

## What Expectations Can Europe Meet in Tomorrow's World?

**Franziska Brantner** is a Bundestag member.

**Jean-Louis Bourlanges** is a member of the National Assembly and Vice-Chair of the European Affairs Committee.

**Bernardino Leon**, a former EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean, is Director General of the Emirates Diplomatic Academy.

**Igor Yurgens** is Chair of the Institute of Contemporary Development (Russian Federation).

**Christine Ockrent** is a journalist and writer.

Translated from French by Philolingua, edited by David Quin.

### Christine Ockrent

Thank you for being so many in this splendid place and for listening so attentively to the Minister of Economy, and the Executive Chairman and founder of Ifri. Thierry de Montbrial has encouraged us to undertake psychoanalysis as it were, but it seems to me that, after the rather optimistic and dynamic picture painted by Bruno Le Maire, and the rather dark picture painted by Thierry de Montbrial, we can congratulate Ifri once again for having chosen to celebrate its fortieth anniversary in the aftermath of a summit that brought China and the European Union together in Brussels. Today, a summit of heads of state and government is also opening, which has to decide, or not, on a new timetable for the endless chaos of Brexit. The coincidence of the two events leads us to think about what Europe is today, Euro-power. We are going to talk about Euro-power, because it is a major economic and commercial entity; but we could also talk about a weakened Europe, weakened from within by its doubts, its identity problem, its inward-looking attitudes, as well as by destabilization attempts by neighbors who are not always benevolent and also about this often cowardly Europe that we all regret, which seems indecisive, so unsure of its ability to make its mark on history.

I would like to start by asking Franziska to give us her reaction to the speeches of this morning, and how, as a Bundestag member and a young politician of the future, she sees this Europe.

## ***What is the purpose of Europe?***

### **Franziska Brantner**

I share Thierry de Montbrial's and the Minister's assessments on the choice the Europeans have to make today. Do we want to remain at the center of a pingpong process between the Americans and the Chinese, or do we want to define our own future? The question applies to all areas, and I am thinking specifically about the topic of digitalization: we have hardly talked about it, but it is very important. Do we accept the idea of US or Chinese digitalization, of private or state monopoly, with the risk of total censorship, or of a private monopoly that defines what we have the right to do or not? For example, at the moment, there is a big debate in Germany about the issue of 5G: do we want to retain European ability to control the infrastructure of the economy of the future, or do we decide to hand everything over to the Chinese?

For me, the question is how we will succeed in rebuilding our economy in the future in accordance with a more sustainable model and with greater social cohesion. We have not talked about it yet, but I think that we won't succeed in defining a European identity simply by naming outside enemies: we need to create greater internal cohesion. The challenge is social cohesion, and we can very clearly see doubts that exist about the need for social cohesion. I come from Germany and so I know what I'm talking about, even if it's difficult to talk about there. It's a key element for creating cohesion at national and then European level.

My last point, which seems essential to me: we must have a vision about our surrounding area. What is happening right now in Libya is a sign of this and largely stems from European disagreement. The French, Italians and British differed on the way forward in Libya, and the result is a disaster for us and the Libyans – regardless of what the Chinese, Americans or Russians think. It is up to us to decide what we want for our neighborhood. There are many challenges here – including, particularly, problems raised by migration, etc. It is not enough to try to identify enemies. We must know what we want to do, with the objectives of a social cohesion model, a sustainable economy, and a peaceful neighborhood.

Our objectives should be positive: we will never be able to win the support of our fellow citizens through fear alone.

### **Christine Ockrent**

Bernardino Leon, you are Spanish, a diplomat; you have taken on important responsibilities on behalf of the European Union, and particularly in

Libya. You are now running a diplomatic academy in Abu Dhabi. How do you see the disastrous consequences in Libya and elsewhere, in the light of the lack of unity that Franziska has just emphasized, and, now you are further south, both the benefits, but also the dangers of this Europe? How can it respond to what Thomas Gomart called the “the world’s panic”?

