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Interview granted to Le Grand Continent magazine by the french President Emmanuel Macron.

2020 is drawing to a close. Between immediate emergency management and long-term vision, what is the current direction for you today?

As you said, 2020 has been marked by crises. Obviously, the Covid-19 pandemic but also terrorism, which has returned with great force in recent months across Europe and in Africa. I refer in particular to this terrorism, called Islamist, but which is in the name of an ideology that distorts a religion.

These crises come in addition to all the challenges we already had, and which were, I would say, structural: climate change, biodiversity, the fight against inequalities - and therefore the untenability of inequalities between our societies and within our societies - as well as the great digital transformation. We are at a time in the history of humanity when we have rarely seen such an accumulation of short-term crises, such as the pandemic and terrorism, and profound, transformative transitions, which are changing international life and even having anthropological impacts: I am referring to climate change, as well as the technological transition that is changing the way we look at the world, as we have seen again recently, which is completely shaking up the relationship between the inside, the outside and our representations of the world.

In the face of this, and you are right to talk about direction, there is, I believe, very deeply, a guiding thread, which is that we need to reinvent the forms of international cooperation. One of the characteristics of all these crises is that humanity experiences them differently depending on location, but we are all confronted with these great transitions and intermittent crises at the same time. In order to resolve them in the best possible way, we need to cooperate. We will not beat the pandemic and this virus if we do not cooperate. Even if some people discover a vaccine, if it is not distributed throughout the world, the virus will return in places. To fight terrorism, which has hit us all: let's not forget that more than 80% of the victims of this Islamist terrorism come from the Muslim world, as we have seen again in Mozambique in recent days. We face these crises together. For me, the first international objective is to look for ways to usefully cooperate: our work on the virus with the Act-A mechanism, what we have been working on with respect to terrorism by building new coalitions, and our relentless work on the major issues I have just mentioned.

In addition, I believe that the way forward is also shaped by the importance, here and now, of strengthening and structuring a political Europe, two elements I see as complementary. Why? Because if there is to be cooperation, balanced poles must be able to structure this cooperation, around a new multilateralism, that is to say, a dialogue between the different powers to make decisions together. That means acknowledging that the multilateral cooperation frameworks are weakened today, because they are blocked: I have to say that the UN Security Council no longer produces useful solutions today; we all have our responsibility to bear when some, such as the WHO, find themselves hostages of the crises of multilateralism.

We need to reinvent useful forms of cooperation – coalitions of projects and players – and we need to modernise our structures and create a level playing field for everyone. In order to do that, we also need to reconsider the terms of the relationship: I believe the second way forward is a strong and political Europe. Why? Because I do not believe that Europe waters down France's voice: France has its outlook, its history, its view of international affairs, but it builds much more useful and stronger action when it does so through Europe. I even think that this is the only way to impress our values, our common voice, to prevent the Chinese-American duopoly, the dislocation, the return of hostile regional powers. That is what we managed to do to uphold the Paris Climate Agreement: it was really Europe that structured the agenda to keep China with us after President Trump's decision. It is what we did in the fight against terrorism in line with the Christchurch Call to Action - by cooperating with New Zealand, but it is really a European action that we launched right here a year and a half ago.

So I believe that, at this point, we cannot lose the European thread and that strategic autonomy, this strength that Europe can have for itself. If I were to look beyond the here and now, I would therefore say that we need two strong guiding principles: to get back on track with useful international cooperation that prevents war and addresses our current challenges; and to build a much stronger Europe, the voice, strength and principles of which can carry weight in this reformed framework.

You speak of a direction, looking to the future, but we can understand this moment of transition by also looking to the past and asking ourselves what is the era that is ending in 2020. Is it an era that began in 1989 or in 1945?

It is very hard to say, because we do not know if we are at a moment in time that allows us to reflect on this period. I do not know if it is dark enough for the Owl of Minerva to look back on what is fading to understand it. But I think the two watershed years that you mention are such moments, 1968 is probably one too.

We see that we have a crisis with the multilateral framework of 1945: a crisis in terms of its effectiveness, but, and it is even more serious in my opinion, a crisis in terms of the universality of the values upheld by its structures. And this is for me - it was mentioned earlier today in the Paris Peace Forum - one of the most important points of what we have just seen recently. Elements such as the dignity of the human person, which were inviolable, and to which all the peoples of the United Nations, all the countries represented, fundamentally subscribed, are now being challenged, played down. There is a perspective emerging today, which is really a break, and which is the game of powers that are not comfortable with the United Nations' human rights framework. There is very clearly a Chinese game, a Russian game on this matter, which promotes playing down values and principles. There is also a game of reculturation that is trying to make these values part of a dialogue of civilisations, or a clash of civilisations, by objecting to them on the basis of religion, for instance. This is instrumental in fragmenting the universality of these values. If one accepts the challenge to these values, which are those of human rights, and therefore of universalism based on the dignity of the human person and of the free and reasonable individual, then it is very serious. Because the value scales are no longer the same, because our globalisation has been built on this principle: there is nothing more important than human life. There, I see a first break. It is very recent; it is currently taking hold; it is the fruit of ideological choices fully endorsed by powers that see in it the means to rise, and a form of fatigue, of breakdown. You grow accustomed to it and think that what has become a set of words that you repeat all the time is no longer at risk. This is the first break, and it is very worrying.

There is a second break in our concert of nations, which is, I think, the crisis of the post-1968 and 1989 Western societies. You see neo-conservatism rising everywhere in Europe, which is challenging 1968 - the neo-conservatives themselves take it as a reference - which is basically challenging a state of maturity of our democracy - the recognition of minorities, this movement for the liberation of peoples and societies - and there is the return of the majority rule and, in a way, of a form of popular truth. This is coming back in our societies, everywhere. It is a real break that should not be overlooked, because it is an instrument of refragmentation.

