INSIDE THE 25 NOVEMBER EDITION

Merkel's liberal values; Trump's new team; Fillon surprises France

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For a moment last week it felt reassuringly like old times, as Barack Obama and Angela Merkel exchanged compliments and smiles during the outgoing US president's visit to Germany last week.

But of course these are anything but old times. Donald Trump is busily readying himself for the White House and three of his new domestic hires, all tinged with controversy, gave us a glimpse of the president-elect's forward thinking. You'll find full coverage of the appointments inside this week's edition.

As the rest of the world watches and waits, Merkel looks increasingly like the last heavyweight defender of liberal values. But engulfed by populism at home, Brexit on the doorstep and Trump charging up the garden path, can the German chancellor withstand the weighty challenges ahead? That's the question Berlin bureau chief Philip Oltermann poses for our cover story, as Merkel prepares to stand for a third term.

In France, the unheralded François Fillon surprised many in the first round of the conservative presidential primary, and now looks the favourite to win this weekend's runoff for the centre-right nomination. In South Korea, President Park Geun-hye is under increasing pressure after a controversial aide was indicted for extortion by prosecutors. From north-eastern Nigeria, meanwhile, comes a tale of hope, from a school where the children of Boko Haram jihadists are given a second chance in life alongside civilians.

Our UK coverage has a special report on exploitation in the world of work, where low wages and diminished rights are becoming disturbingly commonplace.

In these digital times there can be something reassuring about functional old-world technology (something the Guardian Weekly knows a bit about!). Our Weekly Review section explores how the Swiss watchmaking industry has survived technological change with a steadfast focus on quality. The Discovery pages, meanwhile, look at how robotics could provide useful home help solutions in future.

Books considers some differing perspectives on the nature of globalisation. The Culture pages catch up with the superstar ballet choreographer Matthew Bourne, while on the back page John Harris laments the drift of pop music from its mass cultural roots to a signifier of social status.