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Interview given to Atlantic Council by French President Emmanuel Macron.

JOHN F.W. ROGERS: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is John Rogers and I serve as the chairman of the Atlantic Council. And notwithstanding the pandemic requirement that we do this virtually, it's truly a pleasure to be hosting this extraordinary event. It's my privilege to kick off today's official launch of the Atlantic Council's Europe Center with the generous participation of our special guest His Excellency Emmanuel Macron, president of the French Republic. I was fortunate to meet President Macron at a state dinner in April of 2018 at the White House. How things have changed since then.

As this audience knows well, the relationship with Europe is at the very heart of the historic mission of the Atlantic Council as we look to shape our collective future, tackling the global challenges and issues that affect us all in lockstep with our closest strategic allies. As we embark on 2021, a storied year already in its own right as the Atlantic Council celebrates its 60th anniversary, we find ourselves in the midst of a historic moment where countries and societies the world over face simultaneously a health crisis, an economic crisis, and in some cases an identity crisis, while grappling with sweeping technological changes, climate imperatives, and strategic rivals growing increasingly assertive – such as China and Russia.

Against that backdrop, I think most with us today would agree this is also a pivotal moment for transformation, a unique opportunity for those in the transatlantic community to step up and once again shape the future of international order. Of course, at the Atlantic Council we take our responsibilities to this effort with earnest. Our Europe program in recent years has grown rapidly under the leadership of our director Benjamin Haddad. And that's also why we're doubling down on Europe in 2021 with the launch of the new center. So I want to congratulate Benjamin and the entire team for this timely achievement and thank them in advance for what's to come.

In a period in stark need of transformational leadership there is one leader who has established himself as a bold and innovative voice in Europe. And I am, of course, talking about President Macron, whom we are honored to have with us today. President Macron, you have been a courageous reformer in France and an advocate for an ambitious Europe agenda on the international stage. And I know I speak for the broader audience when I say we look forward to hearing your vision for the European Union as an impactful, global leader and partner with the United States as we come together today in tackle this century's biggest challenges so far unfolding before us.

And with that, once again, thank you for joining us. I'll now hand it over now to Benjamin, the director of the Atlantic Council's Europe Center, who will introduce and lead a conversation with President Macron. Thank you.

BENJAMIN HADDAD: Thank you, John. I'm Benjamin Haddad. It's my honor to be here in Paris with you, President Macron, for the official launch of the Europe Center of the Atlantic Council.

Mr. President, it's not a coincidence if we wanted to be with you today in this critical time for transatlantic relations. We're in the midst of a pandemic, of a global climate crisis, of an economic crisis, facing a more assertive China. And these times call more than ever for deep transatlantic bond. At the Atlantic Council we want to play a role in advocating for this relationship, as we always have.

But we need to look forward with no denial of the challenges that we face and no nostalgia for the past. And this is why we will advocate, at Europe Center, for strong, responsible, assertive Europe at the core of this transatlantic partnership. With offices in Washington, in Warsaw, in Stockholm, in Belgrade, with a network of fellows all across Europe, strategic partnerships with the Munich Security Conference, GLOBSEC, the U.S.-Hellenic Chamber of Commerce in Greece, and much more to come, we will continue to be a strong voice in not observing the problems, but really being actors of change.

This year the EU will be our priority. We will partner with the EU delegation in Washington to launch a national campaign to reset EU-U.S. relations, explain the European Union to Americans, and explain why a strong and united EU is a core national interest of the United States. Mr. President, you've been a transformational leader for Europe, leading the way to a more sovereign Europe on the international stage to face these challenges. And this is why we're so delighted to have you with us today. We brought a group of Americans and Europeans from

all walks of life and generations to ask you questions on the foreign policy issues, the global economic challenges, but also the societal challenges that our countries face together.

Let me ask you the first question, Mr. President. Joe Biden was inaugurated as president two weeks ago. You spoke to President Biden, stressed the necessity to coordinate on common challenges – from COVID-19 global economic recovery, the climate, China, the Middle East, the Sahel and Africa, Russia. Where do we start?

PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON: Thank you very much. First of all, thank you for being here and thanks, Mr. Chairman, for your introduction and your first remarks. And I'm very happy to inaugurate, in a certain way, the Europe Center. And I want to congratulate you first for this ambition. And I'm deeply convinced that this institution and your willingness to build a new common agenda is absolutely core.

We will probably revert on a lot of topics during this discussion, but let me say that for me the number one priority in the relation with the new U.S. administration and for the work between U.S. and Europe is to have and to deliver, I would say, a results-oriented multilateralism. We worked hard during these past few years in order to preserve a multilateral framework. All the issues you mentioned – pandemic, economic and social crisis, new inequalities, climate change, our democratic issues, and so on – all these issues require more coordination. And during the past few years we experienced a sort of dismantling of the existing multilateral frameworks and fora.

So I think the number-one priority is to rebuild this multilateralism, not only by pushing an inclusive multilateralism to be sure that we are efficient and precisely inclusive, but to have results-oriented multilateralism, which means having concrete results in order to fix the main challenges, or at least to start fixing these main challenges.

And for me, the very first days of this new administration are absolutely key in such a move. WHO and this decision of President Biden to go back, first to be a contributor but as well to participate to a multilateral framework for our global health; to be part of the One Health Initiative at the same time; participation to the ACT-A, our initiative for not just the African continent but poor and emerging countries in the context of the pandemic. And we will probably revert on that. Plus, the commitment to invest at least 4 billion in this initiative. Obviously, the decision to come back into the Paris Agreement and to join the club of countries in a situation to deliver carbon neutrality by 2050. And probably the coming decisions regarding World Trade Organization and so on.

This is the very first issue, because when, I would say, the main player, the one in charge to guarantee the system in last resort, is the one to leave it, obviously it does weaken multilateralism. And those who benefit from such a situation are precisely the spoilers or those in a situation to propose or push another kind of multilateralism, which is not based on our common values and actual and fair multilateralism.

The second key issue is – and it's linked to the very first one – how precisely to invent all together, because we will have to innovate, very clearly, in order to fix these new challenges. How to build new partnerships and build what we called a few weeks ago here in Paris the new consensus of our global world?

What we see is clearly a world where inequalities are at the top of the list. Even before the pandemic, and definitely after the COVID-19 period of time, inequalities will be very critical issues. We have now, I would say, a weaker regulation regarding arms control, largely damaged by the past decisions. We have probably to invent new cooperations and partnerships in order to deal with climate and biodiversity issues. This is what we tried to do during the past few years with the One Planet summit, first to preserve Paris agreement, but to launch new initiatives for biodiversity.

