

Weekly Commentary 31-A

The three political leaders who committed hara-kiri – Part 2

The sorry episode over the weekend in which three leaders who did not know their own electorates is not over. We will update with the latest news through this additional commentary today.

What happened? Biden claimed a couple of days ago that only The Almighty can cause him to give up the bid to run for re-election. Well, God acts in strange ways and if you figure that now prominent Democrats are calling on him to stand down, I have no doubt that he will be forced to do so. Follow the money. The big donors don't want this decrepit old man to be their standard bearer. So the pressure is on. I think that Biden will step down before the end of this week. This is after his eagerness to prove he is not mentally degenerate, which led him to do an interview with George Stephanopolis, and while he did not completely lose it, like he did in the debate against Trump ten days ago, he was not able to show that he was a spring chicken and sparkling with energy. Like me, most observers were unimpressed. That led to more Democratic calls for him to end his re-election bid.

In France, Macron is now totally discredited. No, he did not bounce back. He is still president but with the second round of the parliamentary elections completed last night, he now has to share power in a situation created entirely by his arrogance. The French parliamentary elections occur in two steps and this is like Macro being slapped twice for the same mistake. Last weekend, he found out that his party lost its majority to the Far Right, and this last Sunday he discovered that a coalition of Left parties slapped him on the other cheek. How humiliating. Worse still, for his country, it is likely that there will be a period of uncertainty ahead when centrist parties are forced to run helter skelter left and right and are unlikely to agree on anything. Or govern...

Only in the UK have things begun to settle down. But this does not mean that the Labour Party would be able to use its huge majority to do good for the UK. This is largely because, the voter turnout was the lowest in about a century. It is NOT a mandate to launch bold initiatives on the economy, healthcare, immigration and bread and butter issues that got the Tories sacked. This reflects that the electorate is totally pissed with the political class and Labour is likely on notice that they had better not screw up and then end up like the Tories in the next election. In other words, Labour did not really win; what had happened was that the Tories lost and created a political vacuum.

As usual, I will review what the mainstream media have to say about the three situations above with my **emphasis in red**. This is to give this the proper context in which I will analyse what will happen next. My conclusions will be written in the final paragraphs on this commentary (**also in red**).

The US election, from the NYTimes:

Should Biden End His 2024 Campaign? What Prominent Democrats Are Saying

By [June Kim](#), [Blacki Migliozi](#), [K.K. Rebecca Lai](#), [Neil Vigdor](#) and [Lily Boyce](#)

Updated July 7, 2024, 4:15 PM ET

The angst among Democrats over President Biden's debate performance is intensifying, with some party members voicing concern about his candidacy and some others urging him to withdraw. A growing number of donors and business leaders have added to the pressure by calling on Mr. Biden to drop out, with some threatening to withhold dollars.

The situation is threatening to divide the party ahead of its national convention next month in Chicago, where Mr. Biden is scheduled to accept the Democratic nomination. Here is what Democratic politicians have said so far.

Said Biden should step aside (The Nay-sayers)

Angie Craig

Representative, Minnesota

"I do not believe that the President can effectively campaign and win against Donald Trump." [July 6](#)

Lloyd Doggett

Representative, Texas

"The need for him to step aside is more urgent tonight than when I first called for it on Tuesday." [July 5](#)

Mike Quigley

Representative, Illinois

"I would say: Mr. President, your legacy is set. We owe you the greatest debt of gratitude. The only thing that you can do now to cement that for all time and prevent utter catastrophe is to step down and let someone else do this." [July 5](#)

"It has to be his decision. We have to be honest with ourselves. It wasn't just a horrible night." [July 2](#)

Seth Moulton

Representative, Massachusetts

"President Biden has done enormous service to our country, but now is the time for him to follow in one of our founding father, George Washington's footsteps and step aside to let new leaders rise up and run against Donald Trump." [July 4](#)

"I deeply respect President Biden and all the great things he has done for America, but I have grave concerns about his ability to defeat Donald Trump." [July 3](#)

Raúl M. Grijalva

Representative, Arizona

"What he needs to do is shoulder the responsibility for keeping that seat — and part of that responsibility is to get out of this race." [July 3](#)

Marianne Williamson

2024 Democratic presidential candidate

"The time is now for another Democratic candidate to take his place on the November ballot." [July 2](#)

Julián Castro

Former Housing and Urban Development secretary

“Another Democrat would have a better shot at beating Trump.” [July 2](#)

Tim Ryan

Former Representative, Ohio

“After deep reflection over these past few days, I strongly believe that our best path forward is Kamala Harris.” [July 1](#)

Tom Harkin

Former Senator, Iowa

“I think the president should step aside and let the convention pick a new candidate.” [June 30](#)*

R.T. Rybak

Former D.N.C. vice chair

“It is absolutely not too late to pick a new candidate.” [June 30](#)

