

European Issues

n°473

15<sup>th</sup> May 2018

# Emmanuel Macron, France and Europe “France is back in Europe”: on which terms[1]?

Thierry Chopin

France has an ambivalent relationship with European integration and for a long time has blown hot and cold about it[2]. It pioneered some ambitious integration projects (ECSC, the Single Act, the Maastricht Treaty) but often it has been extremely reticent about these very same projects: the European Community of Defence in 1954, the empty chair crisis in 1965, and the European Constitution in 2005. For over ten years, France's influence has also decreased due to its own weakening from the political, economic and social points of view, which has in turn influenced the rise of Euroscepticism, both amongst the political classes and public opinion. Since 2008, the economic crisis has exacerbated Euroscepticism within the population: mistrust of the EU in France increased by nearly 25 points between 2008 and 2016[3].

1. This text has been published in a work co-edited by Riccardo Brizzi and Marc Lazar, *La France d'Emmanuel Macron*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018. I would like to thank Riccardo Brizzi and Marc Lazar for their kind permission to publish this text in electronic format.

2. Gérard Bossuat, *Faire l'Europe sans défaire la France. 60 ans de politique d'unité européenne des gouvernements et des présidents de la République française (1943-2003)*, PIE-Peter Lang 2003 and Helen Drake, *French Relations with the European Union*, Routledge 2005.

3. Source: Standard Eurobarometers.

4. 55% of the French interviewed believe that « France has a specific duty towards Europe », Ifop poll « The French view of Europe », October 2016; it is also interesting to note that they show their attachment to « Europe as an area of shared history and heritage » (69%) more than “the European Union as a political institution” (44%).

5. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, trad. fr. *Le grand échiquier. L'Amérique et le reste du monde*, Paris, Hachette 1997.

6. Christian Lequesne *La France dans la nouvelle Europe. Assumer le changement d'échelle*, Presses de Sciences Po 2008.

7. Olivier Rozenberg, « France in quest of a European narrative », *Les Cahiers européens de Sciences Po*, n.4 2016.

8. Jean Quatremer, « François Hollande, l'homme sans conviction (européenne) », *Libération*, 16 April 2017.

9. Philippe Ricard, « Sur l'Europe, l'absence de vision de François Hollande », *Le Monde*, 10 May 2017.

The French feel an even greater malaise vis-à-vis Europe's repeated crises of the last few years because, originally, the European Union was a strategic French initiative[4]. They are discovering that Europe is not “greater France”, and they no longer see it as an instrument at the service of French ideas (“the Archimedes lever” spoken of by General de Gaulle), but rather as the Trojan horse of economic globalisation. Moreover, this feeling has been heightened by the Union's strategic renunciation and the disarmament of its Member States since the end of the USSR 25 years ago. In brief, France no longer seems to believe in its reincarnation[5] within a liberal economic, federal and enlarged Union[6], which reflects its loss of influence and in which it no longer identifies. France seems to be in quest of a new European narrative[7].

In this context, to what extent is the election of Emmanuel Macron as President of the Republic an opportunity for the redefinition of a French narrative about Europe that not only breaks with the weaknesses of the previous President's five-year mandate in terms of European policy, but also with the rationale of a traditional approach that forms the core of France's relationship with European integration and which therefore might be shared by its partners? And where relevant, on which terms would France's return to Europe be effective? Doesn't this imply the adoption of a new discourse

of the method and a new approach to the European Union by France?