### **Bernardino Leon**

Libya very clearly represents Europe’s failure in the Mediterranean region, but we must first broaden the focus and look at things with some political or analytical distance, as well as with some hindsight. Europe has its own values that we should be able to project. Yet, the comments that we have heard show us how the political crisis, the crisis of values, the economic and social crises and the leadership crisis – these are the four major crises that I identify – confront us with the question of survival.

We are under threat. Our survival as Europeans is threatened. And this threat is also reflected in this lack of unity that can be read in our external relations. I mentioned these four crises because they are present in the battle of ideas, in the political battle being played out now in the Mediterranean. It is a major battle for Europe: a battle where democracy is at stake. Neither China, nor the United States, nor Russia, nor Turkey, nor Saudi Arabia will fight for democracy in the Mediterranean. We have seen the cases of Tunisia – nowadays Algeria – Libya, Egypt and Syria: all are challenges and most often regrettable failures for Europe. But we need to see things further.

In Libya, for example, Europe fought with the United Nations and some countries to put the concept of “responsibility to protect” into practice, a concept that reinforced international law, or one of the pillars of European identity. We did it in 2011 with Security Council Resolution 1973, with support for this principle from China, Russia and India. The Europeans, with their internal divisions, indeed prevented the development of this principle and remained divided on Libya until 2014, the time of mediation between the UN and the European Union.

The United Nations message was important: it was to give the European Union an important role in Libya and to project its values there: diplomacy, dialog, no systematic military intervention, development of state-building, institutional and political recovery of Libya through a general agreement that would have been a first step. But Europe remained divided and this division has brought us to the situation we are in today.

In Syria, there was the same division. In Tunisia, we failed to develop a major plan that would have convinced the Tunisians that their battle for democracy was supported by Europe. There is still time to do it, and to provide them with greater integration into our institutions and in our regional policies. Where is Europe on Algeria? Europe must be more present on all these fronts: the battle is not only a battle for the future of democracy, human rights and the great values that are the foundation of our culture, it is a battle for the survival of the southern countries and Europe itself.

### **Christine Ockrent**

Igor Yurgens, you are chairman of the Institute of Contemporary Development in Moscow. We know how the real winner of the bloody chaos in Syria is Vladimir Putin, and we have just seen through Libya, and other examples, that Europe was basically absent from this part of the Arab world. We also understood that Moscow's objective is not to really establish democracy. To what extent do you think the Kremlin's objectives and those of our institutions are different?

### **Igor Yurgens**

What expectations can Europe meet in tomorrow's world?

For the Russians, three issues are critical. First, it is very important to us that you do the utmost to preserve European integration. European integration for the Russians is also their civilization and their culture. The failure of Europe would also be the failure of Russians as Europeans. On Brexit, I understand President Macron's position, who says that there must be a time limit and that the British really must decide. Personally, I would be tempted to give the British *remainers* a little more time, as they are fighting ferociously for Europe. Beyond Brexit, and still on European integration, I would speak about *Russxit*. Russia may soon be excluded from the Council of Europe, which would be a tragedy for us, a rupture that we do not want. Europe's collective intelligence can avoid this situation.

Admittedly, there are Russian duties, obligations that we must fulfill, but we need a strong partner on the European side.

Beyond European integration, our second hope focuses on a fair globalization model. Many expectations were raised here by the Paris Peace Forum, which met at President Macron's initiative for the first time in November 2018. Many academics or engaged people then wanted a

“Davos for the People” to emerge from it. Although globalization is inevitable, it must not be done solely for the benefit of transnational corporations, the super-rich, elites and intellectuals, but for the people, at environmental, social level, etc. The Paris Peace Forum is a very important platform in this respect.

The third task that I will mention is very demanding. It is a question of creating a cohabitation model between liberal and more authoritarian societies, between liberal democracies (of the Westminster type) and regimes like those of China, Russia or Turkey, for example. In Helsinki in 1975, we found a solution for about twenty years. Now, we must get back to the drawing board again, organize a world conference between the existing systems on security, environmental, trade issues, etc.