We have to be very innovative, because this type of new partnerships means building new cooperations between governments, but new cooperations with private players as well and NGOs and some regional entities. And obviously, when we look at digital issues, when we look at the crisis of our democracies, we will have to build a series of new partnerships in order to precisely give content to this new consensus. The third – so this is the second pillar for me of the critical relation. And this is where, for me, European Union and the U.S. are the two main players to build together, but by being very inclusive with other players sharing our values, precisely, these new solutions in the current environment.

And third, I think we have to be much more committed to regional crisis and a consistent approach to these regional crises. We spoke during – precisely a while with President Biden about some of – some of these regional crises. But when we speak about Middle East, when we speak about Africa, when we speak about Indo-Pacific and this concept we tried to push during the past few years, definitely we speak about the relation between the U.S. and Europe, our ability to work together, our ability to preserve or restore peace and stability in some of these regions.

Some of them are part of the European neighborhood. Some others are part of very critical regions in the

Some of them are part of the European neighborhood. Some others are part of very critical regions in the current environment. Some of them are part of precisely the way to reshape the EU and – the EU and China and the U.S. and China relationship in the coming years. And dealing with regional crises means how the U.S. administration wants to reengage in some of them, where are the main priorities. And for me, the fight against terrorism is absolutely critical and peace and stability for this region of this world is absolutely critical. And this is, as well, how to clarify – and we will probably revert on that – the role of NATO and the existing partnerships in such a framework.

I don't want to be longer. We will have the occasion to revert on all these issues. But these three pillars are the three main ones for me to frame the relation with the new U.S. administration.

MR. HADDAD: I want to pick up on your last point in reframing the partnership. Europe has been at the core of your vision ever since your election. You gave a very ambitious speech on European sovereignty at Sorbonne and you've pushed many initiatives on the European level. What do you think this European sovereignty and strategic autonomy agenda means for the transatlantic relationship?

PRESIDENT MACRON: For me, very good news. Why? Because I do believe, obviously, in the national fact. We are democracies based on the expression of our people at the national level. But when you look at the current environment, given all these changes and the increasing tensions, obviously, the European Union is a credible player and the one at the relevant scale, I would say.

So my willingness from the very first days of my mandate has been to try to reinvent or restore an actual European sovereignty. During the past decades, basically, we leave the flow to a nationalistic approach, pushing for more sovereignty at the national level. But our actual sovereignty, which means deciding for yourself and being able to decide your own rules and regulation and to be in charge of your own choices, is relevant at the European scale. This is why we decided to have a common agenda on tech, defense, currency, economic and fiscal answer to the crisis, and so on and so on. And this is how we've progressively framed this concept of strategic autonomy.

This concept means just the European Union has to be able to think itself as a common and relevant entity to decide for itself and to be in a situation to invest much more on the critical items of the sovereign entity, and defense issues are part of them. This decision is absolutely not just compatible with NATO, but totally consistent with NATO. And this is why I strongly believe that this push and this decision to make more together at the European scale is completely – is definitely in the interests of the United States.

Why? Because when you look at the past decades in NATO, the U.S. was the only one in charge, in a certain way, of our own security. And the burden sharing, as some of our former and current leaders pushed the concept, was not fair. This is true. And the relation became progressively insane because, in a certain way, being part of NATO was getting access to the umbrella of the U.S. Army and the counterpart was getting access to the contract and providing contracts and buying U.S. materials, and for me this is a lose-lose approach for European countries and for the United States. Why?

First, because this is not sustainable to have, I mean, U.S. soldiers being in Europe and in our neighborhood involved at such a scale without clear and direct interests. At a point of time, we have to be much more in charge of our neighborhood. So sustainability in democratic societies of the decision was at risk.

Second, it was, for me, an implicit and progressive decision of Europe not to be in charge of its own defense. And there is no political entity which does exist which is not in charge of protecting its people. If you want to push, promote, and preserve the idea and the reality of the European Union, you want the European Union to be in a situation to protect its people.

This is why the strategic autonomy means, first, having European players investing much more for themselves. I decided myself an increasing budget for our defense.

Second, working hard together on common projects, streamlining our organization, and developing common new technologies and equipments. This is what we did with Germany, Spain, Italy, but what we launched at the European scale as well.

Third, having big investment programs, but as well developing much more common intervention with a common culture of intervention. This is what we pushed. I proposed it in the September 17 in La Sorbonne. Now we have a dozen of countries joining this European initiatives of intervention, a brand-new concept. And we are developing concrete illustrations of this, I mean, new approach – for instance in Sahel, where we are engaging much more European countries with us in Takuba, for instance, to better protect Sahelian countries. And I think this approach is definitely in the interest of the U.S. because it creates more consistency and solidarity at the European scale and more involvement of European armies in basically different situations, which decrease the pressure on the rest of NATO players, which means the U.S.

What I want to preserve is, obviously, the strong and political coordination with the United States in order to define and design the political concept of NATO. And what I want to preserve is the interoperability of our armies because it means more efficiency for our interventions everywhere. We decided, together with the U.S. and U.K., unique cooperation in Syria against the use of chemical weapons in spring '18. And we delivered, thanks to NATO, interoperability. Now, in the coming weeks and months, we will have a very critical time because on the basis of the reports, asked after my tough formula end of 2019, I think we are in a period – in a moment of clarification for NATO. We have to clarify the new concepts and our new willingness.

Who is the enemy? NATO was basically created to fight against USSR. Now who is the enemy? Who are the terrorists and the main enemy now of our societies, obviously?

How to deal with new Pacific issues, China. This is a question. This is the elephant in the room. We have to speak very clearly about this issue. My willingness is to have a political approach, because I want a stable and peaceful world. But it means managing together to have a fair and open discussion, sometimes to share differences. But I think we have to face this issue.

Third, having a clear rule of conduct between member states. We will probably revert on that, but how to speak about partnership as NATO members when you have a partner like Turkey having the behavior we experienced in 2019 and 2020. I'm happy to see, it seems, a change, and I want to welcome the recent declaration of President Erdogan, but both the U.S. and Europeans experienced an incredible aggressivity during two years in different theaters. And I think a clarification of the solidarity and the well-behavior – good behavior in such a framework is absolutely critical.

All this stuff are possible because Europe is well and more organized, and precisely because we develop progress even with this concept of sovereignty and strategic autonomy.

MR. HADDAD: So I know that we'll unpack some of these issues with our guests. I'll turn to our first guest, which is Dr. Esther Brimmer. She's the executive director and CEO at NAFSA. She's a board director at the Atlantic Council and was a former assistant secretary of state for international organizations, and I know she wants to talk about the common values underpinning our democracies.

Q: Thank you so much.

