

The U.S.–France Special Relationship: Testing the Macron Method

By Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer and Martin Quencez

Traditional U.S. allies have had a hard time adjusting their bilateral ties to the United States under the new Trump administration. For France, the current situation is perceived as both a challenge and an opportunity, as Trump's approach to international affairs and transatlantic relations could in fact reinforce Paris' role on the global stage. On the most pressing issues continuity and stability are perceived as mutually beneficial, and counterterrorism cooperation remains the priority.

Trump and Macron often disagree more on the method than on the end-state of their foreign policy. Using his good personal relationship with the U.S. president, illustrated by the state visit to Washington, DC, Macron aims to take advantage of Trump's disruptions to enhance France's status in Europe and influence in the Middle East and North Africa region. However, being Trump's main European interlocutor may not be sustainable, and strong policy disagreements could rapidly affect the U.S.–France special relationship.

**This policy brief was updated from its original version on April 18, 2018.*

The first year of a very disruptive U.S. presidency has been surprisingly undisruptive for Franco–American bilateral relations. Despite some specific points of conflict, both sides of the partnership have worked to maintain continuity and stability. Furthermore, the Trump administration's apparent disavowal of global leadership has not been all bad for France's ambitious new president.

Most European leaders, even if they diverge in their approach, have sought to preserve bilateral relations with Washington by focusing on what makes their relation with the United States “special.” The French President Emmanuel Macron was better positioned than others to make this case, though his seduction campaign has not yet translated to shifts in policy. After one year of navigating the Trump presidency, four trends have emerged in the French–American relationship, and more broadly in the transatlantic relationship.

Firstly, defense and counterterrorism cooperation is central. As Donald Trump started his presidency, the French priority was clear: The excellent cooperation with the United States in the defense and intelligence domains must continue despite the political changes in Washington. What was built under the Obama administration, and notably under the control of French Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian and U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, had to be preserved as it served French interests in its struggle against terrorist organizations at home and abroad. The U.S. perception



of France as being Europe's strongest and most engaged military power, also makes dialogue and cooperation with the White House easier on many other issues — an advantage that neither Germany (harshly criticized by Trump for not spending enough on defense) nor the U.K. (caught in the Brexit negotiations and still traumatized by the Iraq war) can assert.

Secondly, Trump's election put an end to the strong "Obama-Merkel" tandem that has structured transatlantic relations for the past eight years. In the context of Brexit and deteriorating relationships between Washington and Berlin, France may have a new role to play as it stands out in Europe as a center of political stability and energy. Emmanuel Macron has opportunistically aimed to use this context to his advantage and has developed a close personal relationship with the U.S. president. Macron views himself as Trump's interpreter in Europe,¹ finding places of common interest and cooperation, while clarifying red lines.² Likewise, Trump turns to Macron for leadership and coordination on many key issues, most notably in Syria, where he is keen to share responsibility and costs.

Each bilateral relationship has its own historical and political dynamic. In the case of the France–U.S. relationship, cooperation has been promoted politically as a way to pursue common strategic interests rather than as the realization of a moral

1 As explained by Jeff Lightfoot, France indeed has less to lose — and more to gain — from the Trump administration than other traditional allies of the U.S. See Jeff Lightfoot, "The French-American Alliance in an America First Era," Atlantic Council, April 2018.

2 Macron's reaction to Trump's decision to withdraw from the climate agreement was a good illustration of this approach: "I'm not ready to renegotiate, but I'm ready to welcome [Trump] if he decides to come back." See "Macron Says It Was 'Aggressive for U.S. to Decide to Leave Paris Climate Accord,'" CBS News, December 11, 2017.

and normative bond. As a result, French leaders have learned to be relatively comfortable working with U.S. presidents who were deeply unpopular in France. The election of Trump — although certainly fostering anti-American sentiment within the French population — was therefore less traumatic to France as it was to other U.S. allies. In the age of Donald Trump, transatlantic relations have become increasingly transactional, and this evolution may in fact suit the French pragmatic approach to the transatlantic partnership.

