

Mr Macron guides France

There is a lot of nonsense talked about how the election of Mr Macron will lead to a much tougher French stance over Brexit. Mr Macron, after all, was not so long ago a Minister serving the outgoing President, who has not been critical of the outgoing President's stance on all this. Anyone leading France will of course be putting EU and French interests first, but this does not mean they will wish to punish the UK.

Recent press comment tells us that the EU itself has researched the legality of sending a leaving bill and realised there is no legal basis for any such payment. That is doubtless why they did not put the phrase leaving bill or equivalent into their statement of how they wish to handle the negotiations. They want the UK to settle the bills it owes, which the UK has always said it will. We are still paying our regular contributions even though we have told them we are leaving, and will doubtless do so up to departure. This implies Mr Macron will be unwilling to make a huge financial demand on the UK, knowing there is no legal back up to it.

Mr Macron has already stated his task – to bring greater unity to France by dealing with the economic hurts parts of the country feel. This will mean securing a good deal for French farmers and others to carry on selling produce into the UK market on favourable terms. IT is difficult to see how Mr Macron could keep faith with farmers if he insists on World Trade tariff levels on agricultural trade between our two countries.

His language of wishing to mellow the discourse and soothe tensions would also sit ill with stoking a wider trade war with the UK. People are affected by the emotions of the moment when they make decisions on what to buy. There are global alternatives to many well known French products, so it behoves the President to help woo the UK customers, just as the UK government wants to reassure and keep UK exports to France which we value.

I wish the new President every success in his stated aims after the election. I see no reason the UK cannot get on well with him in our mutual interest. I expect him to take a firm line in defence of French interests, but to see that it is in France's interest to have a good deal with us. The French people will of course decide next month just how much power to give him ,when they decide on a Parliament to promote his ideas or to tame his reforms.

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