Monsieur le Président, our two countries are republics. We are heirs to the Enlightenment and the great revolutions of the 18th century. Yet, on January 6th a violent mob marched down those beautifully straight avenues that L'Enfant designed for our capital city. They invaded Congress and threatened our elected leaders. In 2018, protesters marched in Paris and some damaged the Arc de Triomphe. Xenophobia and violence are no longer just at the edge of politics. Monsieur le Président, what is the state of liberal democracy today?

PRESIDENT MACRON: Thank you very much for this question. And I'm not sure I will totally be in a situation to provide a complete and comprehensive answer, but I can share some thoughts about the situation because I think especially the two examples you mentioned are probably one of the most tame of the recent period of times in two strong and old democracies with a complete solidarity and friendship.

Look, I think, first, violence, hate, xenophobia are back in our societies, and I think this is brand new. It is pushed and legitimated by some political groups. And for me, this is a big anthropological change.

I had the occasion recently to develop this idea, but for me the initial deal of democracy is that you can choose your leader. You elect them. You elect people in charge of making your laws. You have freedom of speeches, of demonstration. But in exchange of that, in a certain way, you have to respect everybody. You have to accept somebody not to agree with you and violence is forbidden. And it seems that some political narratives re-legitimated violence in our societies, saying there is such violence, between quotations marks, of the current economic or social organizations that your decision to go in the streets and to kill, to hurt, or to destroy is legitimate.

So we have suddenly violence is resuming. Violence was progressively vanishing, and now it's resuming with the different forms you mentioned. And I'm very worried by that because this is a threat for our democracy, because for a lot of people this is unacceptable. How to stop that? For normal people in the streets this is unacceptable and they wait for us to stop such violence, but it is very hard when this violence is felt as legitimate by a lot of people. And this is exactly what we're experiencing in a lot of our democracies.

My deep conviction is that social networks are definitely part of the roots of this change, which is once again an anthropological change, because they legitimated in a certain way the lack of inhibition in the different speech. They promoted, I mean, the culture of tough words, of conflict, and so on. And it progressively, according to

me, changed the nature – the deep nature of what the democratic debate should be. This is why, if we want to preserve our democracies, we have to address these issues.

You know, we made a lot of progress during the past three to four years in order to fight against terrorism on social networks and global platforms. I remember it started here with terrorism. After the terrorist attacks of 2017 in the UK, we launched an initiative. We promoted it after a while in the U.N. At the very beginning, a lot of people on behalf of free speech culture – which is, by the way, our culture – were very reluctant to regulate our social networks to fight against terrorist content. A few months later we had this attack in Christchurch and we launched here again with Prime Minister Ardern and other leaders the Christchurch Call. And we delivered and we got from the main U.S., largely, but U.S. platforms and social networks to have the commitment of this golden hour; i.e., to withdraw in one-hour time any terrorist content identified by the platform, the social networks, and our services. And they did it, I can tell you. They are extremely efficient and they helped us a lot, and we just a few weeks ago passed legislation at the European scale to do so.

What we did on terrorist attack, we have to do it in order to fight against hate speeches, xenophobia on social networks, and so on. The unique way to preserve our democracies is to reestablish a public and democratic order in this new space where our people think, live, and more and more because of the pandemic as well, I have to say. And this new regulation, this new governance in a certain way, has to be democratic and discussed between our leaders. And I think this is very important, and for me this is one of the critical challenges of our times.

You know, I mentioned these initiatives and we delivered, but we have now to do much more. And I think we cannot accept – because you mentioned the very tough images of the Capitol Hill, and I have to say we were very upset here in Paris. And I expressed my friendship and my solidarity and my trusts in the strength of your democracy.

But at the same time, we were very upset, as well, by the fact that a few hours later all the platforms – and let me be very politically incorrect – but all the platforms sometimes which helped President Trump to be so efficient sometimes to promote the same demonstrations a few hours before, at the very second when they were sure he was out of power, suddenly cut the mic and put the mic on mute and killed all the platforms where it was possible for himself and his supporters to express themselves. OK. On the very short run it was a unique answer to deliver, but it's not a democratic answer. I don't want to live in a democracy where the key decisions and the decision to at the point of them cut your mic, to be sure that Ben, is not in a situation to speak anymore because of his speech, is decided by a private player, a private social network. I want it to be decided by law voted by your representative or by regulation, governance, democratically discussed and approved by democratic leaders.

This is one of the critical issues if we want to stop that because 2018 in France, 2021 in the U.S., this is, indeed, the new violence in our democracies, largely linked to these social networks and basically our new way of life.

MR. HADDAD: Let's turn to some of the common foreign policy challenges that we're facing. I'm going to take questions two at a time because we have a lot of questions for you, Mr. President.

Let me first turn in New York to Dr. Adam Tooze. He's a professor at Columbia University, the director of the European Institute, wrote a book on the financial crisis. Dr. Tooze, and then I will turn to Professor Joseph Nye at Harvard.

PRESIDENT MACRON: Hello.

Q: Mr. President, hello. It's a privilege to be here.

I would like to ask you and push a little bit on this idea of result-orientated multilateralism because I think the need for this focus is urgent. We, obviously, need to respond, if you like, to the challenge that the output legitimacy generated, for instance, by the Chinese regime, but it is also a cruel and tough standard to measure up against because it's not enough to simply show that you did things the right way. You actually have to deliver results.

And the specific issue I have in mind is one of the ones which I know is uppermost in the minds of many Europeans right now, and it's the issue of the vaccine, and how we might think about our experience with the vaccine as an object, a project, a model, but also in some sense a warning of how we go forward from here. Because it's Janus-faced. It's, on the one hand, a huge triumph of collaborative, also transatlantic human endeavor, but it has also so easily become, you know – and it's seemingly taking on the dimensions almost of a tragic failure in our inability, at the macro level, to ensure anything remotely like an equitable or even just prudent distribution of the vaccine, and then to be able to deliver it in a legitimate and credible way, even to the affluent populations of Europe.

So I would love to hear your view on how that's going and how we might develop a truly results-orientated multilateralism around this critical issue of biosecurity by way of vaccine technology.

MR. HADDAD: Let me turn to Professor Nye, the former dean of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, a board director of the Atlantic Council.

Q: Mr. President, I'd like to follow up on your comments about China. As you know, many economists believe that by the end of this decade the Chinese economy at exchange rates will be larger than the American economy. At that point, how should Europe and France respond?

There are some European leaders who've suggested that Europe should find a position equidistant between the United States and China. There are others who say, no, if you look at the internal nature of China and the Chinese economy, if it becomes dominant in the global standards when it's a society based on surveillance, it's going to damage our democracies, and instead the democracies should start something called a T-12, a technology 12 of countries which will have special trading arrangements to set standards so that we're not prey to Chinese companies or Chinese standards in areas like surveillance, artificial intelligence and big data; in other words, that equidistance would be a tremendous mistake. This is not just about balancing two large powers. It's about preserving democracy.