Thirdly, the diverging priorities between both sides of the Atlantic and the strategic uncertainties triggered by the election of Trump have reinforced the arguments for Europe's political and strategic autonomy. This evolution, if it leads to a coordinated effort at the European level, corresponds to France's long-term objective for the European project. From the French perspective, Europe should not attempt to oppose Washington or undermine NATO, but it needs to develop both the strategic culture and the operational tools to think and act on its own if necessary. The European Intervention Initiative (EII), which was announced by Macron in his Sorbonne speech in September 2017, precisely aims at filling the current operational void in Europe, based on the lessons learned from Mali (2013) and Central Africa (2014). The EII will gather a core group of the most militarily able and politically willing countries (France, the U.K., Denmark, Spain, and a few others), which could be deployed very quickly if circumstances require, and potentially plug in a EU or NATO mission. A more operationally autonomous Europe aims at strengthening the transatlantic link at a time when Washington is asking for more burden-sharing, especially in Africa.

Finally, France perceives Trump's election as both a challenge and an opportunity to president Macron's ambitions of making France and Europe a credible power at the global level. By reaffirming the French aspiration to engage with all actors of the world arena, Macron has aimed to fill the vacuum left by an

undermined U.S. State Department and a weakened U.S. soft power. French diplomatic activism is particularly remarkable in the Middle East and North Africa region, where the United States has adopted a more confrontational foreign policy.

However, speeches by Trump and Macron at the UN General Assembly revealed two very different views of the international order: Trump's unilateralist and nationalistic agenda contrasted with Macron's support for multilateralism and liberal values. Despite the imperative of cooperating on counterterrorism, how the two leaders exercise power and policies keeps them apart. Thus, maintaining a stable relationship may be more challenging in the coming years, as international crises may bring back to the fore their different approaches to world affairs. 2018 will be the testing year for Macron's attempt to opportunistically translate the disruption of Trump's foreign policy to France's advantage. Whether he succeeds or not, however, may depend more on Trump's own decisions than on a calculated and creative approach to the White House by Paris.

Opportunism and Continuity

Priority issues of the bilateral relationship have been largely preserved from disruption over the past year. Macron has become Trump's main European interlocutor for international crises. On counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, and defense cooperation in the Sahel and the Levant, the level of cooperation and coordination has not decreased under the new American president. Although some events during the year revealed difficulties — such as the U.S. opposition to the first French-led UN resolution on the counterterrorism task force of the

G5 Sahel³ — the overall assessment is positive. On the most pressing issues, continuity and stability have thus been perceived as mutually beneficial: The United States relies on French leadership, network, and know-how in Europe and its southern neighborhood, while France needs U.S. military and financial support to conduct its counterterrorism activities. In his pre-Davos interview, Macron insisted that the “United States is our partner” in the fight against terrorism, on the future of Syria, and in the Middle East. “If we get upset with them, we are not able to act anymore.”⁴

The April 14 joint U.S.–French–British strikes on Syria constitute the latest illustration of this close dialogue on defense and military matters, especially in the MENA. The strikes were designed as a direct response to the use of chemical weapons by Bashar Al Assad on April 7, and highlighted the high level of operational coordination among the three countries. Macron said he convinced Trump that the strikes had to be limited to suspected chemical weapons sites, in contrast with the tougher, more extended action that Trump had tweeted about, but that was talked down by his national security team. However, beyond these tactical strikes, the strategic convergence between France and the United States in Syria is uncertain. Indeed, President Macron declared on French television that he managed to convince Donald Trump to stay engaged in Syria after the strikes, but this statement was partially refuted by the White House. According to Macron, the French and U.S. positions were in fact in line with the same long-term target of building a stable and peaceful Syria: Macron said that by joining forces with France and the U.K. for strikes, the United States “fully realized that our responsibility goes beyond the war against ISIS and that there is also a humanitarian responsibility and a responsibility to build peace over the long term.” However, the

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³ The G5 Sahel is an institutional framework of five African countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger) launched in February 2014 to help coordinate economic and security policies in the Sahel region. Backed notably by France, the military dimension of the G5 Sahel has a strong counterterrorism focus, and the financial support of the UN was the subject of heated debates between Paris and Washington in the spring 2017.

⁴ President Emmanuel Macron, interview with RTS, 24 January 2018.

Trump administration's intent is not to get too deeply involved in regional and local politics and reconstruction, but rather to outsource these matters to regional allies including Saudi Arabia. Macron still wants to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis based on a dialogue with all parties and through the UN. But this back-and-forth is emblematic of the unclear and limited options for France and the United States in Syria, and for Macron the need to "manage" relations with Iran and Russia despite their role in Syria.

“ Disagreements between Trump and Macron often stem less from divergent policies and more from different methods.”

The Trump administration's position on U.S. engagement in Europe and NATO are not that different from those defended by Paris. Early hesitations regarding Article 5 were problematic, but Trump's assertiveness on European defense spending is not negatively perceived, as France has also pushed European allies to do more in the defense sector. Trump's violent rhetoric has given new arguments for the idea of European strategic autonomy, a long-time goal for France. The evolution of the German strategic debate and defense policy, especially in Africa — where Mali has become the country with Germany's biggest military presence, surpassing Afghanistan and Iraq — are seen positively from Paris.

The other defining aspect of the U.S.–France relationship in 2017 was the excellent personal relationship between the two presidents. This could come as a surprise given the two men's ideological background and beliefs, but their multiple bilateral meetings have in fact been judged as very constructive by both sides.⁵ This positive understanding stems from the fact that Macron usually refrains from directly mentioning the U.S. president when openly

opposing the U.S. administration's policies.⁶ Not shying away from policy divergences — for instance, Macron insisted on the importance of the climate agreement, the possibility of a different method to engage with Iran, and the need to calm tensions with North Korea — he has sought to create a space for dialogue and potentially compromise on issues central to French interests. This personal relationship has led to Macron being the first foreign leader to be invited for a state visit by the White House during the Trump presidency.

Finally, Paris has used the evolution of U.S. diplomatic engagement as an opportunity to fill the vacuum and play a more active role. In the Middle East, different initiatives aim to gain influence while the role of the United States becomes more uncertain. To limit the damage of an increasing “Trumpisation” of regional power relations,⁷ in particular an increasingly confrontational path with Iran, Macron has reaffirmed the French diplomatic tradition of “we talk with everyone.” He showed on several occasions that France was committed to maintaining balance in the region and warned the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia against shutting down all dialogue with Iran: “If we are not careful, we will end up surreptitiously rebuilding an 'axis of evil.' The official line pursued by those denouncing the Iran nuclear deal, namely the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia, who are our allies in many ways, is one which is paving the way for war in Iran.”⁸ However, President Macron is experiencing the limits of his diplomatic ambitions and the reality that France does not have the political weight to replace the United States. For instance, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian's trip to Iran on March 5 has seemingly failed to produce the results likely expected by President Macron and

5 Sylvie Kauffmann, "Coming to Davos: Macron and Trump Cross Paths Again," *The New York Times*, January 22, 2018.

6 Emmanuel Macron's speech at the United Nations' General Assembly on September 29, 2017 was an outstanding illustration of this method: While presenting a vision clearly opposed to the one of the U.S. president, Macron never mentioned Donald Trump or criticized openly his decisions.

7 Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, "The 'Trumpisation' of International Relations: Risks and Opportunities," Newsletter, Centre de Recherches Internationales de Sciences Po, 23 January 23, 2018.

8 Emmanuel Macron, "New Year Wishes to the Press," Elysée Palace, January 3, 2018.

instead was perceived by Iranians as France serving as the envoy of U.S. demands, even though it was meant to better convince Trump to keep the nuclear deal alive. On the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Washington's ability to engage with the Palestinian leadership has been strongly damaged since the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and the United States sees France in a potentially supporting role in favor of their peace initiative, which still needs to be detailed.⁹

Macron's activism — and sometimes unilateralism — in the conflict in Libya,¹⁰ as well as his involvement to find a solution to the Hariri crisis, illustrated this renewed ambition. With Turkey, Macron has also aimed to be seen as a privileged interlocutor while Ankara's relationships with both Washington and most European countries have dramatically deteriorated. President Trump urged Macron to enhance cooperation with Turkey to resolve “strategic challenges in Syria.” Macron sought to mediate between Turkey and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Kurdish-dominated group that has fought against ISIS alongside the U.S.-led Coalition which includes France, as part of a broader push by Paris to resolve the seven-year war in Syria. But these efforts were swiftly rejected by Turkey's President Recep Erdoğan.

