

THE EXPERIMENT



START-UP “NEW EUROPE”

BY
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THEY SEEK A NEW EUROPE

MACRON & MERKEL | THE RENAISSANCE OF EUROPE

by

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“National egotisms are slow poisons that bring about the weakening of democracies and a collective inability to rise up to our historic challenge.” “I know the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, is conscious of that.” (EM)

The new French president, Emmanuel Macron, and German chancellor, Angela Merkel, have broken with previous statements by saying they would be prepared to look at changing EU treaties in order to allow a further integration of the eurozone. As such, this can be considered as a small revolution.

Merkel : *“From a German point of view, it is possible to change treaties if it makes sense in order to strengthen the eurozone.”* She said she was personally prepared to make the case for such a change. Merkel is apparently in Macron’s debt for he is rescuing her vision of Europe

Macron, announced that he would seek not just short-term results in tackling French unemployment, but nothing less than ***the historic reconstruction of Europe and the eurozone.*** After his first meeting with Merkel, Macron stressed that he was not in favour of eurobonds – loans underwritten by all members of the eurozone, which some conservative German politicians have described as *a vision of “hell” for their voters.*

Instead, he stressed the *need for investment.* *“I will reform not because Europe asks for it, but because France needs it,”* he said. *“I am not in favour of collectivising debts of the past. It leads to an irresponsible politics.”*

Macron wants an EU finance ministry, an EU budget for social issues and pan-European social insurance.

Merkel further sees more similarities between her’s and Macron’s approach to Russia than that of failed conservative candidate François Fillon, a more natural party ally of the German Christian Democrat.

She also appreciated his praise for her open-border policy at the height of the refugee crisis, which Macron said *“saved our collective dignity”*. Merkel’s decisions in September 2015 has left the German chancellor more isolated and in need of allies in Europe than before.

Even Germany’s bull-headed finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, hinted that his position on the new French president’s plans for deeper eurozone integration was not as intransigent as reputation has it.

Confronted with the suggestion that Germany should divert more of its budget surpluses to southern Europe, Schäuble told news weekly Der Spiegel there was a need for transfers between wealthier and poorer EU states: *“A community cannot exist without the strong vouching for the weaker ones,”* he said.



Politicians on the German centre-left, especially foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel, are trying to use the momentum of Macron's victory to revive many of the policy ideas originally developed in 2012 to 2014, when the new president was first an adviser and then economic minister in Hollande's government.

In the German press, relief about Macron's victory has been quickly replaced with scepticism about the new president's reformist vision. *"Expensive friend: Emmanuel Macron saves Europe and Germany is meant to pay"* ran Der Spiegel's cover line.

"How much is Macron going to cost us?", asked Bild. *Europe and Germany are ailing because France has been standing still for years".*

On the international floor, the French President did not mute his views in addressing his Russian counterpart. Yet he didn't shut the door to improving the relationship with Putin during his visit in Versailles marking the tercentenary of French Russian relationships

Gay rights, freedom for NGOs and the release of political detainees were raised explicitly in the press conference, echoing messages that Angela Merkel has often pressed upon Russia's strongman.

Behind the scenes, there may have been prior counselling from the German chancellor, Mr Putin's most experienced and clear-sighted foreign interlocutor; Europe's cohesion, and the defence of its interests, would be only the better for it.

Mr Macron made plain that firm words could be combined with overtures for dialogue. He told his guest that he sought closer partnership in fighting the Islamic State – but also that France was ready to enforce a "red line" in Syria against chemical weapon use, and to increase sanctions against Russia if ceasefire agreements weren't respected in Ukraine.

Mr Macron revealed himself to be more of a strategist than many expected. He treated diplomacy as a hard bargain.

Overall, he set a welcome tone for European dealings with Russia, especially in the context of an unreliable US administration and multiplying questions about the dealings of Mr Trump's entourage with Moscow.

In his first interview since he was elected, Emmanuel Macron has promised that France will have a strong and pragmatic relationship with a post-Brexit Britain, working together on defence and counter-terrorism because of the two countries' *"linked destinies"*.

"Pragmatism, he insisted, will determine our new relationship" with Britain.

