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# **BALANCING ACT: THE LIMITS OF PRAGMATISM IN THE FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP AND THE WAY FORWARD**

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# **BALANCING ACT: THE LIMITS OF PRAGMATISM IN THE FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP AND THE WAY FORWARD<sup>1</sup>**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At a time when no one expected it, the relationship between President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron got off to a strong start. Not only did the two leaders click on a personal basis, but contrary to many of its European neighbors, France has mostly approached the tempestuous American president with pragmatism and benevolence. Trump's interest-driven "America First" foreign policy, which signaled a repositioning of the United States away from democracy promotion and neoconservative interventionism, suited France's realist approach to the world order. It came at a particularly favorable time for French-American bilateral relations. Over the past decade, France and the United States have enjoyed an excellent defense and security relationship, forged in their common counterterrorism efforts in the Levant and Africa.

Yet, the quality of the French-American bilateral relationship cannot conceal the fact that shared interests and personal connections have not helped to tame the effects of an isolationist and protectionist American foreign policy, nor has it translated into any advancement of multilateral causes or prevented inopportune American meddling in European foreign and internal policies.

At this juncture, France is trying to balance the advantages of a close relationship with an indispensable ally in the fight against terrorism with the reality of a reluctant and disruptive partner that pursues its narrow interests, ignorant to the history of allies and even to the long-term systemic effects on the post-World War II world order.

There is a path forward for France, along with European partners, in dealing with the Trump administration and a more selfish America. It consists of a durable balancing act between interests and principles, national independence and European solidarity, short-term objectives and long-term ambitions. A revamped French strategy for dealing with Trump's America should be focused on uniting and empowering Europe, taking some distance from the U.S. president, preserving institutions through reform and innovation, and keeping the door open to a healthier relationship with the United States down the line.

As Europeans start taking in the reality of increasing global multipolarity, whereby an aggressive United States continues to dominate, they will have to balance between two parallel roads. They will have to not only gain strategic autonomy to protect themselves against great power competition, but also find partners among like-minded powers (such as Japan, Australia, South Korea, Canada) to hold the fort of multilateralism and international law until a more cooperative United States returns.

## INTRODUCTION

"He's perfect," U.S. President Donald Trump said of French President Emmanuel Macron, after casually dusting away alleged dandruff from the younger man's shoulder. This affable grooming gesture, even if somewhat gorilla-like, is indicative of Trump's genuine infatuation with the French president. Trump praises him, embraces him, and congratulates him for his performances, an honor he has granted more often to dictators and authoritarians than to fellow democrats.

There is real chemistry between the two heads of state: Trump and Macron have hosted each other in mutual visits filled with flattering pomp and ceremony (Macron had Trump over for Bastille Day in July 2017, and he was invited to Washington for the first state visit of Trump's presidency in April 2018), and they have showcased a good working relationship, with frequent phone calls and regular bilateral meetings. Much has been written on this peculiar relationship: sharing an experience as disruptive outsiders of their respective political systems, both leaders appear to appreciate the other's blunt and direct style, and find commonality in their diagnosis that the old way of doing politics is over.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, France has been enjoying good press in Washington for years now. In a far cry from the 2003 days of "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" and "freedom fries," France is nowadays viewed as a reliable ally, an advocate for defense spending and burden-sharing at the European level, and a capable military power, willing to intervene when need be.<sup>3</sup> Appreciation for France has become bipartisan: Republicans appreciate Macron's reformist efforts domestically and his respect for their president, while Democrats viewed his election as a bulwark against rampantly growing populism in the West. All applauded the young French president when he addressed a joint session of Congress during his April 2018 state visit.

And yet, a major contradiction lies at the heart of the relationship. On the most pressing foreign policy issues that the trans-Atlantic community faces, the gap between the French and American positions has been rapidly widening, and the proximity between the two leaders has not led to any policy rapprochement—although, to be fair to Macron, no European leader has been able to achieve much with the Trump administration.

Worse, the trans-Atlantic relationship is in a state of deep upheaval, with tensions and conflicts escalating on all fronts of the U.S.-Europe relationship in Trump's second year in office. Trump's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal has effectively resulted in sanctions against European companies; the U.S. president has imposed tariffs on European exports prompting retaliatory measures; the June 2018 G-7 meeting in Charlevoix ended with Trump rejecting the final communiqué; Trump showed discontent with allies over defense spending and energy choices—Germany in particular—at the July 2018 NATO summit; and the U.S. president appeared to deny the existence of Russian information warfare at the Helsinki summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. All of these instances demonstrated a deepening gap between the two sides of the Atlantic. The situation is so tense that it has led to increasingly frequent declarations of independence by major European leaders,<sup>4</sup> eulogies for the West and the "liberal world order,"<sup>5</sup> and calls for separation.<sup>6</sup>

President Macron himself appears increasingly irritated by every new outrage visited by Trump upon the trans-Atlantic relationship and multilateralism,<sup>7</sup> but the French president has stopped short of taking radical action to break off the relationship. Although he has



carefully laid out an alternative vision to Trumpism in many of his speeches (including his address to the U.S. Congress), President Macron has not taken on the mantle of being Trump's top political opponent on the global stage. He has followed a strategy of pragmatism regarding Trump, which relies on two premises: first, a realist calculation that the personal closeness between the two leaders and the two countries' shared goals would allow for at least some accommodation of each other's interests; second, an opportunistic calculation that Trump's skepticism of American global leadership would facilitate a transition toward a more multipolar world that France has long hoped for.

As the first term of the Trump presidency approaches its midpoint, these two premises have been disproven. However costly, U.S. foreign policy under Trump pays little attention to its allies' interests and imposes its hegemonic will on all; and Trump's hostility to multilateralism and cooperation is creating chaos and instability at a global level, unlikely to bring about a French-favored stable multipolar world order.

It is therefore high time to reflect on the French approach to the Trump challenge. What remains of the logic behind this approach? How much political capital can Macron continue spending on this seemingly fruitless relationship? Are there enough shared interests to justify keeping an open line of dialogue between the two countries? If France were to shift gear, what strategy should it adopt?

As Europe wakes up to the reality that difficulties with the United States may continue for the foreseeable future, the trans-Atlantic relationship needs to be re-thought along new modes of interaction. For France, it will mean engaging in a difficult balancing act, walking down the tightrope that leads from the post-Cold War world to the post-Trump world, without giving in to nationalism, withdrawal, or overconfidence. Adapting to Trump, France has a special role to play in empowering fellow Europeans, working with them to preserve the trans-Atlantic relationship, pushing back on the United States when necessary, and engaging America beyond Trump.

