

---

## THE FRENCH ELECTIONS, SEEN FROM UKRAINE

- 30.03.2017

---

EurActiv (30 March 2017)

Ahead of Frances presidential election, Ukraines experience shows that opinion polls may be skewed by underlying hatred of the ruling classes and institutions. Vadym Omelchenko warns that ultra-conservatism stands to gain in the end.

Vadym Omelchenko is the president of the Gorshenin Institute.

Today, the focus of all those who are following politics has shifted from the US to France. The election outcome there will impact the processes occurring globally. And there are certain trends in the French campaign that are worrying.

Indeed, it is neither competition of economic and social programmes nor the traditional duel between the socialists and the republicans that sets the agenda of the campaign in France.

The agenda of this campaign is the legal proceedings against candidates and their family members. New cases appear every few days and the candidates concerned meet with investigators instead of voters.

A wall of compromising information has been thrown up between the voters and the candidates, and the electorate are disoriented. But does this mean that the supporters of the candidates being denounced will shift to support a candidate that has not been compromised?

It is not a secret that sociological studies are not so efficient today. Methods are outdated and do not match modern levels of communications.

The Brexit campaign and the presidential election in the US were a good illustration of that. In my country, Ukraine, we observed a similar phenomenon for the first time in 2012, when the result of the vote was different from what surveys had been showing by 20 to 30% for some candidates or parties, sometimes even by 40%.

More than that, it was a candidate that was little known, who enjoyed a minor campaign budget and media exposure that won.

It was indeed those candidates that had received high-profile endorsements and which had invested considerable amounts in the campaign and dominated the media spotlight that lost.

The polls had not seen the voters of the winning candidates. Actually, they had been seen, but they were labelled as undecided.

We examined that layer of people and their motives. It turned out that these people were very different but they shared the same motive: hate.

Hate towards the ruling class and the pressure from its part on the voters. The strength of the pressure was directly proportional to the strength of the reaction. Doesn't this all sound a bit like the presidential election in the US?

Getting back to France, according to the findings of ODOXA, the number of undecided voters is 43%. We recognise this emotion, this trend. It is hate.

The result will swing towards a candidate exposed to more pressure. And this means, it is most likely that these are François Fillon and Marine Le Pen, unless they leave the race, who will challenge one another in the second round.

The campaign of another major candidate, Emmanuel Macron, is designed almost as if France were detached from the global context.

His team seems not to notice important trends: declining influence of traditional media, deficiency of polling methods and, ultimately, the new agenda where hate and mistrust towards the elites meets sincerity, even though brutal at times.

What is happening now in the electoral campaign in France is quite dangerous. Authority is dismissed and trust in any institution is declining, reaching a critical limit.

It is nihilism that starts dominating when there is a lack of possibility to choose and there is a risk that ultra-conservatism will ultimately gain.

Shaking democratic bases is a dangerous game, regardless of the potential gains. However, we are confident that the election will take place and that the choice made will belong to the French people.

---

Kaynak/Source: