in the first round of elections, “nonsystemic” participants in the presidential race received 29.6%.

BATTLE OF THE PALAIS BOURBON

Perhaps the main intrigue of past elections was the question of whether the president would retain the absolute parliamentary majority necessary to implement the planned bills and carry out the necessary but painful reforms, including those that could not be implemented during the previous presidential mandate. The parliamentary campaign in the current situ-

ation acquired special significance. It is no coincidence that the leader of Unconquered France equated them with the “third round” of presidential elections, hoping to build on their success. The likelihood of another, fourth in a row, “political cohabitation” greatly worried the president’s team.

The parliamentary elections also acquired a crucial significance for the two backbone parties in the recent past—The Republicans and the French Socialist Party (FSP), which have alternately replaced each other at the helm of the state over the past four decades. However, this was more likely to apply to the center–right, which did not lose hope for changes for the better, in contrast to the socialists, who did not even dare to stand on their own in the parliamentary elections after the defeat in the first round of the presidential campaign of the mayor of Paris, the socialist Anne Hidalgo. As a result, the socialists had to join the left-wing electoral bloc New People’s Ecological and Social Union (NNESS) under the leadership of J.-L. Melenchon.

The crisis in the center–right camp has not subsided since the defeat of Nicolas Sarkozy in 2012, when Francois Hollande won, consolidating his success in the elections to the National Assembly. This was followed by a whole series of scandals in the leadership of The Republicans. The attempts of Sarkozy to head the party again and its “rebranding” (the name “Union for a Popular Movement” (USP) was changed to The Republicans on the eve of the 2017 electoral cycle) should have stopped the crisis dynamics. But the failure of François Fillon in the presidential elections due to a story with compromising information and the weak results in the subsequent parliamentary elections became a new blow to The Republicans. The rise to leadership of the party by Laurent Vauquier, who proposed a more right-wing political course in the hope of winning back the moderate electorate of the National Rally, also did not bring success. This was confirmed by the modest results of the center–right in electing members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in 2019. A ray of light shone only in the 2021 regional elections, as a result of which the right-wing managed to keep more than half of the country’s 13 regions under its control. But the optimism that emerged was short-lived. The failed campaign of V. Pekress and the halving of deputy mandates in the National Assembly of the new convocation once again showed that the problems of the French right are not opportunistic, but are of a deep structural nature, due to the ideological crisis of The Republicans.

In an even worse situation, compared to the right, were the French socialists, whose very existence as an independent political force is in question. The disappointing results of the reign of F. Hollande (2012–2017), the rise in popularity of Unconquered France by J.-L. Melenchon and especially of the creation of

Macron, who was briefly in the ranks of the FSP, the new centrist formation Republic Forward!, became a knockout blow for the socialists. The French Greens, who have been gaining political weight in the last decade due to the popularity of the environmental agenda in the socio-political life of the country, have contributed to their collapse. Despite the good results obtained in the European elections in 2019, the results of the presidential campaign in 2022 became a sobering moment for the “environmentalists,” prompting them to join the left bloc of NNESS.

We must pay tribute to the strategy and tactics of J.-L. Melenchon, who was able to build on his success in the presidential elections, transforming it into an impressive representation in the National Assembly of the country. The creation of a left bloc under the leadership of the Melenchonites, which united communists, socialists, and “greens,” can also be considered successful. Although the premier ambitions of the leader of Unconquered France were not destined to be realized (by the way, most French people were clearly not enthusiastic about such a prospect), his party nevertheless became the third largest faction in the Palais Bourbon after the presidential Renaissance (the former Republic Forward! renamed on the eve of the elections) and Le Pen supporters. Formally, this allows the extreme left to position itself as a significant opposition force.

National Rally claims this role with even greater reason, having achieved, without exaggeration, phenomenal success: the number of deputies of this political formation, in comparison with the previous composition of the lower house of parliament, has increased by more than ten (!) times, from 8 to 89! And this is in the conditions of a majoritarian voting system, which had reliably blocked the extreme right from entering parliament for several decades. These results allow us to conclude that this time the Le Pen supporters managed to break through the so-called “glass ceiling.”