## **FRENCH REALISM WAS READY FOR “AMERICA FIRST”**

More so than its neighbors Germany and the U.K., which have seen their bilateral relationships with the United States suffer under Donald Trump, France has given the American president the benefit of the doubt, refusing to indulge in Obama nostalgia. Realism and opportunism drive the French approach. France believes that “the transatlantic alliance is more important than any one person or president,”<sup>8</sup> and that it can deal with this president, at least as much as it dealt with his predecessors. Moreover, French diplomatic tradition, viewed in the past as a hindrance to close relations with the United States, actually proves to be an advantage when working with Trump's America. In particular, France's visceral attachment to its own independence and strategic autonomy—and now to Europe's—has proven a strength in the age of Trump.

First, France is not too concerned with Donald Trump's threat to the West and the liberal world order, which Paris has often criticized as U.S.-centric. Over the past 70 years, in the golden age of American power, France has repeatedly looked for ways to de-Westernize its own foreign policy—presenting itself as a voice for the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s, flagging its own post-colonial “*politique arabe*” as a bridge between Europe and the Middle East, or voicing concerns in the name of the rest of the world during the 2003 Iraq War dispute with Washington. Paris enjoys being a convener of collective

efforts; building on the success of the 2015 U.N. climate summit, France will host the Paris Peace Forum in November 2018, a platform for governance projects, deliberately planned not to be Western-centric or dominated by American philanthropy. Trump's conviction that the United States does not have to hold itself to a higher standard or carry a heavier burden than other countries is a form of "de-Westernization" of U.S. foreign policy, and fits into France's vision.

Second, the Trump administration's preference for interests over values has also preoccupied the French less than other democratic allies,<sup>9</sup> not only because France is itself a pragmatic power when it comes to advancing its own interests,<sup>10</sup> but also because "values" has often been heard in France as a code word for the imposition of the American model of capitalism. In spite of the parallel democratic revolutions at the foundation of both countries, France and the United States have always had different attitudes toward the role of the state (trust in welfare systems, public institutions) and a different understanding of some basic fundamental rights (free speech, secularism, racial equality). France also views the concept of a trans-Atlantic "community of democracies" with skepticism, because it regards it as a neocolonial attempt by American democracy promoters to "Americanize" Europe. In 2000, France stood as the lone opponent to the Madeleine Albright-led initiative for a Community of Democracies—refusing to endorse the Warsaw Declaration—because Paris saw it as an imposition of the U.S. version of democracy on the rest of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Collective preferences also differ widely: France was always amongst the skeptics when it came to American-promoted free trade negotiations, from the New Trans-Atlantic Marketplace of the 1990s to the now moribund Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, the French have always made a clear distinction between the American model and the European model, of which they are very protective. Macron often opposes Europe, whose balance "between freedom, justice, fairness and individual rights, is unique," and the United States, "which [does] not have the same commitment [Europe has] to equality and social justice."<sup>13</sup>

Third, through repeated attacks on the European Union (EU), Trump is questioning the United States' seven-decade-old policy of support for European integration.<sup>14</sup> However, the disappearance of the American "invisible hand" behind Europe feels less tragic in Paris than it does in Berlin or London because the hand was never really on France's back. The United States has always supported a certain type of European integration over another, closer to a British or Northern European model, rather than a French model. In particular, the French disagreed profoundly with the British and American vision for the EU as an ever-expanding free market, with EU accession as a main foreign policy tool for the Union. France worried that enlargement would slow down integration and dilute the ability to make decisions, resulting in a loss of influence for Paris, and it has repeatedly displayed hostility to Turkish accession into the EU, for which the U.K. and the United States have lobbied hard in the past decades.<sup>15</sup> Many French also remember U.S. ambiguity over European defense—and the American insistence that European capabilities should be developed within NATO and with U.S. equipment, rather than autonomously.<sup>16</sup>

Today, an American administration that de-emphasizes its interest in NATO and insists on Europeans taking their security into their own hands is in line with French interests. One reason is that the defense and security bilateral relationship between the United States and France has been excellent for years now. The François Hollande government's decision to intervene in Mali early 2013 (following France's return to NATO's integrated

military command structures and the 2011 intervention in Libya) and to join the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria confirmed in the eyes of American policymakers the utility of its “oldest ally.”<sup>17</sup> French diplomacy was able to secure wide-ranging bipartisan support for its intervention in Mali, and the larger counterterrorism effort in the Sahel region. The United States and France share military intelligence on theaters of common intervention,<sup>18</sup> and meetings in the “Five Eyes + France” format (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., the United States, and France) are increasingly frequent. Thus, the pro-France environment that reigns at the Pentagon reverberates to other branches of the U.S. government,<sup>19</sup> a fact that remains unabated under Trump.

In addition, the quality of the bilateral relationship allows France to promote its own vision of Europe in Washington, which in return serves as a megaphone for French ideas back in Brussels.<sup>20</sup> Under Trump, fellow Europeans have come to realize, as German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said repeatedly, that they “cannot fully count” on the United States anymore.<sup>21</sup> France has seized the moment: Macron was able to rally eight other EU member states around his European Intervention Initiative aiming at building a “common strategic culture.”<sup>22</sup> France’s proposals for the deeper integration of Europe, such as those Macron laid out in his 2017 Sorbonne speech,<sup>23</sup> have now taken a higher strategic urgency, thanks to the ambiguity of the Trump administration’s commitment to Europe. Systematically, Macron makes the case for a self-reliant Europe, a “sovereign Europe,” and a “power with strategic autonomy,”<sup>24</sup> an expression long favored by France, dating back to Charles de Gaulle.<sup>25</sup> “Strategic autonomy” even made its way into the EU Global Strategy, released June 2016, and was mentioned in the conclusions of the June 2018 European Council.<sup>26</sup>

Contrasts matter too. As the “special relationship” between the United States and the U.K. is fading under duress for Britain’s Brexit anxiety, and as the Washington-Berlin axis that reigned supreme under Obama is rapidly disappearing, France is being rehabilitated as an indispensable European ally to the United States, militarily able and politically central.