## 1. EMMANUEL MACRON AND EUROPE: BREAKING AWAY FROM HOLLANDE'S FIVE-YEAR TERM?

### François Hollande's European Policy: a declarative policy

France was not a driving force in Europe during François Hollande's five-year term in office to the extent that it was possible to qualify the latter “as an observer”, even a “vague European”, and for being a man “without any European ambition”[8]. We know the reasons for this: the trauma linked to the split in the Socialist Party of which he was the First Secretary during the French “no” vote to the European Constitutional Treaty on 29th May 2005; the lack of any clear political vision regarding the future of European integration[9] to the benefit of a so-called pragmatic approach, but which in reality was not so much achievement oriented but declarative, and problems regarding public policy perceived in a segmented manner (“policies without politics” in the words of Vivien Schmidt); a lack of any anticipatory ability (the British referendum on Brexit is significant from this point of view); excessive politicisation of the relation with his European partners on a partisan

## Emmanuel Macron, France and Europe "France is back in Europe": on which terms?

basis, as illustrated for example in the development of a debate over budgetary austerity policies: the geographic perception that is often made of it (North/South split), has in reality often gone hand in hand with a partisan interpretation of the ideological split opposing the leaders on the right (Germany and Poland notably) and those on the left (France and Italy in particular). Since the beginning of European integration, France and Germany have been the driving force. However, over the last few years, controversies, mutual accusations, quests for alternative alliances (Franco-British at the beginning of the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, a Franco-Italian Hollande-Renzi axis for example after François Hollande's victory in 2012) to avoid and even to isolate the partnership, have peppered Franco-German relations.

Germany and France tried to recover their role as a driving force in Europe as of 2013 with joint Franco-German work, notably focusing on economic issues. It was the first time since the election of François Hollande that an initiative like that had been taken with Chancellor Angela Merkel, adopting an approach that had typified the best days of Franco-German cooperation. The German government ended the initial tension over the Stability and Growth Pact and sanctions, to concede that in a period of major economic crisis, time is required to return to budgetary balance; it recognised that the goal of stability would not be achieved if the economy of some Member States was crashing; it supported the need for greater political coordination in the euro zone. For its part, the French government accepted the budgetary pact (that François Hollande had promised to renegotiate during the presidential campaign), and made it its goal to end France's debt; he also acknowledged the need for structural reform, a condition sine qua non for competitiveness and the return of long-term growth. This rapprochement helped both governments propose new steps to their European partners to take the Economic and Monetary Union forward. Their suggestions in support of action to improve the financing terms of SMEs and youth employment, the achievement of banking union and a better coordination of economic

policies, were part of a useful working programme for the future of the EMU. However, these Franco-German initiatives led to a series of questions, which went unanswered[10]. From an economic point of view both governments had a completely different approach. France demanded macro-economic revival, a budget for the euro zone and a pooling of the debt, whilst Germany insisted on a supply policy, structural reforms and compliance with budgetary rules[11].

Furthermore, the Franco-German initiative in Minsk (Minsk I in September 2014 and Minsk II in February 2015) regarding the Ukrainian question (with the creation of the "Normandy" format – Germany, France, Russia, Ukraine), the work towards coordinating the management of the Greek crisis in the summer of 2015, then the terrorist attacks[12] appeared to settle relations between the two countries. And yet, the refugee crisis marked a dissociation in the Franco-German couple, to the backdrop of deep disagreement and national unilateralism[13]. Overcoming these disagreements became a vital stake in France's European policy after the elections of 2017. After several years of multiple crises, the issue of confidence had to be raised again in a context typified by a rupture in the balance between the two countries, a lowering in Germany's federalist goals, linked to a real dilution of French influence in the Union, due to the mediocre economic results that affected Paris's credibility in the international arena[14], which led in a way to the latter becoming Germany's junior partner. However, the present challenges facing the Union and its Member States (terrorism, the migrant crisis, economic imbalances, the rise of populism and anti-European extremism, Brexit etc.) demand the revival of a European political ambition both internally and externally.

### An election's power to transform?

Whilst the voice of France has weakened at the European level and the Franco-German couple has been increasingly destabilised over the last few years to Berlin's advantage, is France making a return to

10. Thierry Chopin, Henrik Uterwedde, « Partenariat franco-allemand : aller plus loin ! », *Le Figaro*, 27 June 2013.

11. Frédéric Bozo, "Whither Germany? Why France matters", *Transatlantic Academy*, n.2, 2017.

12. Alexandra De Hoop Scheffer, Daniela Schwarzer, "After the Paris attacks: France and Germany strengthen security cooperation despite key differences", *The German Marshall Fund*, 30 November 2015.

