



TOCQUEVILLE CONVERSATIONS

7th edition

EUROPE'S MOMENT

Between the MAGA Revolution
and Russian Revisionism

27th and 28th of June 2025

Château de Tocqueville
Cotentin, Normandy



The seventh round of the Tocqueville Conversations is taking place against a stormy backdrop within our democracies and within the international system.

Never before has our Tocqueville initiative seemed as meaningful as today.

Putin's war continues to rage in Ukraine, and the destabilization of Europe remains a long-term objective. Meanwhile, the American Superpower seems tired and willing to partially retreat. The entire set of alliances that made the West strong is being turned upside down by a Trump revolution that seeks to renegotiate the terms of Globalization in favor of the US worker, while questioning the burden of world leadership.

A slow unravelling of the "Pax Americana" had been underway for years. But this time, it's a more radical change of the world as we have known it, with the United States being tempted to withdraw from its role as leader of guarantor of the international order built since 1945. Behind the slogan "America First" stands an American administration, that seems intent to revert, in the name of national interests, to a mixture of isolationism, nationalism and imperial mercantilism. Is that actually the case?

At the same time, the new American leadership has started to put significant pressure on its allies, legitimately pressing them to take more responsibility for their defense, but also delivering a striking criticism of "liberal Europe". The transatlantic relationship is deeply shaken. How far will this go? Will the current rapprochement taking shape between Putin's dictatorship and Trump's United States, lead to the de facto sacrifice of Ukraine as a sovereign state? And will the West survive it? Will Europe step up in time? And might there be some positive outcomes from Trump's attempt to solve America's crisis by resetting the world order?

There are deep seated roots behind Trump's spectacular comeback to power in 2025. His victory was a clear rejection of the model of globalization and the identity politics revolution defended (or tacitly accepted) by the American elites. The rejection of "the system" that fuels this revolt reveals an acute crisis of confidence that has been brewing for years, as we have discussed in our previous Conversations. His America first project, meant to reinvigorated American industry and reestablish secure border, has received a clear mandate from the people. The extreme left ideology known as wokism has also been resoundingly rejected. But the American conservative counter-revolution, meant to correct the very real errors of previous administrations, is in danger of morphing into a self-destructive revolutionary catharsis which could threaten the mediating institutions and the checks and balances that Tocqueville saw as essential to a healthy democracy. Will the Trumpist revolution, which is unfolding both at home and abroad, also encourage revisionist powers dreaming of overturning the status quo, such as Putin's Russia and Xi's China, up to now kept in check by American deterrence? All are important that one cannot ignore.



Program

Tocqueville

Conversations

In this volatile context, Europe, caught between Russia's revisionism and the potential loss of American security guarantees, has an appointment with History. Hitherto unpopular, the idea of an autonomous European defense, advocated by France since General De Gaulle, now rallies most of the continent's nations, and even beyond. With America's retreat from its world role, Europeans are realizing that it is now up to them, independently of what happens in America, to stand up forcefully for the security of the continent, while reviving their commitment to citizenship and their nations. As Trump and his predecessors have asked more and more insistently, Europe must build its own hard power. But it must also uphold the fundamental principles of the Free world – freedom, truth, rule of law - and help Ukraine to survive as an independent democracy. Whatever Trump's impact on history, Europe must deliver now, on this urgent matter.

How can we explain the American metamorphosis? What are the deep-rooted political and ideological forces behind it ? Will they gain track in Europe, where similar democratic crises of trust are plaguing our societies? Why has Trumpist America decided that conservatism can no longer go hand in hand with Post WWII liberalism, is America on its way to emulating Viktor Orban's "illiberal democracy"? Might America be furtively renouncing the checks and balances of its founding project? Or are there deep resources with the American regime that will make illiberal democracy unworkable there? What part do the major tech oligarchs play in the new dynamic of American politics and with what consequences? Will the Trumpist American experiment destabilize Europe or will Europe find enough internal cohesion to build a future of its own devising? While Putin still has Ukraine in his sights and is waging a hybrid war against the West, what kind of threat does Russia pose to our democracies? What concrete steps should Europe take to rearm quickly and become capable of defending our continent and values? How should Europeans respond from an economical, technological, military and political perspective? And how can we support Ukraine, the strongest bulwark against Putin?

To debate these crucial questions and seek solutions, we **invite you to join us on June 27 and 28, 2025, at the Château de Tocqueville in Normandy**, where the great Normand philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville wrote his magnum opus *Democracy in America*. Last year, we called on citizens to wake up. Today, it's up to both our politicians and our societies to show boldness, inventiveness and leadership in rearming and renewing our democracies.