So these seem to be big choices that Europe faces. I wonder if you could tell us how you see it from the French as well as the European perspective.

PRESIDENT MACRON: Thank you very much for these two easy questions.

Let's first start with Dr. Tooze's question about how to illustrate results-oriented multilateralism. I think vaccine – I would say COVID-19 is indeed a very interesting object in order to think on how to deliver on that. And on purpose, I don't just think about vaccine, because I think the question is COVID-19 crisis and the consequences.

I think, first, at the G-20 level, and largely led at that time by the European leaders but in a co-construction and a common work with the African leaders, we launched March 2020 this ACT-A Initiative, which is for me typically how I see the new type of partnerships. We conceived an approach where dealing with COVID-19 crisis was helping the African countries in order to preserve their primary health system, to treat people, and to deal with the economic and social consequences of the pandemic. Because at this stage the main consequences for Africa, for instance, is much more economic and social than sanitary and health consequence, given basically the structure of the population, probably some other main features of African societies.

And we started this approach, and we delivered first results. We created the common organization, the ACT-A Initiative, a common governance with African leaders and African Union, and COVAX Initiative for a vaccine.

If you look at the past few months, I agree with you, China probably managed to convince some countries with this diplomacy of the vaccine. They delivered very efficiently as a reaction to this first inclusive and much more G-20/African Union initiative because they were in a situation, basically, to provide vaccine. They were less impacted by the pandemic during the recent period of time than the U.S. and the European Union, and they put themselves in a situation to provide a lot of doses to some countries, some in Western Balkans, some other in the Gulf, and some African countries – in proportion which are not totally clear to us, but with some clear diplomatic successes.

And it can provide the idea that they are more efficient than the multilateral approach we had a few months ago. But I think if we have a comprehensive and coordinated approach, I think on the very long run we can be more efficient. And this is what I want to advocate. Because on the very short run, we can be impressed by the Chinese efficiency. This is true. This is a little bit humiliating for us as leaders, perhaps as countries. I received a few days ago a note: No need to go to African or poor countries. The Serbian president was here. He get access to vaccines thanks to Chinese cooperation, to be very direct with you. With a clear and genuine remark, these guys are more efficient than your co-vaccination teams in European Union, my very good friends.

But what we are seeing is, I think, much more complicated. And the way to address it, especially for poor and emerging countries, is slightly more sophisticated. Number one, dealing with the virus with vaccine requires, to be sure, that we have the appropriate vaccination, that the vaccine is clearly the relevant one against the different variants, with common and transparent information. And I think this is where, at the very moment of the crisis, WHO has a very important role. I will have the opportunity next week to speak with Dr. Tedros. But the role of WHO is to be in a situation to assess, interacting with the different national or regional entities, the efficiency and the potential toxicity of different vaccines against the initial COVID and the variants.

Today we have some evidence about basically U.S. vaccines, some other European vaccines, some partnership made between different players. It seems that we can have more information about the Russian vaccines, with The Lancet publication yesterday, and initiatives to register at the European level. I have absolutely no information about the Chinese one. I will not comment, but this is matter of fact. What it means is that on the medium to long run it is almost sure that if this vaccine is not appropriate it will facilitate the emergence of new variants, it will absolutely not fix the situation of these countries. And Brazil, by the way, is probably a good example of what can happen with Manaus situation – people having been infected, some others being vaccinated, and getting a new form of the COVID-19.

So I think what we can provide is the best possible science with our standard. I mean, transparent, relevant and, I mean, science being proposed under the scrutiny of, I would say, the best possible researchers in the world. This is not to be the case for the Chinese vaccine at this point of time. And I would be very happy if they would provide such initiative. So for me, short term efficiency could be detrimental the mid-term efficiency in this situation. This is for vaccine.

But more than that, I think our ACT-A initiatives that I want to advocate is exactly, for me, the new type of partnership where we can deliver much more rapidly collectively, because we put ourselves in a situation to provide vaccine to poor and emerging countries. Pfizer and Moderna are not relevant for these countries, given basically their main features, especially in terms of temperature and logistics. But Janssen, Johnson & Johnson, AstraZeneca, potentially Sanofi, and some others, like Novavax, could be much more relevant. If we put all together our financing and our commitments, we can provide to these countries a number of doses without any comparison to the one provided by China in the coming weeks and months. This is a very first thing.

Second, in our initiative we included treatments, because you can avoid some severe forms for a lot of people if you basically have the relevant treatments. Testing. It's impossible basically to deal with a pandemic if you don't have a testing strategy. And it means that on top of that where our multilateral approach, so ACT-A, is for me the best one, you have to work directly with the government and to help them to strengthen their primary health system. If you don't have structures, doctors, nurses and so on, it's impossible to have a vaccination campaign. We perfectly know that in our countries. It will be the same in Africa or Latin America.

So the fact that we have a much more comprehensive approach, inclusive, open to everybody – even China, by the way – and inclusive for basically the countries where the pandemic could be very tough – African or Latin American countries – is the most efficient way to get access to precisely results. Now what is at stake, to follow you, is: Number one, WHO commitment to a full transparency and common standards, because one of the weakening point of the results-oriented multilateralism is a double standard approach. If you have one big country, one poor, playing with different standard, no transparency and so on, you are weakened. So we need the WHO.

Second, more commitments of the country. And the U.S. decision – the recent U.S. decision for precisely ACT-A and COVAX is critical. And third, implementation capacity by involving precisely all the emerging and poor countries and having this comprehensive approach I mentioned. For me, it's now the time to deliver by making it very pragmatic. And it's time to implement it. And I mean the perfect and complete answer to your question, Adam, will be in the coming weeks and months if precisely we deliver ourselves and we manage to organize big campaigns in these countries based on our COVAX initiative to provide vaccine, but more largely to the comprehensive approach of the ACT-A initiative we launched together. But once again, I think it's – the fact that we are not demanding more comprehensive is, for me, definitely a strength.

To go to the second question, Professor Nye, about China. First, let me say that our view is that China is altogether a partner, a competitor, and a systemic rival. Which means this is a partner when you have to deal on some global – with some global issues. Like climate change, China is a partner. They committed, they are changing the system, they are trying to reduce their CO2 emission. And I have to say, during the past few years they definitely created an efficient carbon market in their country. They took some clear commitments and got some results. This is a competitor when we speak about trade issues and industrial issues. And this is a systemic rival given its ambition in the Indo-Pacific region and on values, human rights.