I think that we are also at a break point with respect to post-1989. The generations born after 1989 did not experience the last great struggle, which shaped Western intellectual life as well as our relations: anti-totalitarianism. They were based to a great extent, both academically and politically, on a fiction that was the "end of history" and an implicit idea that was the ongoing spread of democracies, individual liberties, etc. We can see that this is no longer the case. Authoritarian regional powers are re-emerging, theocracies are re-emerging. The twist of history, which undoubtedly manifested itself at the time of the Arab Spring, is where what is seen through this same lens as an element of liberation, is an element of the return of the mindset of certain peoples and of religion in politics. It is an extraordinary acceleration of a return of religion on the political scene in a number of these countries.

All these elements create profound breaks in our lives, our societies, and the spirit that emerged from these benchmark dates. That is why I want to launch what you could call the "Paris Consensus", but which will be a worldwide consensus, which we have launched today, which consists of reaching beyond these major dates that have shaped political and intellectual life in recent decades to consider the element of the concretisation of what is called the Washington Consensus and therefore the fact that our societies were also built on the paradigm of open economies and a social market economy, as we used to say in post-war Europe, which became less and less social, and more and more open, and which, following this Consensus, basically turned into a dogma whereby the truths were: less state intervention, privatisations, structural reforms, opening up of economies through trade, financialisation of our economies, with a rather monolithic rationale based on the accumulation of profits. That era had its results, it would be too easy to judge through our current lens. It enabled hundreds of millions of people on the planet to break out of poverty, with the opening up of our economies, with the theory of comparative advantage, many poor countries benefited from it. But we see it differently today, which is a profound break with the major transitions I mentioned.

First of all, it does not help us address and internalise the major changes in the world, in particular climate change, which remains an externality in the Washington Consensus. Now, we are reaching a point where the urgency is such that it is impossible to ask leaders to address one of the main issues of the moment, an issue that is undoubtedly a priority for the coming generation, merely as a market externality. It must be put back into the market. That is what we have been doing since the Paris Agreement, with carbon pricing for instance, which is not understandable under the Washington Consensus, because it implies that something other than profit

needs to be involved.

The second thing is inequality. The way the contemporary financialised market economy works has enabled innovation and a way out of poverty in some countries, but it has increased inequalities in our countries. Because it has massively relocated, because it has reduced part of our population to a feeling of uselessness, with deep economic and social, but also mental tragedies: our middle classes in particular, and part of our working classes have been the adjustment variable of this globalisation; and that is intolerable. It is intolerable, and we have probably underestimated it. Our democracies live on a form of support polygon, where we need both the political principle of democracy and its rotations of power, individual freedoms, the social market economy and progress for the middle classes. These elements form the sociological basis of our regimes: that is the way we have been doing it since the 18th century. When the middle classes no longer have the factors to progress themselves and see their situation sliding year after year, a doubt about democracy sets in. That is precisely what we are seeing everywhere, from the United States of Donald Trump to Brexit and the warning shots in our country as well as in many European countries. It is this doubt that sets in, whereby people basically say, "Since I am no longer making any progress, if I want to get back to making progress, I either have to reduce democracy and accept some form of authority, or I have to accept closing elements of borders because the way the world works doesn't work anymore."

That is why I believe very deeply that we are at a break point, which is a profound break point too, in addition to these political issues, which is also a break in contemporary capitalism. Because it is capitalism that has become financialised, that has become over-concentrated and that is no longer capable of handling the inequalities in our societies and internationally. We can only respond to it by re-forging it. First of all, it is not addressed in a single country, and the policy I have put together is not at all in that vein, and I stand by it. As much as socialism did not work in one single country, the struggle against this mechanism of capitalism is ineffective in a single country. We cannot respond to it through taxation, we respond to it by constructing life pathways differently: with education and health when you are a country, and then with a different way of working for financial and economic movements, that is to say by including the climate objective, the objective of inclusion and the elements of the system's stability in the heart of the matrix. That is how I see it.

We are at a political break point in terms of certain things achieved at key historical dates. At the same time, we are at a break point in terms of the capitalist system, which needs to address the issues of both inequalities and climate change. In addition to this comes a new factor, but one that is taking shape perversely: social media and the Internet. And this remarkable creation, which was initially made to exchange knowledge and circulate it within an academic community, has become an extraordinary instrument for disseminating information. Nonetheless, it has also become two dangerous things: an instrument for the viralisation of emotions, whatever they may be – which means that each person sees themselves in the world and in the other's emotion, out of context, for better or for worse –, and a de-hierarchisation of all self-expression, and therefore of objection to any form of authority, be it political, academic or scientific, which helps shape life in democracy and society, simply because it is there, someone has said it, and it has the same value from wherever it is said. We have not yet sufficiently taken this on board. We have not organised a public order for this space. This virtual space over-determines our choices today, and at the same time it transforms our political life. And therefore, anthropologically, it disrupts democracies and our lives.

The final turning point is demographic change, which is often overlooked. Shaping this point are these great climatic, technological, political, economic and financial changes, and then there is the demographic variable. We have a population that continues to grow at an incredible rate. We have, although I do not defend them, Malthusianist theories that will re-emerge, because we cannot live in a world that has to deal with the scarcity of resources and the finiteness of the human species, and at the same time considers that its demography is an exogenous element. Today, we have reached a world population increase of 400 to 500 million people every five years. And above all, this increase shows acute imbalances: if you take the Europe-Africa region, for one European country demographically disappearing, in the same period, one African country appears. We are witnessing a kind of acceleration in the twists of history. European demography is declining in a worrying way - to a lesser extent in France than elsewhere - we have European countries where there are very worrying population movements, for example in Eastern Europe. And African demography is growing. All of this also creates a re-conception of the world, of economic capacities, of futures, and obviously also disrupts transnational relations.

I do not think that there has ever been a period in our history in which so many breaks have been concentrated.

With what instruments is a new multilateralism being built that addresses these upheavals?

