

Ideas Monitor #35/2017

The German elections triggered plenty of reactions across the European political sphere over the past few days. Commentators, policy analysts and think tanks are speculating over the future of Europe in the light of recent events.

The result of the German election and the difficult coalition-building process that will unfold over the upcoming months could halt any substantial reform of the EU. On the other hand, French president Emmanuel Macron seems willing to push forward rapidly with an overhaul of the current Union governance mechanisms.

Commentators across Europe agree on the fact that the new German political landscape is miles away from being the steady setting it used to be over the past decade or so. With a strong radical right-wing party such as the AfD in the Bundestag, and the prospects of a multi-party coalition government – currently the most likely scenario is that of a “Jamaican coalition”, made up of the ruling Christian Democratic Union party (CDU), the Liberal Party (FDP) and the Greens - it is difficult to foresee the steering capacity of Berlin within the Union.

On *Social Europe*, [Amandine Crespy](#) underlines how the “erosion” of the so-called *Volksparteien* – above all of the Social and Democratic party (SPD) - and the rise of the AfD shut down the post-World War II political model. But Crespy goes further than that and claims that the elections pave the way for an end of a “European Germany”. A “boring electoral campaign” was followed by “tremendously important” consequences for the EU, the author underlines.

On the liberal think tank *Open Europe*, [Leopold Traugott](#), shares his views on the results of the German elections. Talking about the chances of an EU-wide reform process, Traugott argues that “Macron will plead”, but “Merkel will not be able to respond”. Moreover, Traugott warns that the British leadership should not expect any significant improvement on the front of Brexit negotiations. In an earlier post, the author explained that a ruling FDP would have implied a softening of Germany’s position vis-à-vis London in the negotiations. Yet, the presence of the Green party in a likely Jamaican coalition would counter-balance the impetus of the Liberals.

On *Carnegie Europe*, [Judy Dempsey](#) collects reflections from several intellectuals on the consequences of the German vote. Although most of them focus on foreign policy, some tackle issues such as Brexit. Peter Keller, a journalist and former President of *YouGov* claims that the unstable German scenario will not ease off the Brexit negotiations. Keller claims that UK Prime Minister Theresa May was hoping for a strong Merkel leadership in order to strike a compromise with Berlin that could threaten the European Commission’s lead in the talks.

Stefan Lehne argues that Emmanuel Macron has to be counted among the losers of the German elections. Lehne underlines that the FDP opposes any major governance reform that would shift the EU towards more financial solidarity. Yet, Lehne argues that integration could easily increase in fields such as defence and security.

Nevertheless, another key event took place yesterday in Paris, as French President Emmanuel Macron held a speech at the Parisian University, La Sorbonne, outlining his vision for Europe. A positive feedback to Macron came in from the pages of the UK based newspaper *The Guardian*. The [editorial board](#) prizes Macron's speech, defining it "a bold vision for Europe". The authors compare Macron's intervention to those of the founding fathers of the Union who kicked-off the integration process. "Speeches do matter", the editorial board argues, as they can "infuse energy, rally support, set goals".

Although not directly answering to Macron's intervention, the President of the Jacques Delors Institute and former Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta joins the call of the French president. Hosted by many television and radio shows across Europe, [Enrico Letta, argues that in Europe the "status quo is untenable"](#). Letta calls for the leaders of Germany and France to take up their responsibilities. Letta's interventions resemble Macron's own views on the future of the Union.

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that over Macron's speech was greeted only on one side of the Rhine or the Channel. Even in Germany commentators and intellectuals welcomed the Parisian speech. Sure thing, "Macron wants too much", but at least he "wants something", [Sasha Lenartz](#), writes on *Die Welt*. More precisely the German commentator underlines that on many issues, such as defence policies, there might be room of manoeuvre even after the German electoral result. Likewise, Lenartz highlights the fact that Macron did not push it too far on sensitive topics, such as debt mutualisation which were featuring his past interventions on Europe.

On *The European*, [Julian Nida-Rümelin](#), former Minister and President of the German Philosophical Society, goes even further than that. Nida-Rümelin argues that Berlin's opposition to financial and governance reforms is a mistake. Similarly to Letta, he writes that "business as usual can't go on".

This Ideas Monitor is by [Carlo Burrelli](#) and [Alexander Damiano Ricci](#)

Photo Credits CC [European Council](#)
