Throughout the electoral campaign that brought him to the élysée, **Emmanuel Macron** constantly insisted on European issues. As President, Macron follows his Europeanist commitment and strives to make his vision of Europe prevail. Moving from the analysis of his Sorbonne speech, this article intends to offer an overall assessment of Macron's ideas on Europe under the light of the four cleavages that structure European politics : **market-correcting** versus **market-making**, **solidarity** versus **responsibility**, **free movement** versus **national closure**, and **integration** versus **autonomy.**
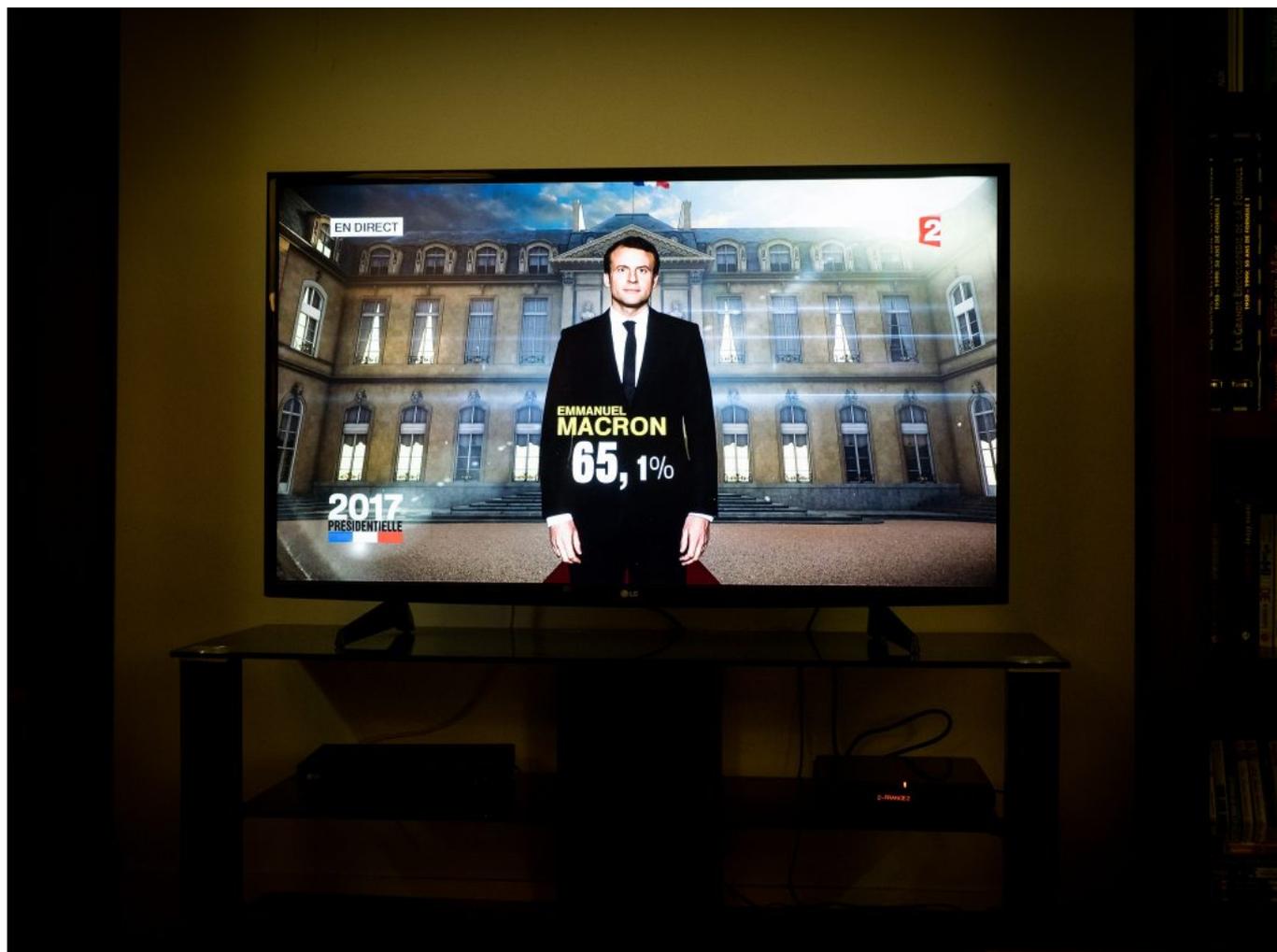
The Sorbonne speech

