

FRANCE - OPINION

# Parliamentary elections (France): How Macron became the far-right's useful idiot

Thursday 23 June 2022, by [SALVI Ellen](#) (Date first published: 20 June 2022).

**By playing at being the sorcerer's apprentice and pitching himself as the only acceptable option between the radical Left and the far-right, Emmanuel Macron has allowed Rassemblement National to become a major force within the National Assembly, argues Ellen Salvi in this opinion article. Rather than fighting against the racist and xenophobic ideas of Marine Le Pen's party, she writes, he ended up giving them a helping hand out of sheer political cynicism. Following Sunday's legislative elections the far-right party will have 89 MPs in the new National Assembly.**

The far-right can be grateful to Emmanuel Macron. Thanks to the head of state the Rassemblement National party, whose candidate this year reached the second round of the presidential election for the second time, has now won dozens of seats - 89 to be precise - at the National Assembly. Faced with the presidential coalition Ensemble and the broad left and environmental alliance NUPES (Nouvelle Union Populaire Écologique et Sociale), the far-right party has become one of the main opposition groups at the Assembly without even needing to run a campaign. It was happy just to benefit from the president's cynicism.

This is the result of five years in which Emmanuel Macron played with political fire in order to ensure that he faced a second - and winnable - head-to-head contest with the far-right's Marine Le Pen in the 2022 presidential election. "I will do everything during the next five years to ensure that *[those who voted for the RN]* will no longer have a reason to vote for the extremes," Macron had [insisted](#) on the evening of his first victory in May 2017. To use the evasive reply that he himself employed about [another subject](#): "I wouldn't say it's a failure: it didn't work."

Under the pretext of "going beyond divisions and taboos", the head of state in reality very quickly succumbed to the same obsessions over identity politics as Nicolas Sarkozy. Like the former president, he made the far-right's pet causes his own and allowed his ministers to use the far-right's language and to recycle its ideas. Far from the "progressivism" and "complex thinking" that they promised to represent, the Macronistas spent the last five years waving the flag of "Islamism-Leftism" with all the assurance of the committed. And they preferred to go along with the "good sense of the butcher in Tourcoing" - a [phrase used](#) by interior minister Gérald Darmanin about his home town in the north of France - rather than follow the basic rules of proper public debate.

The controversial and populist television presenter [Cyril Hanouna](#) became in effect their best media performer. Minister [Marlène Schiappa](#) dished out lessons in citizenship to all and sundry. Education minister [Jean-Michel Blanquer](#) swam in the murky waters of anti-wokism. [Sarah El Haïry](#) - a former minister - described the horror that the "latest talk about [intersectionality](#)" inspired in her which was, if she is to be believed, more horrifying than the words of the far-right polemicist and failed

presidential candidate Éric Zemmour. The minister for ecological transition Amelie de Montchalin promised there would be “chaos”, “disorder”, “anarchy” and plagues of frogs if the NUPES alliance won. Former prime minister Manuel Valls – who stood for Macron’s movement in these elections but lost in the first round - meanwhile simply remained [Manuel Valls](#).

## From rampart to gateway

Rather than taking the 2018-2019 ‘[yellow vest](#)’ protest movement seriously, by giving his government and its institutions a new lease of life, Emmanuel Macron instead shut himself away in a presidency that became ever more remote and indifferent to citizens’ aspirations. On [police violence](#) as on [pension reform](#) and the [climate emergency](#), he constantly opposed society’s demands. Words were stripped of their meaning. Authoritarian bravado took preference over conviction. And the usual reference points became lost amid the tear-gas.

One might have imagined, just for a moment, that the score achieved by Marine Le Pen at the presidential election in April and the growing number of abstentions would have somewhat dampened the ardour of this little world of pyromaniacs. After all, surely the penny might have dropped somewhere, among those who really did fear seeing the far-right come to power in April. But rather than thanking voters on the Left who, once again, took it upon themselves to block the RN’s neo-fascist project, the ruling majority hastened to heap ever more scorn on them.

By equating the far-right and the united Left, the Macronistas swept aside the republican values in which they had wrapped themselves until that point. They depoliticised the legislative campaign, they weakened democracy and they normalised the RN candidates. The electoral defeat of leading figures from the previous presidential term – Jean-Michel Blanquer in the first round of the legislative elections, National Assembly president Richard Ferrand, former interior minister Christophe Castaner and Amélie de Montchalin in the second – and the [lack of an overall majority](#) now are clear signs of their failure.

There would doubtless be nothing much to add if Emmanuel Macron and his supporters were the only ones to suffer from this toxic strategy. But looking at the unprecedented number of RN MPs who are reading to take their seats in the National Assembly one cannot help feeling bitter. The [confusionism](#) or deliberate ambiguity, the levelling down and the intellectual dishonesty of the president of the Republic and his supporters have served as a gateway to the Assembly for precisely those racist and xenophobic ideas they claimed to be fighting. It is their responsibility. And our catastrophe.

**ELLEN SALVI**

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**P.S.**

- Mediapart. JUNE 20, 2022:  
<https://www.mediapart.fr/en/journal/france/200622/how-macron-became-far-rights-useful-idiot>

- **English version by Michael Streete**

- The original French version of this opinion article can be found [here](#).