Expressed concern (the Fence Sitters)

Adam Schiff

Representative, California

“The performance on the debate stage I think rightfully raised questions among the American people about whether the President has the vigor to defeat Donald Trump. And this is an existential risk.” [July 7](#)

Maura Healey

Governor, Massachusetts

“Over the coming days, I urge him to listen to the American people and carefully evaluate whether he remains our best hope to defeat Donald Trump.” [July 5](#)

Ro Khanna

Representative, California

“I expect complete transparency from the White House about this issue and a willingness to answer many legitimate questions from the media and voters about his capabilities.” [July 5](#)

Gerald E. Connolly

Representative, Virginia

“I don’t think we know that yet.” [July 5](#), answering the question of whether Biden still gives his party the best chance to win in November.

Chris Pappas

Representative, New Hampshire

“People are disappointed with what they saw last week. And I think it’s up to President Biden to answer what kind of path he can be on for the future — to restore confidence, or to pass the torch.” [July 4](#)

Jared Huffman

Representative, California

“We need a course correction. We’ve got to acknowledge that this was not just one bad night.” [July 4](#)

David Walters

Former governor of Oklahoma

“He may be operating at 100 percent capacity. But 14 months into this 18-month campaign, the campaign is losing this argument.” [July 4](#)

Katie Porter

Representative, California

“This White House is going to have to be way less insular than they have been.” [July 3](#)

Scott Peters

Representative, California

“The question just now is, is this a candidate who can win the election? Because as much as I love Joe Biden, in those swing states, he’s having a hard time.” [July 3](#)

Debbie Dingell

Representative, Michigan

“President Biden has got to go out there, and in a sustained basis, show he has the stamina and can do the job.” [July 3](#)

Summer Lee

Representative, Pennsylvania

“People are worried. And we need our strongest, our brightest, our bravest to step up and start to take the reins right now.” [July 3](#)

Jake Auchincloss

Representative, Massachusetts

“We have strong people, not just the top of the ticket, but around the ticket, who can be strong surrogates.” [July 3](#)

Ann McLane Kuster

Representative, New Hampshire

“In order to respond to our constituents’ concerns, we need to demonstrate that the president is fit not just for the job, but for the campaign.” [July 3*](#)

Nancy Pelosi

Representative, California

“I think it is a legitimate question to say is this an episode or is this a condition?” [July 2](#)

Greg Landsman

Representative, Ohio

“The question is can he effectively prosecute the case against Trump.” [July 2*](#)

Don Davis

Representative, North Carolina

“If he is going to stay in, he needs to step up.” [July 2](#)

Marie Gluesenkamp Perez

Representative, Washington

“We all saw what we saw. You can’t undo that.” [July 2*](#)

Jared Golden

Representative, Maine

“In 2025, I believe Trump is going to be in the White House.” [July 2](#)

Sheldon Whitehouse

Senator, Rhode Island

“Like a lot of people, I was pretty horrified.” [July 1](#)*

Peter Welch

Senator, Vermont

“I really do criticize the campaign for a dismissive attitude towards people who are raising questions for discussion.” [July 1](#)

Hillary Scholten

Representative, Michigan

“We have heard concerns from people who saw the president on Thursday night. I felt concerned and raised those concerns.” [July 1](#)

Jamie Raskin

Representative, Maryland

“We’re having a serious conversation about what to do.” [June 30](#)*

Expressed support (the Ass-Kissers)

John Fetterman

Senator, Pennsylvania

“Joe Biden is our guy.” [July 5](#)

Shri Thanedar

Representative, Michigan

“I’m fully behind President Biden.” [July 5](#)

Haley Stevens

Representative, Michigan

“I am a hundred percent with the Biden-Harris ticket, and I’m standing by our president.” [July 4](#)

Gavin Newsom

Governor, California

“Joe Biden’s had our back. Now it’s time to have his.” [July 3](#)

Kathy Hochul

Governor, New York

“President Joe Biden is in it to win it, and all of us said we pledged our support to him.” [July 3](#)

Roy Cooper

Governor, North Carolina

“President Biden told us he is definitely running for re-election, he is our nominee and we’ll continue doing everything we can to deliver North Carolina for him.” [July 3](#)

Phil Murphy

Governor, New Jersey

“He is our nominee for President and I’m going to do everything I can to ensure he beats Trump.” [July 3](#)

Wes Moore

Governor, Maryland

“I know President Biden has Maryland’s back, so I’ve got his.” [July 3](#)

Josh Green

Governor, Hawaii

“I suspect people will need to see the president in person and on TV to be convinced he is up to it. He is.” [July 3](#)

John Carney

Governor, Delaware

“He’s our guy. He’s our nominee.” [July 3](#)

Robert Garcia

Representative, California

“The person to defeat Donald Trump is going to be the Joe Biden, Kamala Harris ticket.” [July 3*](#)