The Conversations are organized in partnership with :



Friday,
June 27th

EUROPE FACING A NEW WORLD

10h30 – 10h45

Welcome

Jean-Guillaume de Tocqueville, President of the Tocqueville Foundation

Alexis Brézet, Editor in Chief of Le Figaro

Laure Mandeville, Senior Reporter, Le Figaro

Hervé Morin, President of the Normandie Region

10h45 – 11h30

Keynote speakers

Michel Barnier, Former French Prime Minister

Mirjana Spoljaric, President of the Red Cross (tbc)

11h30 – 13h00

Panel 1- Europe and the end of the Pax Americana

A new world is emerging, marked by Russian and Chinese revisionism, and a Trumpist geopolitical earthquake that is shaking the transatlantic relationship and other traditional democratic alliances, while seeking to develop a new relationship with Russia, in spite of its brutal aggression against Ukraine.

What set of actions, retreats and strategic blunders got us into this geopolitical revolution? What will be the scope and significance of this major shake-up? What consequences will it have for the future of NATO and Article 5? What will be left of the transatlantic relationship? Are we going to see the beginnings of a new Yalta? How can we read the “American First” foreign policy and its impact on Europe? Is it a 19th-century version of national imperialism, with a return to spheres of influence, a purely transactional and mercantilist national egoism that implies a renunciation of America's role as world policeman and defender of democratic values? Will China and Russia reap the rewards of this resounding retreat, if it is confirmed?

Moderator: Ana Palacio, former Foreign Minister of Spain

Raphael Glucksman, Membre de parlement Européen

Dan Twining, President of the International Republican Institute

Stephen Walt, professor of international relations, Harvard University (tbc)

Nicolas Baverez, philosopher and writer

Doug Lutte, General lieutenant, Former ambassador to Nato, USA

13h00 – 14h00

Lunch

14h00 – 15h30

Panel 2- Where is Trump taking America?

This panel will aim to explain the political and ideological origins of the American metamorphosis: What does Trump want? And beyond Trump, what are the deep roots of this American revolution? What were the processes and mistakes that drove the American people to choose Trump as their champion against the political elites?

Beyond the national-conservative pendulum aimed at thwarting the woke revolution and the effects of globalization, could the United States go off the democratic rails? Are we witnessing a MAGA movement likely to destroy the American political system and the international system of which America was the pivot?

And if so, why? Are we headed, as some assert, for an “Orbanization” or worse, a “Putinization” of America (the coarse language, the disdain for truth, the brutality of methods, the questioning of judicial and media checks and balances...?). Or is it something else?

Moderator: Laure Mandeville, senior reporter at Le Figaro

Donna Brazile, Former Chair of the Democratic National Committee

Elissa Slotkine, Senator, USA, (tbc)

Joshua Mitchell, Professor of Political Theory, Georgetown University

Pascal Bruckner, French public intellectual and essayist

Michael Sandel, Harvard University (tbc)

15h45 – 16h45

Panel 3- Musk, the Tech oligarchy and the impact on Europe

For the last two decades, the Tech world has played an increasingly central role in America. The increasing pace of technological breakthroughs has accelerated the trend, but with Trump’s second presidency, the shift has become seismic. A significant part of the Tech oligarchs has migrated to the right and taken on a direct role in Trumpian politics, shaking up the whole political system as well as the geopolitical chess-board. We will look at their goals, the extent of their role on “planet Trump” and the ideological dynamics behind this group : Libertarianism, post-democratic temptation (Dark Enlightenment), technological hubris...

Moderator: Gilles Gressani, Ecole normale supérieure (tbc)

Joel Kotkin, Professor at Chapman College

Jeff Gedmin, President of Middle Eastern Broadcasting Networks

Bari Weiss, Editor-in-Chief, The Free Press (tbc)

Walter Isaacson, Public Intellectual, biographer of Musk, (tbc)

17h15 – 18h15

Panel 4 – Putin, Xi, and other threats facing Europe?

We will discuss the imperial and criminal nature of the regime, the crushing of Ukraine, the will to break the Western order, the absence of limits, the will to expel America from Europe. The hybrid war to destabilize European democracies, Europe in the firing line. The significance of the China-Russia relationship and the nature of the Chinese threat.

Moderator: Andrew Michta, Senior Director, Atlantic Council

Bernard Emié, former head of DGSE

Oleg Dunda, Member of Parliament, Ukraine

Katherine Belton, Investigative reporter Washington Post (tbc)

Guennadi Goudkov, former Russian MP (tbc)

Anne Marie Brady, professor of Political Science at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, (tbc)

Jean Sylvestre Mongrenier, Geopolitologist, ENS

18h15 – 19h15

Panel 5 – The future of Europe security and International Law: the test of Ukraine

The security and the legal foundations of our continent (and the world) are at stake in Ukraine. Will law prevail or will might make right? How can we help defend and rebuild Ukraine, so that it becomes an integral part of the European project and a cornerstone of European defense against revisionist Russia? Can there be real peace without justice in Ukraine? Why is the question of Russia's war crimes so important?