13. Luuk Van Middelaar « France-Allemagne : une incompréhension permanente », *Le Débat*, n.187, November-December 2015.

14. Christian Lequesne "Which place for France in Europe? Reform, Credibility and Influence", T. Chopin and M. Foucher (eds.), *Schuman Report on Europe. The State of the Union 2015 Lignes de repères*, 2015.

Europe in the wake of Emmanuel Macron's election as President of the Republic? Several things lead us to anticipate this. Firstly, from a national point of view, the political offer promoted by Emmanuel Macron during the electoral campaign is typified specifically by the assertion of an extremely marked leaning towards Europe and an explicit defence of the European project that can be explained by his determination not to leave the European question in the hands of the populist and/or extremist anti-European forces alone. The fact that the major political split that structured the second round of the presidential election focused on the opposition between a "society open to Europe and the world" vs "a closed society"[15] or, in all events, the temptation of national withdrawal as well as the victory of Emmanuel Macron over Marine Le Pen, provided the President elect with great democratic legitimacy and a strong political mandate regarding European issues. The creation of a Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs bears witness to this. It is notable that this European bias matches the expectations of the majority of public opinion: as shown in the most recent polls regarding the question of whether they would feel "major regret, indifference or great relief" if France left the EU, those interviewed answered "major regret" as follows, depending on their political preference: 86% of those voting for LREM (La République en Marche); 78% of those voting for the Socialist Party; 63% of Republican voters, 48% of those voting for France Unbowed and 9% of those voting for the National Front[16].

Then, at European level, the political dynamic following the election led to the relay of the Macronist political offer in terms of Europe, not only in France but also in the Union. As Gilles Andréani writes[17] "In all the most striking international effect of Emmanuel Macron's victory is not that he beat the anti-European and populist forces, but that he did it transparently: his victory was indeed acquired over them, not through evasive manoeuvres, as the PS has done since 2005, or by exploiting their ideas, as Nicolas Sarkozy successfully did in 2007, and then in vain in 2012, but by adopting a strategy of head-on confrontation with them, in the name of

European beliefs and by demonstrating a choice for reform. This is what lent his victory meaning at the international level, and credit to the new president in the European and international arena: in a Europe that has shrunk in the East through the spread of populism, and in the West by Brexit, whose values are under threat on both sides, by Putin and Trump, the support given by French voters to an explicitly internationalist, pro-European programme gives the French president room for manoeuvre, and it gives France a central position, which it had not enjoyed since François Mitterrand."

The internal and external aspects are supposed to work together: the project for reform and France's economic recovery are based on the belief that the election has the capacity to transform the country at the domestic level and that this will also take effect in terms of a refoundation that the Union requires. In both cases, for Emmanuel Macron, the political and economic systems in France and Europe are in deadlock and the status quo is untenable in the medium term.

## 2. A NEW FRENCH NARRATIVE FOR EUROPE?

### Helping the European project to make sense again: for a "sovereign Europe"

The new President of the French Republic believes that the refoundation of the European Union is vital and his European priorities focus mainly on legal issues. In 2016, when he was Minister for Economic Affairs, he declared: "Over the last ten years we have lost the thread of European history. Since 2005 we have just managed the crises without putting any project forward. We must free Europe of what it has become. Europe has lost its ability to imagine itself and to project itself on the world stage. It has been obsessed by its internal political, economic and budgetary balances, and it is caving in on itself. It has now become a vast, unregulated market, and it is not defending our collective preferences (...). Protecting our interests legitimately, this is the very meaning of the European project (...). We are pulling the curtain on a Europe that has no political project.