The Sorbonne speech, delivered on 26 September 2017, sums up Macron's Europeanist vision and is articulated around three keywords: **sovereignty, unity, and democracy**. Finding **sovereignty** as a central issue in a Europeanist speech could be baffling: after all, the loss of sovereignty is one of the main accusations that populists raise to the European Union. Macron counters this argument by claiming that, in today's world, the national(ist) sovereignty advocated by populists is an illusion: only by uniting and cooperating, European countries will be able to regain their sovereignty, eroded by globalization. The French President puts forward concrete proposals on six 'key' areas of European sovereignty: **security, border control, a partnership with Africa, ecologic transition, digital technology, and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)**. In his discussion of economic and monetary issues, we can grasp the heart of Macron's criticism to contemporary Europe: if people are more and keener on anti-Europeanism, it is because Europe has lost its ambition to improve the lives of Europeans. **Above all, Europe failed to address its most fundamental problem: mass unemployment**. The EU, claims Macron, should not search for a magical mechanism that ensures growth, nor be just an overseer of Member States' financial problems, but should commit to **a long-term economic and industrial strategy that would allow creating new jobs**. His call for sovereignty, then, is primarily a call for a new, concrete and visible commitment of European institutions.

Emmanuel Macron argues that European institutions and national governments should stop fearing their people and that the integration process needs a new, democratic pulse.

The second keyword, **unity**, is to be understood either in a political, a social, and a cultural sense. In the political sense, Macron advocates a **multi-speed Europe**, that would allow willing States to pioneer further forms of integration: nowadays Europe is not the restricted club it used to be in the past decades, and core countries' will to unite should not be frustrated by others. In the social sense, **unity is threatened by social dumping** and unregulated competition: in his perspective, Europe should thus endeavour to make the social standards of its Members converge. Finally, in order to foster a cultural union among Europeans, Macron proposes to step up exchange programmes, so that youth have more possibilities to spend time in other European countries and to establish European Universities. Lastly, Macron claims for more **democracy**. He argues that European institutions and national governments should stop fearing their people and that **the integration process needs a new, democratic pulse**. Therefore, he launches two ideas. On the one hand, he proposes the establishment of transnational electoral lists, that contend for the seats of the European Parliament left vacant by British MEPs. On the other hand, he launches the idea of democratic conventions for the reform of Europe, to be held throughout the continent in 2018.

Television displays Macron's victory on the occasion of the French Presidential elections, in 2017

Reading between the lines

Overall, the analysis of the Sorbonne Speech allows us to better comprehend Macron's strategy for Europe and his vision in relation to the four different lines of conflict that populate the public and political debate about European integration.

Firstly, the divide between **market-making and market-correcting** separates those who claim that European institutions should conform to market discipline, from those who think that political institutions should mitigate the outcomes of the markets. Indeed, a market-making component is present in Macron's ideas: in his view, European institutions should accommodate, not oppose, globalization. When he speaks of creating new jobs, Macron always specifies that jobs are created if industries and workers are competitive on the global market; for sure, he is not a radical socialist. Yet, **he leans more towards the market-**

correcting side of the continuum, as he envisions a Europe that does not simply adhere to the principle of market efficiency, but also acts in order to regulate the market and to protect its citizens.

The French President calls for a more active European approach on digital and environmental issues. On the one hand, he insists on taxing and regulating the major digital platforms; on the other, he upholds a fixed minimum price on carbon to discourage its usage, accompanied by a European carbon tax, to avoid unfair competition from non-Europeans producers.

When Macron claims that there is not a 'magical mechanism' to solve European problems, **he criticizes the rule-based logic that drove the management of the euro crisis** and advocates a much more active role for European institutions. Macron's idea of sovereignty is epitomised by his proposal of a budget for the Eurozone, managed by a European finance minister under parliamentary control. Far from being a mere auditor of Member States' public finances, the European minister of finance would actively use the budget to fund common investments and foster stability in case of economic shocks.

In addition, the French President calls for a more active European approach on digital and environmental issues. On the one hand, he insists on **taxing and regulating the major digital platforms**; on the other, he upholds **a fixed minimum price on carbon** to discourage its usage, accompanied by a **European carbon tax**, to avoid unfair competition from non-Europeans producers. Further, he advocates a **European tax on financial transactions**. Together with the European budget, **these taxes would fund European common goods**: a common defence policy, border management, development projects in Africa, ecological transition, research programmes. In order to foster his agenda on defence, security and innovation, [Macron seems even willing to accept a diminution of EU farm subsidies](#), a step that no French President has ever had the courage to take.