So the question is how to reconcile these different agendas and precisely how to deal with what you mentioned. I think we never have to precisely consider that we are – for me, we have two different scenario which are to be excluded. Number one would be a scenario where we put in a situation to join all together against China. This is a scenario of the highest possible conflictuality. This one, for me, is counterproductive because it will push China to increase its regional strategy, it which will push China to precisely diminish its cooperation on the different agenda. And I think this is detrimental to all of us.

The second scenario for the European Union, which is unacceptable, would be to say we should be as a clear partner, at the same distance from the U.S. as from China. It doesn't make sense, because we aren't in any case a systemic rival with the U.S. We do share the same values. We do share the same history. And we have to face precisely also challenges regarding our democracies and what was just discussed. But so the question

to face precisely also challenges regarding our democracies and what was just discussed. But so the question for us is how to precisely team up on some critical issues and try to be the useful player to push China not to divert anymore.

I don't know what will happen in the coming years. And to be honest with you, probably the coming semesters will be very critical for Chinese leaders and China, the country and the power. China decided to be part of the multilateral framework – WHO, basically with the World Trade Organization as well, and so on and so on. Now, as the U.S. is reengaging itself, what will be the behavior of China?

I think we have precisely in good faith to try to work all together. This is why I will try to push in the coming months a P-5 summit in order to try to recreate between the five permanent members of the Security Council some convergence, because we totally lost the efficiency of this forum in the past few years.

Second, I think we have to engage China in a bold and efficient climate agenda. And I think the reengagement of the U.S. is a good occasion, as well, to have a proactive and – a discussion on that. And Glasgow, obviously, will be a rendez-vous at the end of this year on this issue, and the fact that Glasgow will be at the same time more or less and the Chinese COP on biodiversity.

Third, we now have to create a global initiative on trade, industry, and intellectual property. On this issue, I think the disalignment of the U.S. and the European Union during the past few years was totally counterproductive. I think we have to resume a discussion, obviously at the WTO level but OECD level as well for us, as OECD members discussing afterwards with China, but by creating as well probably new forms of discussion to try to see how to fix the issue of IP, which is definitely one of the critical issues. IP and market access are the two critical issues in order to, I would say, perhaps, open a new phase of normalization and openness.

And fourth, we have the human rights agenda. On this issue I think, obviously, we have to put pressure, we have to be very clear, and we have to find the right ways to try to reengage on some critical points. This is where the famous investment agreement signed at the end of last year with China by the European Union was, for me, an opportunity.

This agreement is not, honestly, a huge deal, is not a transformational deal, neither for China nor for the European Union. Let's be clear and serious. It presents some very important and positive items. It will improve some issues on investment and access to markets. It failed to deal with the IP issue. Let's be lucid. But for the very first time, China accepted to engage on ILO regulation and to commit precisely on labor issues, which are part of our human rights package. And for me, this is very interesting because this is a test of the reality of a good-faith discussion on that.

So you see, I tried to separate these different talks. For me, we have a series of discussions with China where we can have a positive agenda and our collective interest is to deliver because we speak about global issues without a lot of, I would say, controversial approaches. We have, obviously, very challenging agenda, largely, on economic issues. But I think our common interest should be to reduce the conflictuality, but this is – I don't know the final answer. And we have the very complicated human rights agenda, where my willingness is to increase pressure, have direct discussion, and, precisely, trying to reengage on some specific issues.

In order to be in such a situation in the coming months, years, and in the long run, what we have to do, obviously – the U.S., but the European Union as well, for itself – is to preserve the same strategic autonomy and our ability to negotiate in good faith. And you mentioned that very fairly.

I think on technology, on artificial intelligence, on the type of initiative – space will be a critical issue as well – we have to put ourselves in a situation to cooperate if we decide. But we have to avoid in any way to depend on a 100 percent Chinese solution. And I have to say, my willingness, as well, is to avoid depending – not because for me this is equivalent distance, but I don't want to depend on 100 percent U.S. decision. Otherwise, I will be put in a situation not to decide for the European continent itself.

This is why one and a half years ago I launched an initiative on 5G in order to have a 100 percent European solution. This is why we put some restrictions for the French solutions. And I totally basically decided to endorse this decision in my bilateral discussion with China. And I'm very happy to see that the European Commission in March 2020 decided to put its own standards on 5G; same on the regulation of our platforms; same, for instance, on the regulation we need for artificial intelligence.

And where I think we can cooperate as well much more in this global platform for artificial intelligence we created in the G-7 a few semesters ago is typically an initiative – and I hope the U.S. will join and participate – but we created largely with Canada, where we can work together to avoid any dependency on technical decision but where we want to build common democratic governance on this issue, but preserving our solutions and our ability to decide for ourselves is a precondition of any agenda on these different fields with China.

MR. HADDAD: Let me turn to our two next guests. From Berlin we have – Sophia Besch is a research fellow at the Center for European Reform and a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council; and then Rachel Rizzo from Washington, D.C., who is the director of programs at the Truman National Security Project.

Sophia.

Q: Mr. President, thank you for speaking with us today. It's a great pleasure to be a part of this event.

I would like to come back to the subject of strategic autonomy and the role of NATO. For some European governments, European strategic autonomy in defense has become less urgent with the election of President Biden, because for them a central point in the argument for European strategic autonomy has been NATO's political weakness in recent years, the lack of strategic alignment and coordination between the U.S. and the Europeans or between Turkey and other allies, for instance. And while Turkey may well remain an issue, the new U.S. administration has made restoring alliances, including NATO, the central theme of its foreign policy.

So how can we make this transatlantic realignment succeed without undermining European defense ambitions? And how can NATO usefully contribute to your vision of European strategic autonomy?

MR. HADDAD: Rachel Rizzo.

Q: Thank you, Ben. It's an honor to be part of this conversation today.

Mr. President, I'd also like to shift the conversation a bit to Russia. Earlier this week a Moscow court sentenced opposition leader Alexei Navalny to more than two years in prison. Over the last two weekends, thousands of Russians have taken to the streets to protest his arrest, and it's likely that these protests will continue in light of this sentencing.

Now, you've adopted sanctions against Russia. However, you've also been a proponent of ongoing dialogue with Moscow. What are the areas of overlapping interest where Europe and the new Biden administration can work together to shape a common Russia policy?

Thank you.

PRESIDENT MACRON: I think you're right. Some leaders, some players in Europe, could be convinced that a realignment of the agenda with new U.S. administration would weaken our strategic autonomy or at least reduces, in a certain way, the relevance of such a strategy.

