

Emmanuel Macron Remarks at MSC 2026 (Transcript)

- February 14, 2026

Opening Remarks and Appreciation

EMMANUEL MACRON: Thank you very much, Head of States and Governments, Madame la Présidente de la Commission, Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much, Dr. Ischinger, first for organizing the upload before the speech, which is always the best guarantee, and second to be in a certain way the embodiment of the transatlantic relation because I was not here last year, but I see you're back, and this is good news.

A Message of Hope and Determination

Nevertheless, I will try to address your point of self-assertion of the European, and I wanted to come today in front of you with a message of hope and determination. Where some see threats, I see our fortitude. Where some see doubts, I want to see opportunity, because I believe that Europe is inherently strong and can be made even stronger yet, and this is now. That a stronger Europe will be a better friend for its allies, especially for the United States, and that everybody is asking us to be stronger, except our adversaries, of course, sometimes also less understandably ourselves.

And this is what we need to remedy as well, and this is why I really believe, and I want to start with this remark, we need a much more positive mindset. And in support of it, I would like to start by offering a brief clarification.

Addressing Misconceptions About Europe

There has been a tendency these days in this place and beyond to overlook Europe and sometimes to criticize it outright. Skycatchers have been made, Europe has been vilified as an aging, slow, fragmented construct sidelined by history, as an over-regulated, listless economy that shuns innovation, as a society preyed to barbaric migration that would corrupt its precious traditions. And most curiously yet, in some quarters, as a repressive continent where free speech or, I would say, where speech would not be free and alternative facts could not claim the same right of place as truth itself. That old-fashioned and cumbersome concept.

Europe's True Identity and Achievements

I want to offer a wholly different view. Europe is a radically original political construction of three sovereign states who conjured together centuries of rivalry and war to institutionalize peace through economic interdependence. And don't believe once again, this is an old-fashioned construction. This is what we need. This is what we have to advocate.

And I see so many friends from the Western Balkans and Moldova here, they want to join the European Union. Why? Because they know the value of this approach. We are too shy not to say, we are in a certain way starting not to believe in ourselves, which is a huge mistake. Everyone should take their cue from us, instead of criticizing us or trying to divide us.

Rejecting Spheres of Influence

When President Putin came here 20 years ago to make the case for spheres of influence for his country, he was actually arguing for

spheres of coercion at the expense of Europe. He was, in effect, advocating for the resumption of a doctrine repudiated even before the breakup of the USSR. We all said no. And it is the same resounding no that we are opposing to the reckless assault against Ukraine.

But that line of thought, where your neighbors are considered as captive satellites, and they should be forced back when they stray away from orbit, has not disappeared. Quite the contrary, it seems to gain new traction. And to all those who are thus inclined, I would say, look at Europe. Obviously, the European Union, but as well all these close friends of Europe, Western Balkans, Norway, UK, Canada. Look at what we can achieve with a partnership of equals.

Europe's Success Story

Look at that incredible space for the free movement of goods and people, a space of freedom, a space of peace and prosperity. Look at the life expectancy, health, equality, and freedom indicators. And we still believe in science in Europe, even when we speak about health and this type of things. And I really believe it's much better. Look at our climate and competitiveness policies. Look at the number of EU Nobel Prizes and Field Medals.

Look at how the European cohesion policies ensured economic convergence, and how citizens, their liberties, their press, schools, universities, and academic freedoms are protected. It is a space, not a cohesion, but of cooperation. We should be proud of our European achievements and not our strengths. Obviously, we have to fix a lot of things. We were all together yesterday in a retreat to speak about our competitiveness. And we know the homework we have to deliver. But let's speak about our homework behind closed doors, and let's deliver. But let's provide a positive image of ourselves, and let's be proud of ourselves, because this is what our fellow citizens need, and this is, I really believe, the reality of this continent.

We should be proud of our European achievements, indeed, and we Europeans are proud to play down ourselves, and to endure that others would do so too. We shouldn't, period. It doesn't mean that we are not challenged, but let's face this challenge and let's fix them. But I

wanted to start with this clarification. I will not speak, perhaps you will have questions about Middle East, I will not speak about Iran, even if all of us, we are in total support with civil societies after what happened.

Our Existential Challenge: Ukraine

But I want to focus precisely on our existential challenge, Ukraine.