## FOR FRANCE, TRUMP’S AMERICA FORESHADOWS THE ADVENT OF A MULTI-POLAR WORLD

The peculiar presidency of Donald Trump has been viewed in Paris as a validation of France’s vision of history and geopolitics. If anything, the United States’ transactional, unilateralist, and interest-driven foreign policy under Trump, as well as the return of great power competition, are consonant with French expectations. As President Macron put it, America’s current unilateralism is “a symptom rather than a cause, a symptom of the crisis of today’s capitalistic globalization and the multilateral Westphalian liberal model that goes with it.”<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, France has long sensed the risks of three major evolutions that would affect the 2000s and 2010s: the emergence of non-Western powers, the inevitable weakening of the United States’ dominant position, and the repolarization of the world. It partly explains why France is not as troubled and confused by Trump’s election as its European neighbors, as anticipation leads to acceptance.

As early as 1996, President Jacques Chirac was predicting the rise of a “multipolar world” at a time of undisputed unipolarity.<sup>28</sup> A few months before the start of the Great Recession and a year before the U.S. “reset” with Russia, France’s 2008 White Paper on

Defense and National Security was pointing out the “relative decline of Western powers” and the “fragilities of the collective security system,” as well as the “comeback of a policy of power on the part of Russia.”<sup>29</sup> Published before Obama’s fateful decision not to intervene in the Syrian war, France’s 2013 White Paper warned of the “relative loss of influence” of the United States and Europe, the refocusing of America’s “geopolitical priorities” away from Europe, and the “populist reflex [against unbridled globalization] that hampers the construction of a political consensus” in Western countries.<sup>30</sup>

French officials anticipated that the United States would redefine its own security interests to adapt to the changing global order, in a manner that would not necessarily be favorable to Europeans. They see continuity between Trump and Obama: both increased pressure on Europeans to share the collective security burden,<sup>31</sup> both are skeptical of U.S. exceptionalism, and both have a restrictive approach to defending European security interests. The French were critical of Obama’s prudence, which was deployed, in their opinion, to the point of withdrawal or inaction. When the Obama administration backed away from retaliating against Syria for its chemical weapons attack against civilians, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius vehemently denounced the risky consequences of a “strategic vacuum” left “by the perception that American interests lie elsewhere.”<sup>32</sup>

On almost all fronts, President Trump has prolonged and expanded this redefinition of U.S. interests, packaging it in a nationalistic, protectionist, go-it-alone, interest-driven, “America First” policy. In many ways, the French had imagined Trump even before Trump existed. The entire software of French diplomacy—pro-European realism—and the hardware of French defense policy—independent nuclear deterrence and strategic autonomy—have been built to hedge, dating back to Suez crisis,<sup>33</sup> against a “Trump hypothesis.” As former Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine puts it, the Cold War may have been “a parenthesis of convergence between the United States and Europe,” but now “the two continents will diverge again,” which constitutes an occasion for Europe “to wake up from its strategic coma.”<sup>34</sup>

Now that the Trump hypothesis is a reality, the French feel comfortable in their assessment of the situation, in the legitimacy of their own claims and demands, and in the potential for preserving a pragmatic relationship. France’s own foreign policy objectives, from strengthening European defense to preserving alliances on counterterrorism, have not been significantly altered by Trump’s “America First” approach—his insistence on defense spending equivalent to 2 percent of GDP for NATO allies actually works in favor of France’s argument that Europeans should invest in their own defense. Where this money is spent remains a bone of contention. The United States insists that NATO members purchase U.S. equipment, while France hopes to build up a European defense technological and industrial base.

Initially, the French found much to approve of in the Trump administration’s policy statements and actions. Trump’s invocation of Ronald Reagan’s slogan of “peace through strength” in the 2017 National Security Strategy<sup>35</sup> was seen as a decent articulation of the balance between deterrence and dialogue. After Trump bombed a Syrian air base in April 2017, French diplomats welcomed the perceived change of strategy and apparent decisiveness of the new administration.<sup>36</sup> In April 2018, France found a partner in the United States and joined a U.K.-U.S. strike on Syria’s chemical installations.

As far as they could tell, France’s long-held vision of a multipolar world, where Europeans are, according to Hubert Védrine’s formula, “friends and allies” of the United States but “non-aligned,” may be finally coming to life under Trump.

## THE LIMITS OF PRAGMATISM

Given the pragmatic reasons for which France could find value in a Trump presidency, it was an astute decision on the part of President Macron to try to create a good personal relationship with Trump and cooperate pragmatically with his administration, instead of antagonizing him. When asked to describe the benefits of this strategy, French diplomats and policymakers always point to a handful of concrete outcomes, mostly on the defense and security front.<sup>37</sup> There was a good coordination around sanctions against Russia related to Moscow's attempt to assassinate former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in the U.K., demonstrating Macron's pivotal role in the process. Close consultations between the French and the American presidents also facilitated the France-U.S.-U.K. joint strike against Syrian President Bashar Assad's chemical installations in April 2018. France still enjoys the United States' full support on counterterrorism, which is Macron's number one priority. Security cooperation, mainly in Africa, has been preserved and strengthened—recently, the United States has been supportive of French efforts to organize the G-5 Sahel Joint Force, an initiative of five Sahel states (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mauritania) joining forces to fight terrorism.<sup>38</sup> French diplomats also praise the frankness of exchanges between the two presidents, and they seem amused, or even touched, by the excessively personal nature of the presidential relationship.<sup>39</sup>

As for the other Europeans, they do not appear overly shocked by the embraces between Trump and Macron. Some value the shrewdness of Macron's positioning, others are relieved that at least one European leader gets access to the American president, a few mock the performative physical friendship between the two men, and all believe the strategy is mostly cynical on the part of the French. The closeness between the two leaders did not prevent Europeans from carefully coordinating their messages when dealing with Trump on trade or Iran.<sup>40</sup> So far, French-American bilateral proximity has not gotten in the way of European solidarity.

And yet, given the sheer size of the challenges facing Western nations, some of them close to existential, the few successes Macron obtained by cozying up to the American president appear increasingly insufficient. On most major issues, the French have failed to obtain any concession on Trump's part to accommodate European interests, and have been unable to prevent the systematic targeting of European allies. But to be fair to the French, no one has been successful at this effort thus far.

Few issues are as representative of the limits of French engagement with Trump as the Iran nuclear deal. Visiting Washington in April 2018, Macron, who understood that Trump was hell-bent on leaving the deal regardless of allies' efforts or concerns,<sup>41</sup> chose to offer a "new deal," a framework for further discussions with Iran that would add three new pillars to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), including ballistic missile proliferation, sunset clauses, and Iran's disruptive activities in its region. From Paris' perspective, the logic of the new deal was irrefutable; it was nothing more than an incorporation of concerns that were already part of the French approach,<sup>42</sup> and an olive branch for an embattled American president who needed a political win.