First of all, there is ideological work to be done, which needs to be conceived and named. Today, ideologies diverge. Three years ago, when I spoke about European sovereignty and strategic autonomy, I was taken for a lunatic, and these ideas were dismissed as French whims. We managed to get things moving. In Europe, these ideas have taken hold. We have built European defence capabilities, although it was thought unthinkable. We are making progress in the field of technological and strategic autonomy, whereas people were surprised when I

are making progress in the field of technological and strategic autonomy, whereas people were surprised when I started talking about sovereignty over 5G. So first of all, there is ideological work to be done, and it is urgent. It is a matter of conceiving the terms of European sovereignty and strategic autonomy, so that we can have our own say and not become the vassal of this or that power and no longer have a say.

We must then address these tensions, think about them together, and build our useful action. Europe has a lot of thoughts left unthought. On the geostrategic level, we had forgotten to think because we thought our geopolitical relations through NATO, let's be clear, - France less than others because of its history - but this superego is still present: I sometimes fight against it. The ideology that can therefore be established in Europe, that is, a common reading of the world and our intentions, is an essential point. What we have launched with the Peace Forum, the Paris Consensus and our action for French and European politics, all this is key.

Then, in the very short term, the answer lies in the coalitions of players. What I have been applying since day one is a kind of pragmatism, where we work with what we have, and where we show by example that we are moving forward. When the United States of America decided to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, two hours later, I gave the conference "Make our planet great again", in a nod to President Trump, and a few months later, on the anniversary of the Paris Agreement, we held the first One Planet Summit here at the Élysée Palace. We launched a coalition of players: American states, American companies, major backers, and we launched dozens of coalitions to address, in concrete terms how we combat desertification, for example, reduce carbon emissions or reduce hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) emissions. Since the One Planet Summit in December 2017, we have done this consistently. We have also involved players who we did not sufficiently include in the concert of nations: I held a One Planet Summit in Africa, because I believe that our strategy must be Afro-European. This re-forging must be based on a Europe that is much more geopolitically united and involves Africa as a partner, on an entirely equal footing. We did this in the combat against desertification in Nairobi. We also did it when we held the G7 presidency: we set up coalitions of players to reduce international maritime transport, to reduce HFCs, and by building a G7 with African countries. And they were there for half of the programme.

So, first of all, it is a rethink of our approach: more Europe. Secondly, a true Europe-Africa partnership, because together we have the key to the problem. Then there is the construction of concrete coalitions with governmental and non-governmental players – businesses and associations - to achieve results on a path that we have set together. And from there, we will be able to build broader alliance strategies. It is with this strategy, still on the subject of the climate, that we have succeeded in engaging China with us. At every One Planet Summit, China is present and announces the development of a Chinese carbon market and the implementation of carbon pricing. Because we know how to be active and engage these coalitions without lingering in an inert strategy, we are managing to also engage the Chinese, which I hope will take us to a next step with China regarding the 2030 objectives and carbon neutrality in 2050 in the coming months, and will enable us to re-engage Americans on this basis.

Another example of this tactic I have used in the past three years to achieve these ends is social media: the fight for our freedoms, the public standard, and against online hate and terrorism. When the attack in Britain took place in the summer of 2017, Theresa May came here on 13 July 2017 and we called on the major platforms and social media to remove all terrorist content. We then took it to the United Nations. For a year, it was a very hard fight. Very few were with us. The fierce defenders of free speech stood up against this proposal. At the UN as in Europe, we stood alone. However, we managed to get things moving, unfortunately because of the Christchurch attack. On 13 May 2019, at the Elysée Palace, I invited New Zealand's Prime Minister along with a number of European leaders, African leaders - always with this desire to include different regions - and the major platform CEOs (Twitter, Facebook, Google, etc.). And they all committed to the golden hour, that is to say the removal of online terrorist content in less than an hour. It is not a law, it is a hybrid and unprecedented commitment, among sovereign states, to respond to this problem. In a few days, I hope that Parliament will pass the law that will make this golden hour mandatory in Europe.

We can, in each of these urgent matters, make change happen if our principles and goals are clear and if we manage to build new original strategies of players, between states and with non-state powers. This requires either responding very quickly when there is a shock - the example of Christchurch - or building the ground for a common ideology and a common reading of the world, which is to show that we need, in the face of these shared challenges, to build effective cooperation.

A final example would be Act-A. When the virus appeared, we only had one fear: if the virus reaches Africa and other poor countries, what are they going to do? If we have no other solution than to close our countries, how are they going to live? Immediately, we launched an African Union Office, online, with a number of leaders, before bringing this voice to Europe and the G20. We shaped this Act-A initiative with the African Union, the European Union, the other G20 powers and the WHO to help finance the improvement of primary health care systems, and especially to ensure that the vaccine would be a global public good and that we would be in a position to produce enough of it to provide it to poorest countries. We have solutions each time, but we need to build the necessary innovations for each of these areas.

Could you come back to what you said about geopolitical Europe: what concrete definition is behind sovereignty, strategic autonomy, Europe as a power?

Europe is not just a market. For decades, we have acted implicitly as if Europe were a single market. But we have not conceived Europe internally as a finite political space. Our currency is not finished. Until this summer's agreements, we did not have a real budget and real financial solidarity. We have not entirely thought through all the social issues that make us a united space. And we have not sufficiently thought about what makes us a power in the concert of nations: a highly integrated region with a clear political given. Europe must rethink itself politically and act politically to define common objectives that are more than merely delegating our future to the market.

In concrete terms, this means that when it comes to technology, Europe needs to build its own solutions in order not to depend on American or Chinese technologies. If we are dependent on them, for example in telecommunications, we cannot guarantee European citizens the secrecy of information and the security of their private data, because we do not have this technology. As a political power, Europe must be able to provide solutions in terms of cloud technology, otherwise your data is stored in a space that does not come under its jurisdiction - which is the current situation. So, when we talk about such concrete issues as this, we are actually talking about politics and citizens' rights. If Europe is a political space, then we have to build it so that our citizens have rights that we can politically guarantee.

