



NO.
06

Newsletter

THE **FRENCH** DISPATCH

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THE HEAD-TO-HEAD DEBATE

On Wednesday night, the two finalists of the French Presidential election, the incumbent President Emmanuel Macron and his main contender, the far-right populist candidate Marine Le Pen, faced each other in the traditional second round head-to-head debate. Emmanuel Macron is seen to have mastered the debate but, contrary to their last head-to-head in 2017, Marine Le Pen's candidacy was not discredited. Advantage to Macron, yes, but the campaign is far from settled.

WHO CONVINCED MOST VIEWERS?

According to early polls, most followers believe that Emmanuel Macron won the debate.



39%
**MARINE
LE PEN**



61%
**EMMANUEL
MACRON**

Source: ELABE

SUBSTANCE, FORM, AND POSTURE

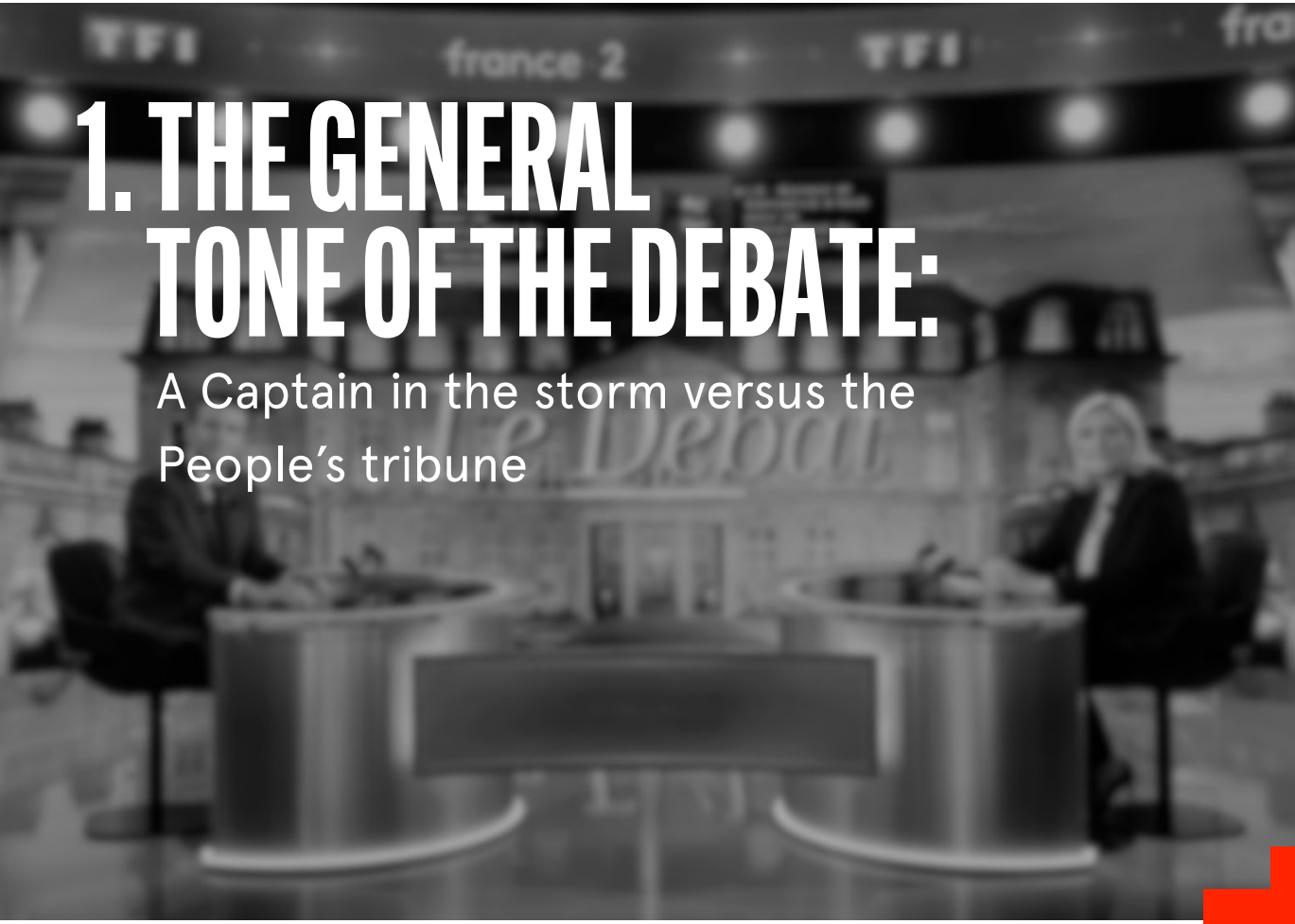
Since Ancient Greece, public debate has been an irreplaceable component of democracy. Yet there are two ways of understanding a debate. Ancient Greek Sophists would emphasise the importance of the skills and charisma of the contenders, while followers of Socrates would primarily look to the content of their discourse. Based on yesterday's performance, we can say that Emmanuel Macron mastered the debate from both these perspectives. However, there is one last ancient Greek concept that the incumbent French President must bear in mind: Hybris.

Emmanuel Macron undoubtedly dominated over Marine Le Pen by being more offensive in his tone and more precise on his proposals.

However, he has also been perceived, by a sizeable share of viewers, as being too professorial and arrogant.

With less than four days before the final ballot, the extent to which Macron's performance in the debate will allow him to tap into the nearly 30% of the undecided voters ahead of Sunday's election is the key question.





1. THE GENERAL TONE OF THE DEBATE:

A Captain in the storm versus the People's tribune

Each candidate had a different objective for this debate. Emmanuel Macron needed to demonstrate that he was the only one able to defend the country's democratic values, economic prosperity, and profile in the European Union. Marine Le Pen had to demonstrate that she could rally all Emmanuel Macron's opponents, and that she was the representative of the less favored social classes in France. These objectives determined each candidate's strategy.

Marine Le Pen positioned herself as the voice of the people against the elite. "I want to give French people their money back" was one of her main messages of the evening as she advocated for a renewed national concord to protect people's sovereignty.

Emmanuel Macron sought to raise his profile as the leader of a nation in crisis. Rather than defending his five years of power, he quite unexpectedly adopted a direct and offensive stance, owning his decisions and attacking Marine Le Pen, accusing her of inconsistency on the key issues.

Where Emmanuel Macron truly made a difference was in his evidence-based arguments and counterarguments. In contrast, Marine Le Pen unsuccessfully challenged the President's legacy on key topics such as spending power or international affairs. In fact, the opposite happened. Emmanuel Macron challenged his opponent directly on her voting behavior and her political positioning over the last five years. Following Marine Le Pen's disastrous 2017 performance, she has adopted a far less vocal stance and avoided appearing too aggressive. However, this position also meant that at times she inadvertently appeared weak and passive. In last night's debate, Emmanuel Macron's offensive strategy took full advantage of this. Quite effective, yes, but with a real risk that his full-frontal attack is perceived by parts of the French electorate as arrogant.

2. WHO SAID WHAT:

The key proposals

TOPIC	 EMMANUEL MACRON	 MARINE LE PEN
SPENDING POWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a profit-sharing mechanism for company employees Increase the basic retirement pension to a minimum of €1100 Incentivize companies to offer bonuses to employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower taxes on households Increase wages for teachers, health personnel and security forces Incentivize companies to raise salaries up to 3 times the minimum salary Raise financial support offered to students Double the benefits provided to poorer families Adjust retirement benefits with inflation Cancel VAT on a bundle of 100 essential products
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the temporary freeze of energy prices Reform the EU energy market to lower the impact of gas prices over electricity Mitigate climate change by through emphasis on nuclear and renewable energy Build 14 second-generation nuclear energy production plants Solar and offshore windfarms should also be priority renewable energy sources Entrust the Prime Minister with environmental planning responsibility Foster investments in the green transition for the industry and the agriculture Incentivise households to shift toward electric vehicles and building renovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Untangle the French energy market from the EU energy market Regulate energy prices Lower VAT on energy products Foster reshoring of productions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions Build 16 new nuclear plants and maintain existing ones Roll back on wind energy by dismantling existing farms Implement local referendums for the development of wind farms Strengthen green hydrogen production
FOREIGN RELATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce western pressure over Russia to reach an immediate ceasefire Engage with non-western countries to avoid the creation of a Sino-Russian front. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reject an embargo on Russia oil and gas Avoid strengthening of the Russian and Chinese bonds Foster economic relations with Africa
EUROPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen EU's defense policy Strengthen the Franco-German alliance Defend Common Agricultural Policy Promote closer European integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change Europe, from the actual EU towards a European alliance of Nations End the posted workers mechanism End the Farm to Fork strategy End the priority given to the Franco-German alliance Beyond Europe, advocate for a "Global France" fostering the country's international bonds
HEALTHCARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase wages and the number of caregivers Investment more in health Foster cooperation between hospitals and private practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest €20 billion in the health care infrastructure (hospitals and retirement centres) Invest in the development of online medicine Incentivize doctors to settle in sparsely populated areas
ECONOMIC STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize the EU digital single market Strengthen investments in research and innovation Deepen European research programs Tackle unfair competition at a European level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a European google and strengthen the data of European citizens Foster productivity growth Strengthen fast internet coverage in France Foster economic patriotism by reducing imports of foreign goods Question existing and future FTAs.
INSTITUTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the use of referendums on key topics Establish a cross-party convention to revise French institutions, implementing proportional representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable citizen-initiated referendums Implement proportional representation in Parliament Hold a referendum to consider a revision of the constitution

3. REACTION FROM THE PRESS

French Press overwhelmingly highlighted that yesterday's debate was profoundly different than the one of 2017. Most journalists acknowledged the dominance of Emmanuel Macron over Marine Le Pen, and the fact that incumbent President followed a rather offensive approach. Emmanuel Macron's inclination to adopt a professorial stance was, however noted. This is particularly true for the more conservative-orientated as well as local press. Left-wing leaning press stressed the inaccuracy of Marine Le Pen's position in many instances and the danger posed by the extreme right in power, citing foreign examples.

LE FIGARO
21 AVRIL 2022 - 100 pages - 1,20 €

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MACRON domine, Le Pen tient le choc
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