However, the effects were more than disappointing. In many ways, the French were too clever by half. Not only did their offer not prevent Trump from pulling out of the Iran deal entirely, without any kind of concessions to European allies, it inadvertently validated the views of the administration's hardliners by admitting implicitly that the nuclear issue could not be dealt with independently from Iran's regional behavior, and, because it was offered on the eve of the U.S. walk-out, it blurred France's long-standing



position by questioning the contours of a deal while it was still being implemented. Trump himself was all too happy to spin Macron's offer on the day after he had left Washington, stating on *Fox News* that he had been able to get the French president to change his mind.<sup>43</sup> Trump, who had hosted his French counterpart with excessive warmth had no compunctions about entirely disregarding his guest's position on the issue, almost a year after the United States pulled out of the Paris agreement on climate change, another major international agreement fiercely defended by France.

Since the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran deal, the pace of Trump's disruption has only accelerated. Over the course of the following three months, the U.S. president has threatened trade wars against the EU, Canada, Mexico, and China, antagonized its major Western allies at the G-7, displayed a proximity of views with Russia, and launched repeated attacks on close allies, in particular Germany and the U.K., for their defense spending, their energy supply choices, and their relationships with the EU. Even as important decisions were reached, Trump's temper torpedoed both the 2018 G-7 and NATO summits—sending existential shockwaves through both institutions.

Compared to his fired-up video address when the United States pulled out of the Paris agreement on climate change,<sup>44</sup> Macron proceeded with caution when publicly reacting to Trump's recent decisions or attacks. At a press conference shortly after the U.S. withdrawal from the Iran deal, Macron reassured his audience that he had no intention "to start a strategic trade war against the U.S. about Iran."<sup>45</sup> On trade, the French president has mostly let his finance minister criticize the Americans,<sup>46</sup> and endorsed collective declarations by the EU-28. Around the G-7 and NATO summits, Macron continued to communicate that he had regular conversations with the U.S. president, tweeting videos of one-on-one conversations.

People in the entourage of President Macron describe how frustrated and annoyed he has grown,<sup>47</sup> contradicting Trump forcefully at the G-7 table, going as far as flagging the idea of a G-7 communiqué signed by only six countries,<sup>48</sup> and expressing skepticism even when trans-Atlantic relations show progress.<sup>49</sup> In two major foreign policy addresses after the disastrous 2018 summer, President Macron highlighted even more forcefully his anti-Trumpist rhetoric, pointing to American unilateralism and isolationism, which "undermines contemporary multilateralism,"<sup>50</sup> and denounced the fateful effects of nationalism and withdrawal on the world stage.<sup>51</sup> He did, however, favor oblique references to Trump and the United States, rather than naming them.

Pragmatism continues to reign supreme. Macron defiantly mocked pundits' preoccupation with his physical proximity to Trump.<sup>52</sup> But his unyielding tirade could not hide the fact that, while Trump has been completely oblivious to allies' interests, treating them almost like adversaries, the French president is the one that appears most constrained by the quality of the bilateral relationship he himself has cultivated.

## A REALITY CHECK

When a *CNN* reporter asked the French president about a conversation he had with Donald Trump, which had been described in the press as "terrible,"<sup>53</sup> Emmanuel Macron quoted Bismarck: "if we explained to people how sausages were made, it's unlikely they'd keep eating them."<sup>54</sup> So, supposedly, a conversation between the two leaders is like sausage-making—ugly, messy, maybe repulsive—but, at the end of the day, it should produce excellent results, like a French *andouille*.

However, it is increasingly unclear whether the Trump-Macron relationship is producing anything positive anymore. Why? There are three realities France is starting to come to grips with: First, there is no reforming Trump and trans-Atlantic relations are only getting worse. Second, Trump has now become an active political opponent of the European Union, putting his weight behind Europe's nationalistic centrifugal forces. Third, the French strategy of pragmatic engagement has run its course, and it is time for a re-evaluation.

France and its allies need to adapt to the new reality of an unchained superpower and a world where the strong prey on the weak. The Trump doctrine of international relations consists of winning individual arm wrestling contests held under the understanding that America has the bigger guns. Trump considers that his predecessors—Obama in particular—were too reluctant to use the full force of American power, and therefore have achieved only sub-optimal results. In a zero-sum vision of power, the American president is launching a pressure campaign in all directions, made of rapid and brutal escalation and de-escalation, to obtain new space to maneuver and, ultimately, to achieve better deals.<sup>55</sup> For Trumpist hardliners, their ideology will allow Gulliver to destroy the multilateral chains keeping him down and to re-establish his freedom to act unilaterally.<sup>56</sup> Based on this narrow conception of the U.S. national interest, Trumpism does not need allies, in particular Europeans, who are guilty of free-riding.

This is unlikely to change any time soon. The disruptive impact of the Trump presidency on trans-Atlantic relations has only accelerated over his second year in office, and there is no sign of abatement. 2018 Trump is not 2017 Trump—he is now surrounded by a team of trusted advisors, from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to National Security Advisor John Bolton, who, instead of constraining his actions, have been facilitating his vision. At this point, it is still unclear whether the United States is following a path of creative destruction, which will seek to rebuild an order that is more favorable to itself, or is seeking to dominate in a purely Hobbesian world.

Under Trump, the U.S. administration has adopted a series of positions that work directly against French and European interests. On climate change and Iran, but also within multilateral institutions, partners and allies increasingly perceive the United States as untrustworthy, not credible, erratic, and a “rogue superpower,”<sup>57</sup> which purposefully creates chaos. In the Middle East, the United States has lost all credibility as an honest broker or a go-between, emboldening Saudi Arabia and Israel, while holding the Palestinians in contempt. A trade war with China could provoke a global economic crisis, while the denunciation of the Iran nuclear deal has raised the prospect of war as the ultimate recourse—a prospect that many in Paris, such as former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, see as increasingly likely.<sup>58</sup>

Beyond the risks of the “America First” policy to the global order and most major international avenues for cooperation, U.S. foreign policy under Trump is now targeting the core institutions providing security, stability, and prosperity to Europe, first and foremost the EU. Trump treats European allies like rivals, not only in his rhetoric—he has constantly compared the EU to China or attacked European allies for not spending enough on defense—but also in his policies such as imposing tariffs against European exports, or applying sanctions for European foreign policy choices (Iran) and energy choices (the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Europe).