J. B. Pritzker

Governor, Illinois

“Joe Biden is going to be our nominee, unless he decides otherwise.” [July 2](#)

Chuck Schumer

Senator, New York

“I’m with Joe Biden.” [July 2](#)

Sheila Jackson Lee

Representative, Texas

“I stand unapologetically with President Biden, because no, he should not drop out. We must not lose focus.” [July 2](#)

Jaime Harrison

D.N.C. Chairman

“This ain’t the West Wing ... we have had a process, millions voted for Joe Biden and we have our nominee!” [July 2](#)

Gretchen Whitmer

Governor, Michigan

“I am proud to support Joe Biden as our nominee and I am behind him 100 percent in the fight to defeat Donald Trump.” [July 1](#)

Katie Hobbs

Governor, Arizona

“As the president himself has said, don’t compare him to the almighty, compare him to the alternative. And by that metric, the choice is abundantly clear in this race.” [June 30](#)

Raphael Warnock

Senator, Georgia

“Absolutely not.” [June 30](#), answering a question about whether Biden should step aside.

Chris Coons

Senator, Delaware

“The only Democrat who has ever beaten Donald Trump is Joe Biden. He is our candidate for November.” [June 30](#)

Hakeem Jeffries

Representative, New York

“A setback is nothing more than a setup for a comeback.” [June 30](#)

Tony Evers

Governor, Wisconsin

“One debate doesn’t change how President Biden has delivered for Wisconsin over the last three and a half years. I supported President Biden four years ago, and I support him still today.” [June 28*](#)

Tim Walz

Governor, Minnesota

“And I think the American people understand that this president has delivered. There’s a lot of folks supporting him.” [June 28](#)

John Hickenlooper

Senator, Colorado

“President Biden has my full confidence as president and if he chooses to remain in the race, he’ll have my full support.” [June 28](#)

Jack Reed

Senator, Rhode Island

“It’s a difference between a bad initial debate and a very bad presidency, which Donald Trump can claim.” [June 28](#)

Bernie Sanders

Senator, Vermont

“I’ll do my best to get him elected.” [June 28](#)

Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Representative, Florida

“I am confident that Joe Biden will keep America’s economy humming, create millions of jobs, and will fiercely protect Social Security, Medicare and our basic freedoms and democracy.” [June 28](#)

Jason Crow

Representative, Colorado

“The president has a great record to run on.” [June 28](#)

Pete Buttigieg

Secretary of Transportation

“Joe Biden’s presidency has been among the most productive and successful in American history.” [June 28](#)

The NYT has this to say, separately in a related article:

Doubts remain after Biden interview

The California Democrat urged Biden to get input from those outside his inner circle.

By [ANTHONY ADRAGNA](#)

07/07/2024 11:21 AM EDT

Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) said President Joe Biden’s interview with ABC News did not assuage concerns about his continued ability to defeat former President Donald

Trump and urged the incumbent to seek outside input on whether to continue his reelection bid.

The comments, made to NBC's "Meet the Press," are hardly a vote of confidence from one of the most vigorous prosecutors of Trump's conduct during his presidency and the likely next senator from California.

"Given Joe Biden's incredible record — given Donald Trump's terrible record — he should be mopping the floor with Donald Trump," Schiff said. "It should not be even close. And there's only one reason it is close, and that's the president's age."

Schiff noted the president's debate performance "rightfully raised questions among the American people about whether the President has the vigor to defeat Donald Trump," calling the election "existential" for the future of U.S. democracy.

The California Democrat is one of the party's most visible faces and a prodigious fundraiser.

Biden should go beyond his immediate circle of family members and close aides to solicit input from people "some distance and objectivity" about his viability in the campaign, Schiff argued. "He should take a moment to make the best informed judgment, and if the judgment is run, then run hard and beat that SOB," he said, referencing an expletive.

The president's ultimate decision will have impacts for Democrats up and down the ballot, Schiff argued, since "you can only run so far ahead of the president" if he continues to struggle as recent polls have suggested Biden will.

Schiff also offered praise for Vice President Kamala Harris were Biden to stand down, saying she "would be a phenomenal president" and could "very well could win overwhelmingly" against Trump.

OPINION FROM THE NYTIMES

MAUREEN DOWD

Joe Biden's Blind Spot

July 6, 2024

By [Maureen Dowd](#) The NYTimes

Opinion Columnist, reporting from Washington

King Lear gave up power too early. President Biden will give it up too late.

And that is Joe's tragedy.

Unlike Biden, Lear had a loyal lord who was willing to tell him the truth. When the old king disinherits his good daughter and divides the kingdom between his maleficent daughters, the Earl of Kent tries to tell Lear he's bollixing everything up:

“What wouldst thou do, old man? Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak, When power to flattery bows?” Lear, swayed by his bad daughters' sycophancy, screams at Kent, “Out of my sight!”

Kent urges the king to “see better.”