15. Gérard Grunberg, « Le clivage gauche-droite est-il dépassé ? », *Telos*, 9 June 2017.

16. Cf. IPSOS / Cévipof survey, 1 June 2017.

17. Gilles Andréani, « Macron et l'international : le sens d'une victoire », *Telos*, 21 June 2017.

## Emmanuel Macron, France and Europe "France is back in Europe": on which terms?

We have to re-invent a Europe that is powerful, which thinks of itself in relation to the rest of the world and which defines its sovereign rules." [18]

Once elected, and before his participation in his first European Council on the 22nd and 23rd of June 2017, Emmanuel Macron set out his vision of "the refounding" of the European project in these terms: "the key to start anew, is a Europe that protects (...). Because in our societies, the middle classes have started to doubt this. They feel that Europe is being made in spite of them. That Europe is dragging itself down. We have to create a Europe that protects by developing a true common defence and security policy. We have to be more efficient regarding major migrations, by making in depth reforms to the system that protects our borders, as well as migratory policy and asylum rights. The present system means that just a few are bearing all of the weight of this themselves and it will not withstand the next migratory waves. I believe in a Europe that has the means to protect its external borders, to guarantee its security via police and judicial cooperation in its fight to counter terrorism, deploying a common organisation in terms of asylum rights and immigration, a Europe that protects against the disruptions of globalisation." [19]

The French President especially set out his vision of the future of European integration in two major speeches, the first in Athens on the 7th of September 2017, and the second at the Sorbonne on the 26th of September 2017, where he presented an initiative for Europe, defending the project of a sovereign, united, democratic Europe: "It is up to us, to you, to map out the route which ensures our future, the one I wish to talk with you about today. The route of rebuilding a sovereign, united and democratic Europe. Let us together have the audacity to create this route. As I have done at every point in front of the French people, I would today like to say with resolute conviction: the Europe of today is too weak, too slow, too inefficient, but Europe alone can enable us to take action in the world, in the face of the great contemporary challenges. Only Europe can, in a word, guarantee genuine sovereignty,

or our ability to exist in today's world to defend our values and interests. European sovereignty requires constructing, and we must do it. Why? Because what constructs and forges our profound identity, this balance of values, this relation with freedom, human rights and justice cannot be found anywhere on the planet. This attachment to a market economy, but also social justice. We cannot blindly entrust what Europe represents, on the other side of the Atlantic or on the edges of Asia. It is our responsibility to defend it and build it within the context of globalization." [20]

### Strengthening the euro zone: necessary but not enough

In this regard, the proposals made by the French President focus on legal issues and firstly on the currency. Emmanuel Macron believes that the European Union must strengthen its internal cohesion, and notably continue the integration of the euro zone to resist any future shocks. Some of these suggestions are extremely ambitious: in particular, the convergence of the 19 euro zone member states must be revived through the adoption of a common standard base, for example in terms of financial, fiscal and also social issues, thereby enabling the creation of a budgetary capacity for the euro zone that will help to stabilise macro-economic shocks. This proposal traditionally comes up against reluctance on the part of certain governments and public opinion, especially in the countries of the north-west and north of Europe, in moving towards a greater pooling of risk, which leads to fears of a union of transfers. It seems more likely that common budgetary instruments will be acceptable if common needs are identified. From this point of view, it seems that it would be useful to engage debate regarding common goods that might be managed together under the common institutions. Amongst these common goods, investments in R&D, cross-border networks and defence seem to correspond to the legal dimension of today's challenges. It is also notable that spending in investments are generally centralised in federal States.

18. *Le Monde*, 19 June 2016.

19. Interview with 12 German dailies in the Funke group and Ouest France 13th July 2017.

20. Emmanuel Macron, speech delivered to the Sorbonne: « Initiative pour l'Europe - Discours pour une Europe souveraine, unie, démocratique », 26 September 2017.

The President especially recognises that for the euro zone to do more than just survive and for it to prosper, it is necessary to share European sovereignty within the common institutions based on legitimacy mechanisms and political responsibility that is sufficiently strong, notably via the creation of a European Finance Minister, who would be accountable to a euro zone parliamentary assembly. Again, these future institutional and political structures of the European Union raise questions. For example, to strengthen democratic legitimacy and control over European decisions regarding the EMU, the creation of a Euro zone Parliament has been suggested. Evidently, the European Parliament would prefer this assembly not to compete with it and for it to be one of its sub-committees, in the same way the Eurogroup is now a sub-group of the European Council. Similarly, uncertainty still surrounds the issue of the method to be used and notably the possible revision of the treaties. In the case of the latter, the progress of euro zone integration raises the issue of growing differentiation between the Union and the status of the States outside of the euro zone.