Let's be clear: we have allowed situations to arise where this is no longer quite the case. Today, we are in the process of rebuilding technological independence, in telecommunications for example, but this is not the case with cloud-based data storage. Our information is on a cloud that is not regulated by European law, and in the event of a dispute, we would depend on the goodwill and workings of American law. Politically, this is untenable for elected leaders, because it means that we have not built the means to provide answers to something which you, as a citizen, are entitled to ask for, such as the protection of your data, a guarantee or regulation on this matter, or at least an informed and transparent debate among citizens.

The same goes for the extraterritoriality of the dollar, which is a fact and not a new one. Less than ten years ago, several French companies were penalised to the tune of billions of euros because they had operated in countries that were banned under American law. In concrete terms, this means that our companies can be condemned by foreign powers when they operate in a third country: that is a deprivation of sovereignty, of the possibility of deciding for ourselves, it weakens our position immensely.

Unfortunately, we grasped the full implications of this when it came to the discussion on Iran. We Europeans wanted to remain within the framework of what we call the JCPOA. With America's withdrawal, no European company was able to continue doing business with Iran for fear of sanctions from the United States. Hence, when I talk about sovereignty or strategic autonomy, I am bringing together all these issues, which at first glance seem very different.

How do we decide for ourselves? That is precisely what autonomy is: the idea that we choose our own rules for ourselves. This means revisiting policies that we had become accustomed to, technological, financial and monetary policies, policies with which we, in Europe, are building solutions for ourselves, for our companies, for our fellow citizens, which enable us to cooperate with others, with those we choose, but not to depend on others, which is still too often the case today. We have made a lot of progress in recent years, but we have not solved this problem.

Can we go so far as to talk about European sovereignty, as I have done myself? It is a term that is a bit excessive, I admit, because if there were European sovereignty, there would be a fully established European political power in place. We are not there yet. There is a European Parliament that defends European citizen representation, but I consider that these forms of representation are not totally satisfactory. That is why I strongly defended the idea of transnational lists, that is to say the emergence of a true European demos that can take shape, not in each country and each political family within it, but in a more cross-cutting way. I hope that the next election will allow us to do this. If we wanted European sovereignty, we would undoubtedly need European leaders fully elected by the European people. This sovereignty is therefore, if I may say so, transitive. But between what the Commission is doing, the Council, on which leaders elected by their people sit, and the European Parliament, a new form of sovereignty is emerging, which is not national, but European.

However, it is the content of sovereignty as a whole that I was talking about, when I raised this notion, and which can perhaps be found in a more neutral way in the term "strategic autonomy." I think it is vital that our Europe finds the ways and means to decide for itself, to rely on itself, not to depend on others, in every area, technological, as I said, but also health, geopolitics, and to be able to cooperate with whomever it chooses. Why? Because I think that we are a cohesive geographical space in terms of values, in terms of interests, and that it is good to defend it, in itself. We are an aggregation of different peoples and different cultures. There is no such concentration of so many languages, cultures and diversity in any given geographical space. But

no such concentration of so many languages, cultures and diversity in any given geographical space. But something unites us. We know that we are European when we are outside of Europe. We feel our differences when we are among Europeans, but we feel nostalgia when we leave Europe.

Nevertheless, I am sure of one thing: we are not the United States of America. They are our historical allies. Like them, we cherish freedom, we cherish human rights, we have deep attachments, but we have, for example, a preference for equality that is not found in the United States of America. Our values are not quite the same. We have an attachment to social democracy, to more equality, our reactions are not the same. I also believe that culture is more important here, much more. Finally, we have a different worldview, which is connected with Africa, the Near and Middle East, and we have different geography, which can mean our interests are not in line. Our neighbourhood policy with Africa, with the Near and Middle East, with Russia, is not a neighbourhood policy for the United States of America. It is therefore not tenable that our international policy should be dependent on it or be trailing behind it.

And what I am saying is even truer for China. This is why I believe that the concept of European strategic autonomy or European sovereignty is very strong, very rich, that it says that we are a cohesive political and cultural space, that we owe it to our citizens not to depend on others, and that this is the condition for having any weight in the concert of nations today.

You talk about changing habits, but this is in the air right now. What are the sticking points? What is holding up this vision?

I am not so sure. When I introduced the idea during the Sorbonne speech, many people said: it will not happen, it is a French whim. Barely over three years later, in European defence, we have a European Defence Fund, structured cooperation and an intervention initiative with nearly ten countries on board. In technology, things have been evolving since we launched the idea of European 5G, and Germany is joining us in this, which was less natural for them because they were also ahead of the game. So we are really rethinking our sovereignty in the area of technology. The health crisis has made us rethink our sovereignty in the area of healthcare and the health industry. It has brought to light our dependencies. When the whole of Europe is crying out for gloves and masks, we all understand that we need to produce gloves and masks again on our soil. That is what the Recovery Plan is for.

In financial matters, it took time, but in June 2018 we signed the Meseberg Agreement with Germany on a common budgetary capacity to deal with issues of Europe's economic and financial independence. This resulted in an imperfect agreement at European level and, because of the Covid-19 crisis, we signed the Franco-German agreement of May 2020, which means we can develop things at the proposal of the Commission and which paved the way for the historic July agreement, bringing a budgetary response to the crisis in record time, but also laying the foundations for a budgetary construction of Europe. This contribution should not be underestimated. For the first time, we have decided to have debt together, to spend together heterogeneously in regions and sectors that need it most. In other words, to have a transfer Union, based on a common signature, and common debt. Hence, this is truly a key point for building this sovereignty of the euro and making it a real currency that does not depend, or will depend significantly less on others, and creating budgetary sovereignty within our borders. We have made progress on all that. There is still a long way to go, on the geopolitical choices – you can see we have differences on Russia and Turkey -, on the strength of these responses, but I believe that things are starting to stir.

The question, if we are straightforward, is the following: is the change in the American administration going to see Europeans letting up? I profoundly disagree, for instance, with the opinion piece signed by the German Minister of Defence in *Politico*. I think that it is a historical misinterpretation. Fortunately, if I understood things correctly, the Chancellor does not share this point of view. But the United States will only respect us as allies if we are earnest, and if we are sovereign with respect to our defence. Therefore, I think that, on the contrary, the changeover of Administration in America is an opportunity to pursue, in a totally peaceful and calm manner, what allies need to understand among themselves, which is that we need to continue to build our independence for ourselves, as the United States does for itself and as China does for itself.