Some eyes get plucked out in “Lear,” but the play is really a lesson about inner blindness, the way power can occlude the ability to see yourself, and the world. A lack of self-knowledge in a leader can lead to ruin.

And that is where we are with President Biden. His *raison d'être* for running, at 81, is stopping Donald Trump, a mendacious scofflaw who will become even more incorrigible with the egregious decisions of his radical Supreme Court and his own age spiral.

But **Biden's contention that he alone can beat Trump was never true. And now he has lost some moral high ground because he hid the evidence of cognitive deterioration.**

Trump is the master con man, but Biden is giving him a run for his money.

He, his wife, his vice president and his longtime aides worked hard to conjure a mirage where everything is fine in Bidenworld.

That mirage vanished with the debate.

We don't know now who is running the country. We only know who shouldn't be — the president and the former president.

Republican lawmakers cravenly failed to stop Trump after Jan. 6. In the days after the debate, most Democratic lawmakers have shied away from being honest with Biden.

We now know that Biden aides have painted over every scene with a Panglossian brush, creating a picture at odds with what the rest of the world was seeing.

They bumbled with praise for the president's back-to-back-to-back performances in Normandy, the splashy L.A. fund-raiser and the Group of 7 summit in Italy. Odd moments of vagueness with the president, when people grabbed his arm to orient him, were dismissed as misinterpretations.

But I was in Paris that week of the Normandy anniversary, and some Macron advisers and European officials were alarmed at Biden's foggy mien, at his moments of not seeming to know where he was.

I feel like a hostage to Joe's ego — and the chip on his shoulder. I can have a president fighting for women to control their own bodies as long as I don't care that Biden isn't sharp enough to serve until he is 86.

He can handle an Annie Leibovitz photo shoot. But he has to stall for two weeks before having a live White House news conference to reassure those freaked out by his brain freezes at the debate — and his acknowledgment afterward to donors that he “almost fell asleep” at the lectern.

As Reid Epstein and Maggie Haberman reported in *The Times*, the president told the Democratic governors on Wednesday night that he needs to sleep more and work less.

Alex Thompson of Axios, who has been breaking news of top aides’ stage-managing minutiae — Biden’s sleep schedule, his orthopedic shoes, his shift to a lower door with a shorter staircase to board Air Force One — [revealed](#) that the president is “dependably engaged” only from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Yet, on Friday, the Biden campaign outlined an “aggressive travel schedule,” trying to prove he can still handle the job.

Biden is in denial and few are willing to tell him, with his every syllable being parsed, that he is sliding to even more humiliation.

The Democrats should give the public what it wants. Voters have said they’d like fresh, exciting voices and a broader choice than Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

Senator Mark Warner is trying to corral other Democratic senators to tell Biden to be the bridge he promised to be.

Let’s open the convention and check out all the Democratic stars.

As for those who say the nomination should be Harris’s by right, James Carville thinks competition would give her a chance to gain the cred that has eluded her as vice president. Even her booster, Representative James Clyburn, said that if Biden passes the baton, there should be a mini-primary before the convention.

And in this election, many think that it would help to have a candidate who can’t be cast as part of the coastal elite.

For decades, Biden was loquacious. But his voice has receded. His staff told him to curb his logorrhea. Later, the inner circle let him do very few interviews and no challenging ones. Biden began sometimes falling into a soft mumble in meetings, or trailing off. The crimped word count is a sign that it’s time to stop charging forward.

Biden told George Stephanopoulos of ABC News on Friday that he would get out only if the Lord Almighty told him to. When asked how he would feel if his defiance threw the race to Trump, Biden said: “As long as I gave it my all and I did the good as job as I know I can do, that’s what this is about.”

But it’s not, not when Biden says that Trump is “a one-man crime wave” and “the biggest threat to our democracy in American history.” It’s time for the president to “see better.”

It is quite clear that Biden and his Almighty has not figured Trump out. Trump is now ahead and if Biden does not quit, he will lose.

The continuing French saga...according to the NYTimes:

French Election Yields Deadlock as Left Surges and Far Right Comes Up Short

The outcome left no party with an absolute majority and France bracing for potential political paralysis.

By [Roger Cohen](#)

Reporting from Paris

July 7, 2024 Updated 10:18 p.m. ET

France faced a hung parliament and deep political uncertainty after the three main political groups of the left, center and right emerged from snap legislative elections on Sunday with large shares of the vote but nothing approaching an absolute majority.

The preliminary results upended widespread predictions of a clear victory for the National Rally, Marine Le Pen's anti-immigrant party that dominated the first round of voting a week ago. Instead, the left-wing New Popular Front won 178 seats.