I don't believe one second that it is the case. And as I tried to explain it at the very beginning of our discussion, I think the more Europe is committed to defend, invest, and be part of the protection of its neighborhood, the more it is important for the U.S. as well, because this is a more fair burden sharing. The question is the nature of the coordination at NATO and the clarity of our political concept and our common targets at NATO.

Obviously, with the new administration, we can say we will have a more cooperative approach. This is definitely sure. Let's look at the reality. Middle East, Africa are our neighbors. It is not the U.S. neighborhood. This is matter of fact. I just speak about geography. I remember a few years ago when we spoke about Syria, the fair and democratic decision of the U.S. administration finally was not to make an operation and attack after the use of chemical weapons. And this decision left the Europeans without the ability to do it on their own. And I think it definitely weakened the credibility of NATO, but it weakened the Europeans themselves because we were not speaking about the theater and the place very far from us. Speaking about Syria in 2013 was just speaking about the place where the terrorist attacks in Paris November 2015 were prepared. So I speak about my own security.

This is why I think the Europeans have to understand that we do need this cooperation, this interoperability, and this very intimate work with the U.S. But we never – I mean, our duty definitely is not to put ourselves in a situation to depend on U.S. decisions, because any U.S. decision that is democratic could be led by a domestic approach, could be led by a domestic agenda, and obviously the reasonable weight of the U.S. interests, and could not be exactly the same as the European one, especially when you speak about our neighborhood. And this is the explanation I want to give to our strategic autonomy. And I would say, whoever will be in charge on both sides, I think this is the right approach and our fair interests on both sides.

The point is that you have to change a mindset that is clearly existing in Europe because, during decades, we built the concept of the absence of European defense. And in a lot of countries we created a system, a mindset, almost a DNA where not having a clear difference, not being in a situation to decide yourself was a precondition after World War II. Now we are opening a new era where we have to put ourselves in a situation to clearly prepare, endorse our European defense. But I want to insist on the fact that we need the strong cooperation of

the U.S.

As for Turkey, when I look at the situation – both for Europe and the U.S. – Turkey put ourselves in a crazy situation. And the absence of any regulation, I would say, by NATO, the absence of intervention to stop the escalation, was detrimental for all of us. I want to remind you that now two years ago Turkey launched an operation without any coordination with NATO, nor with the U.S., nor with France in northeast Syria. They launched this operation as our troops were on the ground, as the coalition was present in Syria – a coalition led by the U.S., but with the participation of NATO.

And they launched this operation based on a national approach, which was to say: “The Democratic Syrian Forces are terrorists to me because they are linked to PKK”. For some of them, this is true. But de facto they launched military operations in a place where we were present at the coalition level and against our proxies. The U.S. soldiers, the French soldiers, and all of our soldiers worked together against ISIS on the ground thanks to these guys. And suddenly one of our members decided to kill them – because they became terrorists. This is exactly what happened.

The credibility of NATO, U.S., France was totally destroyed in the region. Who can trust you when you behave in such a way, without any coordination? And this decision was allowed by the implicit and afterward explicit decision of the U.S. to withdraw – (inaudible) – from the Syrian theater. After watching Libya, in Nagorno-Karabakh, in Eastern Mediterranean Sea, we had a systematic Turkish approach which was unfriendly with its different partners – European or NATO members with the decision to basically frame the situation with Russia.

This is why I’ve suddenly declared that NATO was a “braindead” organization, because what is the concept? Who is the enemy? What is the rule of the game when you are supposed to be allies in an organization where such behaviors are tolerated? We increased pressure during 2020. We got some results. Now the coming months will be critical. I welcome very much the recent declarations of President Erdogan. I think it is largely due to what we did at the European level and the reengagement of a new U.S. administration, much more compliant with the classical approach of NATO, and with such, I mean, demanding and normal approach. And I’m very happy with that.

I now hope we will deliver results, what will be the concrete evidence of our ability to deliver. Fix the Libyan situation. Get rid of Turkish troops from Libya. Get rid of thousands of jihadists exported from Syria to Libya by Turkey itself, in complete breach of the Berlin conference. Fixing the Syrian approach with the rest of the coalition, and I hope fixing the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and decreasing the pressure in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, where the situation seems to be better.

So I think in the coming months what we need is the U.S., the Europeans, and a few members to clearly work hard on the basis of the reports recently given to us by the experts, mandated one year ago, to clarify the new concepts. As I told you, who is the enemy? Is the enemy – is ISIS, for instance, my enemy? Not automatically, these small groups, and so on? And how to regulate, how to define the enemy to legitimate any external intervention? And what are, I would say, the code, the rules between member states? We have some rules well established when we need solidarity from others when you are attacked.

But there is a lack of ruling order to regulate interventions in some countries, where new interests can be basically at stake, and where an intervention is counterproductive and launched by another member. And when we speak about Mediterranean Sea or Middle East, we speak about our neighbors. And this Turkish intervention does have an impact on us. So, this is why I do believe that strategic autonomy is still valued, and that the U.S. realignment and reengagement in NATO is very important to make this clarification and to resume NATO as not just, I would say, a superstructure to coordinate our armed forces, but a political body to harmonize our choices and to have some political coordination.

On Russia, obviously, I totally share your remarks on Mr. Navalny. And I expressed yesterday my strong and clear condemnation after this Russian decision to condemn somebody basically for not being compliant with his constraint in Russia as he was being treated in Berlin, which is I think probably the most obvious way to express a sort of irony and disrespect, not just for him but for the rest of the world. I think this is a huge mistake, even for Russian stability today. So the Navalny case is a very severe situation. We decided some sanctions. And I do regret, and I do condemn this decision.

Having said that, obviously, we have as well the Ukrainian situation with justified sanctions and a process which was designed in Minsk with a Normandy format. And we got some small progresses in December 19 here in Paris. And we are working hard to get more progresses. But in such a context, why did I decide indeed to resume parts of discussions with Russia? I advocate ongoing dialogue.

Because I think you have to deal with your history and your geography. Russia is part of Europe from a geographical and historical point of view. And I think this is very important, whatever happens, to include Russia on this part of the horizon. big part of the world. And clearly, the history of President Putin and a lot of leaders.

on the part of the minority, big part of the continent and clearly, the history of a continent that is completely a European one. They have common values, history, literature, culture, mindset. And we have to take that into consideration.

Second, we have our geography. It's impossible to have peace and stability in Europe, especially at our borders today, if you are not in a situation to negotiate with Russia. And for different reasons, largely due to the Russian aggressivity and the NATO expansion, we created a situation where we pushed our borders to the maximum place at the east, but we didn't manage to decrease conflictuality and threat at this border.

