



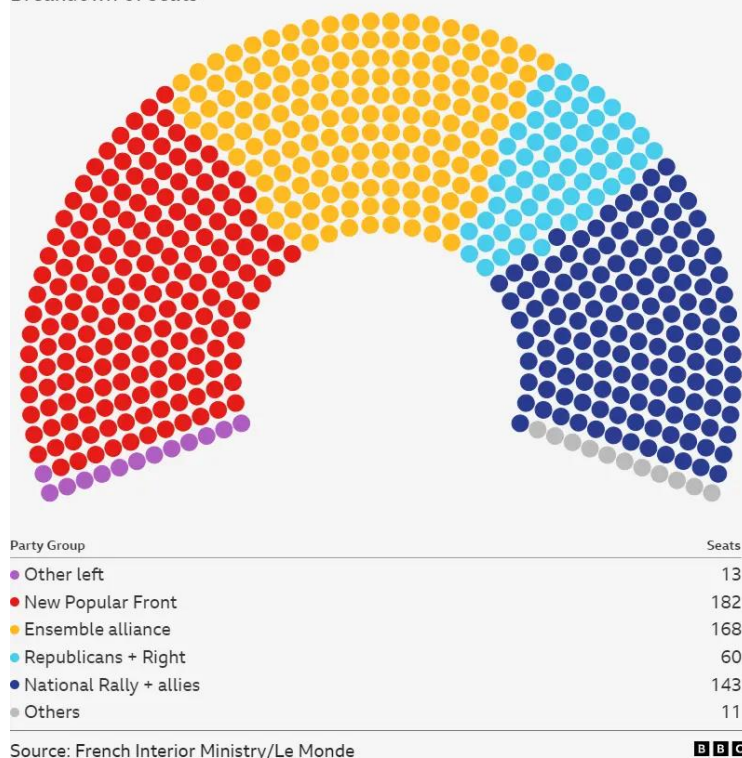
## **French National Assembly Elections and what do they mean?**

**By Otar Davitaia**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, the second round of French parliamentary elections changed the political landscape of the National Assembly. Although Le Pens National Rally ran out of the “luck” they had during the EU parliamentary elections and the first round of National Assembly elections. However, the rise of the left (New Popular Front) is equally concerning. Ultimately, the so-called “republican front” of French politics succeeded yet again in keeping the far-right from the governance. The collaboration between New Popular Front and Macron’s Ensemble clearly bore fruit in this election, as by removing the candidates that came 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in the first round, the non-far-right vote was consolidated and left Lepenistas in 3<sup>rd</sup> place once again.

## France National Assembly elections 2024

Breakdown of seats



With such results, two possible outcomes can be predicted, and as no faction can form a government on its own one is more likely than the other. As the old saying goes ‘hope for the best, expect the worst’, hence worst comes first. The far-left member of New Popular Front Melonchon’s France Unvowed is preparing to govern. They dominate the leftist alliance and hope to finally bring the Fifth Republic to “utopian communist fututre”. Their programme ‘... features a 90 per cent tax rate on annual income of over €400,000, a reduction in the retirement age from 64 to 60, a block on the price of “essential goods”, a 14 per cent increase in the minimum wage and spending commitments of at least €150 billion over three years.’<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, when it comes to foreign policy, while Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Marine Le Pen differ significantly in their overall political ideologies and foreign policy approaches, there are a few areas where their views may converge or exhibit similarities:

- **Anti-Globalism:** Both Mélenchon and Le Pen have expressed scepticism towards certain aspects of globalization. They are critical of international trade agreements and economic policies that they believe undermine French sovereignty or harm domestic industries.
- **Critique of EU:** While their reasons differ, both Mélenchon and Le Pen have been critical of the European Union. Mélenchon criticizes the EU's economic policies and what he sees as undemocratic

<sup>1</sup> Adam Sage, ‘French left-wingers ‘prepare to govern’ with 90% tax on rich’, The Times, 08 July 2024

practices within its institutions. Le Pen, on the other hand, opposes the EU's influence on French sovereignty and advocates for a referendum on France's membership in the EU.

- **Foreign Intervention:** Both politicians have expressed reservations about France's involvement in military interventions abroad. Mélenchon emphasises diplomacy over military action and has opposed French military engagements in various conflicts. Le Pen also prioritises national interest over foreign involvement and questions the efficacy and motivations behind certain international military actions involving France. Although both have vowed to support Ukraine.

If Melonchon and his 'commissars' manage to secure a coalition and form the government, it would be a highly dysfunctional one, as France unbowed represents the radical left and their ideas require acquired tastes. Furthermore, Macron's Ensemble would be an integral part of such a coalition, yet Melanchon plans to reverse almost every reform pushed by Macron during his presidency.

The second scenario seems to be more likely (Although it could be just wishful thinking). New Popular Front have some more moderate members, such as the Socialist Party and the Ecologists, for whom Macron's brand of centrism is more palatable than Melanchon's radical approach. President Macron's best option is to form a rainbow coalition consisting of his Ensemble (168 seats); Republicans (60 seats); the Socialist Party (59 seats), and the Ecologists (28 seats). In this case "rainbow coalition" will have 315 seats out of 577, which would give them a comfortable majority to govern. However, the political vector of the French Government will shift towards the left. Some of Macron's reforms will no doubt be reversed, but at the very least the government will be more moderate and Eurocentric. Furthermore, the foreign policy of France can be expected to stay similar to what it is.

While the President controls foreign policy, this uncertainty from the recent election will no doubt damage Macron's international standing. Nonetheless, as he travels to Washington on Wednesday for the NATO summit, he will try to appear confident in an attempt to reassure the partners that foreign policy is still his prerogative.