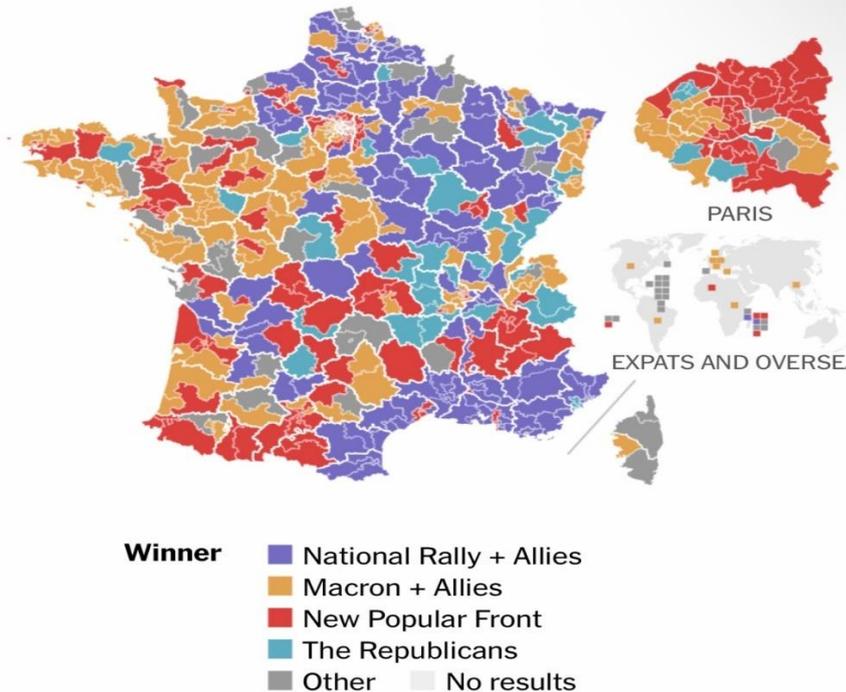
The centrist coalition of President Emmanuel Macron, who cast the country into turmoil a month ago by calling the election, was in second place with 150 seats. Trailing it was the National Rally and its allies, which took 142 seats.

The results were compiled by The New York Times using data from the Interior Ministry, and they confirmed earlier projections showing that no single party or bloc would win a majority.

577 of 577 constituencies reporting

Results by constituency

577 of 577 constituencies reporting



Source: Ministry of the Interior

By Matthew Bloch, Andrew Park, Urvashi Uberoy and Véronique Brossier

The details of the outcome may still shift, but it is clear that, to a remarkable degree, a scramble by centrists and the left to form a “Republican front” to confront the National Rally in the second round of voting worked. Candidates across France dropped out of three-way races and called for unity against Ms. Le Pen’s party.

“The president now has the duty to call the New Popular Front to govern,” said Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the far-left leader who is the charismatic but polarizing voice of the left-wing alliance. “We are ready.”

But **France looked near ungovernable**, with the Paris Olympics about to open in less than three weeks. The left surged, the National Rally added dozens of seats to its presence in the National Assembly, and Mr. Macron’s party suffered a stinging defeat, with the 250 seats held by his party and its allies in the National Assembly cut by about a third.

The result was that in the sharply divided lower house of Parliament, where most legislative power resides, no governing coalition appeared immediately conceivable, with Mr. Macron’s centrists squeezed between far-right and far-left groups that detest each other and him.

Jordan Bardella, the protégé of Ms. Le Pen who led the National Rally to victory in European Parliament elections and the first round of legislative voting last month, called the deals that frustrated its push for an absolute majority “an alliance of the dishonorable” and said **Mr. Macron had condemned France to “uncertainty and instability.”**

Even with fewer seats than predicted, the National Rally has now assumed a place in French politics that erased a postwar political landscape built around the idea that the far right’s history of overt racism and antisemitism made it unworthy of positions of power.

Ms. Le Pen has disavowed that past. But even in its rebranded form, the party’s core message remains that immigrants dilute a glorified French national identity and that tighter borders and stricter regulations are needed to keep them out or prevent them from benefiting from the French social safety net.

France rejected that vision, but voted overwhelmingly for change. It did not want more of the same. It sent a stinging message to the pro-business elites gathered around Mr. Macron, who is term-limited and must leave office in 2027.

“France is more divided than ever,” said Alain Duhamel, a prominent political scientist and author. “We have learned it was a very bad idea for Mr. Macron to dissolve Parliament and call this election.”

At a time when a faltering President Biden is struggling to counter the nationalist America First message of former President Donald J. Trump, protracted French political limbo could add to an unstable international situation. Long close to Russia, Ms. Le Pen has tried to recast herself as a guarded supporter of Ukraine, but there is no question that Moscow will welcome the National Rally’s growing influence.

The New Popular Front campaigned on a platform that would raise France’s monthly minimum wage, lower the legal retirement age to 60 from 64, reintroduce a wealth tax and freeze the price of energy and gas. Instead of cutting immigration, as the National Rally vowed, the alliance said it would make the asylum process more generous and smooth.