I read with much interest the Atlantic Council’s “Declaration of Principles for Freedom, Prosperity, and Peace”, which was signed by very important people. For more authoritarian regimes, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is working to form a new bloc so as not to reproduce disastrous divisions. We need to invent something that connects these logics and we hope that the European genius will provide us with an idea. Less complacency and more intelligence on the part of Europe is what we expect from you.

### **Christine Ockrent**

As for you Russians, we also expect fewer attempts at destabilizing our political systems and fewer attempts at using technology – which we have all become fans of – for purposes that seem suspicious, to say the least.

### **Igor Yurgens**

If democracy doesn’t work, it is a tragedy and perhaps a disaster. What I propose is to put everything on the table and to discuss it step by step: this relates to Ukraine, Syria, disarmament, etc. The problems are enormous.

### **Christine Ockrent**

Jean-Louis Bourlanges, you are one of the leading voices of Europe, with its advances, setbacks, sidesteps, but always the “flame-keeper”. So, can you explain to us how Europe could respond to the offer of dialog, which has just been made, while responding to doubts that are creeping in among its members in public opinion, people in the grip of (for some more emphasized than others) identity politics.

### Jean-Louis Bourlanges

I believe that I am a metaphor for Europe today, since I have both the flame in my heart and a crutch in my hand. In the same spirit, I cannot resist the urge to extend an observation by Thierry quoting the sentence attributed to Napoleon: “When China wakes, it will shake the world”. Thierry rightly said that Tulard, our great Napoleonic specialist, found no trace of this sentence in Napoleon’s writing. But Tulard is also a great cinema specialist, and he found the source of this sentence – it is very interesting metaphorically – spoken by Charlton Heston to Ava Gardner in *55 Days at Peking*. Here, we see both the influence of Hollywood in forming our attitude and the strength of fake news compared to reality. It’s still “Hollywood” that says at the end of *Liberty Valance*: “When the legend becomes fact, print the legend”.

With this in mind, let’s not demonize the United States, in any event not US society or culture, after having idolized them. I will be tempted to say, like General de Gaulle, “Europe and America, its daughter”. The daughter has grown up and is obviously more dynamic and stronger than the mother. I would now like to return to your key question: what is happening?

Fifty years ago, we took a position compared to another power, the USSR; nowadays, we take a position compared to China. I would like to try to understand why this relationship is complicated for us Europeans. I believe that we must not be in a Schmittian relationship – in reference to Carl Schmitt, who advocated the idea that politics is defined according to the dialectics between friend and enemy. It is obvious that the European Community was formed in a relationship of very strong resistance to the USSR. It is equally clear that, when this opponent disappeared, considerably weakened after the collapse of the USSR, European unity disintegrated. And it is also true that today, although the latter holds up more than could be expected, as we can see with Brexit or with the resistance of the euro against the forces of break-up, which have assaulted it, it is also because it feels threatened again. What is dominant and decisive for us is not the relation to the enemy, but the relationship to one another.

The European Union finds it very difficult to think about itself in its non-hostile singularity. It thought of itself as a universality, but was hindered by Stalinism. At the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union – we have already referred to Fukuyama – it thought of itself as a sort of enhanced UN cooperation. It has trouble being accepted in a singularity that is not necessarily aggressive; it has a lot of trouble accepting others.

What is another? It is someone who is not you, but who is in a permanent relationship of association and rivalry with you. Therefore, this prevents any Manichean relationship. For example, we can no longer take US goodwill for granted, since every ten minutes we receive electroshocks from the US administration. Even so, we must not consider the United States as implacable opponents, as they are essential to our security (although it is not at all like before). We can no longer accept a certain amount of Vladimir Putin's behavior and we must not be complacent. However, at the same time, we know that we must have, and we will have, balanced relations with Russia – obviously provided that we know how to protect ourselves against attempts to destabilize part of eastern Europe. It is the same thing with China: we mustn't have Mr Salvini's attitude... Ms Le Pen is putting herself in a position of helping the Chinese government with an extremely one-sided view of relations through the Silk Road. But at the same time, I know that we have a lot to do with China.