"I want the discussions that have just started to be perfectly coordinated at a European level. I do not want bilateral discussions, because the interests of the EU must be preserved in the short, medium and long term."

He insisted that France and Germany would lead on closer European integration with more social protection to win back the confidence of doubting lower middle classes across the continent. He added that Central and eastern European and smaller states had to respect democratic values and couldn't just view Europe *"as a supermarket"*.

- He would engage with Donald Trump and sought the US's return to the Paris climate accords.



Macron insisted that France would “*strengthen*” defence cooperation with the British and work more closely than before on joint counter-terrorism, “because our destinies are linked: terrorists groups don’t know European borders”.

Macron definitely appears as a “*centrist, pro-European standard-bearer of democratic values.*”

To sum it up, Macron said he wanted to lead a “**European renaissance**”, by creating a *European Union that inspired and took better care of its people.*

He said he was completely confident in a new era of restored Paris-Berlin cooperation aimed at boosting the European project in people’s minds not just in dull meeting rooms. “*The key to get going again is a Europe that protects,*” he said.

Macron’s biggest challenge and the starting point for his foreign policy was tackling, as he put it, the “*crisis that is hitting western democracies*”.

He asked: “*When you look at the planet today, what do you see? A rise in illiberal democracies, and extremes in Europe, a reappearance of authoritarian regimes that question the vitality of democracy, and the US in part withdrawing from the world. That context is worsened by a rise in uncertainty and troubles – crises are growing in the Middle East and the Gulf, inequalities are growing everywhere in the world.*”

He said the crisis came “*in part from the profound inequalities created by the world order, and from Islamist terrorism*” but he said climate issues were also key. “*Anyone who thinks the fight against climate change is mere whim by middle-class liberals is deeply wrong.*”

Macron said Europe had no choice but to become the standard-bearer in the fight against illiberalism in the world. “**Because democracy was born in Europe. The US likes freedom as much as we do, but it doesn’t have our love for justice. Europe is the only place in the world where individual freedoms, the spirit of democracy and social justice are so closely joined. So the question now is: will Europe succeed in defending the deep values it brought to the world for decades, or will it be wiped out by the rise in illiberal democracies and authoritarian regimes?**”

“*We have to promote a Europe that goes towards greater economic and social wellbeing.*” The great defenders of this ultra economically-liberal and unbalanced Europe – the UK – came crashing down on this.

Macron said the solution lay in a renewed “*common force*” between France and Germany to transform and inject enthusiasm into the European project.

A EUROPE THAT PROTECTS

“*Everywhere in our societies, the lower middle classes have started to doubt,*” he said. During his election campaign Macron made overtures to Germany, to end the mistrust and deadlock that had plagued the Franco-German motor, marked by France’s poor economic performance and ongoing struggles with its deficit. Macron had pushed for closer integration of the eurozone with a eurozone budget, joint defence, and an overhaul of refugee and asylum policy. He said: “**We have to create a Europe that protects with a real defence policy and common security.**” He said asylum, refugee and migration policy must be “*profoundly reformed*”.

“*The question is to know how to restore the dynamic and bring people on board. It’s not just about pressing policy onto countries or people; you have to be able to bring them along with you, make them dream.*”



He said this couldn't happen *"if France doesn't reinforce its own economy and society"*. He acknowledged that Germany had done its economic structural reforms 15 years ago and knew the situation wasn't viable. He promised: *"That's why I have asked the government to engage the fundamental reforms which are essential for France."* He said: *"Our credibility, our efficiency, our strength is on the line."*

He insisted that Germany was totally in agreement and understood the need to stand together. *"National egotisms are slow poisons that bring about the weakening of democracies and a collective inability to rise up to our historic challenge,"* he said, adding: *"I know the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, is conscious of that."*

After an election campaign in which he had strong words for central European states such as Poland and Hungary for not cooperating on refugees and respecting European values, Macron ~~now~~ insisted he did not believe in *"a conflict between east and west in Europe"*. But he nonetheless warned against certain European leaders *"abandoning principles, turning their backs on Europe, having a cynical approach to the European Union that only served as dispensing credit without respecting its values"*.

