
France: the results of the first round of the presidential election make the headlines, amidst worries and questions about the potential result of the second round

“Macron-Le Pen, a new duel” is written on the headlines of Le Figaro today (as it is on the website of Le Monde too). Last night, French people went to sleep knowing what will be looming ahead for the next 15 days, because the first round of the election that closed at 8.00 pm clearly showed a head-to-head result. In its leading article, Le Figaro lists the challenges Macron will have to face in the next few weeks, but takes his win for certain. On the contrary, Le Monde speaks of the “feeling of seeing a new division confirmed” between “the France of managers and pensioners against the France of employees and workers, the cities against the suburbs, European integration against national sovereignty”. “This time, it’s really scary”, is instead the headline of Liberation which, in its leading article, recalls the way five years ago Macron had promised to “reduce the vote of the far right to zero”, while today, instead, if one adds up the votes for Le Pen and Zemmour, one can see that “over 30% of France voted for the heirs of the Front National”. La Tribune too is quite prudent about the “return match” between Macron and Le Pen, though with very different traits: Macron’s is a “victory in disappointment”, “because it seems almost impossible to lead a population where two thirds of voters are breaking up either by casting an extreme vote or by abstaining”. According to the newspaper La Croix, now “an new election campaign is opening up”, with Macron favoured to win the second round, but with the far right “at unprecedented levels”. From across the Channel, the awkwardness of the situation is clear, in the run-up to April 24th: the next two weeks will be weeks of a “brutal” campaign for the future of the country, The Guardian writes, while The Times is already speaking of surveys giving very weak differences and a “totally open” result. According to The Independent, Marine Le Pen “could be much closer to evicting Emmanuel Macron than anyone would have imagined so far”. The Spanish El Pais opens with the French election and speaks of a Macron who “holds on” and of a “firm progress of the far right”, as well as of the “downfall” of the Socialist Hidalgo. El Mundo too puts “Macron resists Marine Le Pen’s push” on the headline, and, assuming Le Pen becoming president, speaks of the “danger of another Hungary within the EU”. In Germany, the Faz opens with Macron’s photograph and describes the result of the French election “as if the SPD and the CDU had disappeared”: Macron has been left “nice and lonely, in the midst”, after attracting a pro-European constituency left and right of the centre, with the former left-wing and right-wing leading parties without any role any longer and the far right coming out stronger. The website of Die Zeit puts “In the time of the unimaginable” on the headline: after the extremists’ win and the crushing of left-wing and right-wing parties, now Emmanuel Macron “must convince voters” about such parties: “Because, if Marine Le Pen won, it would be a disaster, and not just for France”. The New York Times reads the result of the French election as “the persistent charm of nationalist and xenophobic currents in Europe”. And it states: “An anti-NATO and more pro-Russian France, if Le Pen should win, would deeply worry the allied capitals and would break the transatlantic response, combined with the Russian invasion of Ukraine”.

Valentina Bombelli