You spoke of successful cooperation and of many breakthroughs: China has this titanic project of the New Silk Roads, which is a tremendous project, a vision for the future. This is something that we are struggling to define in Europe. Is it something more internal looking at more integration, a greener policy? Or, on the contrary, is it something meant to spread globally? What is the European dream, the great European project?

You are right to say that the merit of the New Silk Roads is that it is a very powerful geopolitical concept. That is a fact. And it is also a testimony of the vitality of a nation and its fortitude. We were talking about historical references and the post-1989 period: it has to be said that Europe has settled its internal crises, and it is as if it no longer had teleology. There is a moral crisis in Europe, because it has fought all these historical battles, including the fight against barbarity and against totalitarianism. What are our contemporary struggles, since we always organise ourselves around a common struggle or a common dream? What are Europe's contemporary

struggles?

I will tell you how I see them. There is a positive struggle, which is to make Europe the leading power in education, health, digital and green policies. These are the four major struggles, which mean that we will take up these four major challenges. So the dream is massive investment to do just that. I think that we have entirely the possibility to do so, that the recovery plan we have put in place is a step in this direction, as are our national policies. This is a dream for ourselves. It is a very rallying goal, which will change a lot of things. But I think that we can expect a global impact from it, because it will draw in China and the United States behind something very federative, which is also the condition required to live in harmony at home and with the rest of the world. I included education because I think it is one of the challenges that we have left behind, and it is a major one.

There is a second challenge for me, which is that Europe should take up the torch of its values. They are being forsaken everywhere. The fight against terrorism and radical Islamism is a European struggle, a struggle about values. It is a fight for us and, basically, I think that this struggle today is against barbarity and obscurantism. That is what is happening. It is not at all a clash of civilisations, I do not hold with that interpretation at all, because it is not about a Christian Europe versus the Muslim world. That is a fallacy that some would have us believe. It is a Europe with Judeo-Christian roots, that is a fact, but one that has built two things: the coexistence of religions and the secularisation of politics. These are two of Europe's achievements. Because this is what has made it possible to acknowledge the primacy of the rational and free individual and therefore respect between religions. What is happening in the debate that has been going on, largely against France, and I do not think it has been sufficiently gauged, is a colossal step backward in history.

The entire debate has basically consisted in asking Europe, and in this particular case France, to apologise for the freedoms it allows. The fact that there has been so little take-up of this debate in Europe, or that it has taken such an uneasy tone, says something about our moral crisis. But, and I stand by this, we are a free country, where no religion is threatened, where no religion is unwelcome. I want all citizens to be able to practice their faith as they wish. However, we are also a country where the rights of the Republic must be perfectly respected, because, we are first and foremost citizens, and we have a common project and a common representation of the world: we are not multiculturalists, we do not stack the ways of representing the world one after the other, but we try to build one together, irrespective of the personal and spiritual beliefs we subsequently uphold.

By virtue of that, we have rights: freedom of expression, of caricature, which has set so much ink flowing. Five years ago, when those who drew the caricatures were killed, the whole world marched in Paris and defended these rights. This year, a teacher's throat was slit, other people's throats were slit. Many condolences were discreet and we had, in a structured way, political and religious leaders from one part of the Muslim world - who intimidated the other side, I must say - saying, "They should just change their laws." That shocks me, and as a leader, I do not want to shock anyone. I am for respect for cultures, for civilisations, but I am not going to change our laws because they shock elsewhere. And it is precisely because hatred is forbidden under our European values and that the dignity of the human person prevails over all else, that I can shock you, because you can shock me in return. We can discuss it and argue because we will never come to blows, since that is prohibited and human dignity is paramount. And here we are accepting that leaders, religious leaders, should draw a line of equivalence between what shocks and a representation, and the death of a man and a terrorist act - they have done it - and that we should be intimidated enough not to dare to condemn that.

That says one thing to me. The combat of our generation in Europe will be a combat for our freedoms. Because they are being overturned. And so it will not be the reinvention of the Enlightenment, but we will have to defend the Enlightenment against obscurantism. That is for sure. And let's not get stuck in the camp of those who disrespect differences. This is a false accusation and a manipulation of history. Respect is only possible if human dignity is paramount, but respect cannot be at the expense of the freedom of expression. Otherwise, it is not real respect, it is basically walking away from the discussion and the potential conflict in the discussion and the debate. That is what they want. Here, Europe has a responsibility. So I believe that the second fight to be fought is the fight for our values. That word seems generic, but it is the fight for Enlightenment.

And the third great European project, for me, is the shift in perspective with respect to Africa and the reinvention of the Afro-European axis. It is the struggle of a generation, but I think it is fundamental for us. Europe will not succeed if Africa does not succeed. That is for sure. We see that when we do not manage to create security, peace or prosperity in migration. We see it because Africa is part of our societies. We have a part of Africa in all our societies, which also lives in tune. And when I say Africa, I mean Africa and the Mediterranean region in the broadest sense.

But we have something to build. And when I say shift, I mean that we need to manage to make Africa see Europe differently and that we ourselves need to see it differently, that is to say as a chance, a tremendous opportunity for joint development to make a success of this project for ourselves that I mentioned. I say this because I do not believe that we will move forward or that we will solve our problems by being imprisoned by

our history. I myself have launched important memorial and political work on Algeria in particular, but I see in our history somewhat of a return of resentment and pushback where all the subjects roll into one: post-decolonisation, religious subjects, economic and social matters, which create a kind of inability to communicate between Europe and Africa. I think that we need to disentangle these lines, but above all embrace Africa much more strongly in the capacity we give it to develop on its own, by helping it, and give a source of pride to the diasporas who live in our countries and who come from Africa to make tremendous opportunities of this chance and not problems, as we all too often see them. This is why I say a shift in perspective, to show that this universalism we uphold is not universalism of the dominant, as it was during colonisation, but one of friends and partners. These are how I see the three great fights to be fought.

