

Discours du Président de la République devant les deux chambres du Parlement au Palais de Westminster.

Mr. Prime Minister, Madam, Honourable Ministers, Mr. Speaker, Lord Speaker, Honourable members of Parliament, members of the House of Lords, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to thank you, Speaker, for your kind words and greatly appreciate everyone's warm welcome on behalf of my wife, Brigitte, and myself and my whole delegation. Thank you very much for that. And it is a very great honour to speak before the two Houses of the British Parliament. A place composed of both an Upper chamber and a Lower chamber, a place of history bygone and history in the making. A place where modern democracy emerged and the principles of democratic representation and consent were born.

In making its own rules, your great people has inspired among the rest of the world, and in particular my compatriots, who regard you with respect, with more than a bit of admiration. In France, Montesquieu and Rousseau drew from the works of Locke to such an extent that the "Lettres Philosophiques" by Rousseau are often referred to as Letters on the English in my country. But please do not misunderstand me. I'm not going so far as to say that England gave birth to the French Revolution. However, I have to confess that we love monarchy, but especially when it's not at home. But I really believe that from the Magna Carta to America's Declaration of independence in 1776 and France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789, a same pathway emerged towards democratic order and the rule of law. And so many times this shared path was forged in the brotherhood of arms. So many times, it followed the small trails of the Ardennes and the Vosges Mountains under the hail of German bullets from 1914 to 1918. So many times, it almost veered off course, taken up by our common ancestors, reconquering the Normandy coast inch by inch under the glaring sun of June 1944.

And I would like to thank Prime Minister Starmer, dear Keir, for attending the ceremonies of 11th November last year, honouring our fallen soldiers. The British Red Poppy alongside The Bleuets de France, becoming the first British head of government to spend Armistice Day in Paris in 80 years. Thank you. The French people shall never forget the sacrifices British people made to protect Europe and the world during the two World Wars and to uphold with fierce determination the promise of our "Entente cordiale". We shall never forget the support of the asylum your forefathers gave to the Free French Forces in the fight against the barbarism of the Nazis. Sir Winston Churchill was one of the visionaries who had the foresight to help forge a strong transatlantic alliance and to come up with a peaceful European order in which he deeply believed. He passed the same vision onto us of a world order based on law, justice and respect for territorial integrity. An order that is today being attacked on a daily basis as we witness direct attacks on our democracies, the return of war to our continent, the resurgence of imperial impulses and the floating of international rules by destabilizing powers while attempting to divide up the world to their advantage.

Speaker, you and your predecessors have become famous, I have to say, even in France, for your way of restoring order in the court with your imperial and imperious exclamations: "Order, order!" And today, we wish to join you in shooting out "order, order!" with you to calm on the rest in the world. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, deeply committed to multilateralism, the United Kingdom and France must once again show the world that our alliance can make all the difference. Clearly, we have to work together in order to defend an efficient multilateralism and to protect the international order as we thought it after the Second World War.

And first, in supporting Ukraine, which has been illegally attacked by both, rallying the support of Europeans, and coordinating with the Americans to create the necessary conditions for robust and solid lasting peace. I want to commend your country since the first day and even before the first day, you were part of the closest ally of Ukraine, training their army, being here the first day to protect President Zelensky, his government, and allowing their forces just to resist, as you did decades ago with my country. And together we worked very hard during the past few years in order to stand with the Ukrainian people, just helping them to resist. We were right and we are right. And because every time Vladimir Poutine's Russia advances in Ukraine, the threat moves closer to us all. We will never accept the theory that might is right. And I want to be clear. This is why, together with you, Mr. Prime Minister, we decided to launch last February this Coalition of the Willing you mentioned. And this coalition was just a signal that Europeans will never abandon Ukraine. Never.

And whatever the decisions could be elsewhere, we will fight till the very last minute in order to get the ceasefire, in order to start the negotiations to build this robust and sustainable peace. Because this is our security and our principles together which are at stake in Ukraine. This is the possibility of a European peace, our generation did enjoy during the past decade, which is at stake in Ukraine, nothing less. And together we will follow up these efforts.