How is the unprecedented success of the extreme right explained? Several factors have contributed to this. First, the strategy of “de-demonization” of the National Rally” played a big role. M. Le Pen abandoned the clearly right-wing populist theses of her program, which are dangerous in the eyes of the French layman, such as leaving the EU and the Euro zone. It shifted focus from the traditional themes of the right (immigration, national identity, security) to socio-economic problems, primarily to measures to maintain the purchasing power of the population, while at the same time defending the national sovereignty of the country on the external contour. Secondly, the appearance of a competitor in the person of E. Zemmour and his Reconquête party, against the background of whose policy statements (the fight against political Islam, the issues of the so-called

“great replacement”¹⁾ Le Pen supporters began to appear in the eyes of the French as a fairly moderate, ordinary right-wing party, quite compatible with republican values. The complete failure of Zemmour’s “Reconquête” in the parliamentary elections, which failed to get a single deputy mandate, is vivid confirmation of this. Thirdly, the success of National Rally was also facilitated by the marked improvement in the political preferences of voters, noted in recent years by French sociologists.

The pro-government “Together” bloc, led by the “revivalists,” formally won, receiving the majority of seats (244) in the National Assembly. However, the loss of an absolute majority in parliament was akin to defeat. In general, the presidential party, if not successfully, then quite worthily passed the electoral tests, especially considering that a significant part of the French was disappointed with the results of Macron’s rule, during which the “yellow vest” crisis, the pandemic, and the growing economic difficulties (rising energy prices, inflation, increasing public debt, etc.) occurred. All this was against the backdrop of a “total economic and financial war” declared against Russia as a punishment for carrying out the Special Military Operation in Ukraine.

LAME DUCK À LA FRANÇAISE

The loss by President Macron of the pro-government absolute majority in the National Assembly, a noticeable increase in deputies representing the far left and far right political segment, caused very alarming expectations in the media and among a considerable number of analysts. One can often come across arguments about the inevitable political crisis in the country, about instability in the activities of the government, and, as a result, about the impossibility of carrying out important, but painful reforms for French society.

Such alarmist sentiments, in our opinion, were somewhat exaggerated. They were explained primarily by the difficult socio-economic situation in France, associated with the growing energy crisis, problems in the economic and financial sphere (France’s domestic debt exceeded 113% of GDP and inflation became double-digit, which had not occurred for at least the last three decades). The depressive state of French society, which had survived two years of the pandemic, was also influential.

The position of the president was also weakened by the fact that many key figures from his entourage (for example, Richard Ferrand, Christophe Castaner, etc.), who held important positions in the executive

¹ A popular theory among far-right politicians is that there will soon be a numerical “replacement” of “indigenous” citizens of European countries by representatives of immigrant segments of the population, mainly people from Africa and Asia.

branch, were defeated in the parliamentary elections and were forced to resign.

It should be noted that the current political alignment (the loss of an absolute pro-presidential majority in the lower house of parliament, which can be regarded as a kind of political “semi-cohabitation” of the executive and legislative authorities) has already occurred in the recent political history of the Fifth Republic. Thus, a similar situation was observed in the early 1990s, when Francois Mitterrand appointed the socialist Michel Rocard as head of government. Then the French Prime Minister had to use Art. 49-3 of the Constitution of the country, which allows laws to be passed through parliament, without taking into account the opinions of deputies, raising the question of trust in the government.²

The government of Elizabeth Bourne, which was formed not without difficulty by the president on the basis of the results of the last parliamentary elections, had to act in the same way. During the autumn session (2022) of the National Assembly, the government had to use Art. 49-3 for the adoption of important laws on the country’s budgets and the social insurance system for 2023. The right and left opposition alternately initiated a vote on the issue of confidence in the government, but, as expected, did not achieve their goal. The political mini-sensation was the faction’s support for M. Le Pen’s vote of no confidence in the government, which was initiated by the far-left NNESS. But even in this case, they lacked about 50 votes to overthrow the government of E. Bourne; The Republicans did not support the initiative of the “irreconcilable” right-left opposition.

Although the Cabinet managed during the autumn session of 2022 to pass “budgetary” laws through parliament and avoid resignation, one should take into account the fact that Art. 49-3 cannot serve as a reliable political tool, since during the presidency of N. Sarkozy its use was limited. In addition, the “forcible pushing” of laws is sharply criticized by the opposition, which sees it as a departure from the principles of democracy.

