

THE PARIS STATEMENT

A Europe We Can Believe In



1. Europe belongs to us, and we belong to Europe. These lands are our *home*; we have no other. The reasons we hold Europe dear exceed our ability to explain or justify our loyalty. It is a matter of shared histories, hopes and loves. It is a matter of accustomed ways, of moments of pathos and pain. It is a matter of inspiring experiences of reconciliation and the promise of a shared future. Ordinary landscapes and events are charged with special meaning—for us, but not for others. Home is a place where things are familiar, and where we are recognized, however far we have wandered. This is the real Europe, our precious and irreplaceable civilization. *Europe is our home.*

2. Europe, in all its richness and greatness, is threatened by a false understanding of itself. This false Europe imagines itself as a fulfilment of our civilization, but in truth it will confiscate our home. It appeals to exaggerations and distortions of Europe's authentic virtues while remaining blind to its own vices. Complacently trading in one-sided caricatures of our history, this false Europe is invincibly prejudiced against the past. Its proponents are orphans by choice, and they presume that to be an orphan—to be homeless—is a noble achievement. In this way, the false Europe praises itself as the forerunner of a universal community that is neither universal nor a community. *A false Europe threatens us.*

3. The patrons of the false Europe are bewitched by superstitions of inevitable progress. They believe that History is on their side, and this faith makes them haughty and disdainful, unable to acknowledge the defects in the post-national, post-cultural world they are constructing. Moreover, they are ignorant of the true sources of the humane decencies they themselves hold dear—as do we. They *The false Europe is utopian and tyrannical.*

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ignore, even repudiate the Christian roots of Europe. At the same time they take great care not to offend Muslims, who they imagine will cheerfully adopt their secular, multicultural outlook. Sunk in prejudice, superstition and ignorance, and blinded by vain, self-congratulating visions of a utopian future, the false Europe reflexively stifles dissent. This is done, of course, in the name of freedom and tolerance.

4. We are reaching a dead-end. The greatest threat to the future of Europe is neither Russian adventurism nor Muslim immigration. The true Europe is at risk because of the suffocating grip that the false Europe has over our imaginations. Our nations and shared culture are being hollowed out by illusions and self-deceptions about what Europe *is* and should be. We pledge to resist this threat to our future. We will defend, sustain and champion the real Europe, the Europe to which we all in truth belong.

We must defend the real Europe.

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5. The true Europe expects and encourages active participation in the common project of political and cultural life. The European ideal is one of solidarity based on assent to a body of law that applies to all, but is limited in its demands. This assent has not always taken the form of representative democracy. But our traditions of civic loyalty reflect a fundamental assent to our political and cultural traditions, whatever their forms. In the past, Europeans fought to make our political systems more open to popular participation, and we are justly proud of this history. Even as they did so, sometimes in open rebellion, they warmly affirmed that, despite their injustices and failures, the traditions of the peoples of this continent are *ours*. Such dedication to reform makes Europe a place that seeks ever-greater justice. This spirit of progress is born out of our love for and loyalty to our homelands.

Solidarity and civic loyalty encourage active participation.

6. A European spirit of unity allows us to trust others in the public square, even when we are strangers. The public parks, central squares and broad boulevards of European towns and cities express the European political spirit: We share our common life and the *res publica*. We assume that it is our duty to take responsibility for the futures of our societies. We are not passive subjects under the domination of despotic powers, whether sacred or secular. And we are not prostrate before implacable historical forces. To be European is

We are not passive subjects.

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to possess political and historical agency. We are the authors of our shared destiny.

7. The true Europe is a community of nations. We have our own languages, traditions and borders. Yet we have always recognized a kinship with one another, even when we have been at odds—or at war. This unity-in-diversity seems natural to us. Yet this is remarkable and precious, for it is neither natural nor inevitable. The most common political form of unity-in-diversity is empire, which European warrior kings tried to recreate in the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. The allure of the imperial form endured, but the nation-state prevailed, the political form that joins peoplehood with sovereignty. The nation-state thereby became the hallmark of European civilization.

The nation-state is a hallmark of Europe.

8. A national community takes pride in governing itself in its own way, often boasts of its great national achievements in the arts and sciences, and competes with other nations, sometimes on the battlefield. This has wounded Europe, sometimes gravely, but it has never compromised our cultural unity. In fact, the contrary has been the case. As the nation states of Europe became more established and distinct, a shared European identity became stronger. In the aftermath of the terrible bloodshed of the world wars in the first half of the twentieth century, we emerged with an even greater resolve to honor our shared heritage. This testifies to the depth and power of Europe as a civilization that is cosmopolitan in a proper sense. We do not seek the imposed, enforced unity of empire. Instead, European cosmopolitanism recognizes that patriotic love and civic loyalty open out to a wider world.