On this last point, you mention a lack of communication with Africa. In Europe, is there not a form of incommunicability between the countries of Western and Eastern Europe regarding this partnership to be built with Africa?

First of all, I am not saying that there is an inability to communicate but an accumulation of difficulties and problems, a conflation and manipulation by some. There is manipulation on this issue, which is obvious from certain hegemonic powers that have a new imperialistic agenda in Africa and who use this resentment to undermine Europe and France.

When we look at Europe and its relationship with Africa, we have twenty-seven histories with Africa. I would not say that the discord is between the East and the West. Take France and Germany: we do not have the same relationship with Africa. First of all, because language is important and a large part of Africa is French-speaking. And we have a special relationship with French-speaking Africa. I wanted to rebuild a very strong relationship with English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Africa, by which I stand. I was the first French President to go to Ghana or Kenya, for example. Or to go to Lagos. It sounds crazy, but that is the way it was. France only had a relationship with a certain Africa. Germany has a very different relationship, as you know, which is the upshot of the history of the late 19th century. So I think we have plural relationships in our history, which should not overdetermine the way we see things today.

I think we need to engage Eastern Europe fully in this policy. And I think that when we do so, it works very well. I see we have a number of Eastern and Northern European countries on board with us to help with Africa's security. Our best partner in Mali is Estonia, yes Estonia, because they were won over by this concept of strategic autonomy – among other things, because they are afraid of Russia, because they saw how it was in their interest - and since we proposed that they team up with us, they are getting to know us better, cooperating with us in all the operations we are conducting, including the more specific, which we call the Takuba Task Force. So we manage to bring them all on board. So I believe there is no difference between these two Europes.

There are different sensibilities. And, basically, what could complicate Europe's relationship with Africa today? It is migration, that's what it is. It is that we only look at Africa through this lens. I think that it is a mistake. The issue has to be resolved, on certain subjects. Today we are seeing a massive misappropriation of the right of asylum. This is what is throwing everything out of kilter. Groups of people smugglers, who are often also arms and drug traffickers, and who are linked to terrorism, have organised human trafficking. They offer the prospect of a better life in Europe and they use channels that use the right of asylum. When you have hundreds of thousands of women and men every year who arrive on our soil, who come from countries which are at peace and with which we have excellent relations, who are given hundreds of thousands of visas every year, that is not the right of asylum. Or rather, 90% of the time, it is not the right of asylum. So there is misuse. There is tension on this subject. It must be settled in a dialogue with Africa, which we had started in 2017-2018, which we need to take up again with a strong commitment.

But putting this subject to one side, the real issue with Africa is its economic development, peace and security. It is to help Africa fight the scourge of terrorism and the jihadist groups in the Sahel, in the Lake Chad region, and now in East Africa where there are, from Sudan to Mozambique, situations that are absolutely intolerable. Then, we need to help it with economic development through agriculture, through entrepreneurship, through education, especially for young girls, and this whole empowerment policy that we have started to conduct. But we have to go much further. That is the key for me.

A fundamental question in your practice, so to speak, in your doctrine of international relations, is that, basically, there is a principle of working with different entities - states, corporations, local players, associations. Are you in the process of disrupting state multilateralism to replace it with something else? More concretely: do you think that the issue of vaccine distribution will follow this doctrine?

It is a good test. It may not be the least painful. Yes, I think that if we want to move forward with multilateralism, we have to make it work. Look at how multilateralism worked during the Cold War. There was a kind of gentlemen's agreement that said there were issues on which we decided to move forward together. Despite of the tensions, we were able to stabilise armament strategies, find ways to settle an intercontinental

Despite of the tensions, we were able to establish disarmament strategies, and ways to settle an international conflict, with then the non-aligned countries grouping around. In recent years, there has been a phenomenon of disaggregation, including of these mechanisms of cooperation. There has been a Russian strategy of no longer respecting them, of undermining the international forums. And an American response which consisted of reneging on them. Let me take the example of European disarmament: we have never been so exposed by Russian non-compliance, first of all, and then by the American decision to withdraw from these programmes. We have to re-engage with multilateralism, where the states are needed. When it comes to armament, when it comes to major geopolitical issues, you need states. What we need to accomplish is for original coalitions to manage to marginalise those who block progress. Sometimes this works, sometimes it does not. I have to say that on the subject of Syria, for example, we have not managed. And in this regard, for us Europeans, it is very hard to make sure things are respected when the United States is not on our side, because we have neither enough military autonomy nor everyone on board. This is our weakness today, as we saw with Syria.

Second, on what we call the major issues for the common good, the major international issues, state multilateralism is, indeed, no longer enough. When you talk about new technologies, you need to engage with platforms that have developed without any rules because those rules did not exist - I was going to say in spite of the states - but any case with the tacit agreement of the United States. They developed an innovation without any rules in existence. There has been as it were an invention of a common universe by private players that needs to be gradually regulated, and I am a proponent of this: taxation, content, citizens' and businesses' rights, and a common public space. But you have to cooperate and engage with them. That is why I launched Tech For Good in 2017 and we have an edition every year, and we have been able to launch several initiatives, like the Christchurch one we were talking about. When we talk about the climate, likewise, we have to engage with NGOs, businesses, sometimes regions, cities and federal states. I stand by this pragmatism to achieve results.

On the subject of health, between Act-A and the COVAX strategy we have launched, we have brought to the table international organizations such as the WHO, states, and regional powers such as the European Union and the African Union, sector funds such as UNITAID and GAVI, private foundations such as the Gates Foundation, industrial players and public laboratories working on the projects. It is totally hybrid, but with the WHO assigned governance so that there are no conflicts of interest. Because the WHO is the guardian of a system that does not allow the private sector to set the rules for all. You will see, we will have a lot of controversy over this issue. First of all, because there is going to be "vaccine diplomacy", that is to say that everyone is going to want to wave their flag and say "I found it". So, there will be a dash under pressure from public opinion to very quickly say, "We have the right vaccine". We have to be very careful in that regard: will all scientific rules and due diligence be respected? It is our public scientists and the WHO's who can say that, because they do not have a conflict of interest. Let's not ever forget what we have built: the state is the guardian of the public interest. That cannot be delegated. And here, governments have a role to play.