As perfectly symbolized in the July 2018 triple disaster sequence involving the contentious NATO summit, Trump's U.K. visit, and the Helsinki summit with Vladimir Putin, Trump has blurred the lines between friends and foes. The administration might downplay the

president's rhetoric, highlighting instead the administration's actual policies toward Russia.<sup>59</sup> However, Trump, along with supporters and enablers, has become a de facto ally of Putin's Russia in weakening the trans-Atlantic community, united in their sovereigntist nationalism and hostility to the multilateral order.

Worse, not only is Trump's global agenda fundamentally contrary to European interests, the U.S. president has become an active political opponent of the European Union in its existing form. Signs of hostility to the EU have always been present in Trump's rhetoric, from his celebration of Brexit and nationalist movements during his campaign, to his constant disparagement of the EU for "preventing him from building a wall for his hotel in Scotland."<sup>60</sup> Recently though, the hostility has deepened and finds echoes inside and outside the administration. This year, Trump repeatedly portrayed the EU as a threat, even as a "foe" to the United States, over trade competition,<sup>61</sup> saying that it has been created to "take advantage" of the United States.<sup>62</sup> Trump went as far as encouraging France to leave the EU, and he criticized the U.K. for looking for a "soft Brexit," threatening to punish the Brits by ending talks on a bilateral trade agreement.<sup>63</sup> His constant targeting of Germany, and Chancellor Merkel in particular, also constitutes a problem. In fact, the American ambassador in Berlin, chosen by Trump, is acting as an opposition force, almost as if Germany was an ideological competitor.

When the United States was pushing for enlargement of the European Union in the 1990s and 2000s, it was out of a conviction that the EU was a force for stability in Europe. Today, conservative circles beyond Trump are viewing sovereigntist claims within the EU—as embodied by the Brexiteers, Italy's League party, and Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán—as reclaiming European identity, and fundamentally on the right side of history in their fight against Brussels. At a time when Stephen Bannon is promoting his ambition to provide a unifying platform for the far right within European politics, the political ideology that brought Trump to power is starting to look like an existential threat to the EU. While U.S. officials denounce Russia and China's nefarious influence on the European continent,<sup>64</sup> one has to acknowledge the extent of the damage done to the democratic and economic health of the continent by a U.S. president who routinely meddles in European politics and applauds the forces of nationalism.

As Pierre Vimont, former French ambassador to the United States, put it: "Europeans are slowly realizing that the U.S. wants to destroy [the order on which they rely]."<sup>65</sup> This situation should only reinforce Europeans' awareness of the absolute necessity of gaining strategic autonomy from the United States, which has been increasingly using its economic and military interdependence with Europe as a weapon for domination, or as a tool in its great power competition.<sup>66</sup> "Now is the time to be brave or abandon your convictions for good," Vimont added.

Never shy to take the lead, France has a special role to play in encouraging bravery among Europeans, so as to work together to shield multilateral organizations and the European Union from nationalist and authoritarian assaults, including those coming from the United States.

## TIME TO REBALANCE

In private, many high-level officials, policymakers, and French diplomats express regret over Macron's equivocation in dealing with Trump in the first year of the Frenchman's presidency.<sup>67</sup> Yet, when questioned, most are still reluctant to advocate adopting a

different strategy, as they follow the double logic of dependence and prudence. First, France needs the United States in many areas, in particular with regard to military operations in Africa. Second, there is no better alternative to keeping the channels of communication open.

The argument of dependence is paradoxical. It is certainly true that France relies on U.S. logistical support and intelligence-sharing for its military operations in Africa, but what is the point of a Gaullist policy of autonomy of action if exercising it renders France dependent on those who support its actions? Off the record, French officials concede that, if push comes to shove, France could act alone in the Sahel, or with other partners (although differently, as it might have to reduce the scope of its military intervention) if it wanted to, but it probably will not need to. The United States also has strong interests in Africa, closely defended by its Africa Command (AFRICOM), and it, too, benefits from bilateral cooperation with France.<sup>68</sup> For instance, when the United States lends drones to Niger, the French share human intelligence on Somalia. The French have also been fighting alongside Americans for a long time, recently in Afghanistan and currently in the Levant, creating a web of mutually beneficial security cooperation beyond the Sahel. France can count on strong supporters within the Trump administration, such as Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis.

The argument of prudence has weakened as well. The costs of staying the course are now almost exceeding the risks of shifting strategy. By keeping an accommodating posture, President Macron has lost political capital at home and risks losing it abroad if he starts to look like a Trump enabler<sup>69</sup>—some have already made the unflattering comparison to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has been criticized as a lackey for George W. Bush for his unwavering support during the Iraq war.<sup>70</sup> A model ally from an American perspective because of its willingness to intervene militarily and its unsentimental view of world affairs, France should avoid playing the role of the “useful idiot,” unable to prevent the American giant from destroying the institutions it has built over 70 years since the end of World War II, and on which Europe has come to rely for its prosperity and security.

Therefore, it is time to take a stand and upgrade France’s strategy. Although President Macron is known for being wary of shifting his positions excessively, changing circumstances demand a re-evaluation of his policy.

However, France should not adopt an overtly hostile foreign policy toward the United States and its temperamental president. Paris has gone down that road before, and it involves high costs for little effective rewards. No Western leader can afford to break off the trans-Atlantic relationship and risk a repeat of the disastrous days of “Old Europe” versus “New Europe.”<sup>71</sup>

On the contrary, France’s approach to Trump’s America has to involve a durable balancing act between interests and principles, national independence and European solidarity, short-term objectives and long-term ambitions. A revamped French strategy for dealing with Trump’s America should be focused on uniting and empowering Europe, creating some distance from the U.S. president, preserving institutions through reform and innovation, and keeping the door open to a healthier relationship with the United States down the line.