We do not back an imposed, enforced unity.

9. The true Europe has been marked by Christianity. The universal spiritual empire of the Church brought cultural unity to Europe, but did so without political empire. This has allowed for particular civic loyalties to flourish within a shared European culture. The autonomy of what we call civil society became a characteristic feature of European life. Moreover, the Christian Gospel does not deliver a comprehensive divine law, and thus the diversity of the secular laws of the nations may be affirmed and honoured without threat to our European unity. It is no accident that the decline of Christian faith in Europe has been accompanied by renewed efforts to establish political unity—an empire of money and regulations, covered with sentiments of pseudo-religious universalism, that is

Christianity encouraged cultural unity.

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being constructed by the European Union.

10. The true Europe affirms the equal dignity of every individual, regardless of sex, rank or race. This also arises from our Christian roots. Our gentle virtues are of an unmistakably Christian heritage: fairness, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, peace-making, charity. Christianity revolutionized the relationship between men and women, valuing love and mutual fidelity in an unprecedented way. The bond of marriage allows both men and women to flourish in communion. Most of the sacrifices we make are for the sake of our spouses and children. This spirit of self-giving is yet another Christian contribution to the Europe we love.

Christian roots nourish Europe.

11. The true Europe also draws inspiration from the Classical tradition. We recognize ourselves in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. As Europeans, we strive for greatness, the crown of the Classical virtues. At times, this has led to violent competition for supremacy. But at its best, an aspiration toward excellence inspires the men and women of Europe to craft musical and artistic works of unsurpassed beauty and to make extraordinary breakthroughs in science and technology. The grave virtues of the self-possessed Romans and the pride in civic participation and spirit of philosophical inquiry of the Greeks have never been forgotten in the real Europe. These inheritances, too, are ours.

Classical roots encourage excellence.

12. The true Europe has never been perfect. The proponents of the false Europe are not wrong to seek development and reform, and there is much that has been accomplished since 1945 and 1989 that we should cherish and honor. Our shared life is an ongoing project, not an ossified inheritance. But the future of Europe rests in renewed loyalty to our best traditions, not a spurious universalism demanding forgetfulness and self-repudiation. Europe did not begin with the Enlightenment. Our beloved home will not be fulfilled with the European Union. The real Europe is, and always will be, a community of nations at once insular, sometimes fiercely so, and yet united by a spiritual legacy that, together, we debate, develop, share—and love.

Europe is a shared project.

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13. The true Europe is in jeopardy. The achievements of popular sovereignty, resistance to empire, cosmopolitanism capable of civic

We are losing our home.

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love, the Christian legacy of humane and dignified life, a living engagement with our Classical inheritance—all this is slipping away. As the patrons of the false Europe construct their faux Christendom of universal human rights, we are losing our home.

14. The false Europe boasts of an unprecedented commitment to human liberty. This liberty, however, is very one-sided. It sells itself as liberation from all restraints: sexual freedom, freedom of self-expression, freedom to “be oneself.” The Generation of ’68 regards these freedoms as precious victories over a once almighty and oppressive cultural regime. They see themselves as great liberators, and their transgressions are acclaimed as noble moral achievements, for which the whole world should be grateful.

A false freedom prevails.

15. For Europe’s younger generations, however, reality is far less gilt with gold. Libertine hedonism often leads to boredom and a profound sense of purposelessness. The bond of marriage has weakened. In the roiling sea of sexual liberty, the deep desires of our young people to marry and form families are often frustrated. A liberty that frustrates our heart’s deepest longings becomes a curse. Our societies seem to be falling into individualism, isolation and aimlessness. Instead of freedom, we are condemned to the empty conformity of consumer- and media-driven culture. It is our duty to speak the truth: The Generation of ’68 destroyed but did not build. They created a vacuum now filled by social media, cheap tourism and pornography.

Individualism, isolation, and aimlessness are widespread.