The negotiations we are conducting with governments and corporations are a very good test of this new multilateralism. That is the idea of the global public good, in any case, to have global access to the vaccine. This means that none of the laboratories that will develop the vaccine will put themselves in a position of blocking access to other production laboratories, including in massive quantities, for the developing countries. I do not know if we are going to win this battle. Because, clearly, I am not sure that all the countries want to come on board. We will see if China is prepared, if it is the one that discovers the vaccine, if Russia is prepared, if the United States is prepared with its new administration - it was not certain with the previous one, or rather the current one - and we will see what the companies do. But whatever happens, what we have done is to create a common framework with all the important players around the table: a trusted third party in the shape of the WHO, cooperation mechanisms and peer pressure. And so we have the best chance that when something is found, if one of these players behaves badly, they will have a lot to lose by doing so. But that is the new multilateralism. It has to be said. The de facto situation has become the new doctrine for many countries: Russia with Ukraine; Turkey with the Eastern Mediterranean and with Azerbaijan. They are de facto strategies, which means that they are no longer afraid of an international rule. So we have to find mechanisms to get around them.

We would like to come back to the climate issue you have already mentioned as a high priority and as a matter of absolute urgency. The question, as with the vaccine, is that of its politicisation. The environment is now a structural factor in the political field. Would you define yourself today as an environmentalist?

Yes, I have in fact become an environmentalist. I stand by that and I have said it several times. I think that the fight against climate change and for biodiversity is key to the political choices we have to make. That does not mean that it is irrevocably paramount. As I have already said, I am not in favour of a right of nature higher than human rights. But I think that we can no longer view human rights without considering these interactions, these implications. And so it has to be at the top of the agenda. And then, we have decisions to make in all countries, the speed of the transition and the economic and social repercussions it entails. My belief, and I say this after having made many mistakes, including in our country with the carbon tax, is that we cannot carry out this transition if we do not invest massively and if we do not make it a transition that is both environmental and

social, if we do not transform the way we produce and, basically, the core of our structural model. This is also the entire idea of the Paris Consensus. Otherwise, we are constantly running after some kind of imbalance and correcting it. No, we have to produce differently. And producing differently means that we have to change the carbon pricing. That is what we are doing at the European level. I have to introduce the right incentives. I have to prohibit certain activities.

So it is normal that it will be very hard. There was a time of the calls to order in the 1990s. Then, there was the time of the invocations, until the Paris Agreement - that is to say, we made laws that applied to our successors, which is generally what we prefer to do when we do politics. You make a great law for the country's transition, for change, but you do not have to live with any of the consequences. We are the unlucky ones who have to deal with the here and now in the midst of all these tensions. This subject is full of tensions. You have people who have this same fear, but when you are a farmer, who loves our country, its soil, its livestock, but whose business model is dependent on certain fertilisers, it is very hard to get out of it. It is a transition that you cannot ask for overnight, especially if the neighbours do not do it. We are at the forefront, among those who have pushed the hardest. But you have to accept a transition period, good incentives, support; you cannot stigmatise. There is often a tendency to stigmatise, to point the finger.

Similarly, if I take a French family, which has done everything that has been asked of them for thirty years. They were told, "You have to find a job," so they found a job. They were told, "You have to buy a house," but a house is too expensive in the city, so they bought it 40, 50, 60 kilometres away from the city. They were told, "The model of success is to each have your own car," so they bought two cars. They were told, "If you are a family worthy of that name, you have to raise your children well, they have to take music lessons and join a sports club, etc." So on Saturdays, they made four trips to take their children back and forth. This family, now they are told, "You are big polluters. You have a poorly insulated house, you have a car and you drive 80, 100, 150 kilometres a day. The new world does not like you." People are going crazy! They say, "But I did everything right! And for decades, the French government asked me to buy diesel, and I bought diesel!"

As you can see, we ourselves are changing things again. To me, the most transformative element of climate change action is mobility. There is the thermal insulation of buildings - which we are going to do - but it is also mobility. For a family like this one, I need to convince them to move back, closer to the city centre, or better insulate their home, convince them to use public transport - if there is any - and help them change their vehicles for cleaner ones. But I will not change a society's habits overnight. All this to say - this is a fictional example, but it is real life - to show you how hard the climate and environmental transition is. There is no reason to slow down, but every reason for a great deal of mutual understanding and respect. That means that we have to look at what constraints we can lift. I committed to France being the first country to close all its coal-fired power plants. We were able to do it, and that is a huge constraint. You have to explain to the people who have been working there for decades, "You are going to lose your job, we will find you a job elsewhere." But do it moving forwards: we are developing renewable energy a great deal and we will make this mobility transition. But simply that the pace is the time it takes for our societies to process, not the lobbies, not big interests, but normal people. Because we cannot change people's lives in one stroke. And I made mistakes believing that.

What I am saying with the example of this family is that's exactly how they saw me at the end of 2018: as the man who suddenly told them, "Everything we do every day, because we followed your advice, will become bad overnight." But I understood that we made a mistake. We have to involve our societies in this change, which I believe is an absolutely fundamental change to our societies. We have to bring everyone on board in this change. We have to show that everybody is a player, and we have to do it by giving everyone a place, that is to say, by massively developing new economic sectors to create new jobs faster than we destroy old ones. Because let there be no mistake: this change comes after one of the great changes we spoke about earlier, that of globalisation in an open capitalist system. The European and Western democracies' middle classes have experienced change as synonymous with sacrifice. When we said, "We are going to change things for the better," like trade, they lost their jobs. If we now tell them, "Climate transition is really good because your children will be able to breathe, but it's you who will pay the price yet again because we are going to change your jobs and your lives, but not the lives of the powerful, because they live in fancy neighbourhoods, don't drive a car anyway, and will still be able to fly to the other side of the world," it will not work.