Emmanuel Macron during the French Presidential election night, shortly after being elected President of the Republic

Secondly, the divides between **solidarity and responsibility**, and between **free movement and national closure**, are related to the issue of **European social unity**. The first distinguishes those who claim that the European institutions should foster the principle of interstate solidarity from those claiming that the principle of self-help should prevail, whereas the second relates to the level of social protection to be accorded to intra-European migrants. **In both cases, the French President finds his opponents in the Eastern governments, as they benefit the most from their lower social standards**.

Regarding the solidarity/responsibility axis, Macron claims that **an excessive stress on the principle of competition has fostered a race to the bottom among European social models**, leading a disaffection of the people to the Single Market. Thus, he proposes that the forthcoming social budget, to be negotiated in the next year, define a 'corridor' for

corporation tax rates as a criterion to gain access to the funds: **countries that run against the others, states Macron, should not benefit from European solidarity**.

According to Macron's notion of sovereignty, European countries must cooperate if they want to endure in the globalized world.

The French President has also engaged in a struggle for the **revision of the posted workers directive**, which is related to the free movement/national closure divide. In October, the EU employment ministers have agreed on a proposal to revise the directive, by shrinking the duration of posting from 24 to 12 months, and by granting some other minor benefits to the workers. Even if the concrete effects of the revision could be minimal, it has a highly symbolic value, as **it exposes the divide between Western countries that support the revision, led by France, and Eastern countries, that oppose it**. Beside this revision, in his Sorbonne speech Macron makes a further proposal about posted workers: he suggests that, when workers are posted in another country, the higher rate of social contributions should be paid to their home country, and that the money should go to **a solidarity fund to support the convergence of less wealthy countries**.

Lastly, the divide between **integration and autonomy** relates to the extent to which national competencies are pooled at the European level. According to Macron's notion of sovereignty, European countries must cooperate if they want to endure in the globalized world. So, in the six 'key' areas mentioned above, Macron fosters a shift of competences towards the European institutions, and a stronger cooperation among European states. However, since the ambition to integration is not equal in all countries, **Macron advocates a multi-speed integration**, so that the will to integrate of some countries is not prejudiced by the reluctance of the others.

Trieste, 12/07/2017 – Trilateral meeting: Paolo Gentiloni, Emmanuel Merkel, Angela Macron

From Paris to Berlin with love

Macron envisions, then, a Europe where core countries serve as pioneers for the integration. In his speech, he points out the relationship between **France and German as the engine of European integration** and upholds a **renewal of the 1963 Élysée Treaty**, a treaty of friendship between the two countries. French and German Parliaments have jumped at the chance, and on last January 22nd jointly voted a common resolution urging their governments to define a new treaty of friendship. The resolution claims further cooperation in defence, foreign and social policy, in environmental and border issues. Furthermore, it advocates a Franco-German debate on the reform of the eurozone and relaunches Macron's proposals of democratic conventions for the reform of the EU.

As stated by his Minister of Economy and Finance Bruno Le Maire, **Macron's strategy for**

European reforms is articulated in concentric circles: a first agreement must exist between France and Germany, then it must be shared with the other two European largest economies, Italy and Spain, and finally with the other member states. The future '**Quirinale Treaty**', a treaty of friendship that will be defined in the next months between France and Italy, is to be framed within this strategy. The treaty will strengthen cultural and industrial cooperation, and allow for a debate between the two countries on European issues.

He has no fear to claim that it is time to get rid of the taboos that hinder European integration, and to foster his innovation agenda. Only time will tell us whether he will succeed in promoting his Europeanist ideas and whether they will foster a new start for Europe.

Europeanism is a central element of Macron's political thought. He envisions a competitive Europe, **able to solve the long-standing unemployment problem, to regulate the markets, and to provide common goods**, such as security, defence, and cutting-edge research programmes. But while the EU must be competitive in the global market, **excessive competitiveness within the Union should be mitigated** through the convergence of European social models.

His will to reform Europe must now face the intentions of the other Member States. **The major source of uncertainty is the constitution of the next German government**. Macron could find a good ally in the future German government, if the social-democrats of the SPD will agree to form a third *Grosse Koalition* with the CDU/CSU: **the Europeanist vision of the SPD is largely in line with Macron's**, as it is reflected in the preliminary document, signed by SPD and CDU/CSU, that serves as basis for the negotiation for the new government.

At least with regard to his intentions, Macron seems willing to give a new pulse to the integration process. He has no fear to claim that it is time to **get rid of the taboos that hinder European integration (revision of the Treaties, farm subsidies for France, financial transfers for Germany)**, and to foster his innovation agenda. Only time will tell us whether he will succeed in promoting his Europeanist ideas and whether they will foster a

new start for Europe.

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Author: Federico Bruno