16. At the same time that we hear boasts of unprecedented liberty, European life is more and more comprehensively regulated. Rules—often concocted by faceless technocrats in league with powerful interests—govern our work relationships, our business decisions, our educational qualifications, our news and entertainment media. And Europe now seeks to tighten existing regulations on freedom of speech, an aboriginal European freedom—freedom of conscience made manifest. The targets of these restrictions are not obscenity or other assaults on decency in public life. Instead, Europe’s governing classes wish to restrict manifestly political speech. Political leaders who give voice to inconvenient truths about Islam and immigration are hauled before judges. Political correctness enforces strong taboos that deem challenges to the status quo beyond the pale. The false Europe does not really encourage a culture of freedom. It promotes a culture of market-driven homogeneity and politically enforced

We are regulated and managed.

conformity.

17. The false Europe also boasts of an unprecedented commitment to equality. It claims to promote non-discrimination and the inclusion of all races, religions and identities. Here, genuine progress has been made, but a utopian detachment from reality has taken hold. Over the past generation, Europe has pursued a grand project of multiculturalism. To demand or even promote the assimilation of Muslim newcomers to our manners and mores, much less to our religion, has been thought a gross injustice. A commitment to equality, we have been told, demands that we abjure any hint that we believe our culture superior. Paradoxically, Europe's multicultural enterprise, which denies the Christian roots of Europe, trades on the Christian ideal of universal charity in an exaggerated and unsustainable form. It requires from the European peoples a saintly degree of self-abnegation. We are to affirm the very colonization of our homelands and the demise of our culture as Europe's great twenty-first century glory—a collective act of self-sacrifice for the sake of some new global community of peace and prosperity that is being born.

Multiculturalism is unworkable.

18. There is a great deal of bad faith in this thinking. Most in our governing classes doubtless presume the superiority of European culture—which must not be affirmed in public in ways that might offend immigrants. Given that superiority, they think that assimilation will happen naturally, and quickly. In an ironic echo of the imperialist thinking of old, Europe's governing classes presume that, somehow, by the laws of nature or of history, 'they' will necessarily become like 'us'—and it is inconceivable that the reverse might be true. In the meantime, official multiculturalism has been deployed as a therapeutic tool for managing the unfortunate but 'temporary' cultural tensions.

Bad faith grows.

19. There is more bad faith at work, of a darker kind. Over the last generation, a larger and larger segment of our governing class has decided that its own self-interest lies in accelerated globalization. They wish to build supranational institutions that they are able to control without the inconveniences of popular sovereignty. It is increasingly clear that the 'democratic deficit' in the European Union is not a mere technical problem to be remedied by technical means. Rather, this deficit is a fundamental commitment, and it is zealously defended. Whether legitimated by supposed economic necessities

Technocratic tyranny increases.

or autonomously developing international human rights law, the supra-national mandarins of the EU institutions confiscate the political life of Europe, answering all challenges with a technocratic answer: *There is no alternative*. This is the soft but increasingly real tyranny we face.

20. The hubris of the false Europe is now becoming evident, despite the best efforts of its partisans to shore up comfortable illusions. Above all, the false Europe is revealed to be *weaker* than anyone imagined. Popular entertainment and material consumption do not sustain civic life. Shorn of higher ideals and discouraged from expressing patriotic pride by multiculturalist ideology, our societies now have difficulty summoning the will to defend themselves. Moreover, civic trust and social cohesion are not renewed by inclusive rhetoric or an impersonal economic system dominated by gigantic international corporations. Again, we must be frank: European societies are fraying badly. If we but open our eyes, we see an ever-greater use of government power, social management and educational indoctrination. It is not just Islamic terror that brings heavily armed soldiers into our streets. Riot police are now necessary to quell violent anti-establishment protests and even to manage drunken crowds of football fans. The fanaticism of our football loyalties is a desperate sign of the deeply human need for solidarity, a need that otherwise goes unfulfilled in the false Europe.

The false Europe is fragile and impotent.

21. Europe's intellectual classes are, alas, among the chief ideological partisans of the conceits of the false Europe. Without doubt, our universities are one of the glories of European civilization. But where once they sought to transmit to each new generation the wisdom of past ages, today most within the universities equate critical thinking with a simpleminded repudiation of the past. A lodestar of the European spirit has been the rigorous discipline of intellectual honesty and objectivity. But over the past two generations, this noble ideal has been transformed. The asceticism that once sought to free the mind of the tyranny of dominant opinion has become an often complacent and unreflective animus against everything that is our own. This stance of cultural repudiation functions as a cheap and easy way of being 'critical.' Over the last generation, it has been rehearsed in the lecture halls, becoming a doctrine, a dogma. And to join in professing this creed is taken to be the mark of 'enlightenment,' and of spiritual election. As a consequence, our universities are now active agents of ongoing cultural destruction.

A culture of repudiation has taken hold.