The weakening of the position of E. Macron was caused not only by the loss of an absolute majority in the National Assembly, but also by the fact that the president, despite being re-elected, failed to work out and propose a political course that would be understandable to the voter and capable of consolidating French society.³ In this regard, Macron of the 2017 model is a young energetic politician who fed his image with associations with Jupiter and whose goal was to carry out a deep modernization of the country

² In total, during the existence of the Fifth Republic thus far, Art. 49-3 of the French constitution has been used 32 times.

³ “Au bout de six mois Emmanuel Macron toujours sans cap,” *L’Opinion*, October 24, 2022. <https://www.lopinion.fr/politique/au-bout-de-six-mois-emmanuel-macron-toujours-sans-cap>. Cited November 1, 2022.

in record time and to make the EU more sovereign,⁴ in sharp contrast to the current Macron, who lost his former enthusiasm during two unprecedented crises, the “yellow vests” and COVID-19, and was forced to look for ways to counter the current serious threats and challenges.⁵ Not surprisingly, according to opinion polls, two-thirds of the French believe that E. Macron will not be able to implement the reforms that he announced during the election campaign, and they tend to regard the new presidential mandate as a “lost five years.”

Realizing the problems that had arisen, the president attempted to find a “second wind” by establishing a new deliberative body, the “National Council for Reorganization” (NCR).⁶ It was intended to bring together representatives of parties, business, trade unions, NGOs, regions, and ordinary citizens chosen by lot to discuss socially significant issues (employment, school education, healthcare, problems of the elderly, ecological transit) at a round table. However, Macron’s new project, which to some extent copies the mechanisms of direct democracy, officially launched by the French leader himself on September 8, 2022, did not work out. It was not possible to repeat the successful experience of organizing national discussions, which was used to overcome the crisis of the “yellow vests.” Most of the politicians, mostly opposition politicians, from the very beginning refused to participate in the work of the Council, regarding it as the president’s desire to ignore the opinions of the people’s deputies. The majority of the French, 56% (according to a survey of the sociological service *Odoxa Backbone Consulting*), also accepted the establishment of the NCR without enthusiasm, believing that it would not become an effective tool for solving the country’s contemporary problems.⁷

One gets the feeling that the weakening of the president’s position is a long-term trend. Macron has not yet been able to turn the tide, primarily in the domestic political direction; he is forced to make concessions and seek compromises, which was not typical of his style of government during his first presidential mandate. Analysts note a series of failures of the French leader since his re-election. Thus, under pressure from the pro-government majority in the National Assembly, he had to refuse the appointment of Catherine

⁴ It is no coincidence that the program book of the future president was called “Revolution.” See Macron, E., *Revolution*, Paris: XO Editions, 2016.

⁵ “Il faut qu’il se relation: Emmanuel Macron at-il le blues?,” *BFMTV*, October 26, 2022. https://www.bfmtv.com/politique/elysee/il-faut-qu-il-se-reliance-emmanuel-macron-at-il-le-blues_AN-202210260347.html). Cited November 1, 2022.

⁶ French, *Conseil national de refondation, CNR*.

⁷ “Le Conseil national de la refondation désavoué par une majorité de Français, selon un sondage,” *Le Figaro*, September 8, 2022. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-conseil-national-de-la-refondation-desavoue-par-une-majorite-de-francais-selon-un-sondage-20220908>. Cited November 20, 2022.

Vautrin to the post of prime minister in favor of the more leftist, former socialist Elisabeth Born, and instead of Roland Lescour, to agree to Madame Yael Brown-Pivet for the post of speaker of the lower house; there were disagreements with his closest partner, Francois Bayrou, regarding the implementation of pension reform.

The optimism of the French and the popularity of the head of state are hardly enhanced by the calls by Macron to “tighten your belts” and to prepare for hard times and possible hardships in the coming years. References to the difficult international situation and the “war in Ukraine” and “Putin’s energy blackmail” also do not appear too convincing. This is evidenced by the long strike of oil industry workers in the second half of October 2022, during which fuel storage facilities were blocked, which caused kilometer-long queues at the country’s gas stations. Simultaneous large-scale demonstrations with demands for increased purchasing power and intensified environmental policy, organized by *La France insoumise* and its allies in the left coalition, further increased doubts about the success of Macron’s policy.