It is therefore also a moment of rephrasing. This question is how we rephrase our objectives. What we have to do is to find the right strategies, the right public policies, the right investments, the right incentives. Then there is all the work, which I would call political, in the noble sense of the term, anthropological, of engaging our societies in this change, making them players. And then there is bringing our entire agenda into line with this. And in the Paris Consensus, this is key. If we continue to have a financial system that does not distinguish between what is good for the planet and what is bad, what governments do will never be enough. To bring about this transition, I also want us to make rules at European level and on the financial markets - as we did with prudential and strictly financial issues - that penalise investments in fossil fuels and favour green investments. The integration of the European market must be done this way. European green bonds need to be put in place, we need to have a system that gives the incentive to go much more into these activities.

Likewise, we need to align our trade agenda. If we change all the rules, ask for sacrifices and all the while continue to build trade agreements with countries around the world that do not make the same efforts - and the question will arise, you will see, with the new American administration - we would be crazy! That would mean telling your farmer, "You have to make colossal efforts, you will stop using glyphosate, you will use zero pesticides, you will do this, you will do that." He will do it because he thinks it is right. And on the other hand, we make an agreement that allows us to open up and import products made using GMOs, pesticides and so on, because that is what trade is all about. It all ties together, people see it. So, we need to have trade agreements that are consistent with our climate agenda, which is a huge battle. And there is no European consensus on that yet. I am fighting hard for that. We took it to Europe in 2019. And there, there is a real difference. Because some countries stayed with a rationale of openness and trade, which I respect. But the trade variable remains secondary. I do not think that makes sense in terms of effectiveness, but above all it is not politically tenable - *politically*. You cannot create consensus in our societies if you ask for efforts from citizens and businesses and ask for something that is completely the opposite at the international level.

Our last question refers to your vision of the theory of the state and sovereignty. Can Westphalian sovereignty coexist with the climate crisis?

Yes, because I have not personally found a better system than Westphalian sovereignty. If it is the idea of saying that a people in a nation decides to choose its leaders and have people pass its laws, I think that is perfectly compatible because otherwise who is going to decide? How would the people get together and decide? I do not know. The crisis that we are experiencing in our societies is rather a crisis of responsibility: nobody wants to make decisions and take responsibility anymore. Because in some way, we constantly discuss and everyone has legitimacy conflicts, but it is very hard to decide because we have to face choices. But we will always need the sovereignty of peoples. That is very important to me. And given what I was saying earlier about the battles we have to fight, let us never give up on that. Who do you delegate the law-making to in a society, if it is not to leaders you choose? Business? The course of the world? Unelected but purportedly enlightened leaders? I do not want any of those systems. I want to be able to choose every day, every time I am asked to vote, in fair elections, and in a system that can breathe. And make no mistake: not only do we need it, but we need to make that system effective. And making it effective means ideologically rebuilding the consensus that we were talking about earlier, and that means getting results.

The Westphalian systems of sovereignty and the democracies that go with them are currently experiencing a twofold crisis. Many of the problems are not at the level of the nation-state, that is true, and so this implies cooperation, but this cooperation does not imply the dissolution of the will of the people. It implies knowing how to balance them. The second crisis is a crisis of the effectiveness of the democracies. For decades now, Western democracies have been making their peoples feel that they no longer know how to solve their problems because they are bogged down in their laws, their complexities - I experience it every day as far as I am concerned - their inefficiency, and they are becoming systems that tell people how things they ask us to do should happen. And they say, "They do not know how to fix the system of progress, the security problem, and so on." We have to find efficiency through our mechanisms of cooperation, but also by shaking up our structures to find useful effects. That is the crisis of democracies: it is a crisis of scale and efficiency. But I do not believe at all that it is a crisis of Westphalian sovereignty. Because I believe in it, and I believe that you cannot find better. And that, in everything I do internationally, for me what is paramount is always the sovereignty of the people. Every time we have tried to replace it, we have created malfunctions. So I am deeply committed to that. Deeply.

But that is why you need to do the ideological groundwork that I was talking about earlier. Because the crisis that our fellow citizens are experiencing is a kind of diffraction of spaces: people can no longer balance consumer, worker and their own conscience at the same time. Because we have globalised all this it gets to the point where the interactions make it all contradictory. The same citizen who wants to fight climate change is at odds with the consumer who wants to be able to buy everything at very low prices, with the worker who wants to continue to have a factory so his son can work there. That is what we have not been able to reconcile. That is what the new Consensus should enable us to do working into the way our businesses work, our financial system, our political system, the balancing of the climate, technology and sovereignty agendas. This is a huge challenge we are talking about. But we are gradually doing it, despite the discouragement we may feel in the middle of the process or when we cannot yet see the picture clearly because we are too far away. I am thus convinced that we have to keep moving forward on this path. The major transformations should lead us to continue to know how to be very inventive. Inventing new forms of cooperation, taking risks, understanding and conceiving the great transitions of this world, but they should not lead us to forego our fundamentals: the sovereignty of the people, and the rights and freedoms that have made us who we are. Since they are currently under threat.

And in answer to what you said, many people say, "Let's dissolve national sovereignty, let big business decide the course of the world," while others tell you, "Freely expressed popular sovereignty is less effective than an enlightened dictator or the law of God". And we are seeing today the return of theocracies, the return of authoritarian systems. Take the world as it is today and compare it with fifteen years ago: it is very different.

Popular democratic sovereignty is a treasure to be cherished.

Thank you.

Thank you. What is important for me in this period - and the work you are doing is key in this regard - is that this thinking continues and that we manage to build a conversation and a process. We need, through your contributions and reflections, to engage in this debate throughout Europe and build what is in our common *interest* and the strength of our proposals. But I think there is a world to be invented. We are already doing so, but we need to develop it more clearly.