

# Address to the French people by M. Emmanuel Macron, President of the Republic.

Men and women of France, my fellow citizens,

I am speaking to you this evening because of the international situation and its consequences for France and Europe, following several weeks of diplomatic activity.

You are rightfully concerned by the historic events under way that are disrupting the world order.

The war in Ukraine, which has killed or injured nearly a million people, is continuing at the same level of intensity.

The United States of America, our ally, has changed its position on this war, lessening its support for Ukraine and raising doubts about what is to come. At the same time, the United States intends to impose tariffs on products from Europe.

Meanwhile, the world continues to be ever more violent, and the terrorist threat has not lessened.

All in all, our prosperity and our security have become increasingly uncertain. Clearly, we are entering a new era.

The war in Ukraine has gone on for more than three years now. We decided on day one to support Ukraine and to sanction Russia, and it was the right thing to do, because not only are the Ukrainian people bravely fighting for their freedom, but our own security is under threat as well.

Indeed, if a country can invade its European neighbor with impunity, we can no longer be certain of anything. Might makes right and peace can no longer be guaranteed on our own continent. History has taught us this.

The Russian threat goes beyond Ukraine and affects every country in Europe. It affects us.

Russia has already made the Ukrainian conflict a global conflict. It has deployed North Korean soldiers and Iranian equipment on our continent, while helping those countries to further rearm. President Putin's Russia violates our borders to murder his opponents and manipulates elections in Romania and Moldova. It organizes digital attacks against our hospitals to keep them from functioning. Russia is attempting to manipulate our opinions, spreading lies on social media. Basically, it is testing our limits in the air, on the seas, in space and behind our screens. Its aggressiveness seems to know no bounds. At the same time, Russia is continuing to rearm, spending more than 40% of its budget for that purpose. By 2030, it plans to have further expanded its army - to have an additional 300,000 troops, 3,000 tanks and 300 fighter planes. So how believable is it, then, that today's Russia will stop at Ukraine? Russia has become a threat to France and Europe now and for years to come. I deeply regret it and I am convinced that in the long term, peace will return to our continent, with a once-again peaceable and peaceful Russia, but this is where we are today and we have to deal with it.

In this world fraught with danger, it would be madness to stand back and watch from the sidelines. We must make decisions about Ukraine and about the security of the French people and the people of Europe without further delay.

About Ukraine, first of all. All initiatives that help bring about peace are a step in the right direction, and I want to applaud them this evening. We must continue helping the Ukrainians to resist until they can negotiate a deal with Russia that ensures a solid peace for themselves and for all of us. That's why we can't abandon Ukraine on the road to peace - on the contrary.

A peace deal can't be signed at any price on orders from Russia. Peace can't mean Ukraine's capitulation. It can't mean its collapse. Nor can it come about through a ceasefire, which would be too fragile. Why? Because once again, we've learned from the past. We can't forget that Russia began its invasion of Ukraine in 2014, that we negotiated a ceasefire in Minsk, that Russia did not abide by that ceasefire and that we were unable to maintain it due to a lack of solid guarantees. We can no longer take Russia at its word.

Ukraine has a right to peace and security, and it is in our interest – the interest of European security. It is with this in mind that we are working with our British and German friends, as well as several other European countries. That's why over the past few weeks, you saw me bring together several of them in Paris, and that's why I met with them again a few days ago in London, to solidify the necessary commitments to Ukraine. Once a peace deal has been signed, ensuring that Ukraine will not be invaded again by Russia, we have to prepare for it.

That will most certainly require long-term support for the Ukrainian army. It may also involve the deployment of European forces. They wouldn't immediately go off to fight – they wouldn't be fighting on the front lines – but they would be there once a peace deal is signed in order to ensure full compliance. Next week, the joint chiefs of the countries that wish to shoulder their responsibilities in this regard will meet in Paris. What we prepared together with the Ukrainians and several European partners is a plan for a solid, lasting, verifiable peace. It's the plan I championed in the United States two weeks ago, and around Europe. I want to believe that the United States will stand with us, but we must be ready if that's not the case.