Based on the current situation, it can be assumed that the head of state will try to form the necessary absolute majority in the National Assembly by offering a political alliance to The Republicans. The first steps in this direction were already taken during Macron’s big interview on the TV channel *France 2* October 26, 2022. However, an attempt to create a “constructive coalition” with the center-right as opposed to the “anti-systemic” opposition, which he accused of “cynicism and irresponsibility” seems very problematic due to the extremely difficult position of The Republicans, who have not yet decided on a political strategy.

The president has, of course, more drastic measures in his arsenal like the early dissolution of parliament. However, the risk of failure like what happened to Chirac in 1997 is quite high. Carrying out complex reforms (for example, a painful pension reform) through the organization of a referendum is possible, but it seems very difficult both organizationally and financially.

Despite the difficulties noted above, the government of E. Born, though not without difficulty, managed to survive and in half a year of work to pass important laws concerning measures to support purchasing power, the reform of the unemployment insurance system, increased security measures, and the fight against crime. In principle, six months of the Cabinet’s work show that the loss of an absolute majority in the National Assembly did not lead to disorganization of government or to the failure of political institutions, although it required the executive branch to strengthen contacts with parliamentarians and search for compromises and concessions. The president delegated this painstaking and thankless

work to the government, having lately concentrated his efforts on the foreign policy direction. In general, such a “division of labor” allows E. Macron to “hold out” until the end of the second presidential mandate, without risking again facing serious socio-political crises. This was done in a similar situation by F. Mitterrand in 1988–1995 and Jacques Chirac in 2002–2007. However, it would not be entirely correct to draw analogies here due to one important circumstance: the predecessors of E. Macron had not planned to continue their political careers due to the age limit and health status. But the eighth president of the Fifth Republic, by all appearances, may well compete for the Élysée Palace for the third time in 2032, when he is only 55 years old—a young age for a head of state. This is probably why E. Macron cannot, and does not want, due to his ambitious nature, to play the role of the “Queen of England,” to be above the fray. To ensure his political future, he will probably have to be active, take risks, and decide to carry out complex reforms in the spring of 2023, like pension insurance and the law on immigration, which will certainly cause not only heated discussions in parliament, but also, according to an unkind tradition, mass manifestations of dissenters on the streets of French cities.

PARTY AND POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION WITH AN EYE ON 2027

The results of the 2022 parliamentary elections have increased the fragmentation of the French party-political system and demonstrated that not a single political force in the country enjoys the trust of the population. Almost every parliamentary party is in a difficult situation, which requires significant efforts to update the program settings, fresh ideas, and characters. By and large, the main winner of the past electoral cycle was National Rally, which received the second faction in the lower house of parliament in terms of the number of deputies, which cannot be said about all other participants in the country’s party-political landscape, including *La France insoumise*.

Thus, the stability and political future of the left bloc of the NNESS is rather vague. Although the left coalition is represented in the current lower house of parliament by 127 deputies, the Melanшонites, socialists, “environmentalists,” and communists have retained their autonomous parliamentary factions. Their views on economic, social, environmental, and international issues are very different. There are doubts that, in the upcoming European Parliament elections in 2024, the left bloc will remain united. As a study of the Jean Jaures Foundation shows, the ideological views of these parties and their supporters are very different, as well as their electorate, although on some issues, for example, in relation to European integration, the differences are not so great. Thus, 58% of the supporters of *La France insoumise* perceive France’s participation in the European Union posi-

tively, and only 10%, negatively. At the same time, the number of Euro-optimists among socialists and “greens” exceeds 80%.⁸

A study of the sentiments of NNESS supporters revealed the main differences in that 82% of supporters of the socialists and the “greens” are in favor of dialogue with the executive, but 55% of Mélenchon sympathizers are in favor of tough opposition. The electoral success of La France insoumise and the alliance of the left as a whole was to a large extent ensured by the charisma and oratorical talent of J.-L. Mélenchon. However, the age of the “tribune of the people” is unlikely to give him a chance to compete again for the highest state post in 2027. Whether the party of the extreme left will be able to maintain its political leadership after Mélenchon’s “retirement,” as he has repeatedly said, is a big question. So far, there are no characters on the left flank who can appear as a substitute.⁹ On the whole, the task of maintaining the four-party alliance of the left over the next five years seems to be very difficult.

If we evaluate the prospects of the allies in the left coalition, then the last elections showed that only the “greens” have a good political weight, ensuring their independent positions, which cannot be said about the communists and even the once influential socialists, who are rapidly turning into marginals.