The proposal of an economic government is not such a great point of consensus as it might seem and this is a real problem: the need for clarification, simplification and legitimisation of European economic policy. But the fault lines that this debate has revealed since the start of the euro zone crisis<sup>[21]</sup> have not gone away and run through national political culture in Europe, notably in France and Germany. While government is synonymous to politicisation and interventionism in France, it refers to the wish for independently implemented rules in Germany. These fault lines did not disappear with the election of Emmanuel Macron, and both countries will have to agree on a common idea of the European political and economic system if they want to agree on a common government and finally on a collective management of European common goods (macro-economic stabilisation policy, European defence etc.).

A few months ago, as she explicitly supported the wish to reform the euro zone put forward by Emmanuel Macron, Angela Merkel seemed to show

that she was open to discussion of the means for greater economic integration; this step forward by Germany is remarkable. However, even with the extension of the grand CDU-SPD coalition, Germany seems now to be reluctant vis-à-vis financial transfers involving a common budget on this level. Moreover, for progress to be made in terms of reforming the euro zone, France needs to recover its economic credibility, the reforms announced aiming to revive the national economy need to be implemented successfully, and budgetary commitments need to be respected. These are the conditions for France to win back the confidence of its German partner.

#### **From sovereign Europe to a Europe that protects**

Furthermore, from an external point of view, international issues challenge the collective European capacity to respond to world geopolitical and geo-economic transformation. This is the case regarding the organisation of their collective security, the regulation of migratory flows, and also the fight to counter terrorism. In this context, the project that aims to develop a sovereign Europe, advocated by Emmanuel Macron, includes both economic and structural advantages in that there is an obvious continuity between the internal factor of these challenges and the means to rise to them by coordinating Member States means at European level (justice, police, intelligence, anti-terrorist combat) and the external dimension at international level (diplomacy and defence). A project like this finds its full meaning in terms of the new world geo-economic power balances, both from the point of view of climate change – even more so in the wake of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement: "Make our Planet Great Again" – digital and trade issues, since Europe has to be able to defend its strategic interests and its collective preferences.

In this context the French President can defend a strategic position at European level, notably regarding collective security issues, in areas in which France has a high credibility rate and which match the most firmly established collective preferences amongst the French population. The

<sup>21</sup>. Jean-François Jamet, *L'Europe peut-elle se passer d'un gouvernement économique ?*, La documentation française 2012.

## Emmanuel Macron, France and Europe "France is back in Europe": on which terms?

return of regal challenges, to which France and its European partners have to rise (management of migratory flows, terrorism, security challenges in the East and the South etc.) can therefore be used to politically reformulate a French narrative for the future of the European project that can be shared by its partners[22]. Indeed, it is striking that regal subjects are those on which the voice of France can legitimately be strong given both its military and diplomatic power (France will be the only nuclear power and the only member on the UN Security Council after Brexit), the recognition of its expertise (for example in the area of taxation) and even European solidarity regarding the terrorist attacks of which France has been the focus. Furthermore, the congruence between the historic model, French political identity and its State legacy on the one hand, and the "regal" nature of the challenges to meet on the other, might help to effectively counter the increasing mistrust of the French regarding European integration, and possibly even more widely, regarding politics and its ability to act efficiently at the national, European and international levels.