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22. Our governing classes are advancing human rights. They are at work fighting climate change. They are engineering a more globally integrated market economy and harmonizing tax policies. They are monitoring progress toward gender equality. They are doing so much for us! What does it matter by what mechanisms they inhabit their offices? What does it matter if the European peoples grow more sceptical of their ministrations?

Elites arrogantly parade their virtue.

23. That growing scepticism is fully justified. Today, Europe is dominated by an aimless materialism that seems unable to motivate men and women to have children and form families. A culture of repudiation deprives the next generation of a sense of identity. Some of our countries have regions in which Muslims live with an informal autonomy from local laws, as if they were colonialists rather than fellow members of our nations. Individualism isolates us one from another. Globalization transforms the life prospects of millions. When challenged, our governing classes say that they are merely working to accommodate the inevitable, adjusting to implacable necessities. No other course is possible, and it is irrational to resist. Things cannot be otherwise. Those who object are said to suffer nostalgia—for which they deserve moral condemnation as racists or fascists. As social divisions and civic distrust become more apparent, European public life grows angrier, more rancorous, and no one can say where it will end. We must not continue down this path. We need to throw off the tyranny of the false Europe. There *is* an alternative.

There is an alternative.

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24. The work of renewal begins with theological self-knowledge. The universalist and universalizing pretensions of the false Europe reveal it to be an ersatz religious enterprise, complete with strong creedal commitments—and anathemas. This is the potent opiate that paralyzes Europe as a political body. We must insist that religious aspirations are properly the province of religion, not politics, much less bureaucratic administration. In order to recover our political and historical agency, it is imperative that we re-secularize European public life.

We must turn back ersatz religion.

25. This will require us to renounce the mendacious language that evades responsibility and fosters ideological manipulation. Talk of diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism is empty. Often, such

We must restore a true liberalism.

language is deployed as a way to characterize our failures as accomplishments: The unravelling of social solidarity is ‘actually’ a sign of welcome, tolerance, and inclusion. This is marketing language, a language meant to obscure reality rather than illuminate. We must recover an abiding respect for reality. Language is a delicate instrument, and it is debased when used as a bludgeon. We should be patrons of linguistic decency. Recourse to denunciation is a sign of the decadence of our present moment. We must not tolerate verbal intimidation, much less mortal threats. We need to protect those who speak reasonably, even if we think their views mistaken. The future of Europe must be liberal in the best sense, which means committed to robust public debate free from all threats of violence and coercion.

26. Breaking the spell of the false Europe and its utopian, pseudo-religious crusade for a borderless world means fostering a new kind of statesmanship and a new kind of statesman. A good political leader stewards the commonweal of a particular people. A good statesman views our shared European inheritance and our particular national traditions as magnificent and life-giving, but also fragile gifts. He does not reject that inheritance, nor does he chance losing it all for utopian dreams. Such leaders covet the honors bestowed upon them by their people; they do not lust for the approbation of the ‘international community,’ which is in fact the public relations apparatus of an oligarchy.

We need responsible statesmen.

27. Recognizing the particular character of the European nations, and their Christian mark, we need not be perplexed before the spurious claims of the multiculturalists. Immigration without assimilation is colonization, and this must be rejected. We rightly expect that those who migrate to our lands will incorporate themselves into our nations and adopt our ways. This expectation needs to be supported by sound policy. The language of multiculturalism has been imported from America. But America’s great age of immigration came at the turn of the twentieth century, a period of remarkably rapid economic growth, in a country with virtually no welfare state, and with a very strong sense of national identity to which immigrants were expected to assimilate. After admitting large numbers of immigrants, America closed its doors very nearly shut for two generations. Europe needs to learn from this American experience rather than adopt contemporary American ideologies. That experience tells us that the workplace is a powerful engine of assimi-

We should renew national unity and solidarity.

lation, that a generous welfare system can impede assimilation and that prudent political leadership sometimes dictates reductions in immigration—even drastic reductions. We must not allow a multicultural ideology to deform our political judgments about how best to serve the common good, which requires national communities with sufficient unity and solidarity to see their good as common.

28. After World War II, Western Europe cultivated vital democracies. After the collapse of the Soviet Empire, Central European nations restored their civic vitality. These are among Europe's most precious achievements. But they will be lost if we do not address immigration and demographic change in our nations. Only empires can be multicultural, which is what the European Union will become if we fail to make renewed solidarity and civic unity the criteria by which to assess immigration policies and strategies for assimilation.

Only empires are multicultural.