The platform said the alliance was supportive of Ukraine’s fight for freedom against Russia, and called for President Vladimir V. Putin to “answer for his crimes before international justice.”

How exactly the alliance’s economic program would be financed at a time when France faces a ballooning budget deficit, and how a pro-immigration policy would be applied in a country where it is perhaps the most sensitive issue, was unclear.

The New Popular Front, which is sharply divided between moderate socialists and the far left, did very well among young people in the first round of voting, and in the projects heavily populated by North African immigrants around major cities, including Paris.

The ardently pro-Palestinian stance of Mr. Mélenchon proved popular in these areas, even as it caused outrage when he appeared to cross a line into antisemitism, accusing Yaël Braun-Pivet, the Jewish president of the National Assembly, of “camping out in Tel Aviv to encourage the massacre.” He said of a large demonstration last November against antisemitism that “the friends of unconditional support of the massacre have their rendezvous.”

Nothing had obliged Mr. Macron to call the snap election, but he was ready to gamble he could still be a unifying figure against the extremes. In fact, he had lost the allure to do so over seven years in office. He declared left and right to be obsolete labels when he came to power in 2017. They no longer are.

Still, Mr. Macron’s centrist alliance did better than expected at the last and he lived to fight another day.

Mr. Macron now appears to have two options, excluding resignation, which he has vowed he will not contemplate.

The first is to try to build a broad coalition that might stretch from the left to what remains of moderate Gaullist conservatives, some of whom broke a taboo during the campaign by aligning with the National Rally.

This possibility seems remote. Mr. Macron has made no secret of his intense dislike for Mr. Mélenchon; the feeling is reciprocated.

The second, less ambitious option would be for Mr. Macron to try to form some sort of caretaker government to handle current business.

Mr. Macron might, for example, ask former prime ministers from parties across a centrist bloc — his own, the Socialists, the center-right Republicans — to suggest a government of technocrats or prominent personalities who could deal with a restricted agenda over the next year.

Under the Constitution, at least a year must elapse before the next parliamentary election.

One area where Mr. Macron may still be able to exert considerable influence, more than if he had been forced into a “cohabitation” with Mr. Bardella as prime minister, is international and military affairs, the traditional preserve of the president in the Fifth Republic.

An ardent supporter of the 27-nation European Union, which the National Rally wants to weaken, he will no doubt pursue his push for a “Europe power” with more integrated armies, defense industries and technological research, but his clout may be lessened by domestic weakness.

Mr. Macron, once tempted by a rapprochement with Mr. Putin, has also become an outspoken supporter of Ukraine’s fight for its freedom. **With the American presidential election just four months away, doubts have grown over the willingness of the West to continue arming and funding Ukraine.**

Russia clearly believes France will wobble. “The people of France are seeking a sovereign foreign policy that serves their national interests & a break from the dictate of Washington & Brussels,” the Russian foreign ministry said in statement a few days ago. “French officials won’t be able to ignore these profound shifts in the attitudes of the vast majority of citizens.”

France, in short, faces great uncertainty, both internally and externally. It appears that a constitutional crisis cannot be ruled out over the coming months. Gabriel Attal, the outgoing centrist prime minister who offered his resignation Sunday, declared that “tonight no absolute majority can be controlled by the extremes thanks to our determination and values.”

He was claiming a small victory, but of course the center does not have any such majority either.

Unlike many other European countries, including Belgium, Italy and Germany, France has no tradition of monthslong negotiation to form convoluted coalition governments between parties of divergent views, or of making caretaker alliances. Indeed, Charles de Gaulle designed the Fifth Republic in 1958 to put an end to the parliamentary turmoil and short-lived governments of the Fourth Republic.

One theory offered for Mr. Macron’s mysterious decision to call the election was that, with the National Rally governing and Mr. Bardella as prime minister, the sheen would have come off the far right party before the presidential election in 2027.

It was another gamble based on the idea that it is easier to rail from the margins than to make difficult governmental decisions. Mr. Macron does not want to hand the keys to the Élysée Palace, the seat of the presidency, to Ms. Le Pen three years from now.

In this sense, the election result may confound Mr. Macron and benefit Ms. Le Pen. She has demonstrated her growing popularity without her party assuming the burdens of office. On the other hand, an ingrained French resistance to the idea of power passing to the far right was once again illustrated.

And in the UK...

This Trump Supporter Helped Crush the U.K.’s Conservative Party
Nigel Farage got his first parliamentary victory in eight attempts

[By Max Colchester](#) and [David Luhnow](#)

July 7, 2024 1:32 pm ET

LONDON—Nigel Farage, a leading figure behind Brexit and a longtime supporter of Donald Trump, set out last month with what many political analysts thought was a long-shot aim: Win millions of votes, get a seat in Parliament and destroy the ruling Conservative Party.