Iran, Jerusalem, and the issue of reciprocity in trade, show that the disagreements between Trump and Macron often stem less from divergent policies and more from different methods. In fact, they share the same analysis of the situation and of the needed end-state. The French president's goal has been to convince his American counterpart that he can reach the same goal through less disruptive means. On China, both Trump and Macron insisted on the need for more

reciprocity in trade relations, but the French president warned against the risks of an unnecessary “trade war.” He has also used Trump's withdrawal from the climate agreement and the TPP to strengthen his relationship with a concerned Chinese leadership, including in the counterterrorism domain, by seeking Chinese financial support for the G5 Sahel joint force. In parallel to building a personal bond with the U.S. president, he aimed to circumvent Trump's blockages by working with other U.S. political actors, notably at the state level. Macron reached out to influential governors such as Jerry Brown, and private business figures such as Bill Gates and Michael Bloomberg, to advance the climate agenda, as illustrated by the One Planet Summit organized in December 2017 in Paris. This strategy of “containment”¹¹ of the White House is yet to prove successful, but it provides the French leader with alternative options in the case of a complete opposition with Donald Trump.

“**Macron's desire to establish his credibility on the international stage has driven his effort to be seen as Trump's main European interlocutor.**”

Strengthening France's Role in Europe

In its first year, the Trump administration made three decisions that highlighted the limited influence of Macron's seduction campaign. Both before and after his election in May, Macron announced that he would try to convince the U.S. president not to withdraw from the climate agreement and not to reject the Iran nuclear deal.¹² On both cases, Macron's attempts to argue in favor of these frameworks failed to influence Donald Trump's position: “I'm always extremely

9 Julia Manchester, “Macron Dispatched Advisor to Sway Palestinians on Trump's Peace Plan,” *The Hill*, January 18, 2018; and Philippe Gélie and Cyrille Louis, “Proche-Orient: Macron veut laisser sa chance à l'initiative de Trump,” *Le Figaro*, January 28, 2018.

10 The meeting of Celle-Saint-Cloud on July 25, 2017 was organized with the support of UN Special Envoy Ghassan Salamé, but it did not involve partners from the European Union or the African Union. This form of French unilateralism was problematic for countries such as Italy and Algeria that did not appreciate to be isolated from this initiative.

11 Richard Werly, “A Paris, Emmanuel Macron encercle Donald Trump sur le climat,” *Le Temps*, December 12, 2017.

12 See for instance his interview with *Mediapart*, “Emmanuel Macron. Battré Le Pen, et ensuite?” *Mediapart*, May 5, 2017.

direct and frank. He is. Sometimes I manage to convince him, and sometimes I fail,”¹³ the French president said. Similarly, the recognition of Jerusalem as capital of Israel, explicitly opposed by France and most of European partners, illustrated that Macron does not yet have the right tools to affect the White House’s decision-making process. This will continue to be a challenge at a time when U.S. foreign policy decisions are internally-driven and mostly for electoral purposes, and this trend is likely to increase as we approach the mid-term elections at the end of this year. Some European priorities such as climate and Iran have become a “collateral damage” of Trump’s focus on his political base, and this will continue to affect French and European interests.¹⁴

“ ***If French industrial and economic interests were targeted by the economic nationalism of the Trump administration, the political implications would be extremely damaging.***”

In this context, the policy record of Macron’s engagement with the U.S. president is hardly impressive. Maintaining the outstanding level of defense cooperation between the two countries was indeed the priority, but this achievement stems as much from the direct coordination of their bureaucracies and military as from the personal understanding between the two leaders. One could argue, however, that influencing Trump’s foreign policy decisions was never the primary goal of the French president. Instead, building a strong personal relationship with Donald Trump served as a lever for France’s position in Europe and in the world, and as a strategy to “bring [president Trump] back in the multilateral system and to leave the door open

in case he decides to return.”¹⁵ The Iran nuclear deal and the climate agreement will be the real tests for Macron’s method. Indeed, it remains to be seen whether Donald Trump may nuance his position and find a compromise with his European partners or, in the case of a definitive transatlantic divide, whether European unity and global commitments can hold despite the U.S. withdrawal.