EUROPE IS A COMMON DESTINY

He stated: *"Europe isn't a supermarket. Europe is a common destiny. It is weakened when it accepts its principles being rejected. The countries in Europe that don't respect the rules should have to face the political consequences. And that's not just an east-west debate."* He added: *"I will speak to everyone with respect but I won't compromise on European principles – on solidarity or democratic values. If Europe were to accept that, it would mean it's weak and had already ceased to exist."*

After meeting Trump last month with a deliberately firm handshake before Trump decided to pull the US out of the Paris climate accords, Macron said: *"Donald Trump is first and foremost a leader elected by the American people. The difficulty today is that he hasn't yet drawn up the conceptual framework of his foreign policy. So his politics can therefore be unpredictable, which is a source of discomfort for the world. In terms of the fight against terrorism, he has the same drive for efficiency that I do. I don't share some of his choices, above all on the climate issue. But I hope we can find a way for the US to return to the Paris climate accords. That's the hand I extend to Donald Trump. I hope he changes his view. Because everything is connected. You can't want to fight efficiently against terrorism and not be engaged for the climate."*

"Democracy isn't built from the outside without the people."

*"My election, and my majority in parliament are not the end of something: they are a challenging beginning. **It's the start of a French renaissance, and I hope a European one.**"* He said he wanted to bring back ambition and *"not play on fears but transform them into energy"*.

He added: *"Fears are still there and what divides societies is still there. There are no magic solutions, it's a combat for every day."* He said the issue was to appeal to the intelligence of citizens. (from Macron's first international interview conducted by The Guardian, Le Figaro, El País, Gazeta Wyborcza, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Le Temps, Le Soir, Corriere della Serra)

Fact is that Europe is mainly popular among the elites. A recent opinion pool (Chatham House) has revealed that 60% of the Belgians think negatively about Europe. Only the Greek and the French prove to be even more negative. There is a huge challenge to be tackled to turn the tide.



NO EUROPEAN RENAISSANCE WITHOUT "EYES OF EUROPE"

"THE ISSUE IS TO APPEAL TO THE INTELLIGENCE OF CITIZENS" (Macron)

Let us put it bluntly, there will be no European Renaissance as long as there is no such thing as a European public opinion instead of an addition of contradictory nationalistic opinions and one European folk instead of a mosaic of European nationalist and fairly antagonist nations.

Let us face it : it will take at least a generation to generate both.

And more importantly, it will take a powerful auto active European platform to create a *virtual agora* where young Europeans speak to other young Europeans across the old continent.

Now, mind you: that is exactly the ambition and the program of Eyes of Europe

Since its creation in 1942, Voice of America has been committed to providing comprehensive coverage of the news and telling audiences the truth about the western world and its democratic *values*. Through World War II, the Cold War, the fight against global terrorism, Voice of America has been struggling in favour of liberty and democracy. *To be effective, Voice of America is trying hard to win the attention and respect of listeners.* Yet some commentators consider Voice of America to be a form of propaganda, although this label is disputed by others.

It is by no means Eyes of Europe's ambition or intention to make propaganda for the EU. E.o.E. is actually determined to promote Europe's values and cultural inheritance especially among the young.

If I have understood and read him well, this is exactly what Macron has in mind. In his book "*revolution*" as well as in his political program, education appears to be his top priority. Among other initiatives, he is suggesting to create an ***Erasmus program for secondary school teenagers.***

Likewise, Eyes of Europe is about educating the young Europeans in a most critical and rational way. It is also about learning by exchanging personal experience. Eyes of Europe wants to help the young teach each other by generating permanent connections between them in real time. All burning political, social, economic and especially ethical issues are to be discussed daily in real time in English (or in globish to begin with; everybody understands globish except the English, but the English are out now)

"What exhausts democracies is politicians who think their fellow citizens are stupid The crisis of western imagination is a huge challenge and it's not one person alone who will change it. But I want to get back the line of history and energy of the European people, to hold back the rise of extremes and demagoguery. Because that's a battle of civilisation."

This battle of and for civilisation is precisely what Eyes of Europe is basically about.

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