We have also stood together in calling for the cessation of hostilities and path to peace in the Middle East since the spiral of violence began after the terrorist attacks by Hamas on the 7th October 2023. Together, we call for the release of all hostages. Together, we've called for a ceasefire in Gaza. It is a matter of absolute urgency to end the suffering of the hostages and of the Gazans. A war without end and without a strategic objective poses a huge threat to the region and our collective security. Today, a dehumanization is occurring there that can never be justified. Together, we are aware that a political way out is crucial, and I believe in the future of the two state solutions as a basis for regional security architecture which will enable Israel to live in peace and security alongside its neighbours. But I want to be clear. Calling today for a ceasefire in Gaza without any condition is just telling to the rest of the world that for us as Europeans, there is no double standard. And as we are attached to human lives, as we are attached to territorial integrity, we want the ceasefire. No discussion. And today, working together in order to recognise the State of Palestine and to initiate this political momentum is the only path to peace.

Because since Oslo in 1993, with Gaza in ruin and West Bank being on a daily basis attacked, the perspective of a Palestinian state has never been put at risk as it is. And the objective of a recognition is not just making our duty, but this is as well reopening a political perspective and refusing just an answer based on security. And this is why the solution of the two states and the recognition of the state of Palestine is as well, according to me, the only way to build peace and stability for all in the whole region. This approach is in line with our common refusal to tolerate the threat posed by an Iran that poses nuclear weapons.

There again, we know all too well the limitations of solutions based on force and the temptation to bring about regime change. France, the United Kingdom and Germany, in coordination with all stakeholders, have the duty to bring about a stringent negotiation which ensures international monitoring of Iran's nuclear program over the long term, thereby preserving the international non-proliferation framework as a foundation for collective security. It is with the same coherence and firmness that we must act to defend the world order.

In Africa, our two countries have had a weighty past, which is why we can legitimately send a message of conciliation and refusal of spheres of influence, of respect for economic and territorial sovereignty. In the Indo-Pacific, our history has made us a watchdog of the freedom of navigation and compliance with international law, which we defend. Amid these upheavals, the alliance between France and the United Kingdom has not faltered. It has even become stronger.

Yes, during the past few years, this alliance became stronger. On defence and security, the Lancaster House Treaties showed that we were willing to cooperate on the most sensitive subjects, regarding our sovereignty and our deterrence. When our two countries signed them, some clever people found a way to derive savings of resources from them, and others even dubbed them the "Entente Frugale". Yet, they have successfully provided structure for defence cooperation between our two countries for the past 15 years.

At this bilateral summit, we will enter a new stage that will scale up this cooperation. And our two countries, the only European nuclear weapon states, the leading armed forces of the continent, together accounting for 40 % of European military budgets, vow to fully shoulder the responsibility when it comes to European security. And we are faced with new threats, with aggressive nuclear powers, with sometimes hesitating alliances, and the return of major conflict on our continent. This is why, in today's, our summit is so important and the announcement we prepared so historical.

The capabilities identified 15 years ago at Lancaster House must be increased dramatically in proportion to the threat. Our industrial cooperation must also move to the next level, and our relation to Europe must change, even in the core of sovereignty. There is an expectation in Europe that faith with revisionist neighbours, our two countries, have a special responsibility for the security of the continent. And it is time to articulate it and to paraphrase Pitt's famous phrase, "to make sure that not only our two countries will save themselves by their own exertions, but also that we will save Europe by our example and our solidarity." But we will return to this in more detail at the summit on Thursday, but very clearly, taking the commitment to go to the 3.5% on defence in the years to come, it's not just piling money, but increasing our cooperation all together, reducing our dependencies, and building a strong European pillar in NATO. We have to work together to cooperate, as we did a few years ago in Sahel, shoulder to shoulder. We have to cooperate in order to build new common program, to increase the cooperation of our industries, and to make a more independent and stronger Europe of defence.

Second, on climate and biodiversity. Together, we commit to the planet in the face of the new league of international reactionaries, who deny science and facts. We also defend with one voice the implementation of our climate ambitions towards carbon neutrality, phasing out fossil fuels, and protecting forests, which will be core issues of the upcoming COP30 in Belem. We are also acting together to achieve the ratification of the BBNJ Treaty on the Protection of Oceans, mobilising the private sector, reforming the official development assistance system in line with the Pact for Prosperity, People and the Planet, where we work together.

We worked very actively and still work together on biodiversity and biodiversity credits. The report we commissioned together as Franco-British during King Charles' state visit to France is not just excellent, but we endorse it and we will implement it. We will now continue to work together and implement this work.