The 2022 election was another “cold shower” for The Republicans, dispelling their hopes of overcoming the crisis that the party has been experiencing for the past ten years.¹⁰ Although they control the Senate, they still maintain a strong position at the regional and local levels, but this does not reduce concerns about the future of the neo-Gaullists. The convenient role of an arbiter in the lower house of parliament, which The Republican faction can act as today, would seem to increase their political weight and influence. In fact, perhaps, it complicates the position of the party even more and reveals its ideological crisis and the absence of a coherent strategy. In fact, the past election campaigns have shown that the center–right has not been able to present an alternative program to macronism. It is precisely in this situation that the main reason for failures lies, and not only in the weakness of the person of V. Pékress. The Republicans cannot find their political niche, squeezed between the far-right Lepenovites, who were able to move to the center, and Macron’s “diverse” neo-centrists. The tactics of

“constructive opposition” to the government majority largely coincide with the tactics of the National Rally. But the latter have a clear advantage; their program, although fairly saturated with populism, is more clear and understandable to the voter, especially the protest one.

Hopes for the revival of the party are associated with the election of a new leadership of The Republicans, scheduled for the first decade of December 2022. The three main contenders for the highest party post (Eric Ciotti, Bruno Retailo, Aurelien Pradier) understand that a “total restructuring” is required partly, because, in fact, we are talking about its survival. However, from their speeches in the media, it is not entirely clear how and, most importantly, what they propose to overcome the crisis. Thus, the leader of the right wing of the center–right E. Ciotti believes that “the values of the authority of power, identity, and freedom must be seen as a response to the adversity of our country.” The most likely winner of the future intra-party elections, the head of The Republicans faction in the Senate, B. Retailo, calls for the re-creation of “a large right-wing party, popular and patriotic, which is so lacking in France today.” Perhaps the main thing that unites The Republicans today is the understanding of the need to restore their political identity. One of the main appeals of B. Retailo is not accidental: “We will never become macronists!”

The complexity of the task of renewing the neo-Gaullists is compounded by the fact that many iconic figures of The Republicans have left the party ranks. Thus, after the failure in the elections in June, did the head of the center-right K. Jacob behave. It is possible that in the near future one of the founders of the party, N. Sarkozy, who did not support V. Pékress during the election campaign, will behave similarly. Complicating the already difficult situation is the lack of unity in their ranks. For example, one of the party “heavyweights,” Xavier Bertrand, head of the North of France region, without formally leaving the party, created a new party formation *Nous France* the official presentation of which took place on October 1, 2022. Bertrand strongly opposes the “deadly idea of a union of the right and the extreme right,” pedaling issues of national identity. In his opinion, for the revival of the center–right, “new ideas are needed, an infusion of fresh blood in order to propose a new project of society and come up with the right of the 21st century.”¹¹

An equally difficult path has to be passed by the Macron Revival party, which led the centrist bloc Together, which won the majority of seats in the National Assembly. The renewed party included smaller political formations, “Act” of the center-right and “Territories of Progress” (center-left), which

⁸ Bristielle, A., *Quel futur pour la NUPES?* Fondation Jean Jaures, August 25, 2022. <https://www.jean-jaures.org/publication/quel-futur-pour-la-nupes>. Cited November 20, 2022.

⁹ “Comment Mélenchon entretient l’ambiguïté sur un retour en 2027,” *Le Figaro*, September 21, 2022. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/comment-melenchon-entretient-l-ambiguïte-sur-un-retour-en-2027-20220920>.

¹⁰ This is not the first crisis in the very difficult and sometimes controversial history of the centre-right. See details: Tabard Guillaume. *La malédiction de la droite (60 ans de rendez-vous manqués)*. Editions Perrin, 2019.

¹¹ “Xavier Bertrand: à droite ‘il faut tout changer sans tabous,’” *Le Figaro*, September 27, 2022. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/xavier-bertrand-a-droite-il-faut-tout-changer-sans-tabous-20220927>. Cited November 20, 2022.