Finally, the narrative regarding a sovereign Europe helps to put questions regarding sovereignty, subsidiarity and the efficiency of public action into the right perspective. Hence, a political narrative of this nature on sovereign Europe is one that aims to strengthen the sovereignty of public power, whether this is exercised at national or European level, since both levels are not mutually exclusive, but are in fact complementary. The European Union and the States of Europe, in our democratic model, have the same purpose: protecting the security of their citizens, both physically and economically, whilst guaranteeing the greatest possible space for individual freedom: "The State is more efficient if it knows how to use its own sovereignty alongside true European sovereignty. Protection has to exist at this scale (...) we must think of the place the State occupies across Europe (...) Where does true French sovereignty lie? Sometimes it is within the country. But it also lies in Europe. Digital sovereignty, energy sovereignty, sovereignty over migration or the military are managed at this level (...). The paradox

comprising the opposition between 'sovereignism' and Europe is also a French trauma." [23]

### 3. IS FRANCE BACK IN EUROPE? THE NEED FOR A "DISCOURSE OF THE METHOD"

#### Economic reform, credibility, influence

France will only make its come-back in Europe under certain conditions and firstly by achieving economic and social results. The causes of the French problem are firstly national. Achieving economic results would help France to strengthen its credibility amongst its partners and to play its full role as an inspirational power. The presidential election was accomplished mainly according to the wish for structural reform (labour market, pensions, unemployment benefits etc.) and the implementation of the means to foster training and innovation. From this standpoint, France must achieve results in terms of growth and employment, a condition sine qua non to recover its credibility and to have the capacity to influence European economic strategy. Emmanuel Macron is aware of this requirement: "the question is whether we can succeed in restoring a dynamic, a capacity to inspire (at Union level) (...). France will not be a driving force if it does not offer a clear narrative and a lucid vision of the world. But it will not achieve that either if it does not strengthen its economy and society. This is why I have asked the government to start fundamental reforms that are vital to France. Our credibility, our efficacy and our strength are at stake" [24]

For it to make a real come back in Europe, France has to also break away from its preference for public spending. Again, it is significant that a great number of its partners fear that Paris will ignore its budgetary commitments by postponing once again the deadline for a return to balance of its public finances and by allowing its public debt and deficit to spiral out of control. The time is not right for a slacking in budgetary discipline, especially if the French authorities want to convince their euro zone partners of the need to reform Economic and Monetary Union. Future discussions about the

22. Thierry Chopin, « Defending Europe to defend real sovereignty », Policy Paper, n°94, Jacques Delors Institute Jacques Delors / Robert Schuman Foundation, 24 April 2017.

23. Macron par Macron, Editions de l'Aube, 2017 and interview in Le 1, n.121, 13 September 2016.

24. Interview given to 8 European newspapers, 22 June 2017.

European financial framework will also be a major test of France's ability to address the budget, in a way other than on the basis of the financing of redistributive policies, in particular the common agricultural policy.

Furthermore, France's agenda for protection in the fields of economic and social policy, with the strong commitment to reforming the Posted Workers Directive to prevent fraud and social dumping, is coming up against resistance in Central and Eastern Europe.

On the one hand, the latter must of course recognise that freedom of movement and establishment in the internal market are based on the Union's fundamental principles, but that they must not lead to service provision in the same place following different social and tax rules: this is the condition for fair competition and the protection of social models. It seems that the trip made by Emmanuel Macron in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of August 2017 convinced some countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria notably) to accept the principle of a reform of the Posted Workers Directive. But on the other hand, in a cultural context in which French State centrism, together with the low influence of economic culture in France, has led to great mistrust of the market and European competition, as well as globalisation – the clarification of France's relations with the market is vital in order to debate these issues calmly with its partners[25]. The problem is that it is not certain that the French will see things like this, as witnessed in the biased, partial nature of recurrent debate over posted workers. The declaration of the French President is symptomatic from this point of view: "You think that I can explain to the French middle classes that businesses are closing in France and moving to Poland because it is cheaper, and that here, construction companies take on Polish workers because they are paid less? This system is not working as it should." [26]