Ukraine today, Ukraine tomorrow, Ukraine the day after, and security in Europe. Ukraine is obviously the first challenge we have. And on this challenge, we delivered, we delivered, with a total assistance of €170 billion package, making Europe by far the main donor, and today almost the only source of military funding. We imposed 20 sanctions package on Russia, and entirely rearranged our economic model to reduce dependency on Russia, and very rapidly. Nobody thought in February 22, we would be able to do so. We did it.

I fully support President Trump's drive towards a negotiated peace. One that should be just, lasting, and robust. And I want to believe that we are getting closer. But as discussions are taking shape, Russia keeps pounding civilians and destroying energy facilities with the obvious aim of freezing Ukrainians into submission. The answer cannot be to cave in to Russia's demands, but to increase pressure on Russia instead.

Russia's Strategic Failure

And let us look at the broader picture. If you take this past four years, Russia after invading Ukraine is a weakened country. It squandered inordinate amounts of money on a senseless war, and has now entered recession. It is isolated economically. It is completely dependent on China. While the country already had a severe demographic problem, it lost hundreds of thousands of young lives to an illusion. It meant to fight NATO expansion, Sweden and Finland joined NATO. It meant to weaken Europe, Europe is massively rearming. This is a strategic, an economic, and even a military failure.

And when I hear some defeatist speech about Ukraine, when I hear some leaders urging Ukraine to accept they are defeated, overpricing Russia in this war, this is a huge strategic mistake because this is not a reality. One day Russians will have to reckon with the enormity of the crime committed in their country, with the futility of the pretexts, and the devastating longer term effects on their country. But until that time comes, we will not lower the guard.

We must ensure that the settlement protects Ukraine, preserves European security, disincentivises Russia from attempting again, and also doesn't give the rest of the world a calamitous example to follow.

Europe's Direct Stake in Ukraine

So the Europeans have a direct take. As main actors of the support to Ukraine, as members of the Coalition of the Willing, as fellow inhabitants of the same continent, and because of the European destiny of Ukraine. First we have to make sure that Ukraine is in a position to continue to resist the aggression. Last December, European Council decided on the 90 billion euro loan to Ukraine for 2026 and 2027, two thirds of which will be devoted to military equipment, with a clear Ukrainian and European preference.

And France will do its part, and I want to thank the President of the Commission for the hard work in order to deliver this package, and it will be voted in the days to come. Our Defence Minister just visited Kyiv, our Deputy Defence Minister did the same, and we send new equipment to Ukraine on top of what is done. I want to thank Germany for the great commitment and all the financing.

Second, we should keep going after the Russian war economy. We are preparing a 20-sanction package in the EU, focusing on the energy and financial services sectors. And we should continue to hit harder the Russian shadow fleet. Russian oil revenue is down 25%, and 75% of sanctioned ships do not return to Russia. We should definitely step up and generalise this effort against the Russian shadow fleet, because it's efficient, and it's painful for the war economy in Russia.

Coalition of the Willing

Third, we should intensify the work carried out with the Coalition of the Willing on security guarantees. Imagine, one year ago, we were just looking at the US to try to clarify if they were ready to engage on Ukraine, or pushing just for the end of the war without any conditions. The big change during this year is the Coalition of the Willing. From the Canadians to the EU, Norway, Iceland, Western Balkan countries, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, we financed 100%. When some US material is delivered to Ukraine today through the Coalition of the Willing, it is financed by the Coalition of the Willing.

Now, it's the first wake-up call, and it worked. We organised ourselves to frame the support to Ukraine, and we did organise and finalise in January with a clear political mandate the security guarantees for the day after the peace, in order to make this peace credible and sustainable. Our military staff are finalising this work, with now a clear backstop provided by the US and a monitoring process, but a clear commitment of all the Europeans and allies in these security guarantees.

No Peace Without Europeans

Fourth, the Europeans will have to agree to any possible deal, because they will be an essential part of any security guarantees, any prosperity package, any sanctions relief, any decisions on the European future for Ukraine. No peace without the Europeans. I want to be very clear. You can negotiate without the Europeans if you prefer, but it will not bring a peace at the table.

It is for the same reason that I have decided to establish a direct channel of communication with Russia, in full transparency with Ukraine and our European partners and our American allies. We will be part of the solution, and we should be part of the discussion. And we have our own European interests to defend this, especially when it comes to the future of strategic stability on our continent.

Co-existing with an Aggressive Russia

And this is for me the second challenge ahead of us. How will we, in the future, co-exist in Europe with an unreconstructed, aggressive Russia on our borders? And we have to discuss this issue now. If we reach a settlement on Ukraine, we will still have to contend with an aggressive Russia, with a defensive industry on a sugar high and a bloated army.

