



By: Ferry Biedermann

Greenland and the repositioning of France's far-right



France's far-right Rassemblement National is leveraging Donald Trump's Greenland threats as part of a wider effort to rebrand itself as mainstream Gaullists.

But notwithstanding its newfound zeal to defend European sovereignty, the party remains profoundly anti-EU and hence also a favourite of Trump's MAGA project.

The RN's repositioning push, mainly directed by its youthful president, Jordan Bardella, comes at a time of renewed political flux in France.

The centrist minority government of **Sébastien Lecornu** is relying on the Parti Socialiste to push through a 2026 budget that consists of a mishmash of measures to limit the budget deficit to 5% of GDP but that doesn't satisfy anyone, including its own ministers.

The popularity of Lecornu's patron, President Emmanuel Macron, is at an all-time low as he limps towards the end of his term in 2027. In current form, none of his centrist allies is seen as a likely successor, with the RN coming out on top in almost all scenarios.

Macron definitively lost control of parliament after he called a snap election in 2024. Since then, governments have come and gone. Lecornu, in power since September last year, is trying to break that pattern by buying off the Socialists with crucial concessions.

Main among these is the suspension of **pension reforms** that would have seen the retirement age raised from 62 to 64. In the latest budget, among other things, a highly symbolic €1 meal for students has been extended on the insistence of the Socialists.

The government is pushing through the budget with emergency powers that it had earlier said it would not use and is facing non-confidence motions from both the left and the right as early as Friday.

With the support of the Socialists, though, it is expected to survive until the whole budget has been passed, possibly in mid-February to late

March.

Whether it will hang on for much longer is doubtful, especially if the RN, as expected, makes large gains in local elections due in March.

Breaking with Macron's Europe

Such instability is debilitating for France and for Europe, not only on the crucial issue of the economy but more importantly at the moment for France's geopolitical and security engagement and that of the EU.

France is supposed to be the engine of European cooperation, together with Germany. The country's political instability is making that harder, especially with a still flailing new German Chancellor, Friedrich Merz.

France's troubles are also being used by the US in its fight with Europe. The argument that Macron will be "out of office soon" and hence is not important anymore has been employed by **Trump** in recent days to undermine the French position, both on Greenland and on his Board of Peace.

Trump and his MAGA allies are trying to shift the conversation to what will happen after the 2027 presidential elections, with the implication that a right-wing victory is all but assured.

This would then, in their telling, nullify whatever steps Macron is taking now to make Europe more resilient, including in the realm of defence.

More importantly, a RN president would be the final nail in the coffin of the EU, in the telling of one-time Trump whisperer Steve Bannon.

"France is in the process of freeing itself from Macronism; it is time to break with Macron's Europe as well" - Bardella

The RN is not fully reciprocating, at times distancing itself carefully from Bannon and his ilk, but the relationship has not been entirely sundered.

The US has reportedly weighed sanctioning the judges involved in the embezzlement trial of **Marine Le Pen**, who was then barred from running for political office for the next five years. Le Pen is now **appealing**.

And just this week a senior French magistrate said that the American embassy had sent people to ask her to intervene to get the charges against Le Pen dropped.

The American narrative that Macron is on the way out and will be inevitably followed by an RN president, whether Le Pen or Bardella, is embraced by the party itself.

Already in 2024, in an interview with *Le Parisien* newspaper, Le Pen said she was preparing for early presidential elections and that Macron was “finished”.

She stated that was not only true in France but also internationally. “He has angered everyone. He has no more influence in the European Union.”

Bardella too has made the link between Macron’s domestic weakness and his European visions, in a post on X: “France is in the process of freeing itself from Macronism; it is time to break with Macron’s Europe as well.”

Undermining Europe from within

Yet, France’s 5th Republic constitution leaves wide-ranging powers on foreign and defence policy in the hands of the president. This is the legacy, among others, of Charles de Gaulle, whose mantle Le Pen and Bardella now seek to usurp.

Bardella’s vehement defence of Greenland against American encroachment fits in with the Gaullist insistence that the continent

should not submit itself to US dominance.

A Member of the European Parliament for the RN, **Bardella** even went so far as to call in Strasbourg for the EU to “activate its anti-coercion instruments without delay”.



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Whatever the merits of that strategy, it’s a bit rich coming from a deputy and a party who have consistently accused Brussels of anti-democratic overreach.

As with the comments by the AfD’s Alice Weidel in Germany, the condemnations of Trump’s threats sound somewhat false and self-interested. It almost provides the far-right with too good an opportunity to show they’re European patriots.

While criticism of EU institutions and Ursula von der Leyen is certainly legitimate, the goal of both AfD, RN and related movements remains to undermine the EU as much as possible.

The RN is not the only party to disguise this by harking back to the supposedly Gaullist vision of a Europe of states, not as a supranational power.

This ignores, though, that De Gaulle very purposefully, in his 1962 comments, added “right now” to his verdict.

The situation has by now drastically changed, and a true Gaullist vision would be much more aligned with his efforts to make Europe less dependent on the US and other powers.

In a 2024 interview with *El País*, Le Pen admitted her continuing Euroscepticism, despite having pulled back from demanding a 'Frexit'.

"I am deeply Euroskeptic. I am not against Europe, but I consider the way it currently operates to be anti-democratic, anti-national and completely contrary to the sovereignty of nations."

This is more or less how a lot of European MAGA fellow travellers nowadays formulate their stance. They'll no longer pull out of Europe but will just undermine it from within.

More moderate nationalists, such as supposedly Italy's Giorgia Meloni and Belgium's Bart de Wever, have by now completed a remarkably similar journey towards respectability.

France's RN is trying very hard to gain admittance to this ostensibly more moderate, and hence government-worthy, club, and Trump's Greenland remarks offer it another rhetorical device to achieve this.