All this requires maturity of Europe and adult relationships: we are no longer children who need protectors and friends. We are not yet like elderly people who curse everything around them because "it's really awful, all these youngsters who want to take our place" ... We are in an adult situation faced with people who wish us well and others who want to harm us, defend their interests, their values, and with whom we must have a positive relationship. The problem is not the relationship with China, the relationship with Russia or the relationship with the United States; the problem is the relationship with ourselves.

We have never answered the single question that a real political community is based on: who are we? That is to say: who should be members of this club – and it is obvious that they are people who have in common a certain idea of law, democracy and respect for others. We do not answer the question anymore: what do we want to do together, and what do we want to do separately at member-state level? Finally, we do not answer the question: how will it work? How can we have a democratic model for 27 different member states? It obviously cannot be the same as a unitary democratic state.

These three questions frighten us: they are like headlights that blind us 27 rabbits – 28, if we still count the United Kingdom – without being able to answer them.

It is up to the 27 states that are meeting today to determine and suggest to their people what they want. Who are we in the European Union?

What do we want to do? What do we want to uphold? And how do we want to support it? These three major blanks have never been colored in. We think we can eliminate these fundamental questions, and it is the source of Euroskepticism and our spinelessness, which is very worrying in a world full of threats. The problem is not that of the European Union, but that of Europe, of the European people, of the European governments and of European civilization. Do we want to be something in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

I will speak like Sieyès: what was Europe in 1914? Everything. What was it in 1945? Nothing. What does it aspire to become in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Something. Again, it must want it!

**Christine Ockrent**

Franziska, what would your answers be to Jean-Louis Bourlanges' three existential questions?

***What do we want to do together?***

**Franziska Brantner**

The key question is: what do we want to do together? The problem is not just having peace between ourselves – it's already important, but it is not enough anymore. We must explain what we want to do, and I think that one of the objectives is to have a social and ecological economy together. The Minister spoke earlier about the fact that [electric] batteries are currently only produced in China. If we Europeans want to change our production method, we must invest. We must save Europe to save the climate, and we cannot do it alone.

The second objective is to guarantee social stability and social cohesion. Again, the member states cannot do it alone. The large companies we talked about earlier have benefited from loopholes and contradictions in taxation policies, for example. And it is very important, as everyone must know, that if this continues we will no longer have the resources to finance schools, universities, etc. Everyone must participate in funding European priorities. And the problem can only be solved collectively.

A third objective is digitalization – the *cloud*. For example, we are currently having a debate in Germany about where the police store their surveillance videos. At the moment, Amazon is being paid to have a place to store these recordings; I personally find this unbelievable. It is clearly a security issue – and we should have a *European cloud*. We have our own data and it is not up to the Americans or the Chinese to provide us with



such a tool. Therefore, the first question is whether we want to have a digital future together. Then comes the question of resources.

I support the idea of a European federal republic. What is a republic? It is a political entity where all the citizens – Romanians, Germans, Swedes, French, etc – are equal, with the same political and social rights, where the nation-states and Europe are responsible for upholding these rights. It is much less urgent to redefine the European Council's rights than to define the citizens' rights that must be upheld in common. That's what defines us and not just corporate rights.

We must start by saying what citizens' rights are, define those that we want to uphold in common, and provide ourselves with the means to do so in an increasingly hostile world. What gives me hope, these days, are the students who mobilize every Friday to combat global warming. This is a European project and they have a European conscience, mobilizing everywhere in Europe at the same time. It's a brand-new movement. We must harness their energy and rebuild Europe from their projects.

### **Christine Ockrent**

However, we also see this generation using technology that isn't European, Facebook, that generates these changes in public opinion, these mass movements. Bernardino Leon, we have not sufficiently emphasized the fact that Spain has made a remarkable and constant effort to catch up with Europe very quickly after having emerged from Francoism, has overcome a major economic and social crisis, much more serious than the one experienced in northern Europe. In your opinion, can Europe respond to one of these three existential questions posed by Jean-Louis Bourlanges through social glue, as Franziska proposes?