We will have to define rules of co-existence that limit the risk of escalation beyond current work on separation of forces after a future ceasefire. As Europeans, we will start with defining our own security interests. And this is part of such a peace deal.

Should we accept the deployment of long-range missiles within distance of our borders? Should we accept Russian interference in our neighbourhoods? What does arms control look like in the age of drones? Will it be possible to define missile limitation arrangements in Europe, like the INF Treaty, while China has become a factor in arms control? And what about the nuclear domain, where New START, the last treaty still in force between the US and Russia, is now terminated?

How will we rebuild our alliances in our immediate neighbourhoods when Russia is trying to maintain or increase its footprint in the Mediterranean Sea or in Africa, aligning with all the forces of destabilisation?

I'm clearly in complete agreement.

European Consultation on Security Architecture

in this list but all these questions have to be carefully prepared by the Europeans because we will have to be at the table of these discussions and these discussions will occur and we have to be prepared. And we all forgot ten few years ago we just lived in an order where all these questions were partially fixed by very old treaties negotiated without

the Europeans for the Europeans, betrayed without any consent of the Europeans and sometimes with the withdrawal of some allies without any coordination with the Europeans. And I still remember the end of the INF treaty. I discovered it in the newspapers as all the allies. We have to be the one to negotiate this new architecture of security for the for Europe's day after because our geography will not change. We will live with Russia at the same place and the Europeans at the same place and I don't want this negotiation to be organized by somebody else as the Europeans.

Even in periods of less confrontation it took sometimes decades to craft any of these treaties that help mitigate the dangers of the Cold War but the Europeans must start this work with their own thinking and their own interests. So my proposal today is to launch a series of consultations on this important issue which we have started to flesh out with our British and German colleagues but in the broader European consultation with all the colleagues here with a lot of capacities, a lot of strategic thinking. I see my Swedish colleague and a lot of European colleagues. We will address together the issues, we will coordinate and we have to face it.

Building Leverage: Europe as a Geopolitical Power

This leads me to the third challenge: how do we build leverage to enter into such discussions in a position of strength? Europe is rearming but we must now go beyond. Europe has to learn to become a geopolitical power. It was not part of our DNA. We consider ourselves as a political construction to provide peace. We delivered. Second, a single market to provide growth and prosperity. We delivered. Now we have to reform it into order in this new geopolitical environment. Europe has to become a geopolitical power. It's ongoing but we have to accelerate and clearly to deliver all the components of a geopolitical power in defense, in technology and in the terrestrial vis-à-vis all the big powers in order to be much more independent.

But when I speak about Europe becoming a power, I don't speak about France or Germany becoming a power. I speak about Europe. So we

have to think and act as Europeans I would say by design and this is what we have to do now. And if this time of rearmament is a time of dis-energies of separation on national power it would be a huge mistake. We have to think now power at the European scale.

European Preference and Strategic Independence

We have to think about our defense obviously but we have to reduce our dependencies through policies of European preference. This must be the case for the anti-virus chain from AI and cloud computing, critical mineral space, clean tech as well as defense industries and design of armaments. Everywhere we have over dependencies we have to be at risk our model and we have to endorse clearly a European preference, targeted, perfectly designed and I want to thank the Commission for this hard work but this is a necessity. We will be credible only if we are able to procure and produce what we need without foreign strings attached.

We have achieved significant progress last year within the EU. We have agreed on the defense readiness roadmap to 2030 to fill our critical capability gaps. We standardized an interval interoperable equipment in Europe and in this spirit I believe clearly we have to follow up. This is why makes sense to make the future air combat system together with Germany and Spain. It does make sense to have concrete projects like air defense with some teen new generation with Italy and UK. It does make sense to have early warning system like Jewells, our initiatives with Germany and we have to accelerate the cooperation we organize sometimes seven, eight years ago and we have to build additional cooperation.

And I want to warn everybody we have, I mean you have a lot of money on the European market on defense and security. If this money is used just to have national solutions or just to favor the national players without a clear European approach to build European standards, to make European simplification and to play Europeans and to help countries to deploy as well additional industrial footprints, we will waste our money, waste our time and create a lot of these

synergies. Huge mistake. So I'm an old fashioned guy for these days but I do believe in TFCAS. I do believe in Jewells and I do believe in some page you know new generation because it's hard for me to understand how we will build new common solution if we destroyed the few one we had. Sorry to say that.

