
MACRON AND MERZ MUST LOOK AT THEMSELVES IF THEY WANT TO STOP EUROPE SLIDING TO THE FAR RIGHT

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Political elites in Europes mature democracies warn of external threats □ but at home they normalise racism and undermine the rule of law

Europes leaders cannot stop talking about democracy. President Emmanuel Macron says he wants to kickstart a democratic resurgence, and Friedrich Merz, the German chancellor, has warned of an axis of autocratic states targeting liberal democracy in Europe. Having promised to fight for what she calls European values, Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, has just announced a new democracy shield and a Centre for Democratic Resilience to prevent foreign interference and deal with external threats. I keep hoping for similar scrutiny of democratic backsliding within the EU – but so far it has not happened.

Foreign interference, disinformation and the creeping illiberalism of Hungary, Poland and Slovakia deserve attention. But lost in this fretting is a more inconvenient truth: within Europes mature democracies, there is a steady corrosion of the rule of law, a degradation of political discourse and the normalisation of racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

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