

Politics after the French Elections: the Beginning of a New Age

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With the election of Emmanuel Macron as president and the landslide victory of his party La République en marche in the first round of the French parliamentary election the full extent of the revolution taking place in France has become visible. Different from what many commentators expected, Macron will not need to compromise vastly on his positions and depend on the conservative party to get a majority for his pro-European presidency. And even less there seems to be a backlash in favour of the extreme right. Marine Le Pen not only lost even more clearly in the second round of the presidential vote; her Front National scored a disappointing 13.2%, another crushing disappointment for the extreme right.

And as to Macron, he doesn't seem to only have played a role as many suggested. He acts as the exact counter image to the rebellious populist people saw in him when running as an independent candidate. He embraces the agenda of deepening European integration and accepts the challenges of solving the complex social, economic and ecological challenges to our societies. He has pushed the German government from his first day on to join him in delivering proposals for a reform of the European Union and counters the populist and reactionist agenda from Washington D.C. and London. When Trump announces that the US will join Syria and Nicaragua as the sole countries who're not following the Paris climate accord he answers that he'll welcome and support climate scientists to 'make the planet great again'. When Theresa May visits him after shooting the second British own goal since David Cameron called a referendum on the EU membership, Macron offers a hand to Britain and says that the door is still open for them to return.

This massive shift in the landscape of political parties and the new alliances which are currently emerging in France will not only question the situation and strategy of French political parties and movements but change the political discourse across the whole of Europe. A new age of political strands in Europe and of a new kind of European policy making is about to begin. It is an open game in which coalitions and alliances will arise during the transformation process but it seems to be more than clear that the classic division between socialism, conservatism and liberalism again is challenged by new categories. In particular the Greens, which already have emerged from a mixture of all these strands, will have to define their role in this development quickly. In France it seems to be obvious that the party needs to build new alliances but also in other parts of Europe this is evident. While the precise partners could be different throughout the various countries, the actual idea and profile of the Green movement in Europe should be sharpened in light of the new frontlines.

One important new frontline seems to be opening between those who stand for an open society and those who see it as endangering their concept of national economies, societies and cultures. The idea that globalisation and digitalisation will bring us closer and is not something we can stop but should shape actively instead – in particular with common democratically decided European policies – is inherent to the Green concept of 'thinking globally and acting locally'. Therefore the Greens will be at the forefront of this side of the political debate. This includes also the new frontline between those who want to actively push for European and international regulation and those who argue against supranational or even any regulation at all but rather see the free play of the market or nation state protectionism as the solution to the demands of their particular interest groups.

The Greens could play an important role to open up new ideas and new concepts of European and international regulatory approaches and push broader alliances to agree on pursuing these goals. The elections in France and the new dynamic setting of the political landscape which has been evolving in their aftermath should be a motivation for the Green



party family to get active and define the developments rather than stand aside and watch them. In changing times like these we all have to adapt quickly to a massively transforming society and it could be worthwhile to be courageous enough to be among the first to make a move.