Trade negotiations are another example. At present, sources of growth are mainly outside of Europe, due to demographic dynamics and economic catch-up, but also because of the numerous technological

innovations that are now becoming widespread and more profitable across the world. In this context, protectionism only means "protection" in name. However, this does not mean that Europe should not defend its interests and preferences. This notably implies demanding reciprocity, for example in terms of applying market economy principles, the protection of intellectual property, public procurement and export guarantees. It also supposes guaranteeing that trade treaties do not challenge (directly or indirectly via frameless dispute settlement mechanisms), existing European consumer protection measures, whether this is in the healthcare, agricultural, environmental or financial sectors. Finally, this means that Europe must have the means to check that its rules are being respected, and that they are also as effective as the American tools, for example in terms of taxation, finance and technical standards. The proposals put forward by the French President regarding the monitoring of foreign investments in Europe, the fight to counter industrial dumping (against the over production of steel by the Chinese) and a "Buy European Act", to defend European strategic interests and a model of regulated openness, can be deemed legitimate; at the same time, they expose France to the suspicion of protectionism. Indeed, these proposals inspire questions and reluctance in the countries of the North of Europe (Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden etc ...) where Emmanuel Macron – a graduate of the ENA – and former Tax Inspector, is perceived of course as a liberal, but above all as a French liberal, i.e. State-oriented with a view of a State-run economy[27]. Again, taking the "Frenchness" out of the discourse in this area is undoubtedly a condition for France to be able to promote it effectively.

### "The Jupiterian Republic" under test in Europe

From this point of view, the election of Emmanuel Macron raises two fundamental questions, not only for France, but also regarding the influence and leadership it might exercise in Europe: "Does this election mean that liberalism has emerged from the minority status it has occupied in France? Will it lead to a new mode of functioning and organisation

25. Yves Bertoncini, Thierry Chopin et al., « Notre débat public doit sortir d'une forme de schizophrénie vis-à-vis du grand marché européen », *Le Monde*, 24 March 2017.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Lucien Jaume, « Le libéralisme de Macron est à rebours de la tradition française », *Le Monde*, 13 May 2017 and Jérôme Perrier, « De quel libéralisme Emmanuel Macron est-il le nom ? », *Telos*, 2 June 2017.

## Emmanuel Macron, France and Europe "France is back in Europe": on which terms?

---

of political life?"[28] This last question is vital from the socio-economic and political points of view. Indeed, it is by redeveloping its vision and the way it organises its public authorities that France will be able to make a full come-back in Europe. French political culture seems indeed to make France unwilling to share power, which is a key factor in order to address Europe serenely. The functioning of the Union is based on an institutional edifice, in which decisions are made based on negotiated compromise between a number of players. But this does not match French tradition, which concentrates major power in the hands of a central leader. Is this situation likely to change with the election of Emmanuel Macron? A development like this is possible, but it remains uncertain: the President seems in effect to have adopted an extremely French, centralised, vertical approach in terms of his power, which seems to reflect the view he held already in 2015: "Democracy always comprises a type of incompleteness, because it is not self-sufficient. There is something missing from the democratic process and the way it functions. In French politics, the missing element is the king figure, whose death I really believe at heart the French people did not want. The Terror created an emotional, imaginary and collective vacuum: the King is missing! An attempt was then made to fill the gap, to place other figures: typified by the Napoleonic and Gaullist moments notably. The rest of the time, French democracy has not filled that space. We see this with the permanent question surrounding the presidential figure, which has continued since the departure of General de Gaulle. After him, the normalisation of the presidential figure re-established an empty chair at the heart of political life. However, what is expected of the President of the Republic is for him to assume this role. Everything is built on this misunderstanding." The question remains and the answer that will be given will affect France's European policy. Indeed, the leadership of a country on the European scene may depend on the personality of one political leader or another, and Emmanuel Macron's personal leadership may very well comprise a vital factor of influence on France's part in the European

arena in this regard. Nevertheless, leadership also supposes being able to find a fair balance between voluntarism and decisiveness at European level, on the one hand, and on the other, the more patient, consensual approach necessary due to the difficult exercise of negotiating between diverse partner countries. A truly influential national political leader in the European arena must acquire all of the leadership qualities that American presidents known as "the power of persuasion"[29]; and from this point of view Emmanuel Macron has to find the right balance between the will to exercise political (co)-leadership in the Union, and the defence of realistic ambitions amongst France's European partners, at the risk of continuing to encourage traditional French frustration – if this is not already the case – of a Europe deemed too liberal, too vast and heterogeneous, and too naïve from the point of view of defending its strategic interests.