I think our perspective for the coming years and decades is precisely to find a common way to discuss and build peace and security for the whole continent, which means having a dialogue on cyber aggressivity - obviously on any aggression -, on how we see all the critical countries, I would say, in this very sensitive area where you have Ukraine, Belorussia, and so on. We need a political discussion with Russia about that. Otherwise, it will be our willingness to protect and the willingness to conquer and dominate. And when I look at the outcomes of the past strategy with Ukraine, with Belorussia now, and with a lot of countries, our results are not positive. So we have to recreate a framework of discussion for these countries in this part of our continent.

Second, when we speak about arms control, definitely we need a discussion with Russia on the U.S. decision, the unilateral decision to leave INF. Now Europe is no more protected from these Russian missiles. We were not perfectly protected, by the way, in Poland and some other places, given the legal framework of the INF Treaty, but we framed in a certain way our discussion and our organization regarding arms control in a Cold War way; i.e., through a discussion between the U.S. and Russia. I want, as a European, to build a discussion between the European Union, Russia. Probably we need - and we do need the U.S. and probably China, which is very important for the U.S. agenda, and this is fair and I do approve it. But we need a broader discussion on the different arms-control agreement and treaties in order to face, monitor, and reduce the conflictuality of our world. But as we speak about the safety of the European continent, we do need the Europeans to discuss with Russia about these issues. If you don't create the right conditions and a dialogue to do so, this is impossible.

Last point, our neighborhood. In the Middle East, what we experienced during the past few years was a decrease of our collective credibility, both NATO and U.N., because of the fact that we decided not to intervene, because of the fact that they sent proxies or they intervened and they paid very well with this grey zone. They maximized their efficiency precisely because of this new type of war. And at this point of time, we almost - us European and Americans, we almost disappeared, and we are not in a situation to basically stabilize an international or multilateral framework on this issue. If we want to reengage, we need to reengage a dialogue with Russia. You asked for examples where stopping any dialogue and being stuck in some critical situations like Ukraine or Navalny, that are extremely important and where we have to be tough, in full solidarity, which is the case. But beyond these points, we do need a comprehensive dialogue.

Having said that, I'm extremely lucid. In the very short run, our ability to deliver and to have concrete results is very low. I'm lucid. But our duty is to preserve or resume these channels of discussion and not to take the responsibility to stop the dialogue on our side, and to constantly reengage.

And my experience, even with the current people in charge in Russia, is that the more you reengage, the more you put reasonable pressure to avoid any divergence. It is when you are tough and you don't deliver, or when you don't speak about an issue, that they consider that the door is open and they can go. If you put a red line and you deliver, you build your credibility - what we did, by the way, in 2018 with the military operation in Syria. And if you constantly reengage a dialogue, you can get few results, but at least you avoid stronger divergence. It will take years, perhaps decades, but we do need such a dialogue for European peace and stability.

MR. HADDAD: Mr. President, with your permission, let me take two last questions before we turn to our CEO and president, Fred Kempe, to close us.

I'll call Fred Smith, who's the chairman and CEO of FedEx, and then Monique Dorsainvil, who is a former staffer in the Obama White House and an Atlantic Council Millennium leadership fellow.

Fred Smith first.

PRESIDENT MACRON: Hello.

Q: Hello, Mr. President.

As you know, trade liberalization since the end of World War II was a very big part of the increased prosperity that we all enjoy today. And the transatlantic expansion of trade was particularly important. So what are your thoughts on how to reengage Europe and the United States on a more positive and expanded trade relationship?

MR. HADDAD: Thank you.

Monique.

Q: Thanks, Ben.

I want to talk about Gen Y and Gen Z. In the current social and political climate, you have a generation of young people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, a generation that feels the economic scars of graduating and job hunting during a recession. You have young people who've witnessed populism and the rise of wars, you know, on and off their shores.

So my question to you is what do you say to these young people around the world, many of whom are isolated at home, grappling with these issues, and still working every day to find creative solutions to lead and to stay connected with the people around them?

PRESIDENT MACRON: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Fred. I do agree with you about the fact that trade liberalization did provide a lot of growth and opportunities for people all over the place, and was an extremely efficient strategy to reduce poverty in a lot of places. Here we are in, according to me, a quite different situation, and our challenge is that we need a more comprehensive agenda.

First, obviously, we have, and we will have post-COVID-19, to resume some exchanges, because these were reduced in speediness and in stability to exchange. And I think the critical point is, obviously, to preserve and increase market access, the ability to provide opportunities, and the ability to have an efficient organization of our trade and our industries. We have to take into consideration climate change, as I was mentioning it, and how to reduce our carbon footprint. Which means, how to rethink our logistics, how to be closer in terms of production to the final market, and so on. This is a very important point.

The second point is inequalities. And I want to insist on that. Our trade liberalization was focused, I would say, on the consumer side largely, how to reduce the pricing of different products and goods. And we killed a lot of jobs in our societies. And this is true. We reduced poverty in poor and emerging countries, but we increased the gap and inequalities in our societies. And this is part of the democratic crisis we have. And I revert to the previous question about democratic crisis. I focus my answer on violence and hate. But inequalities in our societies are critical because they are legitimating the resuming of violence.

And any new trade agenda should take into consideration the question of inequalities in our societies. So what I do believe in is, I would say, a multi-stakeholders trade, where we have to take into consideration consumers, workers, stakeholders, citizens. And where we have to reconcile economic, climate, and inequality issue. So it is impossible to resume the former framework we had between the U.S. and Europe, because it didn't take into consideration either the climate change or inequalities issue, to be very frank with you. It explains as well why I do endorse not to have any regional trade agreement with a country or region which doesn't comply with the Paris agreement. But we also have to assess the pros and cons of this agenda.

So it should be much more sophisticated. But more than that, what we should work on very actively altogether in the coming months and years, is to build a common agenda between the World Trade Organization, the ILO, the IMF, and our multilateral regulation of climate change and biodiversity. Putting in phase our different tracks and agenda is the only way to build the new sustainable openness and trade agenda.

Let me go to the second question about our youth and this new generation. And I totally share your concern and your willingness to address messages to these generations. I have to say that these generations probably understood much more than ours the importance of climate change, with a unique awareness of the fact that our ability to fix this issue and to provide clear and relevant answers was a global agenda based on cooperation. This generation indeed is the one to have 20 years during this pandemic – 20 years old during this pandemic. And it's one to be students, to have their first love affairs and so on as we live at home without any bars, restaurants, and sometimes without the ability to go to school or to go to university – which is totally unfair in the situation where we are deciding lockdowns or a lot of other restrictions to protect our older people.

My first point is that they totally understand the solidarity between generations. But what they want now and what they need, it seems to me, is the necessity not just to be part of a very organized world and just to put a place to earn money and to live a normal life, but to be part of the reinvention, I would say, the ability to recreate a new world. And to have a meaningful part of this ability to create precisely not just a new government, but the whole of the game and our ability to live altogether.