Moderator: Constantin Sigov, professor of philosophy, Mohyla Academy, Ukraine

Pavel Fischer, President of the Committee of Foreign Affairs of the Senate, Czech Republic

Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Peace Prize, Human rights lawyer, Center for Civil Liberties, Ukraine (tbc)

Maksym Butkevych, Human rights activist and former prisoner of war, Ukraine (tbc)

Andrea Bianchi Professor of international law at the Graduate Institute of International and Development studies (tbc)

Kenneth Roth Professor, former executive director of Human Rights Watch (tbc)

Saturday,
June 28th

09h00- 09h30

EUROPE: THE URGENCY TO ACT

Keynote speech:

Andrius Kubilius, Commissioner Defense and Space, European Commission, (tbc)

09h30- 11h00

Panel 1 – What Europe do we want? The question of power and values

What is Europe? What does it want to be and to defend? What system of values and borders? What should we change to take over the defense of our continent and support Ukraine? Can Europe do without America? How should we redefine our relationships? What future for Nato?

Moderator: Nicolas Tenzer, Public Intellectual

Benjamin Haddad, Minister for European Affairs of France

Konrad Szymanski, Former Minister for European Affairs, Poland

Dominique Moisi, Geopolitical Analyst, Special Adviser at the French Institute of International Relations (tbc)

11h30- 13h00

Panel 2 – Building up Europe's industrial and technological power

In 20 years, Europe's GDP per capita, which used to roughly equal America's, is now about 40% smaller. Among the 10 major Technological giants in terms of market capitalization, 9 are American, and none is European. What -is needed to counter this trend and recover economic growth and dynamism? What major reforms will be needed to spur innovation and bring industrial vigor to Europe? How to go from words to actions? What strategic response to Trump's tariffs and China's aggressive commercial policies? In which way should Geopolitics force us to rethink our industrial and economic policies? How do we reconcile competitiveness and the climate transition?

Moderator: Bertille Bayart, Columnist, Le Figaro

François Villeroy de Galhau, Governor of the Bank of France (tbc)

Vincent Montagne, CEO, Media Participations

Declan Ganley, CEO, Rivada Networks

Stephen Schwarzman, CEO of the Blackstone Group

13h00- 14h00

Lunch

14h00- 15h00

Panel 3 - Rearming Europe: Blueprint for an autonomous European defense

Rearming Europe in the unfavorable economic context of the American tariff war and Europe's falling out with the United States is a major challenge. How can we meet it? Can Europeans overcome their divisions to take actions? How can we manage our dependence on the USA without putting ourselves at risk? Is NATO still the preferred framework for the defense of Europe and support of Ukraine? How do we reconnect European citizens to the key responsibility of defending their countries?

Moderator: Kasjia Ollongren, former Minister of Défense, Netherlands

General Jean-Paul Paloméros, former Chief of Staff of the French Air force and Deputy Supreme Commander in charge of Nato Transformation

Eric Trappier, CEO, Dassault Aviation, (tbc)

Nadia Calvino, President of the European Investment bank (tbc)

Edward Stringer, Senior Fellow at Policy Exchange, Air Marshal, Royal Air Force

15h15- 16h30

Panel 4 – Trump, Putin and the future of European conservatism

National conservatives and national populists, who are gaining momentum across the West, are divided over how to respond to Russia's aggression in Ukraine and the Trump phenomenon. Some, like Viktor Orbán, advocate betting on Putin, whom they see as an ally in the fight against Islamism and the excesses of liberalism. They view Trump as a source of inspiration. Giorgia Meloni, for her part, has embraced the Ukrainian cause while actively engaging in dialogue with MAGA America. Germany's CDU and France's Les Républicains (LR) advocate for a firm stance toward both Putin and Islamist extremism. Beyond Trump and Putin, the future of European conservatism is a hot topic for Europe, as national and far-right parties gain ground, even though the EPP remains the largest political force in the European Parliament.

Moderator: Alexandre Devecchio, Editor in chief, Le Figaro

François-Xavier Bellamy, Member of the European Parliament

Douglas Murray, British political commentator (tbc)

Jean Pierre Le Goff, sociologist and public intellectual

Bernard Cazeneuve, Former French Prime Minister

Jean Yarbrough, Professor of social sciences, Tocqueville scholar, Bowdoin college

16h30- 16h45

Wrap-up: Two students conclude the Conversations