The newly elected French president, aware of his own inexperience and of the need to reassess France’s leadership in Europe, wanted to quickly establish his credibility on the international stage. This objective has driven Macron’s effort to be seen as the main European interlocutor of Donald Trump.¹⁶ For the French president, this was not only a personal gain. It was crucial, after eight years of the Obama administration which crowned Angela Merkel as the leader of Europe, to put France at a more central place within the transatlantic partnership.

Indeed, while Barack Obama tried to define a balance between three complementary special relationships — with Berlin for European and economic affairs, London for its political support within global institutions and the UN Security Council, and France for out-of-area military cooperation — the election of Donald Trump and the Brexit referendum have completely reshuffled this equilibrium. London’s role as a “bridge” in the Atlantic will not survive after the U.K. leaves the EU, and the balance of power within the EU has fundamentally changed. More importantly, the personal trust between Obama and Merkel has been replaced by a personal mistrust with Donald Trump, who repeatedly criticized the German Chancellor’s immigration policy, shortfall in defense spending, and U.S. trade deficit with Germany. Similarly, the relationship with the U.K. has not started under favorable auspices, as shown by

¹³ Emmanuel Macron, interview for the BBC’s “The Andrew Marr Show,” January 21, 2018.

¹⁴ Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, “Trump’s Diplomatic Initiatives Have Isolated the United States,” *Le Monde*, January 26, 2018.

¹⁵ Elysée sources quoted by Isabelle Lasserre, *Le Figaro*, January 26, 2018.

¹⁶ The first weeks of Macron’s presidency were marked by several international events meant to reinforce his position as an international leader: the G7 summit, the NATO summit, but also Vladimir Putin’s visit to France only three weeks after the French election also served this purpose.

the constantly postponed visit of the U.S. president to London. In the next three years, Macron is likely to keep strengthening France's transatlantic role in order to reaffirm its importance in the European context. The White House announcement that the French president would be the first foreign leader to be invited for a state visit to the U.S. confirms the success of Macron's approach to Donald Trump.¹⁷

Four Risks in An Unpredictable President

From a French perspective, U.S. unpredictability actually preceded Trump. In French diplomatic circles, the turning point was in fact Obama's decision not to follow-through in Syria in 2013, despite the Assad regime's "red line" violation, just hours before French warplanes were due to join the bombing mission over Syria. In the words of former French Minister of Affairs Laurent Fabius, this was a "world-changing event,"¹⁸ one that would durably undermine the U.S. credibility and reliability, and bolster Russia to annex Crimea just a few months later.

Trump's election and exercise of power have only increased the degree of U.S. unpredictability, making it nearly impossible to predict future challenges to the U.S.–French relationship. Major disagreements between the United States and other European partners, or rising tensions between Washington and China, Russia, or even Iran would obviously affect France. In this context, the growing influence of more hawkish figures such as John Bolton and Mike Pompeo within the Trump administration are a concern for the French government. The "America First" agenda and its strong unilateralist tendencies, are expected to be reinforced. The challenge is therefore to maintain a strong dialogue at the highest level, which takes place mostly at the presidential level. Beyond these, four issues may have a specific impact on the future of the bilateral relationship between France and the

United States. These challenges could mean that a close relationship with Washington would become politically costly in France for Emmanuel Macron.

The first issue is the risk of a heightened trade competition between the United States and European states. The "America First" discourse, translated into economic and trade policy, could indeed lead to new measures directly affecting European companies and markets. In the case of France, the memory of the U.S. sanction against BNP Paribas, Alstom, Technip, Total, or Crédit Agricole — to name a few — remains very sensitive and new extra-territorial U.S. sanctions (for instance, targeting Airbus) could trigger an escalation of the tensions between the two countries.¹⁹ Macron's primary promise to his electors is to strengthen the French economy after years of stagnation. If French industrial and economic interests were targeted by the economic nationalism of the Trump administration, the political implications would be extremely damaging. The French president already played a role in the temporary exception of the EU from U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum. This short-term exemption, however, does not imply a weakening of Trump's assertiveness in the domain of trade. The recent nominations in the Trump administration may in fact reveal a strengthening of the "America First" approach, which would be a source of real concern in Paris.

