

The collapse of the Republican Party

1-According to an IFOP poll for Marianne published on February 7, Emmanuel Macron would emerge victorious (30%) in the first round of an early presidential election, ahead of Marine Le Pen (27%), while the LR would be marginalized (8%). Considering the improbability of a victory for Marine Le Pen in the second round, when the "right total" is much higher than the left total, how can we draw a political portrait of a platform - a program - from the right that can bring this electorate together in order to win the presidential election?

The result of the IFOP survey dated February 7, 2019 is interesting in that its first lesson is the collapse of LR. The descent into hell, begun with the self-destruction of the party devoted to the leaders' war in 2017, is endless: if the figures are taken seriously, Laurent Wauquiez is on the way to joining Benoît Hamon, LR to become as weak as the PS. It is even necessary to add the fictitious scores of Hamon and Faure, to see that Wauquiez is lower than the sum of the candidates of a divided PS. It would be necessary to have more detailed data, but it is clear that the LR electorate is moving, in order: towards the white vote, towards Marine Le Pen, towards Emmanuel Macron, towards Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, towards JC-Lagarde. It is regrettable that the hypothesis of a new application from Asselineau has not been tested, but this does not change anything for the analysis here.

The second round hypothesis presented here shows both a considerable reduction in the gap between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen; but the president of the National Rally still seems unable to win, despite Emmanuel Macron's considerable weakening. At the same time it benefits from its new pragmatism regarding the euro; but it does not convince this fringe of the social order party that explains the President's current rise in polls. Marine Le Pen is constantly paying for its double erroneous choice: that of 2013, not to fully support the Manif for All; and that of 2017, the attempt to unite the populisms instead of taking advantage of its popular roots to try to rally to it a part of the right of savers and rentiers but also the creators of wealth and complete the construction of a large party of the popular, entrepreneurial and conservative right.

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2-One of the strong aspirations of the right-wing electorate is to regain control. Could a form of neo-Thatcherism, or an enlightened "trumpism", bring together a large part of this electorate?

Thatcherism is a thing of the past. It was right-wing in the sense that it was first and foremost an anti-socialism; but the movement weakened British conservatism because it reduced the division of British society into "two nations", to use Benjamin Disraeli's words. Trump is certainly more of a reference point - we do not dare to say a model, for fear of shocking the bourgeois electorate that it is a question of seducing. Trump succeeded in conquering the Republican Party from what could be called "peripheral America". To stay in the coordinates of the French right, we remember how Nicolas Sarkozy had sucked up some of the Lepenist votes in 2007; and his first round score in 2012 remains high (26%) even though some of the Lepenist electorate had gone back to the National Front, disappointed by the gap between the Sarkozy discourse on immigration control and the restoration of security in the suburbs and the reality on the ground. It is interesting to compare 2012 and 2017. In 2012, Sarkozy + Marine Le Pen accounted for 46% of the votes in the first round; while the total in 2017, Fillon + Marine Le Pen, in the first round, was only 40%. 2012 is the great missed opportunity for the consolidation of a French right that would have made Nicolas Sarkozy the precursor of Donald Trump. Whether we like it or not, it was the power of the Buisson line, in fact imperfectly assumed by Sarkozy. The French President of the time, in fact, never had the courage to face a desert crossing, not only in the media but also in the world, in the manner of Donald Trump. On the contrary, Sarkozy was obsessed with the "opening to the left", starting with the choice of ministers such as Bernard Kouchner. In doing so, he blurred his image in the working classes. His commitment to the fight against the crisis and the undeniable effectiveness of his action in several areas were not enough to convince the "deplorable" French people to vote for him again. However, it must be remembered from the Sarkozy experience that it is possible to rally part of the "Orleanistic" right to a major programme of popular, entrepreneurial and conservative right-wing alliance.

3-One of the weaknesses of the right seems to be that it has separated the world of ideas and the world of politics for too long. More than a providential figure, doesn't the right nowadays need intellectuals capable of rethinking the traditional message of the right within parties and to politicians?

What you describe is the choice made by Marion Maréchal, who chose, in 2017, not to stand for re-election to the National Assembly and to move towards what she calls "metapolitics". The former MP is proposing, in small touches, particularly through conferences abroad, the outlines of a French conservatism - in the sense that conservatism can have in the English-speaking world, that is, much broader than the mere question of moral and social order. It is for this purpose that it has created a school of political science. The ambition is to provide a platform for speakers, to have tools for disseminating ideas, but also to train new generations of political leaders, entrepreneurs and associations with solid analytical tools and principles of action. It is probably broader than meeting the need for intellectuals. It is good that there are academics, writers, intellectuals, but the intellectual is like the providential figure: the risk is to submit everything to questions of ego.

The left is also facing this challenge: it needs less leaders and intellectuals in the traditional sense than places where deputies, mayors, entrepreneurs and the

committed citizens of tomorrow are trained. The collapse of the SP and that of LR are exactly parallel, due to a lack of debate on ideas, knowledge of the world and its transformations. We need a big progressive party as well as a big Conservative party. This is deeply necessary for democratic life. And Emmanuel Macron's great failure, from this point of view, is not to have been able to give autonomy, a space of maturation to La République en Marche to make it a real political force, capable of helping it to renew itself and, also, no less importantly, to last beyond its presidency.