So if I had a message to deliver to this generation, it would first be: Thank you, definitely, because I know that

So if I had a message to deliver to this generation, it would not be . Thank you, definitely, because I know that the efforts we are asking you, your generation, are definitely the highest of our societies. Because it's not just to protect yourself, and to stay at home and so on, but it's renouncing to what makes very basically the salt and the pleasure of life during these years. But you do it precisely because we probably rediscovered during this period of time what solidarity and fraternity does mean, because all generations decided to stop to protect some of our people. Because we decided to put human life on top of economic interests and anything.

But what we owe to your generation is not to go back to a normal life the day after. It's first to provide you the opportunity to study during this period of time, to clearly have a full awareness of the fact that you are an active and important player of our fight against the virus, and to help you build new initiatives in this period of time and for the future, reshape the world, and build what I called at the beginning of our discussion this new consensus. To help to innovate and provide new solutions.

And let's be clear, I'm sure that our post-COVID world, first, will be a world where human life, human dignity will be much higher than before. Where the fight against inequalities for an ambitious and fair health-care system will be much higher. Where we will have to rebuild growth in a much more inclusive way. And you have a role to play because you are the ones to innovate. And when I speak about innovation, I speak about technological innovation but as well sociological innovation, organizational innovation. This world is the one where we can create and build new solutions.

And I have to say that during this period of time, what was just unthinkable was done to fight against the virus. So day after day, what was considered as unthinkable should be made and organized in order to provide new solutions for climate change, fight against inequalities, and build a new inclusive growth. And I think our role and our duty as politicians is to give them the opportunity to do so by preserving their ability to go to school or university, by providing the best possible post-COVID-19 situation, and probably by giving them the maximum opportunities and chances to be part of the solution and these new innovations.

MR. HADDAD: Mr. President, before we turn to Fred Kempe, our president and CEO, to close this conversation, I really want to thank you for this fascinating chance and the ambitious agenda that you laid out. And I just want to tell you that you have friends and partners at the Atlantic Council in the United States, in Europe to help you implement this vision in the next coming years.

Let's turn to Fred, but maybe you want to say a word first.

PRESIDENT MACRON: No, thank you very much. Thank you for this opportunity. I mean, we addressed a lot of topics and I'm sorry if I was too long in my answers. Obviously, we didn't address some of these critical topics. I mentioned them very lightly at the very beginning.

But we can have other and further discussions, but obviously, our discussion, our role, and our new partnership with the U.S. will be absolutely critical in Africa. We mentioned about COVID-19, obviously, the vaccine and our ACT-A Initiative. But in Sahel, we are very much involved and we have an agenda where we do work hand-in-hand with the U.S., and we need this commitment. And I think in the coming months, our partnership with the U.S. in Sahel both on security but as well on development issues will be absolutely critical.

And we didn't mention Iran, which is perhaps a surprise for a lot of people, but we had a very useful discussion about China and Russia. But let me say in a few words that I do welcome the willingness to reengage a dialogue with Iran. And this is a common challenge for peace and security in the Middle East. I will do whatever I can to support any initiative from the U.S. side to reengage a demanding dialogue, and I will – I will be here and I was here and available two years ago and one-and-a-half year ago, to try to be an honest broker and a committed broker in this dialogue. But I do believe that we do need to finalize, indeed, a new negotiation with Iran, and President Biden has a critical role, first because they are much closer to the nuclear bomb now than they were before the signature of JCPOA in July of '15; second, because we have to address, as well, the ballistic missiles issues; and we have to address the stability of the region. And this comprehensive agenda needs to be negotiated now because this is the right timing. And we have to find a way to involve in these discussions Saudi Arabia and Israel because they are some of the key partners of the region directly interested by the outcomes with our other friends of the region, obviously. But this is impossible to fix the situation without being sure that all these countries are comfortable with this new agenda. But I will – and I do support any reengagement of the negotiation.

That's what I wanted to add by thanking you again for this discussion and your questions, and by welcoming once again your initiative to launch this Europe Center at the Atlantic Council.

MR. HADDAD: Thank you.

FREDERICK KEMPE: Mr. President, thank you so much. That was a tour de force.

And thank you, Ben, for guiding us through that. And congratulations, Ben, on the new Europe Center.

And thank you, Mr. President, for helping us launch it. You brilliantly framed what you see at the heart of the U.S.-European relationship, and you captured both the drama and the opportunities of our times, from the violence and xenophobia that is infecting our democracies to vaccine diplomacy, issues of China, Turkey, Russia, next generation, trade, Iran at the end.

You outlined at the very beginning a three-part agenda for U.S.-European relations that can be executed, starting with the rebuilding and strengthening of the multilateralism that we together created after World War II and has served us so well for 75 years.

You called for new partnerships – number two, you called for new partnerships for our new and future challenges – climate, biodiversity, digital – with the European Union and United States at the heart.

Third, you focused on new work together on key regional challenges – the Middle East, Africa, the Indo-Pacific – again with Europe and the U.S. at the heart, but also working with China, also involving the EU and NATO. And NATO you called the political body to harmonize our choices.

Your ambitions for the European Union to be an impactful global leader and partner for the United States to tackle this century's biggest challenges, it's the right time for that message. At the Atlantic Council, we see ourselves as being in an inflection point – in an historical inflection point as important as the periods of time after World War I and World War II, and we know that at that time the transatlantic relationship was decisive in a negative sense after one and in a positive sense after the other.

Mr. President, I want to thank you for your significant comments in the launching of our new Center. But to be truthful, Mr. President, the entire Atlantic Council has been a Europe center for 60 years. We have 14 programs and centers – regional on Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. We have functional centers on energy issues, climate issues, technology, global economy, global security. So in this way, Mr. President, we are designed to promote just the bold and future-oriented transatlantic agenda you've outlined for us today as we work in common cause on all the issues that you enumerated.

Mr. President, you can count on us to be there at the Atlantic Council and in our global Atlantic Council community for partners for a robust and effective Franco-American relationship, for stronger U.S.-EU efforts, and of course as longstanding NATO allies.

And thank you for closing, giving such an inspirational message to the next generation with this wonderful quote about post-COVID, how the value of life will be higher than before after COVID. That's a great way to send us off.

Thanks again, Mr. President. And for our next Atlantic Council Front Page at the Europe Center, we'll continue to build this agenda by hosting the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, who will be live a week from now on February 10th at 10:30 a.m. Eastern Standard Time. We hope to see you all then. And thank you again, Mr. President and Ben Haddad and everyone at the new Europe Center.

PRESIDENT MACRON: Thank you very much.