On Friday, Farage was in London celebrating. His upstart party Reform UK had won more than 14% of the total vote in Britain’s election last Thursday on an anti-immigration platform. The 60-year-old, who built a career protesting against the

establishment, will now sit in Parliament alongside four other Reform UK lawmakers—his first victory for Parliament in eight attempts.

His six-week campaign helped ensure that the Conservative Party lost scores of additional seats, suffering its worst defeat in its nearly 200-year history, and giving an even bigger majority to the center-left Labour Party, which was widely expected to win. Former U.S. President Trump quickly sent a message of congratulations to Farage: “Nigel is a man who truly loves his Country!”

For Farage, a cigarette-smoking populist, the vote establishes a bridgehead in Britain’s Parliament from which he can launch the next stage of his strategy—professionalize his protest campaign to try a takeover of the right-wing of British politics and become prime minister when elections are next held by 2029. His campaign saw millions of mostly working-class voters switch from Tory to Reform UK.

“Let the Conservative Party tear themselves apart as they are going to do in opposition,” he said Friday.

After 14 years in power, the Conservative Party faces its biggest election defeat ever. WSJ’s Max Colchester explains what the world can expect from Keir Starmer, Britain’s incoming prime minister.

Farage’s strong showing in the election comes at a time when far-right parties across much of Europe are making big gains, especially in France, where Marine Le Pen’s National Rally won the first round of parliamentary elections last weekend, taking about a third of the vote, and hopes for a similar result in the second round on Sunday. Germany’s AfD recently came in second place in European elections, beating the governing center-left party.

Reform UK’s immediate effect will be to fuel what will likely prove a bruising battle within the Conservative Party and more broadly on the right-wing of British politics over how best to challenge the left. The Tories are embarking on a leadership contest to replace outgoing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who has said he will stay on as party leader for a few months until a successor can be picked. The Tories face a difficult choice: whether to embrace Farage, try to compete against him and woo his supporters by promising a harder line on immigration, or reject him outright and try to appeal to centrist voters.

“It’s really a nightmare scenario for the Conservatives,” said Matthew Goodwin, a politics professor at the University of Kent. “It’s not at all clear how they get out of this or whether they can survive as a viable political party.”

Others think Reform will have a more difficult time shaking things up. Some parliaments across Europe have proportional representation that gives a bigger voice to smaller parties, making it easier for populist insurgencies to gain momentum, said Tony Travers, a political professor at the London School of Economics. The U.K.’s system gives seats only to the outright winners in each district, called “first past the post.” That means Reform may have won 14% of the vote but got just five seats out of 650.

There is another, crucial difference, Travers said: Both the National Rally in France and AfD have been decades in the making. Farage, however, has had a tendency to explode onto the British political scene and then retreat. Farage is like a “comet that occasionally appears in the sky. It doesn’t stay in the sky all the time, whereas National Rally is there permanently as a feature of French politics,” said Travers. Even as the U.K. campaign started in late May, Farage took a few days to decide whether he would take part or focus on Trump’s campaign instead.

Farage didn’t immediately reply to a request for comment.

The British election, on its surface, was an endorsement for the center left. The Labour Party, under Keir Starmer, romped home with one of the biggest parliamentary majorities in its history on a pledge to run the country better.

But dig deeper and a more fractured picture emerges. Surveys show roughly **half of Britons say they hardly ever trust parties to put the country’s interests above their own**—a far higher rate than just a few years ago. Thursday’s vote had the second-lowest turnout since 1885, with voters staying away from the polls, unexcited by the political options on offer. It also saw a much more splintered vote. Labour won only a third of ballots cast, while the Tories won only 24% of the vote. The rest were spread across a range of smaller parties offering more radical solutions. Four lawmakers were elected on a pro-Gaza platform capitalizing on Labour’s support for Israel. The pro-environmentalist Green Party also got four seats.

Reform UK scooped up older, working-class voters, many of whom voted for Brexit and are skeptical about immigration. In 2019, then Conservative leader Boris Johnson won these voters over with a pledge to “Get Brexit Done.” But by 2024, many of these voters felt disillusioned. Brexit hadn’t stopped immigration, which under the Tories rose to record highs in 2022 and 2023. Nor did it insulate them from the global economic shocks of the pandemic or the war in Ukraine.

“I want this Sunak out. And Starmer, I don’t think he’ll be any better,” said Anthony Hughes, 77 years old, who voted Reform in the latest election.

Analysis of the results shows how Reform UK won over a big chunk of right-leaning working-class voters. Compared to a previous iteration of the party called the Brexit Party, Reform UK votes rose by 16 percentage points in seats that the Conservatives were defending—twice the swing achieved in seats that Labour was defending, according to pollster John Curtice. The Tory vote fell by 12 points in less strongly pro-Brexit seats but fell nearly 30 points in the most staunchly pro-Brexit areas, said Goodwin, the professor.

