

TOGETHER FOR EUROPE

AGAINST NATIONALISM AND POPULISM

BY

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Europeans are standing for democracy, solidarity, public spirit and diversity (Sigmar Gabriel, Germany's Foreign Secretary). *The French have voted with 75% in favour of Europe „La victoire de l'extrême Droite“ proved a chimera.*

Globally, Gabriel is making a point but I'm afraid things are a little more complex than that.

The French party system is in ruin, the Socialist party is in tatters and the right-wing *Parti Républicain* is lying in shambles.

Paradoxically, the *Front National* has emerged as the strongest party organization that survived this disaster. Yet it was bypassed by *En Marche*, a *movement* that Emmanuel Macron, winner of the first election round, launched only one year ago and which is regarded by all as neither left nor right or possibly both right and left... Is he going to win the second round next Sunday? Most likely, but by no means evidently.

Anyway, 39 year-old, Macron a full blood Europeanist could prove quite a challenge for the Germans as suggested by the German Daily (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*).

Juncker was really delighted by Macron's first success and he said so openly: *Macron is defending our European values. What is basically at stake is a choice between the defense of what Europe is standing for, and the other option that is determined to destroy Europe.* Still Macron's views may appear far too harsh for many Europeans: isn't he advocating a budget for the Euro-Zone and a common Finance minister? Anyway, he is also in favor of relaunching the French German dialogue which is very likely to boost the European dynamic again, either with Angela Merkel, if she happens to be reelected in September, or with Martin Schulz as her successor. That could eventually produce new light at the end of the European tunnel.

Many will have felt a huge sense of relief at the outcome of the first round vote in the French presidential race. But to infer that the battle has been won against extremism and demagoguery in this key test for liberal democracy in Europe, would be a daring assumption. The 7 May run-off could still turn out dramatically in favor of Le Pen. All hands are definitely needed on deck to bring about Marine Le Pen defeat. All those who, especially on the left, hesitate, falter and wince – or opt for full-on disruption – will hold a historical responsibility if it comes to the worst.

France did save its honor on that dramatic first round Sunday. *In the era of Brexit and Trump, this vote was a major pushback against forces that threaten the fundamental democratic values the west is meant to uphold. For good reason this was swiftly applauded in Brussels and Berlin.* (The Guardian)



Le Pen, who pleads for national sovereignty and claims her French roots, has been trying for years to "detoxify" her party: *"what's at stake is wild globalization that endangers our civilization."* (Marine Le Pen)

In any case, anti-establishment and anti-globalization sentiments will not have evaporated overnight in France. The agonizing question now is whether a low turnout on 7 May, fueled by a *neither Macron nor Le Pen* reflex among parts of the electorate, might yet produce a nightmare scenario, one that would make next Sunday's collective sigh of relief look like a delusional moment.

At such a defining moment in French and European politics, surely there can be nothing more important than making sure a key democracy resists the sirens of the Front National, which would restore values from of the darkest eras of French history. *Anti-establishment sentiment can be understandable, but if it's indifferent to the outcome it produces, then that's chaos and nihilism – not renewal. Believing that a political catastrophe must unfold for a utopia to rise from the ashes is a line of thought no one can afford. Not if they care about what makes democracy possible.* (The Guardian)

Marine Le Pen is profoundly anti-immigrant, radically anti-European and speaks with delight of *a clash of civilizations*.

The narrative of the far-right surge across Europe may be, if not broken, slightly disrupted anyway. Donald Trump and Nigel Farage's preferred candidate did not win. Geert Wilders did not win either. The Austrian far-right did not win. Macron has won by forming a new movement. Fair enough, an inexperienced, Macron may find it hard to run the Assembly if hopefully he wins the second round. Some are suggesting France may turn ungovernable. But his victory in the first round certainly cheered up the pro-European globalists.

Emmanuel Macron, as a committed Europeanist, has made an important distinction between [patriotism and nationalism](#): *You can love your country without wanting to be a racist anti-immigrant party.*

Still, the very fashionable rejection of elites can manifest itself in several ways. In France it has become a clear rejection of the traditional ruling parties opening a wide street to Macron's centrism.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon's refusal to swiftly endorse Macron was shocking and shabby. The hard left's hesitation to call out a fascist leaves a bitter taste.

Le Pen picked up a fair number of young and female voters; they will be there for coming elections: whether we like it or not, the Front National has become a *respectable* choice.

But let us face facts, we are not over the bridge yet: Marine Le Pen hasn't lost the second round, far from it. The fight remains open.

EUROPE AS NATIONALISTS' POPULISTS' SCAPEGOAT

*The French electoral campaign, like several that have preceded it in Great Britain, the United States and the Netherlands, along with future campaigns in other countries, provides the opportunity for a large number of candidates to speak out against « **the system**, » a scapegoat guilty of all the misfortunes, responsible for all the failures, all the problems. It has been suggested that the « system » creates unemployment, poverty, poor housing, poor quality of life, junk food, terrorism, and some even say global warming.*

Seeking a single cause for all of the world's evils is not new. Over the centuries, many groups and peoples have taken on the role of the scapegoat: Witches, Gypsies, Blacks, Arabs, Freemasons, Jews, Christians, Muslims, as well as many others outside the group.