Whether or not peace is achieved quickly in Ukraine, the European nations must be able to better defend themselves and to deter any new aggression, given the Russian threat I just described. Yes, whatever happens, we must be better equipped; we must improve our defence posture for the sake of peace and for the purpose of deterrence. In that regard, we remain committed to NATO and to our partnership with the United States, but we must do more – we must increase our independence in the areas of security and defense. Europe's future cannot be decided in Washington or Moscow. And yes, the threat is back in the East, and the innocence, as it were, of the last 30 years, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, is now a thing of the past.

In Brussels tomorrow, at the extraordinary meeting with the 27 heads of State and government, the Commission and the Council President, we will take decisive steps. We will make several decisions that France has been proposing for years. Member States will be able to increase their military spending without adding to their deficit. We will decide on large-scale, joint funding for the purchase and production in Europe of ammunition, tanks, weapons and some of the most innovative equipment that exists. I have asked my administration to work to make sure that this strengthens our military as quickly as possible and accelerates the reindustrialization of every region in France. I will be holding a meeting with the relevant ministers and industry representatives in the coming days.

Now, the Europe of Defence that we have been championing for eight years has become a reality. That means European countries that are better able to defend and protect themselves, that work together to produce the equipment that they need in their own countries, and that are willing to cooperate more and reduce their dependence on the rest of the world, and that's a good thing. Germany, Poland, Denmark, the Baltic states and many other partners of ours have announced plans for unprecedented military spending.

Now, at this long-awaited time for action, France is in a unique position. We have the most effective military in Europe and, thanks to the decisions made by our predecessors after World War II, we possess nuclear deterrence capabilities. That affords us much better protection than a number of our neighbours. Moreover, we didn't wait for the invasion of Ukraine to understand that the world was in trouble, and, thanks to the two military programming laws that I put forth, which were passed by two successive Parliaments, our military budget will have doubled over close to 10 years. However, given the way that threats are evolving and in light of the acceleration I just described, we will need to make new budgetary decisions and additional, henceforward essential investments.

I have asked my administration to get to work on this as quickly as possible. These new investments will require us to mobilize both private and public funding without raising taxes. To achieve this, we will need reforms, choices and courage.

Our nuclear deterrence protects us. It is thorough, sovereign and French from start to finish. Since 1964, it has played a clear role in the preservation of peace and security in Europe.

However, in response to the historic call sounded by the future Chancellor of Germany, I decided to launch a strategic debate on using our deterrence to protect our allies on the European continent. Whatever happens, that decision has always been, and will always be, up to the President and Commander in Chief of France.

In order to control our destiny and increase our independence, we must step up our military efforts, as well as our economic efforts. Economic, technological, industrial and financial independence are critical. We must be prepared for the United States to impose tariffs on European goods, just as they confirmed they are doing with Canada and Mexico. This decision, which is just as incomprehensible for the US economy as it is for our own, will bear consequences for some of our sectors. It makes these times more difficult but we will not let these tariffs go unanswered. Therefore, as we prepare to respond with our European colleagues, as I did two weeks ago, we will continue trying to convince them by every means possible that this decision will hurt us all. And yes, I hope that I can convince and dissuade the President of the United States of America.

In sum, this time calls for decisions that have no precedent going back for many decades. When it comes to our agriculture, our research, our industrial sector, and all of our public policies, we cannot keep having the same debates as before. That is why I asked the Prime Minister and his cabinet to make proposals in light of this new context. I invite all the political, economic and union representatives of France to do the same. Tomorrow's solutions cannot be yesterday's habits.

My fellow citizens,

Faced with these challenges and these irreversible changes, we must not give in to any form of excess: neither excessive warmongering, nor excessive defeatism. France will follow only one course: that of the desire for peace and freedom, true to its history and its principles. Yes, that is what we believe in for our security, and that is also what we believe in when it comes to defending democracy, a certain idea of the truth, a certain idea of free research, a certain idea of respect in our society, a certain idea of freedom of expression that eschews hate speech, and a certain idea of humanism. That is what we believe in and that is what is at stake. Our Europe has the economic strength, the power and the talent to rise to meet our time.

We have the means to hold our own in comparison with the United States of America and, to an even greater extent, Russia. Therefore, we must take action, united as Europeans and determined to protect ourselves. That is why our country needs you and your commitment. Political decisions, military equipment and budgets are important, but they can never replace a nation's strength of character. No longer will our generation enjoy the peace dividends. It is up to us to ensure that one day, our children will enjoy the dividends of our efforts.

So we will face this together.

Vive la République!  
Vive la France!