## ***Empowering Europe***

The top priority should be the unity of Europe. Faced with Brexit and disputes over economic and migration policies, Europeans need to reaffirm what makes them strong and united, to contain the bleeding and the divisions. Given the instability of the trans-Atlantic relationship, there is a real risk of division among allies, a temptation to go it alone. Germans were tempted to negotiate directly with the Americans to avoid the imposition of automobile tariffs; Poles made a formal offer to create a permanent American military base on their soil, offering \$2 billion for the privilege (and naming it “Fort Trump”), in spite of allies’ reservations.<sup>72</sup>

As long as it avoids grandstanding and self-aggrandizement, France is particularly suited to provide energy and determination to the European camp. Despite recent difficulties in the polls, President Macron still dominates the political field in his country. Leadership is concentrated at the Elysée Palace, which allows for agility and flexibility. Macron’s centrist platform makes him acceptable to many governments in Europe, from Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) to Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez’s Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) to Member of European Parliament Guy Verhofstadt’s Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group, but also a clear opponent to the Rome-Budapest axis of nationalism. He has reached out to partners in Eastern and Northern Europe, getting out of a traditional Western Europe-centric French posture. Together with fellow European partners, France should lead the fight on a number of fronts.

- **Obtaining a popular mandate.** In the next European parliamentary elections of 2019, nationalist forces will try to gain the upper hand over integrationist, progressive forces. The latter will have to re-affirm the role of the EU as a bulwark against all populism, domestic and foreign, and against nationalistic forces and great power competition. The relationship between the EU and the United States should be discussed in that context.
- **Establishing red lines.** President Macron could help facilitate a discussion among European leaders over what constitutes red lines for them with regard to U.S. foreign policy. In particular, the United States under Trump has been meddling in European internal affairs in an unhealthy way, and Europeans have the right to say “enough.”
- **Favoring a culture of unity.** Europeans have spoken in a strong and united manner on trade, for it is the exclusive competency of the EU Commission.<sup>73</sup> Foreign policy as well as defense and security matters are much more divisive. France is institutionally suited to raise awareness of global security challenges among its neighbors. After the U.K. leaves the EU, only one single permanent seat at the U.N. Security Council (UNSC) will belong to an EU power. France empowers Europeans on matters of peace and security when it conducts consultations or debates at the EU level on issues introduced at the UNSC. It should also work in close cooperation with future non-permanent members of the body, such as Germany, Belgium, and Poland, in 2019-20. Establishing a European culture of cooperation and consultation on matters of global governance, sustainable development, and peace and security at the U.N., NATO, G-7, G-20, and Bretton Woods global financial institutions will only strengthen these multilateral bodies.

### *Creating distance*

In the context of tense trans-Atlantic relations over trade and security, it should be clear to all, particularly to President Trump, where France stands. Fewer displays of affection coupled with firm stances will clarify France's position:

- **Cooling off the relationship.** Although talking to everyone, from populist opponents to authoritarian counterparts, is part of Macron's political DNA,<sup>74</sup> displays of personal affection between him and Trump will appear increasingly odd and misplaced. As Macron's proximity to Trump has not borne much fruit, a cool distance might go a longer way, although there is no magical wand to deal with such a combustible character.
- **Displaying a counter-Trumpist narrative.** President Macron has multiple occasions forthcoming in which he can continue to detail his ambitions for a "strong multilateralism," demonstrate the relevance of international cooperation to defend peace and security, and push back against the nationalism and unilateralism championed by his American counterpart. In November 2018, Macron will host the Paris Peace Forum coinciding with the centenary of the 1918 World War I armistice, with more than 80 heads of state in attendance. Other symbolic moments will include the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 2018, or the centenary of the International Labor Organization in 2019.

### *Adapting to reality*

All of the post-World War II global institutions were established to create norms and standardized approaches meant to constrain individual states' power and facilitate cooperation. As the head of the world's single superpower, Trump is able to render institutions ineffective by simply refusing to engage, and pushing other parties to deal with the United States on a bilateral basis, in which America will always have the upper hand. In this context, the French, along with Europeans, must adapt their approach to the American superpower:

- **Reforming existing institutions.** Some have suggested holding off on trans-Atlantic summits completely, in order to prevent President Trump's disruptions.<sup>75</sup> At minimum, Europeans and other allies committed to multilateral or trans-Atlantic institutions will need to innovate to protect them. In 2019, France will be hosting the G-7 in Biarritz, taking over after the drama at the 2018 meeting in Canada. As Macron hinted in his 2018 U.N. General Assembly speech, France will "revisit the format thoroughly to bring along other powers and work on new forms of coordination."<sup>76</sup> Expanding the G-7 to include China or India, or proposing a reduced G-6 are not viable options (the former option would resemble a G-20 redux, while the latter would be an unproductive act of hostility). However, France could innovate in offering an optional format for discussions—G-7 members could choose to participate in specific discussions, depending on their willingness to compromise, without the need for all parties to endorse or veto the full discussions.
- **Diversifying partnerships.** The United States is a unique partner in all fields of interests to Europeans. Replacing it is not an option. But Europeans need to expand beyond the trans-Atlantic community and reach out to new partners. At the 2019 G-7 in Biarritz, guests could be invited to participate. The IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) format, although long dormant, could be an interesting partner for the occasion. On

trade, EU negotiations with Japan, Canada, Mercosur, and others are an effective normative tool to be pursued, as long as they focus on areas where norms and regulations are urgently needed, for instance on climate policy or fiscal evasion.<sup>77</sup> Mutual interests need to continue to be discussed with China and Russia.<sup>78</sup>

- **Offering a positive agenda for cooperation.** President Macron has offered repeatedly to discuss China's trade practices with the United States, only to be met with refusals from President Trump. However, there is no reason why that should stop Europeans from constructive attempts to broaden the scope of the trans-Atlantic relationship. France has the capacity to introduce reform proposals at the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the EU-28, to launch discussions over the security challenge posed by China to NATO, or to propose regulation and taxation of the digital industry at the G-7.

### *Engaging America*

As many European diplomats have had the unpleasant experience of realizing over the past year and a half, most of their interlocutors in Washington can be contradicted at any given time by the president, and knowing his next steps is as hard as ever. But, even if the power to disrupt is concentrated in the Oval Office under Trump, it does not mean this is where France and European allies should focus all of their energy:

- **Engaging Congress.** As the fallout from the Trump-Putin summit in Helsinki demonstrated, members of Congress can voice their opposition to the administration in a forceful manner. France and Europe should continue to improve their outreach programs to members of Congress and make sure no opposition to the EU solidifies in the context of trade wars.
- **Engaging with all sectors of American life.** Businesses, universities, states, and local communities are valuable partners for Europeans. A lot of the connective web between the two continents should be protected by continuing to push mutual investments, exchanges, and debates.
- **Sending a message.** The United States is going through an incredibly rocky political period and attitudes toward European allies could shift drastically with a change of administration. So why oppose Trump when he crosses the line? Why not wait him out? The reason is because Europeans need to send a message to all Americans, to this administration, and to its successors: European allies will drag their feet on American priorities when mistreated and they will be united and resolute when their interests are threatened. But they will also be ready to reinvent the modalities of cooperation for when a more cooperative United States returns.

### **CONCLUSION: BALANCING FORWARD**

As Trump's foreign policy shows no sign of moderation, Europeans are waking up to the fact that the United States is not abandoning Europe or agreeing to disagree with Europeans, but using asymmetric interdependence to try to dictate European policy through coercive tactics.

Meanwhile, the challenge of Trumpism appears as insurmountable as Europe's vulnerabilities. The voluntary disarmament of most of the continent still leaves Europeans highly dependent on American security guarantees. Eastern and Central

Europeans would hate to have to choose between the EU and the United States, with a heightened Russian threat and greater dependency on European markets posing an even harder choice than in 2003. As Merkel approaches the end of her reign, Germany is unlikely to lead a fight, at best teaming up with France, at worst playing the role of status quo power. “Europe's spinal cord is broken,” is the expression used by top French diplomats to describe Germany's situation.<sup>79</sup> All of Europe is preoccupied with Brexit, looming eurozone and migrant crises, and nationalistic forces gaining ground. None are too enthusiastic with the idea of a European Union à *la française*, and French activism often passes for arrogance.

Yet, France and the rest of Europe will have to find a way to strike a balance in a deeply destabilized relationship.

For France, it will mean balancing between reliance on the United States for defense and security matters and deep disagreement on political matters. Even harder for France, it will mean balancing between acting unilaterally and decisively for its own sake and acting collectively and deliberately for the sake of Europe.

For Europeans, it will mean balancing between the realities of increasing global multipolarity and continuing U.S. dominance. In that regard, Europeans will have to adapt to the constraints of great power competition, gain strategic autonomy, and shield themselves from external pressure, while defending international law and institutions along with like-minded powers (Japan, Australia, South Korea, Canada), until a more cooperative United States returns.

Balancing is both an act of faith and a recognition of gravitational reality. Walking the trans-Atlantic tightrope will require cold blood and strong will.



## ENDNOTES

1 An earlier version of this paper was published in April 2018. See Célia Belin, "Can France Be America's New Bridge to Europe?" *Foreign Affairs*, April 19, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/france/2018-04-19/can-france-be-americas-new-bridge-europe>.

2 For example: Benjamin Haddad, "Emmanuel Macron Is No Anti-Trump," *Foreign Policy*, June 16, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/16/emmanuel-macron-is-no-anti-trump/>; Celia Belin, "The Macron/Trump co-dependency," *Brookings Institution*, September 18, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/09/18/the-macrontrump-co-dependency/>.

3 Jeff Lightfoot, "The French-American Alliance in an America-First Era," (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, April 12, 2018), <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/the-french-american-alliance-in-an-america-first-era>.

4 A few examples include the following. In a letter to European leaders in June 2018, Donald Tusk wrote that "while hoping for the best, we must be ready to prepare our union for worst-case scenarios." See Steven Erlanger, "E.U. Leader Warns of 'Worst-Case Scenarios,' Citing Trump," *The New York Times*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/world/europe/donald-tusk-trump-eu.html>. In a major speech on Europe on June 13, 2018, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas noted, "That world order that we once knew, had become accustomed to and sometimes felt comfortable in—this world order no longer exists. ... However, the Atlantic has become wider under President Trump and his policy of isolationism has left a giant vacuum around the world. ... Naturally, the U.S. remains our closest foreign and security policy partner outside the EU. However, it is time to re-adjust the trans-Atlantic partnership, too—not with the aim of abandoning it, but rather to preserve it in a changed global situation. ... In recent days and weeks in particular, we are finding that where the U.S. administration overtly calls our values and interests into question, we will certainly need to take a more robust stance in the future." Heiko Maas, "How can Europe hold its own in a world radicalised by nationalism, populism and chauvinism?" (speech, Berlin, June 13, 2018), <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/maas-europeunited/2106528>. On June 26, 2018, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told the *Financial Times* that Trump "gives us a reason to united and a historic chance to become stronger." Anne-Sylvaine Chassany and Claire Jones, "Le Maire warns critics eurozone budget is 'non negotiable,'" *Financial Times*, June 26, 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c3b4c1ea-786e-11e8-bc55-50daf11b720d>.

5 To name two examples of what was written after the decision to pull out of the Iran deal, see James Traub, "RIP the Trans-Atlantic Alliance, 1945-2018," *Foreign Policy*, May 11, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/11/rip-the-trans-atlantic-alliance-1945-2018/>; Klaus Brinkbäumer, "Time for Europe to Join the Resistance," *Der Spiegel*, May 11, 2018, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/editorial-trump-deals-painful-blow-to-trans-atlantic-ties-a-1207260.html>. Even more striking, Germany's foreign minister, Heiko Maas, called for a "balanced partnership." See Heiko Maas, "Making plans for a new world order," *Handelsblatt Global*, August 22, 2018, <https://global.handelsblatt.com/opinion/making-plans-new-world-order-germany-us-trump-trans-atlantic-relations-heiko-maas-europe-956306>.

6 For example, Michel Duclos, "Iran Nuclear Agreement – Why A Transatlantic Crisis Is Just What We Need," *Institut Montaigne*, May 9, 2018, <http://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/iran-nuclear-agreement-why-transatlantic-crisis-just-what-we-need>.

7 After Trump withdrew the United States from the Iran nuclear deal, the U.K., France, and Germany issued a joint statement to say the decision was a matter of "regret and concern." "JCPOA - Joint Statement by France, the United Kingdom and Germany (8 May 2018)," *France Diplomatie*, May 8, 2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/disarmament-and-non-proliferation/events/article/jcpoa-joint-statement-by-france-the-united-kingdom-and-germany-08-05-18>. A month later, France becomes more forceful in its criticism: a few hours after Trump's about-face on the G-7 communiqué in June 2018, the Elysée warned against "incoherence and inconsistency." "Trump poursuit ses attaques contre les Européens et le Canada depuis Singapour," *Le Monde*, June 10, 2018, [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2018/06/10/vladimir-poutine-ironise-sur-le-babillage-inventif-des-pays-du-g7\\_5312453\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2018/06/10/vladimir-poutine-ironise-sur-le-babillage-inventif-des-pays-du-g7_5312453_3210.html).