### Europe is not a "French garden"

Finally, from an external point of view, in the context of the globalisation of security issues, only the scale of an enlarged Union will help the States of Europe to continue their influence in the international arena. From this general standpoint, France can play a role in the completion of this project, but on certain conditions. Firstly, it will have to dissipate all ambiguity that has surrounded its European policy for decades. For 60 years, France has succeeded in combining two radically different views of the purpose of its European commitment. By simplifying, on the one hand, the project of the "founding fathers" that presupposes a fundamental convergence of interests of the Member States, and on the other hand, the Gaullist project of a Europe that is simply a multiplier of power to enable France to defend its national interests. It means removing this ambiguity and promoting a clearer relationship between France and the European Union, which is not just based on a wish to project French ideas at the European level. Emmanuel Macron seemed to be aware of this when, on the occasion of the European Council of the 22nd and 23rd of June 2017, he declared "that one must not succumb to

28. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Monde*, 15 June 2017.

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power, the Politics of Leadership*,

29. New York, Wiley 1960.

the French sickness which is to think that Europe is about us and only us."

In addition to this, current developments will possibly help to clarify the problematic relationship of the French regarding enlargement, whilst explicitly raising the question of the territorial limits of the Union[30]. From an internal point of view, Brexit and the rise of nationalist, authoritarian and illiberal populism in Central Europe, and from the external point of view, recent geopolitical changes (the Ukrainian crisis, the isolation of Turkey in terms of its accession) undoubtedly provide an opportunity to clarify the issue of the Union's borders and decide on the conflict in vocation between two antagonistic visions of the future of the European project[31]. On the one hand, there is the vision of a Union, whose jurisdiction is a rationale of an indefinite extension of the market and enlargement in the number of its Member States, including Turkey, but not Russia. This is the vision held by the UK[32] and by some countries in the North of Europe; a vision traditionally supported by the USA, relayed and defined based on specific national interests in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. On the other hand, there is the vision of the EU developing towards the establishment of a political union based on territorial, politically defined power, which would be able to exercise its strategic influence externally. From this standpoint, it would be necessary to redefine a specific policy regarding Turkey within the framework of a "tailor-made" partnership[33]. This vision is held by those, including France

and Germany, who consider that identity, which relies primarily on culture and values, determines membership.

Not to take into consideration the reality of the Union with 27 members (after Brexit), nor to engage in a debate that leads to the political enunciation of the limits of the Union – even in a temporary manner – may lead to a continuation of the latent malaise regarding an enlarged Europe, which would prevent France from fully playing its role within the Union as it is.

\*\*\*

In fine, France's return to Europe will only be successful if there is a return by Europe to France, which supposes an appropriation by French public opinion of what the European Union really is, of the political and economic rationale, as well as the complex balance on which it is based. This is a condition sine qua non to end doubts that the French have about their future in Europe and in a changing world.

---

### Thierry Chopin

Head of research of the Robert Schuman Foundation, associate professor at the Catholic University of Lille (ESPOL)

30. Michel Foucher, *Le retour des frontières*, CNRS Editions, 2017 et *L'Obsession des frontières*, Perrin, 2007.

31. Thierry Chopin "Which borders for the European Union? Europe's different scales", *Schuman Report on Europe. State of the Union 2018*, Editions Marie B. – Lignes de repères, 2018.

32. *The vote in support of Brexit in the referendum on 23 June 2016 is in part linked to a rejection of the enlargement policy defended by the British elites.*

33. Pierre Mirel, "European Union-Turkey: from an illusory membership to a privileged partnership", *European Issue n.437*, Robert Schuman Foundation, June 2017.

You can read all of our publications on our site :

Publishing Director : Pascale JOANNIN

---

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani