

25 April 2018 - [Seul le prononcé fait foi](#)

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Speech of the President of the Republic, Emmanuel Macron, before the Congress of the United States of America

Washington — 25 avril 2018

Mr. Speaker,
Mr. Vice President,
Honorable members of the United States Congress,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for France, for the French people, and for me, to be received in this sanctuary of democracy, where so much of the history of the United States has been written.

We are surrounded today with images, portraits and symbols, which remind us that France has participated – with heart in hand – in the story of this great nation. From the very beginning.

We have fought shoulder-to-shoulder many battles, starting with those that gave birth to the United States of America.

Since then, we have shared a common vision for humanity. Our two nations are rooted in the same soil, grounded in the same ideals of the American and French Revolutions. We have worked together for the universal ideals of liberty, tolerance, and equal rights.

And yet, this is also about our human, gutsy, personal bonds throughout history.

In 1778, the French philosopher Voltaire and Benjamin Franklin met in Paris. John Adams tells the story that after they had shaken hands, “they embraced each other by hugging one another in their arms and kissing each other’s cheeks”.

It can remind you of something!

And this morning, I stand under the protective gaze of La Fayette, right behind me. As a brave young man, he fought alongside George Washington and forged a tight relationship, fuelled by respect and affection. La Fayette used to call himself a “son of the United States”. And, in 1792, George Washington became a son of America and France, when our First Republic awarded citizenship to him.

Here we stand, in your beautiful capital city, whose plans were conceived by a French architect, Charles L’Enfant.

The miracle of the relationship between the United States and France is that we have never lost this special bond deeply rooted not only in our history, but also in our flesh.

This is why I invited President Donald Trump for the first Bastille Day Parade of my presidency, on 14 July last year. Today, President Trump’s decision to offer France his first state visit to Washington has a particular resonance, because it represents the continuity of our shared history, in a troubled world. And let me thank your president and the First Lady for this wonderful invitation to my wife and myself.

I am also very grateful and I would like also to thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for welcoming me on this occasion.

And I would like to especially thank you, Mr Speaker, for your invitation. I want you to know how much I appreciate this unique gesture. Thank you, sir!

The strength of our bonds is the source of our shared ideals.

This is what united us in the struggle against imperialism during the First World War. Then in the fight against

Nazism during the Second World War. This is what united us again during the era of the Stalinist threat, and now we lean on that strength to fight against terrorist groups.

Let us for a moment transport ourselves to the past. Imagine, this is 4 July 1916. Back then, the United States had not entered World War I. And yet, a young American poet enlisted in the ranks of our Foreign Legion, because he loved France and he loved the cause of freedom.

This young American would fight and die on Independence Day at Belloy-en-Santerre, not far from Amiens, my home town, after having written these words: "I have a rendez-vous with death." The name of this young American was Alan Seeger. A statue stands in his honour in Paris.

Since 1776, we, the American and French people, have had a rendez-vous with freedom.

And with it come sacrifices.

That is why we are very honoured by the presence today of Robert Jackson Ewald, a World War II veteran. Robert Jackson Ewald took part in the D-Day landing. He fought for our freedom, 74 years ago. Sir, on behalf of France: thank you. I bow to your courage and your devotion.

In recent years, our nations have suffered wrenching losses simply because of our values and our taste for freedom. Because these values are the very ones those terrorists precisely hate.

Tragically, on 11 September 2001, many Americans had an unexpected rendez-vous with death. Over the last five years, my country and Europe also experienced terrible terrorist attacks.

And we shall never forget these innocent victims, nor the incredible resilience of our people in the aftermath. It is a horrific price to pay for freedom, for democracy.

That is why we stand together in Syria and in the Sahel today, to fight together against these terrorist groups who seek to destroy everything for which we stand.

We have encountered countless rendez-vous with death, because we have this constant attachment to freedom and democracy. As emblazoned on the flags of the French revolutionaries, "Vivre libre ou mourir". Live free or die.

Thankfully, freedom is also the source of all that is worth living for. Freedom is a call to think and to love. It is a call to our will. That is why, in times of peace, France and the United States were able to forge unbreakable bonds, from the grist of painful memories.

The most indestructible, the most powerful, the most definitive knot between us is the one that ties the true purpose of our peoples to advance, as Abraham Lincoln said, the "unfinished business" of democracy.

Indeed, our two societies have stood up to advance human rights for all. They have engaged in a continual dialogue to unpack this "unfinished business".

In this Capitol Rotunda, the bust of Martin Luther King, assassinated 50 years ago, reminds us of the spiration of African-American leaders, artists, writers who have become part of our common heritage. We celebrate among them James Baldwin and Richard Wright, whom France hosted on our soil.

We have shared the history of civil rights. France's Simone de Beauvoir became a respected figure in the movement for gender equality in America in the 70s. Women's rights have long been a fundamental driver for our societies on both sides of the Atlantic. This explains why the #MeToo movement has recently had such a deep resonance in France.

Democracy is made of day-to-day conversations and mutual understanding between citizens.

It is easier and deeper when we have the ability to speak each other's language. The heart of Francophonie also beats here, in the United States, from New Orleans to Seattle. I want this heart to beat even harder in American schools all across the country.

Democracy relies also on the faculty of freely describing the present and the capacity to invent the future. This is what culture brings.

Thousands of examples come to mind when we think of the exchanges between our cultures across the centuries. From Thomas Jefferson, who was Ambassador to France and built his house in Monticello based on a

building he loved in Paris, to Hemingway's novel *Moby-Dick* celebrating the capital city of France. From our great 19th-century French writer Chateaubriand bringing to the French people the dream of America's open spaces, forests and mountains to Faulkner's novels crafted in the deep South, but first read in France where they quickly gained literary praise. From jazz coming from Louisiana and the blues from Mississippi finding in France an enthusiastic public to the American fascination for Impressionists, and the French modern and contemporary arts. These exchanges are vibrant in so many fields, from cinema to fashion, from design to high cuisine, from sports to visual arts.

Medicine and scientific research as well as business and innovation are also a significant part of our shared journey. The United States is France's first scientific partner.

Our economic ties create hundreds of thousands of jobs, on both sides of the Atlantic.

The story of France and the United States is a story of an endless dialogue made of common dreams, of a common struggle for dignity and progress. It is the best achievement of our democratic principles and values.

This is this very special relationship.

But we must remember the warning of President Theodore Roosevelt: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, handed on for them to do the same".

This is an urgent reminder indeed. Because now, going beyond our bilateral ties, beyond our very special relationship, Europe and the United States must face together the global challenges of this century. And we cannot take for granted our transatlantic history and bonds. At the core, our Western values themselves are at risk.

We have to succeed facing these challenges, and we cannot succeed forgetting our principles and our history.

In fact, the 21st century has brought a series of new threats and new challenges that our ancestors might not ever have imagined.

Our strongest beliefs are challenged by the rise of a yet unknown new world order. Our societies are concerned about the future of their children.

All of us gathered here in this noble Chamber, we - elected officials - all share the responsibility to demonstrate that democracy remains the best answer to the questions and doubts that arise today.

Even if the foundations of our progress are disrupted, we must stand firmly and fight to make our principles prevail.

But we bear another responsibility inherited from our collective history. Today, the international community needs to step up our game and build the 21st century world order, based on the perennial principles we established together after World War II.

The rule of law, the fundamental values on which we secured peace for 70 years are now questioned by urgent issues that require our joint action.

Together with our international allies and partners, we are facing inequalities created by globalization; threats to the planet, our common good; attacks on democracies through the rise of illiberalism; and the destabilization of our international community by new powers and criminal states.

All these risks aggrieve our citizens.

Both in the United States and in Europe we are living in a time of anger and fear, because of these current global threats.

But these feelings do not build anything. You can play with fears and anger for a time. But they do not construct anything. Anger only freezes and weakens us. And, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt said during his first inaugural speech, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself".

Therefore, let me say we have two possible ways ahead.

We can choose isolationism, withdrawal, and nationalism. This is an option.

It can be tempting to us as a temporary remedy to our fears.

It can be tempting to see as a temporary remedy to our fears.

But closing the door to the world will not stop the evolution of the world. It will not douse, but inflame, the fears of our citizens. We have to keep our eyes wide open to the new risks, right in front of us.

I am convinced that if we decide to open our eyes wider, we will be stronger. We will overcome the dangers. We will not let the rampaging work of extreme nationalism shake a world full of hopes for greater prosperity.

It is a critical moment. If we do not act with urgency as a global community, I am convinced that the international institutions, including the United Nations and NATO, will no longer be able to exercise their mandate and stabilizing influence. We would then inevitably and severely undermine the liberal order we built after World War II.

Other powers, with a stronger strategy and ambition, will then fill the void we would leave empty.

Other powers will not hesitate one second to advocate their own model, to shape the 21st century world order.

Personally, if you ask me, I do not share the fascination for new strong powers, the abandonment of freedom, and the illusion of nationalism.

Therefore, distinguished members of Congress, let us push them aside, write our own history and birth the future we want.

We have to shape our common answers to the global threats that we are facing.

The only option then is to strengthen our cooperation. We can build the 21st century world order, based on a new breed of multilateralism. Based on a more effective, accountable, and results-oriented multilateralism. A strong multilateralism.

This requires more than ever the United States' involvement, as your role was decisive for creating and safeguarding today's free world. The United States invented this multilateralism. You are the one now who has to help to preserve and reinvent it.

This strong multilateralism will not outshine our national cultures and national identities. It is exactly the other way around. A strong multilateralism will allow our cultures and identities to be respected, to be protected and to flourish freely together.

Why? Because precisely our own culture is based, on both sides of the Atlantic, on this unique taste for freedom, on this unique attachment to liberty and peace. This strong multilateralism is the unique option compatible with our nations, our cultures, our identities.

With the US President, with the support of every 535 members of this joint session, representing the whole American nation, we can actively contribute together to building the 21st-century world order, for our people.

The United States and Europe have a historical role in this respect, because it is the only way to defend what we believe in, to promote our universal values, to express strongly that human rights, the rights of minorities and shared liberty are the true answer to the disorders of the world.

I believe in these rights and values.

I believe that against ignorance, we have education. Against inequalities, development. Against cynicism, trust and good faith. Against fanaticism, culture. Against disease and epidemics, medicine. Against the threats on the planet, science.

I believe in concrete action. I believe the solutions are in our hands.

I believe in the liberation of the individual, and in the freedom and responsibility of everyone to build their own lives and pursue happiness.

I believe in the power of intelligently-regulated market economies. We are experiencing the positive impact of our current economic globalization, with innovation, with job creation. We see, however, the abuses of globalized capitalism, and digital disruptions, which jeopardize the stability of our economies and democracies.

I believe facing these challenges requires the opposite of massive deregulation and extreme nationalism. Commercial war is not the proper answer to these evolutions. We need free and fair trade, for sure. A commercial war opposing allies is not consistent with our mission, with our history, with our current

commitments to global security. At the end of the day, it would destroy jobs, increase prices, and the middle class will have to pay for it.

I believe we can build the right answers to legitimate concerns regarding trade imbalances, excesses and overcapacities, by negotiating through the World Trade Organization and building cooperative solutions. We wrote these rules; we should follow them.

I believe we can address our citizens' concerns regarding privacy and personal data. The recent Facebook hearings highlighted the necessity to preserve our citizens' digital rights, all over the world, and protect their confidence in today's digital tools of life.

The European Union passed a new regulation for data protection. I believe the United States and the European Union should cooperate to find the right balance between innovation and ethics, and harness the best of today's revolutions in digital data and artificial intelligence.

I believe facing inequalities should push us to improve policy coordination within the G20 to reduce financial speculation, and create mechanisms to protect the middle class's interest, because our middle classes are the backbone of our democracies.

I believe in building a better future for our children, which requires offering them a planet that is still habitable in 25 years.

Some people think that securing current industries - and their jobs - is more urgent than transforming our economies to meet the global challenge of climate change. I hear these concerns, but we must find a smooth transition to a low-carbon economy.

Because what is the meaning of our life, really, if we work and live destroying the planet, while sacrificing the future of our children?

What is the meaning of our life if our decision, our conscious decision, is to reduce the opportunities for our children and grandchildren?

By polluting the oceans, not mitigating CO2 emissions and destroying our biodiversity, we are killing our planet. Let us face it: there is no Planet B.

On this issue it may happen we have a disagreement between the United States and France. It may happen, like in all families. But that is, for me, a short-term disagreement. In the long run, we will have to face the same realities. We are citizens of the same planet.

We have to face it. Beyond some short-term disagreements, we have to work together.

With business leaders and local communities, in order to make our planet great again, and create new jobs and new opportunities, while safeguarding our Earth. And I am sure one day, the United States will come back and join the Paris agreement. And I am sure we can work together to fulfil with you the ambitions of the Global Compact on the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe in democracy.

Many of our forebears were slain for the cause of freedom and human rights. With the great inheritance they gave us comes the responsibility to continue their mission in this new century and to preserve the perennial values handed to us and assure that today's unprecedented innovations in science and technology remain in the service of liberty and in the preservation of our planet for the next generations.

To protect our democracies, we have to fight against the ever-growing virus of fake news, which exposes our people to irrational fear and imaginary risks. And let me attribute the fair copyright for this expression "fake news", especially here.

Without reason, without truth, there is no real democracy -- because democracy is about true choices and rational decisions. The corruption of information is an attempt to corrode the very spirit of our democracies.

We also have to fight against the terrorist propaganda that spreads out its fanaticism on the Internet. It has a gripping influence on some of our citizens and children. I want this fight to be part of our bilateral commitment, and we discussed with your President the importance of such an agenda.

I want this fight to be part of the G7 agenda because it deeply harms our rights and shared values.

The terrorist threat is even more dangerous when it is combined with the nuclear proliferation threat. We must therefore be stricter than ever with countries seeking to acquire the nuclear bomb.

That is why France supports fully the United States in its efforts to bring Pyongyang, through sanctions and negotiations, towards denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

As for Iran, our objective is clear: Iran shall never possess any nuclear weapons. Not now, not in 5 years, not in 10 years. Never.

But this policy should never lead us to war in the Middle East. We must ensure stability, and respect sovereignty of the nations, including that one of Iran, which represents a great civilization.

Let us not replicate past mistakes in the region. Let us not be naïve on one side. Let us not create new walls ourselves on the other side.

There is an existing framework – called the JCPOA - to control the nuclear activity of Iran. We signed it at the initiative of the United States. We signed it, both the United States and France. That is why we cannot say we should get rid of it like that. But it is true to say that this agreement may not address all concerns, very important concerns. This is true. But we should not abandon it without having something substantial, more substantial, instead. That is my position. That is why France will not leave the JCPOA, because we signed it.

Your President and your country will have to take, in the current days and weeks, their responsibilities regarding this issue.

What I want to do, and what we decided together with your President, is that we can work on a more comprehensive deal addressing all these concerns. That is why we have to work on this more comprehensive deal based – as discussed with President Trump yesterday – on four pillars: the substance of the existing agreement, especially if you decide to leave it, the post-2025 period, in order to be sure that we will never have any military nuclear activity for Iran, the containment of the military influence of the Iranian regime in the region, and the monitoring of ballistic activity.

I think these four pillars, the ones I addressed before the General Assembly of the United Nations last September, are the ones which cover the legitimate fears of the United States and our allies in the region.

I think we have to start working now on these four pillars to build this new, comprehensive framework and to be sure that, whatever the decision of the United States will be, we will not leave the floor to the absence of rules.

We will not leave the floor to these conflicts of power in the Middle East, we will not fuel ourselves in increasing tensions and potential war.

That is my position, and I think we can work together to build this comprehensive deal for the whole region, for our people, because I think it fairly addresses our concerns. That is my position.

And this containment – I mentioned it one of these pillars – is necessary in Yemen, in Lebanon, in Iraq and also in Syria.

Building a sustainable peace in a united and inclusive Syria requires, indeed, that all powers in the region respect the sovereignty of its people, and the diversity of its communities.

In Syria, we work very closely together. After prohibited weapons were used against the population by the regime of Bashar al-Assad two weeks ago, the United States and France, together with the United Kingdom, acted to destroy chemical facilities and to restore the credibility of the international community.

This action was one of the best evidences of this strong multilateralism. And I want to pay a special tribute for our soldiers, because they did a great job in this region and on this occasion.

Beyond this action, we will together work for a humanitarian solution in the short term, on the ground, and contribute actively to a lasting political solution to put an end to this tragic conflict. And I think one of the very important decisions we took together with President Trump was precisely to include Syria in this large framework for the overall region, and to decide to work together on this political roadmap for Syria, for Syrian people, even after our war against ISIS.

In the Sahel, where terrorist networks span a footprint as large as Europe, French and American soldiers are

confronting the same enemy and risking their lives together.

Here, I would like to pay special tribute to the American soldiers who fell this past fall in the region, and to their French comrades who lost their lives early this year in Mali. Better than anyone, I think, our troops know what the alliance and friendship between our countries means.

I believe, facing all these challenges, all these fears, all this anger, our duty, our destiny is to work together and to build this new, strong multilateralism.

Distinguished members of Congress,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On 25 April 1960, General de Gaulle affirmed in this Chamber that nothing was as important to France as "the reason, the resolution, the friendship of the great people of the United States".

Fifty-eight years later, to this very day, I come here to convey the warmest feelings of the French nation, and to tell you that our people cherish the friendship of the American people, with as much intensity as ever.

The United States and the American people are an essential part of our confidence in the future, in democracy, in what women and men can accomplish in this world when we are driven by high ideals and an unbreakable trust in humanity and progress.

Today the call we hear is the call of history. This is a time of determination and courage. What we cherish is at stake. What we love is in danger. We have no choice but to prevail.

And together, we shall prevail.

Vive les Etats-Unis d'Amérique!

Long live the friendship between France and the United States of America!

Vive la République!

Vive la France!

Vive notre amitié.

Merci.

Thank you.