

SPRECHEN SIE FRANZÖSISCH?

*The french presidential
election through german
lenses*

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Newsletter

French presidential elections

FRANCE2022



→ A 'winner takes it all' mentality:

Germany is governed by Parliamentary coalitions, while France is headed by one president and his disciplined majority. To succeed in Berlin you must, during the electoral period, prepare for future talks and agreement. In Paris, outpacing your opponents in the key road for success. Campaigns are therefore far more hectic and the debates fiercer.

→ Immigration & security taking centre stage:

The steadfast salience of security and immigration within the French public debate lies in stark contrast to Germany's last year's elections. Zemmour's 'entrée en force' in the polls – outflanking marine Le Pen on her right has shifted France's public debate toward heated identity and immigration related debates which were rather absent from last year's German election campaign.

→ Germany, the bogeyman of the radical candidates:

The relation with Germany is always central in France. Moderate candidates usually present the German economic model as an example that France should follow to reinforce its competitiveness and its economic base. President Macron often praises the German Mittelstand while Conservative candidate Valerie Pécresse regularly deplors that past governments never pursued Hartz IV type labour market reforms. However, the rising socio-economic tensions combined with the scapegoating tendencies by the far left and the far right, have salinized the idea that France is striking a bad deal with Europe – and especially with Germany. According to Éric Zemmour, France has had governments that "For 20 years have submitted to Germany" and that the country can "succeed without Germany". Meanwhile, Marine le Pen has often reiterated that Germany "is not the right partner for France". Even more direct than Le Pen is the left-wing populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon, whose "Shut up, Merkel" slogan many may still remember and who is not afraid of alarming the French population regarding "expansionism". In the German political landscape, however, similar statements regarding France remain marginal at best. In fact, in Germany, it is hardly noticed that, in recent years, anti-German resentment has been used in election campaigns in all major European countries. This is not only the case in France, but also in Italy or in Poland.