EU Financing Instruments and Strategic Capabilities

And we have adopted new EU financing instruments such as EDIP and SAFE and don't underestimate the strength of this instrument. We decided to raise money on the market for EU to make common protection. I don't want to, I don't want to pronounce any name or I know the taboo sometimes we have but de facto we decided to issue money on the market, have common borrowing programs on defense. It's a very good thing because this money, we have a lot of appetite in the market to take it. There is an appetite for safe and liquid assets is European money and it will be used for European solutions and European programs. It's just it's wonderful innovation.

We should actively expand our toolkits to include items of strategic value such as deep precision strike capacities as well and the European initiative called ELSA is very important in this regard because it is something despite the end of the INF Treaty which will allow us to close the gap and it's very important. The discussion we have with UK, Germany but often to a lot of other European players to have a new generation of long-range missiles that will give Europe a new edge. But credibility is not only a question of missiles. It is in large part a question of determination.

If we want to be taken seriously on the European continent and beyond we must show the world our unwavering commitment to defend our own interests. It start of course with continuing to extend our support to Ukraine but it could nicely follow with fanning off unjustified terrorists and politely declining unjustified claims on European territory. This is what we did and this is what we will do.

Protecting Democracy and Public Debate

Therefore before concluding I would like to mention briefly a last challenge. As many of us Europeans will soon have important elections, defending our sovereignty also involves protecting the integrity of public debate and democratic process and this is as well a question of security and safety for our democracies and they are quite clearly under attack and I speak under the control of several leaders largely attacked during the electoral process and information manipulation.

Foreign interference amplified by online platform and social media is clearly a critical issue for all of us. How is that the craziest and most harmful narratives can go unchecked in our digital space where they will fall under the law if published in print? We started to deliver a good agenda in Europe with the DSA. This is a very important regulation because for the first time we created the framework to regulate this platform.

But how do you want to be serious and consistent when we speak about defense and security and to see free speech means no regulation on our social media? Meaning free speech mean would mean I will give the mind, brand the heart of my teenagers to algorithm of big guys. I'm not totally sure I share the values or Chinese algorithm without any control. We are crazy. This is why we launched this initiative to ban under 15 years old access to social media because it's matter of health but as well protection of our education and democracy.

But how can we imagine that everything which is forbidden in the public space, racist speech, hateful speech, anti-Semitic speech and so on could be allowed in the digital space because it would be free speech? We have a good knowledge of free speech. It comes from this very region of the world. We designed it during the European afternoon. There is a clear meaning of that. When you have free speech you have respect, you have rules and the limit of my freedom is the beginning of your freedom and respect and it's a matter of

democracy. When we are democracies we want to respect and we want to be respected. This is where we are. This is our view as well of the relationship and this is the basic of a good relationship.

Regulating Social Media and Foreign Interference

And this is why it's extremely important we go further on the regulation of social media in order to preserve the DNA of our democracy, in order as well to preserve the integrity of our democracies. Because at the same time we are opening the Pandora box and allowing a lot of hateful speech in these platforms and social media. We are too weak and too naive vis-à-vis external interferences and foreign interferences. No doubt. We should forbid the capacity of these guys to interfere in our public space and we should ask this platform first to completely block trolls, bots. We have to be sure there is one single person with one account. If this is an AI system, if this is bought or organized by big organization it should be just forbidden.

Second, we need the transparency of the algorithm. We are democracy. We don't ask for the IP and we ask for transparency which is part of our democracy. Third, we need the responsibility of this platform when they don't respect our social order, when they don't respect our rules and as the DSA allows us to do so. We have to go further in order to excuse those who clearly decide not to respect our rules and our regulation and we should block all those willow interferences in our systems.

A Strong, Audacious Europe

So as you can see it's quite a menu of things to do and I will stop here. We should exhibit strength and tenacity on Ukraine. We should articulate among Europeans our real long-term security interests in our region and give ourselves the metal and the court to prosecute them and at the same time fortify ourselves as confident democracies. These are no mean challenges and I really believe in the power of our

audacity. This is the right time for audacity. This is the right time for a strong Europe and this is such a Europe.

Clear in the support of Ukraine doesn't mean to support a currency the very last minute. Clear on the condition of a sustainable peace. Clear on the conditions with every Russia and building its own architecture of security. Clear on how to be risk is model. This Europe will be a good ally and partner for the United States of America because it will be a partner taking its fair share of the burden. It will be a partner being respected and we have to be respected. We did a lot and we will do more but we will follow this path. Believe me.

Thank you very much.