### **Bernardino Leon**

Absolutely. Spain is an example of integration and shows how Europe can play a positive role, but also how the crisis in Europe and the attacks on Europe that originate from some countries threaten this success. Spain was able to develop democratic institutions quickly. It suffered a terrible jihadist attack in 2004 and a very strong legal system opposed it. Spain was the only one of the major countries attacked by terrorist groups to resort to an existing legal system – without creating special legislation or resorting to specialized courts. So, we have shown remarkable democratic and social strength.

Nowadays, we can see how this success is threatened, and I sometimes think that Europeans are blind to reality. In Spain, we have two pro-independence parties that have always been respected by the Spanish

democratic system. They are active and present in all the institutions, free to express their opinion and regularly stand in elections. Different European intelligence services have highlighted various interferences in elections in Spain – as everywhere in Europe: all the major anti-European forces have received this type of support one way or another. We must face reality. The issue now in Spain is no longer how we overcame Franco's dictatorship, or how this success was possible due to Europe's support, but to realize that Europe really is threatened. If we are not able to act together, to strengthen European institutions, extend the rule of law, democracy and human rights in Europe and around Europe, what will be in danger is both the European project and national stability.

***Is there an issue with Russia?***

**Christine Ockrent**

Igor Yurgens, you encouraged us to be less complacent earlier, but less complacent in relation to whom?

**Igor Yurgens**

What are you doing in Ukraine, for example? As soon as we discuss the Ukraine conflict, the Europeans make speeches saying we must support Ukraine, that we must build something... But the European Union's attempts to create something concrete, for example to fight against corruption in the country, are negligible for the time being.

Vladimir Putin went to Brussels in 2003 opening up all possibilities for cooperation. We created four common areas of cooperation. We explained we were friends. And then, in Brussels in 2008, you said: "Yes, Ukraine's entry into NATO is possible..."

**Christine Ockrent**

Yes, but the idea was immediately blocked, particularly by France, and was never on the agenda.

**Igor Yurgens**

France, Italy and other countries engaged in quite successful cooperation. But when we think in terms of a security bloc, it becomes dangerous. Ukraine is the victim of a confrontation of this type. The Russians think that the CIA is at work, fomenting an anti-Russian coup; and the Ukrainians think that the Russians started it, with the annexation of Crimea and Donbass. Therefore, it is urgent to discuss all these subjects frankly.

**Christine Ockrent**

Including Crimea then?

**Igor Yurgens**

All these subjects, including Cyprus, including Azerbaijan, in short, all unresolved issues. What I call complacency is the fact of stating something needs to be done and then nothing happens.

**Christine Ockrent**

Jean-Louis Bourlanges, is Europe really doing nothing? Could Europe, through its shortcomings, be the cause of this misunderstanding with Russia?

**Jean-Louis Bourlanges**

No, I don't think so. I would differentiate Europe from the United States in this respect. We have not had quite the same approach, particularly on the issue of expansion of the Atlantic alliance. It is true that the official communications were a bit ambiguous, but it is clear that France and Germany, in particular, are clearly opposed to the United States on the idea of incorporating Ukraine into NATO. We sent diplomatic signals.

There is a starting point that I will not discuss here, regarding NATO's expansion, about President Bush's attitude, etc. In reality, it seems that Gorbachev negotiated his withdrawal very badly... Also, the Germans say this; the then Chancellor's advisors say that they were ready to make far more concessions to achieve German unity... No matter. We have always thought fundamentally that we had to establish a very positive relationship with Russia, perhaps admittedly with a little "Fukuyama" idealism, thinking: "Yeltsin's Russia, going beyond the problems of corruption and oligarchy, will gradually evolve towards a capitalist, democratic system, and we will be able to maintain cooperative relationships with it – not integration, because it is too large to join the European Union."