arose as a result of a split in the ruling majority in the lower house of parliament of the last convocation. The founding online conference of the renewed party took place on September 17, 2022, during which a new party leader, Stéphane Séjourné, was elected, who replaced Stanislav Garini, who was not distinguished by great charisma, and a new party charter was adopted. The conference was attended by 23 000 people. This figure is clearly inferior to the number of supporters of the Republic Forward! movement, which, according to the French media, in 2018 amounted to 400 000 people. The new leader of Renaissance sees the main task as the transition from a political movement to a real party, with an ideology and, most importantly, a “powerful presence on the ground.”¹² It is clear that getting rid of this “Achilles heel” of “Republic Forward!”, which is extremely poorly represented in local authorities, will not be possible soon. However, the calculation is being made on the preparation of macronists for the next electoral cycle in 2027 and in the longer term for 2032, when the current president will be able to take part in the elections again. Obviously, the success of the formation of a renewed party will directly depend on whether President Macron succeeds in implementing his election program. Complicating the achievement of the intended goals may be the emergence of a competitor, the Horizons party, which was formed by former Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, the popular mayor of Le Havre, who is preparing to run in the 2027 presidential election.

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The last elections recorded a new alignment of political forces in France: a sharp increase in the far left and right opposition, along with the continued marginalization of the former systemic parties—The Republicans and the Socialists—and the weakening of the presidential majority in parliament. This leads to an increase in the polarization of the party-political system of France, narrowing the possibilities for finding compromise solutions and inter-party alliances. In fact, the current composition of the National Assembly was divided into three opposing blocs, the left NNESS, the pro-government Together, and the National Rally, with the The Republicans trying to maintain their political independence.

The sensational results of National Rally (NR) achieved in the parliamentary elections, and a fairly significant percentage of votes (41.45%) cast for M. Le Pen in the second round of the presidential election, judging by the data of sociological studies, is not an accidental, but rather a natural phenomenon, reflecting the long-term trend of the “correction” of French

society.¹³ NR has practically moved into the category of “normal” parties and is now not considered by the majority of the population as a dangerous and extremist formation. It is possible that on the wave of success and completing the process of “de-demonization,” National Rally will be able to become a platform for creating an alliance of right-wing and far-right forces, including part of the right-wing Republicans, at least half of the center-right supporters share the values and program settings of Le Pen. In this case, it will be possible to speak of a full-fledged “right turn” in France.

The results of the last elections drew a line under the macronism of the 2017 model (J.-L. Mélenchon does not by accident speak of the end of the “era of Macron”). They set before the re-elected head of state the task of developing a new political course, taking into account not only the interests of the implacable opposition, but, first of all, The Republicans in the hope of their support.

The loss of an absolute majority in the National Assembly, a significant deterioration in the socio-economic situation, the calls of E. Macron to “prepare for worse times,” the vagueness of the prospects for a new “presidential five-year plan,” as well as the impossibility of re-election for a new term—all this, perhaps for the first time in the political history of the Fifth Republic, has led to a paradoxical situation, when a few months after the end of the presidential elections in 2022, in fact, preparations have begun for the future in 2027.

Of course, it is difficult to make medium-term forecasts, especially since nothing guarantees the preservation of the current political landscape.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it can be assumed with sufficient certainty that M. Le Pen, inspired by the successes of 2022 and the example of Giorgia Meloni in Italy, is increasing the chances of winning the highest public office. In the battle for the Élysée Palace, the representative of the extreme right will most likely have to compete with the former “Republicans” who have come under the banner of Macron—E. Philippe, B. Le Maire, and J. Darmanen and the popular “governors” of the French regions L. Vauquier and X. Bertrand. Despite his age, it is possible that J.-L. Mélenchon will once again take the risk of participating in a future presidential campaign. It is likely that the upcoming European elections in 2024 will give a clearer picture of the balance of political forces in France and will make it possible

¹²“Majorite: la difficile naissance de Renaissance,” *L'Opinion*, September 1, 2022. <https://www.lopinion.fr/politique/majorite-la-difficile-naissance-de-renaissance>. Cited November 20, 2022.

¹³“Mutations politiques et majorité de gouvernement dans une France à droite,” Un étude de la Fondation pour l'innovation politique sur les résultats électoraux de 2022, September 2022. <https://www.fondapol.org/etude/mutations-politiques-et-majorite-de-gouvernement-dans-une-france-a-droite/>. Cited November 20, 2022.

¹⁴“Guillaume Tabard: ‘Le paysage de 2027 ne sera pas celui de 2022.’” *Le Figaro*, September 20, 2022. <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/guillaume-tabard-le-paysage-de-2027-ne-sera-pas-celui-de-2022-20220920>. Cited November 20, 2022.

to assess more accurately their chances of winning in 2027.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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