Secondly, Trump's deep reluctance toward multilateralism and the very idea of an international order — reaffirmed by the National Security Strategy — could also cause new problems in the coming years. France has a tradition of a rather pragmatic approach toward institutional and legal formats for its foreign policy, and values what multilateral institutions — in particular the UN — can to advance its interests. The disagreement on the G5 Sahel Force²⁰ may be a first instance of a larger issue, as the cuts in U.S. funding or the vetoing of resolutions could directly clash with

17 Donald Trump's visit to France for the French national day and July 14th Military Parade has been lauded by the U.S. president, who even contemplated organizing a military parade for July 4th. See "Excerpts from the Times' Interview with Trump," *The New York Times*, July, 19, 2017.

18 Laurent Fabius interview on Europe 1, February 11, 2018.

19 Benoît Colombat, "Guerre économique : comment les Etats-Unis font la loi," *France Inter*, January 18, 2018.

20 Colum Lynch, "Trump Weighs Vetoing France's African Anti-Terrorism Plan," *Foreign Policy*, June 13, 2017.

France's foreign policy goals. While Paris may turn to the UN to present solutions to current and future crises (in Africa, in the MENA, and in Eastern Europe for instance), U.S. blockage could lead to increasing tensions with Washington. The recent nomination of John Bolton at the National Security Council may widen the divide between the two countries on this matter.

Thirdly, migration policy is a key issue for the Trump administration and for Donald Trump personally. The way European countries handled the refugee crisis in 2014–2015 was heavily criticized by the U.S. president and his electoral base. While the Obama administration remained rather neutral in the European debates at the time, a new crisis would play very differently on transatlantic relationships with Donald Trump, who is likely to be involved in this sensitive discussion. On the other hand, France in particular has been critical of Trump's migration decisions — especially the so-called “Muslim bans” — and of their potential implications for counterterrorism cooperation with partner countries in the MENA region. Macron's migration policies (with hotspots in Libya and with new regulations in France) have triggered reactions from the left of the French political spectrum, but also within his own party. He cannot afford to see the highly unpopular U.S. president getting involved in an already very sensitive issue.

Finally, in this transactional relationship, Macron will have to prove that France can deliver, especially in the defense and security field. The French president has committed that the defense budget would reach 2 percent of the national GDP in 2025. The situation is therefore less problematic than it is for Germany, but this promise is only partially satisfactory from the White House's perspective: not only because it is still a slow pace compared to Trump's objective, but also because Macron's own presidential mandate ends in 2022, and his budgetary commitments for

the the following three years could be questioned.²¹ Although France is a security leader at the European level, and its activism to fight terrorist organizations in the MENA is praised by Washington, the French leader will have to keep affirming his credibility and seriousness on defense spending to a U.S. president who has paid close attention to the question of the 2 percent.

Sustainable for Three More Years?

The political and strategic priority of counterterrorism will likely remain significant in the coming years, and will cement the French–American relationship under President Trump. Both governments consider it in their mutual interest to maintain the level of defense and intelligence cooperation that was developed at the end of the Obama presidency.

At the transatlantic level, the role of France may become all the more important as the discussion about security responsibility sharing will continue to frame the conversation. According to the new National Defense Strategy, the United States perceives the re-emergence of revisionist powers, primarily China and Russia, as the biggest threat to its national security and military superiority for today and in the future.²² In this context France's role as a European leader on defense matters will be key in defining the terms of transatlantic burden-sharing while the Trump's administration increasing focus on hard power vis-à-vis rival and “rogue” powers (Iran and North Korea) will continue to put pressure on European and NATO allies to step up their financial and military efforts suppress, especially in Africa but also in Afghanistan.

Donald Trump will remain unpredictable and cooperating with the White House will be a source of

²¹ Macron's plan to reach the 2 percent target relies on an annual increase of €1.7 billion of the defense budget until 2022, and an annual €3 billion increase for the period 2022–2025. For more details, see Pierre Alonso, “Macron promet une hausse du budget de la défense surtout après son mandat,” *Libération*, January 19, 2018.

²² See “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America — Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge,” U.S. Department of Defense, January 2018.

challenges for Paris in the future. New controversial decisions from the Trump administration, if they directly affect French interests or lead to war with Iran, could increase anti-American sentiment in France, making Macron's cooperation with the United States politically costly. It is therefore unclear whether the current French approach to the Trump administration — building a close personal relationship with Trump on the one hand, and promoting very different political positions on the other hand — can be sustainable for the next three years.

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