


Alexandre Holroyd: “Macron’s Presidency will not have a huge impact on Brexit per se, but on the future of the EU”

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Alexandre Holroyd is the *En Marche!* candidate representing the French living in Northern Europe. In a recent panel discussion organised by the *1989 Generation Initiative*, Alexandre Holroyd discussed the implications of Macron’s presidency for Brexit, the future of the European Union and the importance of the upcoming local elections in France for the next five years.



Alexandre Holroyd (left), Michael Cottakis (centre) and Professor Iain Begg (right) at the talk ‘What does Macron’s presidency mean for Brexit? (LSE, 26 May 2017)

What is Macron’s position on the European Union?

The decision of *En Marche!* to run an openly pro-European campaign puzzled most political commentators. At a major meeting on 10 December in Paris, Macron dedicated a third of his speech to the European project, something that did not occur in France since the late 90s.

The party truly believes that the future of France and its economic prosperity lies in Europe. This Europhile position is both an emotional one linked to the memory of the war and the role the EU played in building peace, and a pragmatic one linked to the single market and the economic opportunities it offer. This position has traditionally been defended by the UK with France being on the other side of the table.

Finally this position is realistic, the election of Donald Trump has accelerated the perception that the US is withdrawing slowly from Europe, combined with difficult relations with Russia, there is a need to federate both European defence efforts and security intelligence capacities.

What are the implications of a Macron presidency on Brexit?

In the first six to eight months, there will be little open criticism of the European Commission's conduct of the negotiations. Indeed, enormous efforts are made to show a complete alignment of all the European positions behind the chief negotiator, Michel Barnier. This is a fundamental element of how Brexit is going to look like from a French perspective.

The British press coverage of Macron's position on Brexit, reporting that he wants to punish the UK by making it less competitive is wrong. However, the reality is a strong desire to make France more competitive and attractive and Alexandre Holroyd does not believe that this has to be done at the expense of the UK.

As for the Brexit negotiations, very few people in France do believe that it will be settled within the allocated two years. The complexity of the EU decision-making which include twenty-six regulatory bodies who sift through secondary legislation on all sorts of policy issues and the UK will be subject to these for the foreseeable future, for at least eight to ten years.

It is not likely that by the two years timeframe, the UK and the EU will have a full exit deal. However, Alexandre Holroyd thinks that the highly political issues (i.e citizen's rights, budget) will be solved during that period and then a long transitional period is likely to be established to negotiate the different regulatory mechanisms.

Macron's Presidency will not have an enormous impact on Brexit per se, but on the future of the European Union. While there was a narrative in the UK that the EU will fall apart and that right-wing candidates are going to swipe across the continent, on the contrary, there is a drive at the moment to push Europe forward following the elections in Austria, the Netherlands and France. But that is going to be an enormous challenge because, in the last twenty years, there has been a growing anxiety on what direction the European project is taking.

To address that, Macron has developed a measure in his program called a 'democratic convention' that will be launched by the end of 2017 in all the Member States. The objective is to grasp what the citizens expect from the EU taking into account the coherence in different countries. It is similar to the way En Marche! program was developed by crowdsourcing in information from hundreds of local committees across the country and followed by experts working with the results to translate them into concrete policy proposals. This is how the party ranked its key priorities: employment, education and the European Union. The idea is to replicate this methodology at the European level, working with academics and experts, to end up with a clear idea of where the EU project should go and potentially a treaty reform based on the results of the democratic convention. The key objective is to defend an EU that can advance without unanimity, with different level of integration as it already exists in some policy areas such as the Eurozone.

What if Macron can't get an absolute majority in the upcoming local elections?

There are three possible scenarios. First, if Macron wins an absolute majority in the local elections, he will be able to implement his set of reforms in France. Second scenarios, En Marche! doesn't get an absolute majority but a cross-party coalition is possible where the left and the right get some of their reforms through which means that Macron will be able to implement only a smaller part of the program.

Finally, although the polls don't seem to go in that direction, there is a possibility where the last two are impossible, in that case it will be a disaster for France and for Europe and very little will be done in the next five years. The President is very powerful if he has the Parliament on his side. There is indeed a threat of anti-European candidates gaining support if the presidency results in high unemployment and climbing inequalities. On the European elements of the program – including the relaunch of the EU and the Foreign policy plans – the only way to get the Germans on board is to prove that Macron can reform the country, but if he fails nothing will be implemented at the EU level.

It is essential that French citizens go to the polls and vote for the upcoming local elections because the parliamentary election is as important as the presidential election.

A recording of the full event is available [here](#).

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Note: This article gives the views of the interviewee, and not the position of EUOPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

About the interviewee

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Alexandre Holroyd is the [En Marche!](#) candidate representing the French living in Northern Europe. He studied European politics at the London School of Economics (LSE) and worked for five years in Brussels in the consultancy industry before going back to London.



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