



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# Macron is calming the ground with Michel Barnier



By **appointing** Michel Barnier as prime minister, French President Emmanuel Macron continued to make unexpected and seemingly risky moves, expecting the series to be as successful as it has been so far.

President Macron's choice, which at least temporarily ended the crisis surrounding government formation, was a surprise for many, but mainly for the left coalition, the New Popular Front, which secured the majority of seats in the elections on June 30 and July 7.

However, do those whose electoral success was a huge surprise have the right to be surprised?

Macron "stole the election from the French people," Jean-Luc Mélenchon, one of the leaders of the colourful left-wing bloc, **wrote** on X after he heard that the conservative Barnier was assuming the position of head of government.

It turned out, however, that the leftists entered the negotiations regarding the prime minister and the government with much more self-confidence and a lack of flexibility, underestimating compromise as the only way out of the post-election maze.

Encouraged by the fact that they had surprisingly won the most seats in parliament, even though not enough for a majority, the New Popular Front **expected** that this would be enough for President Macron to appoint a prime minister from their ranks.

## Failures of the left

They are now outraged, with Mélenchon's hard-left France Unbowed calling for protests and announcing the start of impeachment procedure against President Macron for rejecting the election results as a guide to appointing a prime minister.

First and foremost, they disregarded the established political practice in France, not accustomed to coalition governments. Even

more, they underestimated Macron's willingness to take the path of risky and unconventional decisions, despite the fact that he has demonstrated this to them repeatedly in less than a year.

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Ultimately, they demanded the appointment of Lucie Castets, the little-known and politically inexperienced head of finance in the city of Paris, as prime minister.

When we consider today that Macron appointed one of the most experienced French and European politicians, a conservative, as prime minister, the candidacy of a politician with a completely opposite profile and background had no chance of success.

President Macron has postponed the process of establishing a government, which was highly unusual for French circumstances. However, several **previous steps**, which were equally complex and unusual, directly influenced the complexity and length of this process.

## Macron's gamble

Macron's decision to replace the prime minister in January and appoint his protégé Gabriel Attal as the youngest PM in French history was surprising, but calculated to thwart the prospect of a growing far-right ahead of June's European Parliament elections.

This manoeuvre was unsuccessful because Marine Le Pen's National Rally won the European elections. However, it had the purpose of promoting Mr Attal at the highest level as a potential political successor to Macron, including his 2027 presidential bid.

**The French president now has much better cards in his hands than he did just three months ago**

Macron's "gamble" with calling early parliamentary elections following the poor results in the European Parliament elections proved successful, as it halted the far right's ascent, causing it to drop to third position behind the United Left and Macron's centrist bloc.

If Michel Barnier's appointment as prime minister looks like another Macron's "gamble," the French president now has much better cards in his hands than he did just three months ago and the disappointing European Parliament elections.

## Softened extreme rightists

This is primarily reflected in the position of Marine Le Pen's National Rally, which in just a few months, from the leading position and the trend of further growth, was knocked down on the list to the third most powerful political group in France.

Michel Barnier's government will depend on the support of National Rally MPs from the very beginning, as it will be under pressure in parliament for a vote of no confidence.



*Barnier appears at least to meet one of the criteria we'd demanded - Marine Le Pen*

However, the far-right now seems much more inclined to compromise than they were a few months ago, and certainly much more than the leftists showed in the government negotiations.

"Barnier appears at least to meet one of the

criteria we'd demanded, which was to have someone who would respect different political forces and be able to speak with the National Rally," said Marine Le Pen on the occasion of the appointment of the new prime minister.

Softening the views of the far-right is something Emmanuel Macron was clearly counting on when he appointed the conservative Barnier as prime minister.

Procrastinating and aggravating the crisis surrounding the government's formation would certainly suit the extreme right. However, the extreme right chose the appointment of a prime minister, with whom it can establish contact and potentially influence state policy from the third most powerful position, as a more beneficial solution.

Marine Le Pen's calculation also shows that she is much more interested in paving the way for the 2027 presidential election, realising that she needs a gradual return to the top after a disappointing result in the parliamentary elections in June and July.