



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 2, 2014

Amid Economy Disaster, French Socialists Get Crushed in Election

With France's economy falling apart even more quickly than its fellow European Union partners under the Big Government leadership of Socialist President Francois Hollande, the French went to the polls this weekend in local elections and voted for change — real change — in massive numbers. The rout was so monumental that the election day is being described as the government's "Black Sunday." Not only did Hollande's radical Socialist Party get crushed, losing more than 150 major towns mostly to the "right"-leaning opposition, analysts say the primary beneficiary of the landslide was probably the hysterically demonized anti-EU National Front.



When Hollande and his fellow socialists squeaked into power by a small margin in 2012, they made grandiose promises — vowing to seize even more wealth to redistribute from the "rich," hiking taxes on the "wealthy" to 75 percent, drowning businesses in ever-greater deluges of regulations, and more. Instead of resulting in a new utopia, however, the plans, as has been historically true of all socialist political endeavors, backfired, and big time. Among other problems, the policy shifts sparked soaring unemployment, huge numbers of business failures, record-setting plunges in foreign investment, as well as a [quickly-growing exodus](#) of wealthy, productive, and ambitious citizens to more liberty-friendly jurisdictions.

French voters, who were never particularly enamored with their Socialist Party rulers anyway, responded in Sunday's local elections with what is being described by some analysts as a "tsunami." Indeed, polls cited in media reports show that some 80 percent of French voters dislike Hollande, whose administration has been plagued with scandals beyond even the economic devastation it intensified. With former French President Nicolas Sarkozy's Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), traditionally the other establishment party, reeling from its own scandals, respected analysts said the election results largely reflect public fury with the entire French ruling establishment.

"What we are seeing is a Gallic shrug on a shuddering scale: a cynical, bitter, grumpy and yet faintly bored rejection of the entire political class," explained liberty-minded author Daniel Hannan, a pro-national sovereignty member of the European Parliament (MEP) with the surging U.K. Independence Party. "Can you blame them? Unemployment is over three million and there is no prospect of an economic recovery. Only 40 per cent of French people are in work of any kind.... The French state last ran a surplus in 1974. The money has run out."

In all, the Socialist Party, which often collaborated with UMP in the past to keep non-establishment parties out of power, lost control of 155 cities. Among those were some that had been under Socialist



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rule for over a century. Many of those jurisdictions elected the establishment “center-right” UMP party instead. Almost a dozen, though, fell to the anti-capitalist, anti-EU National Front (FN) party, which portrayed itself as the alternative to the ruling establishment. The FN also secured numerous seats on local councils across France. An estimated 40 percent of voters, meanwhile, stayed home from the polls — a new record widely interpreted as a reflection of disgust among the public with the political class.

While analysts were divided on how to interpret the election, virtually all agreed that the results were a dramatic rebuke of the increasingly unpopular Socialist Party and the government it runs. In fact, with front pages of even leftist newspapers acknowledging as much, even socialist politicians conceded that voters were upset and expressed their feelings at the polls. “This evening is a moment of truth,” said French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault with the ruling Socialists after results emerged. “There is no getting away from it: this vote is a defeat for the government ... and I take my part of the blame.”

However, Ayrault, who will be replaced by current Interior Minister Manuel Valls as part of a Cabinet restructuring announced by Hollande following the embarrassing results, appears to have missed the root cause of the voters’ wrath. “I think we have not done enough to explain that the recovery efforts undertaken since 2012 were essential for the future of our country,” he was quoted as saying, suggesting that voters simply did not understand the wisdom of socialist policies. He did acknowledge, though, that the vote, “as much on a local level as on the national level, is a defeat for the government and the majority.”

Responding to the blow, Hollande himself announced a “re-shuffle” of his government’s leadership while admitting that the public was clearly unhappy. Like Ayrault, though, he seems to have missed the point. “Not enough change, still too much slowness,” he was quoted as saying. “Not enough jobs, still too much unemployment. Not enough social justice, still too many taxes. Not enough efficiency in public action; and so, still too many questions about our country’s ability to make it, though it has so many assets.” While promising to make minor adjustments — reducing taxes, for example — he also vowed to continue moving forward with Socialist schemes.

Perhaps the only real bright spot for Hollande’s embattled massive-government party came from Paris, the capital, where Socialists managed to maintain control of local government. Hollande referred to the results there as “good news in an ocean of bad news.” The new mayor, Anne Hidalgo with the Socialist Party, who is being widely celebrated in press reports for becoming the first female to occupy the post, vowed to double down on Big Government ideology. “Mine was a victory for authenticity, a victory for a left loyal to its principles and effective at implementing them,” she was quoted as saying by AFP.

Grabbing headlines worldwide, meanwhile, was the emergence of the socially conservative National Front as a powerful contender in French politics. In 2008, the party had around 60 elected local councilors. After the latest election, the party, sometimes referred to (inaccurately) as “far right,” now has over 12,000, with some 15 of its candidates being elected as mayors — up from its previous record of three, held two decades ago. “We have moved on to a new level,” said Marine Le Pen, the party chief. “One has to take into account now, there’s a third major political force in our country.”

Describing the strong showing as a “glass ceiling” being “shattered,” Le Pen added, “no one can seriously deny this has been a huge victory for us.” However, while the establishment media in France and the United States portrayed National Front’s surge as a win for the “far right,” the reality is much more complex. The party used to be more free-market oriented under its previous leader, but in recent years has moved far to the left on economic issues, advocating and defending government control of healthcare, education, transportation, energy, and more.



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On the other hand, unlike the two establishment parties, the National Front also opposes the EU, unrestricted immigration, radical Islamism, the government's imposition of radical values, the controversial single "euro" currency, and other sacred tenants of the "mainstream" political class in France and much of Europe. In fact, those are among the primary reasons why voters have recently gravitated toward the party, which is now [working with other anti-EU parties across Europe](#) to form a pro-sovereignty coalition before the elections to the European Parliament.

Faced with the [increasingly radical imposition of social engineering](#), socially conservative movements in France and across Europe are growing quickly. Some commentators and officials are even pointing to the rise of a "Tea Party"-style movement among the French and in other European nations, which are facing extreme top-down "progressive" values imposed from Brussels and national capitals. Whether those forces can come together with [pro-sovereignty and free market-oriented forces](#) before upcoming EU elections to crush the generations-old establishment dream of a "progressive" federal Europe remains to be seen. If France offers any indications, though, it is a very real possibility.

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