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## MACRON AND ORBAN DEFEND OPPOSING EU VISIONS

11.05.2018

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EU Observer (11 May 2018)

French and German leaders have defended a vision of Europe that was denounced as a "nightmare" by Hungary's Viktor Orban the same day.

The two models - of deeper EU integration and liberal values, versus an EU of independent and illiberal nations - will define voters' choices in the European Parliament elections next year.

The EU should forge ahead on monetary union and create a single foreign and defence policy, French president Emmanuel Macron said in Aachen, Germany, on Thursday (10 May) while receiving the Charlemagne Prize, a yearly award for pro-EU personalities.

He repeated previous calls for "an ambitious European budget and a eurozone with its own budget allowing for ...convergence between member states".

"We have to fight for a new and stronger Europe ... now is the time," he said, amid German reluctance to put its wealth behind the project.

"In Germany, there cannot be a perpetual fetish for budget and trade surpluses, because they are achieved at the expense of others," he said.

EU values of democracy and rule of law had helped create the past 70 years of "miraculous" peace on the continent, Macron added.

EU states should also have a joint "European sovereignty" on the world stage, he said.

"We need to ... construct our own sovereignty that will be the guarantor of stability", in the Middle East and further afield Macron said, amid an EU-US split on how to handle Iran.

"Europe has to take its fate into its own hands ... It's about European sovereignty, about refusing to let others decide for us," he said.

German chancellor Angela Merkel broadly endorsed the French EU vision.

Germany wanted to move more slowly than France on monetary union, she acknowledged, but it also aimed to build a stronger eurozone and a single foreign policy, she said in Aachen.

"We come from different political pasts but we find common ground, and that is the magic of Europe," Merkel said.

"We will make progress on the banking union, we will make progress on the capital markets union,

we will strengthen the eurozone," she said.

"It is no longer such that the United States simply protects us, but Europe must take its destiny in its own hands," Merkel said on EU foreign policy.

The EU also needed a new asylum system that was "fair" and based on "solidarity", the chancellor, who was among the few leaders who had welcomed refugees to Europe, added.

The EU had to defend "European democracy, the European system of values ... the dignity of each individual, in short everything that constitutes European identity," she said.

It also had to guard against "narrow-minded, backward-looking nationalisms and authoritarian temptations", Merkel added, in an allusion to the rise of illiberal administrations in Hungary and Poland and to the popularity of far-right parties more widely in Europe.

She spoke of Macron's "contagious enthusiasm" for the EU.

The Charlemagne prize board also spoke of his "passion for and commitment to Europe ... and his decisive stance against all forms of nationalism and isolationism".

## **Fly in the ointment**

But the Franco-German EU vision was denounced as a "nightmare" by Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban in Budapest the same day.

"The [European] Union must function as an alliance of free nations and give up on its delusional nightmares of a United States of Europe," he said in his inaugural speech in parliament on Thursday after winning elections in April.

"The EU must return to the grounds of reality. As a first step, it must change its thinking about migration," he said.

"We will oppose the mandatory migrant settlement quotas ... and will fight for the protection of borders," he added, referring to Hungary's legal battle against an EU project for greater solidarity on sharing asylum seekers.

Orban won the election amid attacks on free press and civil society after having created what he previously called an "illiberal democracy" and what he now called a "Christian" one.

"We have replaced a shipwrecked liberal democracy with a 21st-century Christian democracy, which guarantees people's freedom, security," he said.

"It supports the traditional family model of one man and one woman, keeps anti-Semitism at bay, and gives a chance for growth," he added.

His vision of Europe stood in diametric opposition to Merkel's shared "European identity", as the EU heads toward its next elections in 2019.

"Hungary must prioritize geopolitical considerations ... Hungary is and will remain a dedicated member of the Western alliance system, but that does not change geographical constraints," Orban said.

"To our west is the land of German iron chancellors, to our east is the world of Slavic soldier peoples, and to our south are massive crowds of Muslim people. Berlin, Moscow, Istanbul - Hungary exists in this space. We need to make calculations based on this," he said.

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