

French Political Crisis

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French Political Crisis : Collapse of govt

Context : French Prime Minister **Michel Barnier** resigned after his government was toppled by a **no-confidence vote**, supported by **far-right and leftist lawmakers**. This vote marked the **first time in over 60 years** that a French government fell through a no-confidence motion, occurring just three months into Barnier's tenure. This makes him the **shortest-serving Prime Minister** in modern French history.

Current Scenario:

While the government will function in a **caretaker capacity** until a new one is appointed, **President Emmanuel Macron** is expected to address the nation regarding this **political crisis**.

Governance and Electoral System in France

System of Governance:

France operates under a **semi-presidential system** established by the Fifth Republic in 1958.

- Combines elements of **parliamentary** and **presidential systems**.
- Both the **President** and **Prime Minister** hold executive powers, with the President focusing on **foreign policy** and strategic decisions, while the Prime Minister oversees **domestic affairs**.

Parliamentary Structure:

The French Parliament is **bicameral**:

1. **National Assembly** (Assemblée Nationale):
 - Lower house with **577 deputies** elected for five years through a **two-round majority voting system**.
2. **Senate** (Sénat):
 - Upper house indirectly elected by an **electoral college**, mainly representing local authorities.

Role of the President:

- Head of state with **significant powers**, including:
 - **Appointing the Prime Minister**.
 - Presiding over the **Council of Ministers**.
 - Commanding the **armed forces**.
 - Dissolving the **National Assembly**.

- Calling referenda or invoking **emergency powers under Article 16** of the Constitution.

Role of the Prime Minister:

- Head of government responsible for **implementing laws**, managing **domestic policies**, and coordinating **ministerial work**.
- Accountable to the **National Assembly** and can be removed through a **vote of no-confidence**.

Election of the President:

- Directly elected by citizens for a **five-year term** using a **two-round voting system**.
- Requires an **absolute majority** to win in the first round, with a runoff held if needed.

Appointment of the Prime Minister:

- The **President appoints the Prime Minister** without requiring the National Assembly's approval.
- The appointee is typically someone capable of **commanding a majority** in the Assembly to maintain **legislative stability**.

Background of the Current Political Crisis

Political Instability:

- **President Macron** dissolved Parliament in June after **centrist forces** were defeated in the European Parliament elections.
- Early elections resulted in a **fragmented Parliament** with no clear majority, forming three blocs: **left, centre, and far-right**.
- Despite being the largest bloc, the **left-wing coalition (NFP)** was denied the right to form a government. Macron appointed Barnier as Prime Minister, creating a **“cohabitation” situation** where the President and Prime Minister belong to different parties.

Barnier's Challenges:

- Barnier sought support from **far-right lawmakers** by focusing on **crime, security, immigration, and economic relief**. However, his efforts failed to secure lasting backing.
- A **controversial austerity budget** aimed at cutting **€60 billion** through **spending cuts and tax hikes** to reduce the deficit sparked a backlash.
- Barnier invoked **Article 49.3 of the Constitution** to bypass parliamentary approval, triggering the **no-confidence motion**.

Consequences for France and Beyond

Political Uncertainty:

- France faces **deep political instability**, with concerns about ending the year without a **stable government** or an **approved 2025 budget**.

- **Investor confidence** has been shaken, temporarily increasing France's **borrowing costs** above those of Greece.

Emergency Budget Provisions:

- The **French Constitution** allows a **caretaker government** to pass emergency laws, extending the previous year's budget to prevent a shutdown and ensure **public sector workers are paid**.

Impact on the European Union:

- The political crisis in France adds to the **EU's challenges**, including Germany's **coalition government collapse** and concerns over maintaining unity amid the possibility of **Donald Trump returning to the White House**.



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