Third, on migration. I have the feeling to be waited on this issue as well in your country. Indeed, in this unstable world, hope for a better life elsewhere is legitimate, but we cannot allow our countries' rules for taking in people to be flattered and criminal networks to cynically exploit the hopes of so many individuals with so little respect for human life.

France and the United Kingdom have a shared responsibility to address irregular migration with humanity, solidarity, and firmness. The decisions that we will take at our bilateral summit will respond to our aims for cooperation and tangible results on these major issues. Very clearly, we task our Minister of Domestic Affairs to work very closely together, and I want to salute the very close coordination and cooperation. But our objective, very clearly, is to have the best-ever cooperation between our two countries in order to fix today what is a burden for our two countries. But let me remind as well, as we are making these bilateral efforts, as we are stepping up the level of our cooperation, a third of the people entering illegally into the Schengen area attempt to cross the channel. We will only arrive at a lasting and effective solution with the action at the European level and the cooperation, especially of the countries of first and third, on the European soil, by continuing to work with the countries of departure and transit of global migration routes and as well by addressing pull factors. Let's be clear, we will deliver together because this issue is a clear issue for our two countries.

Fourth, on economy. Our trade has been revived and has even surpassed the pre-Brexit levels. The 3,500 French companies working in the UK remain the second leading foreign employers in your country and vice versa. And we want to do more, on the occasion of the summit as well. We will deliver additional results, additional investment, and very strategic investment in the energy and space fields where we have long-standing cooperation, but where we want to build a new step forward and open a new era.

Since the last time a French president spoke before you in 2008, Europe has changed.

First of all, of course, because the sovereign British people choose to leave the European Union in 2016, a decision that we respect, even if we found it deeply regrettable. I am aware that I am the first European Head of State to make a state visit since the United Kingdom left the European Union. I take full account of the importance of this moment.

It took us a few years, but we have agreed on the foundations for our new relationship after the withdrawal agreement and the trade and cooperation agreement reinforced by the Windsor Framework. And some of us worked very hard on all these texts. I have great memories.

I support Prime Minister Starmer's efforts as well to restore trust, ensure compliance with the agreements concluded, and strengthen this framework through targeted cooperation in our common interests. I welcome the fact that on the 19th of May, we were able to define a pragmatic roadmap between the European Union and the United Kingdom on defence, energy, climate and other issues.

But just as leaving the European Union did not mean the United Kingdom left Europe, efforts to address the challenges facing all of Europe cannot be limited to the European Union alone. What is at stake today in Europe is our ability to shoulder the responsibility to ensure our continent's security ourselves to a greater extent.

What is at stake today in Europe is our ability to invest in key technologies of the future — AI, quantum technologies, space, biotech, decarbonised energy sources and defence industry, as I mentioned — in order to avoid strategic dependencies and disengagement that would put us at risk, and especially the risk of a slow death, to mention Mario Draghi.

Indeed, we have to de-risk our economies and our societies first from the risk of the lack of innovation. And this is what we experienced during the past decade, if we compare our countries with the United States. We will have as well to de-risk our two countries for the excessive dependencies on both the US and China. I do not put a sign equal between China and the US. We have a strong ally on one side and a challenger, sometimes a partner when we speak about climate change, with China.

But let's be realistic. If the Europeans, if the United Kingdom and France do not work together in order to build solid value chains, in order to reduce our dependencies on this critical area, as I mentioned, if we still depend on both China and the US, I think we have a clear view of our future and the future of our children.

On one side, over capacities and over subsidies are clear threats of a fair trade. And they are destabilizing a lot of value chains and creating new dependencies. On the other side, the trade war is clearly an explicit decision not to be compliant anymore with WTO and this "*doux commerce*" we loved till now.

We have no other choice if we want to be lucid, if we want to build a sustainable future for all children, to de-risk our economies and our societies from these dual dependencies. We want an open world. We want to cooperate, but not to depend. And each time we depend, each time we are not able to stand up and decide and agree to disagree, this is the beginning of our problem.

We are in this situation. This is why we have to work very hard together on this technological and economic field in order to strengthen our value chains together and reduce these dependencies.

But what is at stake as well today in Europe is the defence of democratic models amid foreign interference, information manipulation, domination of minds by negative emotions and addictions to social media. This is the big other risk.

It is the same challenge we are facing when it comes to digital age, restriction online and protecting our children from social media and screens, an issue brutally brought to the light three months ago by the British series "Adolescence". Let's be clear, this is the same type of risk. Being vulnerable to algorithm designed in the US, being vulnerable to algorithm designed in China with social networks not even allowed to Chinese teenagers. This is being vulnerable to the interferences and misinformation coming from Russia and other places. But the strength of our democracies depends on our capacity to create new regulations in order to better protect our children and our democracies and our democratic debate, the relationship with science and truth. Otherwise, our future will be decided by those who will decide on these algorithms.

Our two countries are among the oldest sovereign Nations in Europe and sovereignty means a lot to both of us. Everything I referred to was about sovereignty. Deciding for ourselves, choosing our technologies, our economy, deciding our diplomacy and deciding the content we want to share, the ideas we want to share and the controversies we want to share.

Even though it is not part of the European Union, the United Kingdom cannot stay on the sidelines because defence and security, competitiveness, democracy, the very core of our identity are connected across Europe as a continent. And you understand me, the point is not to diverge but to move forward side by side on these strategic choices we are facing, to avert the risk of effacement, division, weakness, a certain idea of Europe, so dear to George Steiner, must continue to connect us today.

It is also the meaning behind the European Political Community, which has shown its ability to bring together the European family across the continent of Europe, to address the issues of stability, security and cooperation between States in concrete terms. The United Kingdom is playing a full role, as demonstrated a year ago during the Blenheim Summit.

I believe that our two countries will continue to be drivers of change, drivers of this wider Europe and this meaningful convergence.

We must be able to count on our economic, academic, research and cultural relations to together tackle these sovereign related challenges. I welcome the number of partnerships agreements that our universities, museums, research institutions will sign in the margins of this visit. They will participate in our respective agenda to reindustrialisation and strategic independence in key sector from Artificial Intelligence to culture. Our two countries are leaders in Europe when we refer to AI. But the competition of the U.S. and China is fierce and Europe on this point as well needs to step up its investments. This is why we have to work as well together.

As the Channel Tunnel is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, let's make a wish here today. Let's not allow the channel to grow wider. Although there are 300,000 French people living in the United Kingdom and 150,000 British people living in France, there has been a decrease in movement in recent years when it comes to school, university, professional and research exchanges.

Today there is a risk that our societies are growing apart, that our young people do not know each other as well and may end up strangers at a time when international current events remind us on a daily basis of our common future. Let's fix it. Let's work together in order to facilitate the exchange of students, researchers, intellectuals, artists. This is so important. Let's allow our children to have the same opportunities as the one we had.

Members of Parliament, my Lords, tomorrow at the British Museum, we will officially announce an historical exchange. In the run-up to the 1000th anniversary of the birth of William the Conqueror, France will loan the United Kingdom the Bayeux tapestry.

I have to say it took probably more years to deliver this project than all the Brexit texts. Because we launched it together with Prime Minister Theresa May at that time during a summit a few years ago. But at the end of the day, we did it. And the tapestry will be displaced in London, while the National Museums of Rouen and Caen will receive the Sutton Hoo treasure on loan.

I think the mutual loans of these extraordinary national treasures will involve fascinating human exchanges, which will certainly be positive for our future in terms of culture. And let's see this exchange happening between summer 2026 and summer 2027 as the beginning of this new era of exchange and the reopening of this mutual movement.

The times of William the Conqueror are over, happily, and the rows of charging cavalry as well. Our "Entente Cordiale", sealed 126 years ago, has enabled our countries to bring their futures closer to protect Europe's strategic balances and to enter into an era of cooperation and competition, replacing our battlefields with football and rugby fields, as you mentioned.

At the invitation of His Majesty, King Charles III, whom I should like to thank for his hospitality and his long-standing, very special relationship with my country.

I came here today to renew the French people's message of friendship and fraternity. Yes, finally we meet again. And let's be sure that we will meet again for years and decades. Because we are linked by our geography, by our past, but we are linked by our common future. And the only way to overcome the challenges we have, the challenges of our times, will be to go together, hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder. This is our common destiny.

Long live our France-United Kingdom friendship!

Long live the United Kingdom!

Long live France!