



## ELISABETH GUIGOU

President of The Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures; Former Member of Parliament and President of the Commission of Foreign Affairs at the Assemblée nationale, France

### Ali ASLAN

This is why I am delighted to welcome a former member of the French Parliament and a member of the Commission of Foreign Affairs at the French National Assembly. Currently she is the President of the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures. I am delighted to welcome Elisabeth Guigou.

Richard and Steven both alluded to France, a very important country and one that needs to assume its rightful place as one of the leaders of the EU if this union of 28, and soon 27, nations is to work out. That is why I am delighted and curious to hear from someone from France, who is deeply immersed and experienced in French politics, about where the country is headed.

### Elisabeth GUIGOU

The morass Europe presently finds itself in, which Steven described so well — widening divisions, the rise of euro-scepticism, euro-hostility and populism, not just in France but also across the continent — is connected to the fact that the European Union was built by turning its back on the rest of the world and not facing the challenges of globalisation. Under the pressure of necessity, it was based on navel-gazing and had a priority: peace and prosperity. After two world wars and the tragedy of the Holocaust, that was the most urgent task.

My first point is this: it must never be forgotten that the European Union's great achievement is to have become synonymous with the three decades of peace and prosperity between 1945 and 1975 — but only in Western Europe, rebuilt in the shelter of two kinds of protection: American protection for its security, and the Iron Curtain — granted, a detestable border, but protected by article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.

The European Union has been too preoccupied with its internal matters to think about post-Soviet European security. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the European Union was outpaced by history. The only answer was to admit the States of central and eastern Europe, which was necessary of course, but managed quite poorly from a political point of view. The negotiations focused primarily on the single market and the economy, because they were the most urgent priorities for the central and eastern European countries and also because they were at the heart of the EU's brief and what the negotiators were used to doing. But we did not speak enough about values, solidarity and relations with our eastern and southern neighbours, so now we have a problem: what do we share? What do we want to do together?

Above all, the EU accommodated itself much too easily to the collapse of the Soviet Union, oblivious to the humiliation it would cause in Russia.

I think many of the European Union's present and future troubles come from the fact that it turned away from the outside world. Naturally, that does not mean the European Union must stop strengthening itself from within. On the contrary, a banking union and governance, strengthened by a euro zone finance minister, a budget and democratic legitimacy, must still bolster the monetary union. Above all, the economic, fiscal and social union has yet to be achieved.

Emmanuel Macron is the first French president since François Mitterrand, with whom I worked eight years at the Elysée — as European Affairs minister I negotiated Maastricht — to put Europe at the heart of his agenda. He won the election by beating Mrs. Le Pen on the issue of Europe and the euro. We are all deeply grateful to him for that. Mrs. Le Pen probably would not have won anyway, but had she obtained 42, 43 or 45% of the vote instead of 35%, it would have been a different story.



President Macron has put forward proposals because he understands that Europe is not natural. Europe needs initiatives, willpower, even a bit of utopian dreaming, and at the same time realism. Those who succeeded — Delors, Kohl and Mitterrand — had all of those things: vision and at the same time a practical way forward. Now, the main challenge facing Europe is the challenge of unity, of course. Steven put it very well: immigration has become a key issue. But what is the immigration issue? It is a security issue and an issue of fighting terrorism in Africa. Boko Haram buys human beings for almost nothing. Immigration is a matter of development. Immigration is a matter of sustainable development: jobs for youth, education, training, health care and, of course, the fight against climate change.

Today, Europe's main strategic problems lie to the East — what policy should be adopted with regard to Russia — and the South — the southern shore of the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa. Richard Burt was absolutely right to say that the time has come for us to take our affairs into our own hands. We are still paying for the failure of the European Defence Community in 1954. It took 40 years for the European Union to say, "Perhaps we can have our own ambitious foreign and defence policy". That was the Maastricht Treaty. Today, we no longer have the choice: America's disengagement, begun with Barack Obama and accelerated under Donald Trump, puts the EU face-to-face with its responsibilities.

Above all, it seems to me that we must have an absolute strategic priority: Africa and Europe moored to each other, as Emmanuel Macron said recently. Europe *and* Africa, because we must face our challenges together. Otherwise, withdrawal, rejection of the other and confrontation will only grow.

I would like to say a few words about Brexit. I fervently hope that the United Kingdom will return to the European Union one day. Having any kind of punishment whatsoever in mind is out of the question. A compromise on the three sticking points in the divorce is within reach. Long talks on future relations between the EU and the United Kingdom will follow. Brexit is a raw deal for the European Union and a tragedy, in my opinion, for the United Kingdom, the effects of which are only now starting to be felt. Despite this disaster, it is absolutely essential to preserve our bilateral ties, especially our defence cooperation. But Brexit is also an opportunity for the 27, who, for the moment, have stood united in the negotiations in order to overcome their divisions, agree on their common interests and take their destiny in the global world into their hands. The European Union must look at the world and find the will to come up with common solutions on security, sustainable development and migration. That is what will roll back xenophobic populism and lethal isolationism and restore Europe's hope.

#### **Ali ASLAN**

Thank you for giving us the view from France, also reiterating that perhaps with the new president there might be another focus and emphasis on France's contribution to Europe. Thank you, of course, for a very passionate plea; it is very easy to overlook, if you are focused on the day-to-day obstacles and problems of the EU, why the EU was founded in the first place, and you pointed that out and put it in a historical context.