8 Jeff Lightfoot, "The French-American Alliance in an America-first era," (Washington, DC: Atlantic Council, April 12, 2018), <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/publications/reports/the-french-american-alliance-in-an-america-first-era>.

9 Rex Tillerson, “Remarks to U.S. Department of State employees,” (speech, Washington, DC, May 3, 2017), <https://www.state.gov/secretary/20172018tillerson/remarks/2017/05/270620.htm>; H.R. McMaster and Gary Cohn, “American First Doesn’t Mean America Alone,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 30, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-first-doesnt-mean-america-alone-1496187426>.

10 John Bolton, not exactly a Francophile, has even praised the French foreign service for its capacity to defend ferociously its own national interests—along with Russians, Indians, and Pakistanis. Edward Luce, “Lunch with the FT: John Bolton,” *Financial Times*, October 19, 2007, <https://www.ft.com/content/7a2140c6-7b7c-11dc-8c53-0000779fd2ac>.

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13 Emmanuel Macron, “European Union - Speech by the President of the French Republic (Athens, 7 September 2017),” (speech, Athens, September 7, 2017), <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/european-union/events/article/european-union-speech-by-the-president-of-the-french-republic-athens-07-09-17>. Macron reiterated this idea in his Davos speech in January 2018, contrasting European values to both Chinese and American ones: “Europe has a responsibility and a role vis-à-vis China and the U.S., because our vision, our DNA, in terms of the relationship between freedom, justice, fairness and individual rights, is unique. ... There is a strong preference for freedom in the U.S. but the approach to fairness is very different.” Emmanuel Macron, “Transcription du discours du Président de la République au Forum économique mondial de Davos, Suisse,” (speech, Davos, January 25, 2018), <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/transcription-du-discours-du-president-de-la-republique-au-forum-economique-mondial-de-davos-suisse/>.

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15 Macron’s speech at the ambassador’s conference on August 27, 2018 provides another example of French skepticism on adhesion to the EU, this time for Albania and Turkey. Emmanuel Macron, “Speech by President Emmanuel Macron - Ambassadors’ Conference 2018,” (speech, Paris, August 27, 2018,) <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/the-ministry-and-its-network/events/ambassadors-week/ambassadors-week-edition-2018/article/speech-by-president-emmanuel-macron-ambassadors-conference-2018>.

16 At a NATO summit in December 1998, following the Franco-British declaration of Saint-Malo in favor of establishing the European Security and Defence Initiative (ESDI), Secretary of State Madeleine Albright warned against three risks (known as the three Ds.): “Any initiative must avoid preempting Alliance decisionmaking by *de-linking* ESDI from NATO, avoid *duplicating* existing efforts, and avoid *discriminating* against non-EU members.” The speech demonstrated the American insistence on developing European capabilities within NATO, rather than autonomously. Madeleine Albright, “Statement to the North Atlantic Council,” (speech, Brussels, December 8, 1998), <https://1997-2001.state.gov/statements/1998/981208.html>.

17 To read about France’s interventionism based on its image as a nation, realist concerns, desire for independence, and high risk-acceptance, see Jean-Baptiste Jeangène Vilmer and Olivier Schmitt, “Frogs of War: Explaining the New French Military Interventionism,” *War on the Rocks*, October 14, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/10/frogs-of-war-explaining-the-new-french-military-interventionism/>.

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- 19 At a time when U.S. military experts lament “Western Europe’s continued disarmament,” they see France as retaining “the military capability and the political moxie to contribute significantly and aggressively to collective responses to security threats to the Atlantic Alliance.” Michael Shurkin and Peter A. Wilson, “France Is Replacing the UK as America’s Top Ally in Europe,” *RAND Corporation*, March 30, 2015, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2015/03/france-is-replacing-the-uk-as-americas-top-ally-in.html>.
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- 21 Nick Allen and Rory Mulholland, “Angela Merkel says Europe can no longer rely on US or UK - and must ‘fight for its own destiny,’” *The Telegraph*, May 28, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/28/angela-merkel-says-europe-can-no-longer-rely-us-uk-must-fight/>; Arne Delfs and Gregory Viscusi, “Merkel Says Europe Can’t Count on U.S. Military Umbrella Anymore,” *Bloomberg*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-05-10/merkel-says-europe-can-t-count-on-u-s-military-umbrella-anymore>.
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- 25 Frederic Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the U.S., and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).
- 26 “Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security and underpin its role as a credible and reliable actor and partner in the area of security and defence. The Union is therefore taking steps to bolster European defence, by enhancing defence investment, capability development and operational readiness. These initiatives enhance its strategic autonomy while complementing and reinforcing the activities of NATO, in line with previous conclusions.” See “European Council conclusions, 28 June 2018,” European Council, June 29, 2018, <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/06/29/20180628-euco-conclusions-final/>.
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- 30 “French White Paper, Defense and National Security, 2013,” (Paris: French Government, 2013), [http://www.livreblancdefenseetsecurite.gouv.fr/pdf/the\\_white\\_paper\\_defence\\_2013.pdf](http://www.livreblancdefenseetsecurite.gouv.fr/pdf/the_white_paper_defence_2013.pdf).

- 31 As illustrated by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' departure speech at NATO in June 2011: "In the past, I've worried openly about NATO turning into a two-tiered alliance. ... Between those willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, and those who enjoy the benefits of NATO membership ... but don't want to share the risks and the costs. ... And it is unacceptable." Robert Gates, "Remarks by Secretary Gates at the Security and Defense Agenda, Brussels, Belgium," (speech, Brussels, June 10, 2011), <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4839>.
- 32 Laurent Fabius, "Intervention pour le quarantième anniversaire du centre d'analyse, de prévision et de stratégie," (speech, Paris, November 13, 2013), <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/133002689.html>.
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74 Some of his advisors even talk about Macron's "doctrine" of engaging populists. Macron was the first politician ever to debate a candidate from the Front National party in the second round of the presidential election, and did so willingly, almost enthusiastically, as he believes nationalistic arguments need to be debated to be defeated. Interviews, Paris, June-July 2018.

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78 According to Dominique de Villepin, Europe must now "favor the continental axis over the maritime axis," meaning turning toward Russia, Eurasia, and Asia, rather than its continued focus on the Atlantic. However, the author does not share the view that one should replace the other (Interview with Dominique de Villepin, July 4, 2018).

79 Interviews under conditions of anonymity with high-level officials and analysts at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Ministry of Defense, and Élysée, June-July 2018.

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