*For some time now, this role has increasingly been attributed not to a social, religious or national group, but to a strange entity known as the « **system**. »*

*The word is so vague as to be open to all kinds of interpretations by those who use it, and those who hear it: some of those who use it are politicians; others are entrepreneurs or wealthy people; still others are high-level officials from the French Government or **the European Union**. (Jacques Attali)*

Macron is saying *the EU must reform or face a 'Frexit'*

Marine Le Pen has meanwhile accused Emmanuel Macron of being *merely more of the same*, i.e. François Hollande's spiritual son. Le Pen has capitalized on anti-EU feeling, and has clearly promised a referendum on the *Frexit*.

I'm a pro-European, I defended constantly during this election the European idea and European policies because I believe it's extremely important for French people and for the place of our country in globalization," Macron, told the BBC.

*"But at the same time we have to face the situation, to listen to our people, and to listen to the fact that they are extremely angry today, impatient and the dysfunction of the EU is no more sustainable. So I do consider that my mandate, the day after, will be at the same time **to reform in depth the European Union and our European project**."* Macron maintained that if he were to allow the EU to continue to function as it was would be a betrayal.

"And I don't want to do so," he added. *"Because the day after, we will have a Frexit or we will have [Ms Le Pen's] National Front (FN) again."* In fact we seriously risk ending up with both. The choice is therefore basically between a dynamic cosmopolitan and liberal Europeanist who is backed by no specific party and a super nationalist, populist Europhobe named Le Pen.

The 39-year-old is leading in the polls by 20 %, and he is trying desperately to win over more voters.



Whether he will succeed in convincing them is not only of a dramatic importance for France but it is also definitely conditioning the future of Europe. If Marine Le Pen were to win, which isn't altogether impossible, a Frexit would follow suit and herald the end of the sixty-year-old European project.

Very much like Trump and Brexit voters, Marine Le Pen has won support in rural and former industrial areas by promising to retake control of France's borders from the EU and slash immigration.

Laurence Haïm, a former French TV correspondent in Washington who has recently joined the team after covering Barack Obama's early rise and Donald Trump, described Macron as *"A man with a lot of empathy, unbelievably down to earth, of the left, but 'not a socialist."*

"Macron describes himself as a product of French meritocracy, a member of the elite graduated in a very strict Jesuit *collège*. He admitted rising up in a privileged microcosm. By his mid-20s he had joined the highest ranks of the senior civil service, after studying politics and philosophy — working on Hegel and Machiavelli. He attended the *École Nationale d'Administration*, seen as a factory of the French elite to join the Rotschild Bank, like president Pompidou in the sixties.

THE REJECTION OF THE ELITES

In a long outstanding article focusing the French presidential elections published recently in the German *Die Zeit*, Chantal Delsol is pointing out where the French stand when it comes to Europe. *The European idea is suffering from chronic disease; the elites are blamed for it. Nicht der Kulturkontinent Europa, die Brücke zwischen Ost und West oder die deutsch-französische Freundschaft. Diese Dinge sind lebendig und wohlauf. Krank ist nur ein Europa: das institutionelle.*

Let us face figures: more than 50 % of the French want to say goodbye to Europe's Institutions. The centrist Emmanuel Macron, the defeated Republican François Fillon are both resolute Europeans. Europe failed so far to appear as a major issue in the campaign, but this is suddenly changing dramatically at the very end of the campaign.

Macron appeals to young modern voters that dream of a Scandinavian kind of society; right-wing Fillon voters stand for radical structural reforms, Mélenchon's and Hamon's left-wing partisans struggle for a more authentic style of socialism. Le Pen rallies all those who want a hard Frexit, less immigration and more than anything fewer moshes in France.

They blame national and especially non-elected European Brussels elites who advocate universalism, globalism cosmopolitanism, whereas they stand for nationalism, autonomy and populism.

They hate the EU not because they offer too few subventions but because they chose to ignore them although they condition their daily lives. They simply choose to ignore the many advantages the Union offers them while they still want more of it. It results in a dialogue of the deaf in which the European project, a unique opportunity to unite Europe is reduced to ashes. *People leave the European ship not because they are uneducated analphabets, but because they feel ignored, because nobody talks to them except Marine. Emmanuel Macron est une caricature du sciences-po universaliste et déraciné de tout, et Marine Le Pen est la caricature de l'enracinement et sa simplification grotesque. (Chantal Delsol)*



DIE ELITEN HÖREN NICHT AUF DAS VOLK.

Es ist unmöglich, Demokrat zu sein und die öffentliche Meinung zu ignorieren. Genau aus diesem Widerspruch erwächst die radikale Ablehnung der EU. Die europäischen Institutionen müssen sich radikal reformieren, sonst werden sie vergessen. Es wäre die größte vorstellbare Schande, wenn wir den so wertvollen Schatz Europa deshalb verlieren, weil ein paar Bürokraten denken, sie können oberhalb der öffentlichen Meinung regieren. (Chantal Delsol)

It is therefore high time to educate the European young citizens and turn them first into a European public opinion, later into a genuine European people. It may take a generation.

That is, as we keep repeating, the job and the ambition of Eyes of Europe. It is not only a necessity; it is now really becoming an urgency

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