Furthermore, the Russians have helped us: we withdrew from Kosovo, where we were doing a bad job, because the Russians dropped Milošević. Here, we had great hopes with the appointment of Medvedev as prime minister. And then the system broke down completely. I think that fear of democratic contagion coming from Europe played very strongly in Russian leadership circles, who said "we don't want that". And, secondly, I maintain that the swinging of the Russians between Europe and China is a mistake.

The real danger for the Russians is China. I would compare Russia's situation now to France's in the aftermath of 1815. We were then all convinced in France – well, the entire liberal wing: Chateaubriand, Musset,

etc – that it was dreadful, that France was at the bottom of the abyss. It had lost Waterloo and was at the mercy of Europe... Only the wisest – that is to say Talleyrand, Louis Philippe, etc – said “No, we are very powerful in Europe and we have no interest in changing the new *status quo*.” Those who thought otherwise, like Napoleon III, caused the disaster of 1871. Among the Russians, there is a deep feeling of humiliation related to the collapse of the Soviet Union – and it’s true it’s a major historical failure. However, the Russians haven’t admitted that the system they could build peacefully with a united Europe would be much better than what they can expect if they play the China card.

On Syria, the Russians were right and we were wrong throughout to claim to settle the problem without them, when they had a legitimate or illegitimate – it is difficult to know who is legitimate in the region – but, in any case, real presence in this country. We should have called on them from the beginning. We were right about Ukraine, but we were wrong about Syria.

### **Christine Ockrent**

Igor Yurgens, does the rapprochement between Russia and China seem to be a response to the equation suggested to us this morning? What should Europe do, faced with China on the one hand and Trump’s America on the other?

### **Igor Yurgens**

You are pushing us towards an unnatural marriage. It’s the geopolitical situation that is pushing us towards this unnatural marriage.

We need a partner for our future development. We worked with Europe between 2001 and 2005, and Vladimir Putin, like the Russian elite, then thought that Europe had betrayed them, as there was no progress either on the security system or economic cooperation, nor agreement on the expansion of NATO, and that the EU’s Eastern Partnership was not working.

### **Christine Ockrent**

Is Xi Jinping a more reliable ally?

### **Igor Yurgens**

Some civilizations are naturally more authoritarian than others. You will not be able to establish democracy in China, even in ten or twenty years. In a sense, nowadays, Russia, Turkey to some extent, China, India, other countries that are also not as advanced as Europe, are autocratic. Xi Jinping’s and Putin’s autocracy brings them closer together. We probably

had the choice in 2003, and then things started to be much less favorable for us. There is no other choice than to start talking again.

### ***A word on Europe's destiny***

#### **Christine Ockrent**

I would like to ask each of you to choose a word that would reflect the answers that Europe should give to the questions in our debate. What word, do you think, would summarize Europe's proposal faced with the chaos of the world today?

#### **Jean-Louis Bourlanges**

I would like to quote Thucydides' phrase: "Happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on being courageous".

#### **Bernardino Leon**

I would say "union", because of the attacks that we are experiencing nowadays against international law, and that emanate from Trump and his positions on Jerusalem, or his support for Assad. All this requires a political response on our part, and this will not be possible if we do not have a united Europe in a united response.

#### **Igor Yurgens**

I will quote an English expression – I don't remember how Hegel phrased it – *complementarity of the opposites*, to symbolize the dialectics between Russia and Europe.

#### **Franziska Brantner**

Liberal democracy. That's what you have to uphold as a European. Whether it be Facebook or the influence of Russian bots, the digital sphere needs to be regulated to uphold our liberal democracy, and we can only do it together. We must listen to the eastern European countries if we want to uphold this liberal democracy. We must act not just when the leaders shout loudly, but when needs, doubts and very legitimate fears are voiced. Currently, it's the Czech Republic that is fighting with Huawei, with China; it is doing so alone, and this is not acceptable. If we want to uphold our liberal democracy, we must solve these problems, go to eastern Europe, where we must defend our social cohesion. However, I remain optimistic that we will achieve this.