29. Many wrongly think Europe is being convulsed only by controversies over immigration. In truth, this is but one dimension of a more general social unraveling that must be reversed. We must recover the dignity of particular roles in society. Parents, teachers and professors have a duty to form those under their care. We must resist the cult of expertise that comes at the expense of wisdom, tact and the quest for a cultured life. There can be no renewal of Europe without a determined rejection of an exaggerated egalitarianism and the reduction of wisdom to technical knowledge. We endorse the political achievements of the modern era. Each man and woman should have an equal vote. Basic rights must be protected. But a healthy democracy requires social and cultural hierarchies that encourage the pursuit of excellence and give honor to those who serve the common good. We need to restore a sense of spiritual greatness and give it due honour so that our civilization can counter the growing power of mere wealth on the one hand and vulgar entertainment on the other.

A proper hierarchy nourishes social well-being.

30. Human dignity is more than the right to be left alone, and doctrines of international human rights do not exhaust the claims of justice, much less of the good. Europe needs to renew a consensus about moral culture so that the populace can be guided toward a virtuous life. We must not allow a false view of freedom to impede the prudent use of the law to deter vice. We must be forgiving of human weakness, but Europe cannot flourish without a restoration of a communal aspiration toward upright conduct and human excel-

We must restore moral culture.

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lence. A culture of dignity flows from decency and the discharge of the duties of our stations in life. We need to renew the exchange of respect between social classes that characterizes a society that values the contributions of all.

31. While we recognize the positive aspects of free-market economics, we must resist ideologies that seek to totalize the logic of the market. We cannot allow everything to be for sale. Well functioning markets require the rule of law, and our rule of law should aim at more than mere economic efficiency. Markets also function best when they are nested within strong social institutions organized on their own, non-market principles. Economic growth, while beneficial, is not the highest good. Markets need to be oriented toward social ends. Today, corporate gigantism threatens even political sovereignty. The nations need to cooperate to master the arrogance and mindlessness of global economic forces. We affirm the prudent use of government power to sustain non-economic social goods.

Markets need to be ordered toward social ends.

32. We believe Europe has a history and culture worth sustaining. Our universities, however, too often betray our cultural heritage. We need to reform educational curricula to foster the transmission of our common culture rather than indoctrinating young people into a culture of repudiation. Teachers and mentors at every level have a duty of memory. They should take pride in their role as a bridge between generations past and generations to come. We must also renew the high culture of Europe by setting the sublime and the beautiful as our common standard and rejecting the degradation of the arts into a kind of political propaganda. This will require the cultivation of a new generation of patrons. Corporations and bureaucracies have shown themselves to be poor stewards of the arts.

Education needs to be reformed.

33. Marriage is the foundation of civil society and the basis for harmony between men and women. It is the intimate bond organized around sustaining a household and raising children. We affirm that our most fundamental roles in society and as human beings are as fathers and mothers. Marriage and children are integral to any vision of human flourishing. Children require sacrifice from those who bring them into the world. This sacrifice is noble and must be honoured. We endorse prudent social policies to encourage and strengthen marriage, childbearing, and childrearing. A society that fails to welcome children has no future.

Marriage and family are essential.

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34. There is great anxiety in Europe today because of the rise of what is called ‘populism’—though the meaning of the term seems never to be defined, and it is used mostly as invective. We have our reservations. Europe needs to draw upon the deep wisdom of her traditions rather than relying on simplistic slogans and divisive emotional appeals. Still, we acknowledge that much in this new political phenomenon can represent a healthy rebellion against the tyranny of the false Europe, which labels as ‘anti-democratic’ any threat to its monopoly on moral legitimacy. The so-called “populism” challenges the dictatorship of the status quo, the ‘fanaticism of the centre,’ and rightly so. It is a sign that even in the midst of our degraded and impoverished political culture, the historical agency of the European peoples can be reborn. *Populism should be engaged.*

35. We reject as false the claim that there is no responsible alternative to the artificial, soulless solidarity of a unified market, a transnational bureaucracy, and glib entertainment. Bread and circuses are not enough. The responsible alternative is the true Europe. *Our future is the true Europe.*

36. In this moment, we ask all Europeans to join us in rejecting the utopian fantasy of a multicultural world without borders. We rightly love our homelands, and we seek to hand on to our children every noble thing that we have ourselves received as our patrimony. As Europeans, we also share a common heritage, and this heritage asks us to live together in peace as a Europe of nations. Let us renew national sovereignty, and recover the dignity of a shared political responsibility for Europe’s future. *We must take responsibility.*

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