A former commodities trader, Farage helped co-found the UK Independence Party and won a seat to the European Parliament in 1999, helped by proportional representation. He used his seat as a springboard for becoming an outspoken and colorful critic of all things European Union, once saying a top EU official had the “charisma of a wet rag” and the “appearance of a low-grade bank clerk.” His notoriety helped draw attention to his euroskeptic cause.

Back in 2010, former Tory leader David Cameron called Farage supporters “fruitcakes and loonies.” But as growing numbers of Tory voters went to UKIP and some of his

own party defected, Cameron then promised a referendum on membership in the EU. Cameron fought against Brexit and lost. In 2019, the Tories promised a total divorce with the EU, and Farage agreed not to run in that election. The Tories got a huge majority.

One of the reasons Sunak called a surprise vote for this summer was in the hope that it would catch Farage off guard and he wouldn't be able to get a campaign together.

Now, Sunak finds himself out of 10 Downing Street. The right-wing of his party, led by Suella Braverman, a former home secretary, has hinted that the party needs to embrace Farage and even welcome him into their party.

Others aren't convinced and say that the only way to win again is to tack back to the center ground and try to convince middle-class voters to back Conservatism.

Reform UK's campaign was blighted by undercover reporting showing Farage campaigners making racist comments. Farage has said now that he is in Parliament, he can better vet his candidates and professionalize his operation.

Farage also said the West provoked the war in Ukraine, causing even the conservative media to question him. Farage has stood by his remarks, but said that he "is not an apologist or supporter of Putin."

(The political class in the collective west is probably at its most divisive phase in its recent history. The G7, EU and NATO organizations are in name only. None of them can act in unison.

Firstly, the two parties in the US are so embittered with each other that if someone tells me tomorrow that they have started a civil war there, I would not be surprised. What is clear is that Biden will lose in the Nov election and even the Democratic party thinks so, which may pull the rug from under the man, hence exacerbating the sharp divisions in the country. Up to now, it was just Maga vs the NeoCons; now there is a faction supporting Biden's re-election bid in a futile manner and another which wants him gone so that their Party can have a chance to defeat Trump. As I see it, it won't happen. Simply because Trump has shown that he is made of stronger mettle than the Democrats have made him out to be. And the electorate sees that in the man, after having gone through 2 impeachments over witch-hunts and more recently, court cases in which he has proven his innocence.

The fact of the matter is Trump is now justifiably more popular in the Red states and Republican circles than he has ever been. He was right about one thing. Ever since he was elected in 2016, he has been subjected to acts in which he was politically ostracized by the "swamp" within the Beltway. They did not see him as one of them, and they did everything they could to keep him out. And down.

But it did not work. Frankly, Trump was sabotaged in his presidency by the liberals and the mainstream media, especially the likes of CNN and MSNBC. And even after he was defeated by Biden in 2020, they keep up the lawfare against him until there were 92 charges stacked against him (actually there were just four and they were just double-counting), but it was a desperate act to get him convicted so that he has to

suffer the ignominy of being a felon, and lose his appeal to ordinary Americans. But it did not work. The more they lumped charges at him, the more popular he became. And it is obvious to most people in the electorate what Biden and the Democrats were trying to do – use lawfare to kill off political opposition. Trump may have been uncouth, but he did not even start a war. ...

So when Biden lost the debate ten days ago against his nemesis, Republicans thought it was a fitting turn of events. Now it is Joe who is under pressure. And if I am correct in my analysis, then Trump will be president again. And Biden may be fired ignominiously by his own party. For being too old...

In France, the country has become ungovernable because Macron was cocky. And thought too much of himself Born to lead??? Nah, his political career is over; even if he reemerges in some kind of super ambassadorial role, like being appointed into some EU or NATO leadership position like Mark Rutte or Jan Stoltenburg, it is over for him. Clearly, he cannot win votes in his own country anymore. He is a spent political force. And with his departure, the attempt to lead NATO into more wars against Russia, whether by sanctions or by military means will be diminished.

And the likes of Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and other idiots in the UK will have plenty of time to reflect upon their failures in leadership. The Brits told them all, rightly, on July 4, Fxxk Off! And took away their seats in Parliament. Man, this was a fitting end to how they had lorded over their country, as well as against Russia. And they dragged Ukraine, in league with the corrupt regime in Kyiv, into the greatest disaster since the end of the Soviet Union without any remorse. The aim to become Global Britain has floundered miserably, and all of these ex prime ministers would have to sit on their hands for the rest of their political lives. And leave it to more dynamic people like Nigel Farage to bring prosperity back to the UK.

The failure of all these three groups to sustain their militaristic hegemony in the world is a fantastic outcome, from the point of view of the Global Majority, and it fortuitously due to their catastrophic failures domestically. With Biden, Macron and the Tories (especially Boris J) gone, the EU and NATO will be weaker and far less ready to stir shit in the rest of the world.

Good riddance to bad characters!

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