

## Chapter 5

### Plus ça Change?

#### *France and America during the Trump Interlude*

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#### INTRODUCTION: A FRENCH EXCEPTION?

If the scholarly field of international relations (IR) contains within its ranks one “canonical” figure, it would have to be the English historian E. H. Carr. He was the author of the seminal *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, a book widely, and justifiably, regarded as having played a central role in launching the “scientific” study of modern IR during the era of World War II.<sup>1</sup> Yet there is another author, with a similar sounding name, who should be regarded as equally canonical for the study of France’s relations with the United States. He is Alphonse Karr, whose connection to IR theory may only be a homophonic one, but whose relevance to the Franco-American relationship is incontestable.

If we think of this nineteenth-century French political journalist at all these days, it has little to do either with contemporary international politics or the Franco-American relationship, and everything to do with his epigrams, the most famous of which is “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose,” a phrase he coined back in early 1849 to betoken a certain repetitive feature of political life.<sup>2</sup> What he had in mind were the likely long-term consequences of the political turmoil that had rocked Europe in 1848,<sup>3</sup> and from the epigram, we can see that he anticipated more continuity than change in European politics. I invoke him in these pages to make a related point about the mooted impact that a more recent turbulent era, the four years of Donald Trump’s presidency, has had upon France and that country’s relationship with America.

The claim I make in this chapter is that the Trump interlude did not really cause much change in the structure of the Franco-American relationship. Such a claim might seem jarring, at minimum, especially as it is being made in a volume such as this, whose *raison d’être* owes so much to the eminently sensible thought that the Trump era *must* have marked a sharp and distressing point of departure from what had been traditional American diplomacy since the ending of World War II, in respect of any number of countries, allied or not. Not for nothing did Trump have the reputation of being the “great disruptor.” While it is true that he proved to be both a challenge and a shock to so many of America’s allies during his short tenure in office, to say nothing of America’s own foreign policy establishment, it would be hard to substantiate

the argument that with regard to Franco-American relations, the consequence of the Trump presidency was to set the bilateral relationship upon a radically different trajectory from the one that had been so familiar over the years. True, the tone of Franco-American diplomatic discourse took on a greater edge of rancor than at any time since the two countries' heated quarrel over the Iraq war, back in 2003. But the *substance* of the relationship hardly altered.

A touch of irony can even be injected in assessments of the Trump impact upon France, gleaned from a back-handed compliment paid in December 2020 to the departing president, by one French editorialist in the Parisian daily, *Le Monde*. That editorialist, Alain Frachon, scolded those legions of Europeans who had nothing good to say about Donald Trump, calling them a bunch of "ingrates," who should instead have thanked the president for the gift he had given them. On the assumption that they actually wanted to provide genuine substance to their oft-recited mantras about building that "more perfect" Europe, the Europeans should have been grateful to Trump for showing them the "world as it is," a place in which force remains the *ultima ratio*. The departing president brought home to the Europeans the urgency of enhancing their own ability to project force; for this reason, Frachon argued that Trump should be remembered as having served as the "obstetrician" (*accoucheur*) at the birth of the new Europe for which so many in France and elsewhere had been longing.<sup>4</sup>

It remains to be seen just how much of a gift (if that is what it was) the Trump years did represent for the Europeans, since the French vision of a more autonomous EU is neither as new nor as widely shared in Europe as Frachon and others might wish it to be. In the following section, I address that long-standing French vision, before turning to more recent developments associated, first, with the administrations of Trump's two immediate predecessors, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, and then continuing with the initially promising, but ultimately doomed, "partnership" of Trump and France's president, Emmanuel Macron.

### *Le Différend Franco-Américain Revisited*

It certainly may be soothing for the allies to receive reassurances that now that Donald Trump is gone, "America is back."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, it remains far too soon for anyone to bring closure to an interrogation that has puzzled Europeans for the past few years. Does the Trump interlude represent an aberration unlikely ever to reappear, or does it simply mark the rudest stage yet in an otherwise unstoppable American retreat from the multilateral western order?<sup>6</sup> Stresses in that wider order predated Trump's arrival in power, but they certainly became greatly exacerbated once he took office. One consequence of his presidency and its startling dénouement was to kindle anxiety among many allies about the credibility of the America upon which so many of them had grown used to relying—a consequence so well presented in Jonathan Kirshner's laconic, almost deadpan, assertion that the United States "is now looked at far differently than it once was."<sup>7</sup>

Kirshner's observation may be accurate enough insofar as most of the allies are concerned, but it does not really apply to France, at least not in the same way as it might apply, say, to such traditional allies as Britain, or Germany, or Canada—for all of whom the Trump experience was more unsettling than it was for the French. For

France has been, and remains, the one member of NATO that has most stood out in the constancy of its “America policy,” Donald Trump or no Donald Trump. When it comes to the business of fretting about American credibility, France has been a past master of the practice, with one consequence of its skepticism being to help ensure a long life for a pattern of dealing with the United States that has featured an uncanny ability of both countries repeatedly to get under each other’s skin.

This pattern stands out from either country’s comportment in respect of any *other* western security and defense partner. Because the “diplomatic” [*sic*] tone set by Trump was so unusually abrasive, we might be tempted to think that recent discordant relations between Paris and Washington could simply be chalked up to personality foibles of leaders, and to exult in the great days now in the offing, pursuant to the recent regime change in Washington.<sup>8</sup> But succumbing to this temptation, however comforting, would be unwise; the Franco-American problem is more deeply rooted. For a very long time, the two countries have been mutual irritants—not *consistently* so, but much more often than not—acting and reacting toward each other in such a way as to lead one observer of the tandem to have referred to them in the late 1990s, unflatteringly though not unfairly, as the “feuding hillbillies” of the West.<sup>9</sup> To another observer writing at roughly the same time, they were nothing other than the “world’s worst friends.”<sup>10</sup>

The “special” bilateral relationship between France and America is one in which cooperation does take place. It is just that this cooperation consistently seems to be less optimal and more complicated than might otherwise be expected, among allies. And if the Franco-American relationship might be said to adhere to the tenets of rational action, it does so only in the manner suggested decades ago by Herbert Simon’s concept of “bounded rationality.”<sup>11</sup> The bounded rationality of Franco-American relations has a history long predating Trump’s presidency, and will almost certainly long outlast it. Its peculiar qualities have often been commented upon, with one of the most accomplished students of the relationship, André Kaspi, providing us with this priceless descriptive term, “*le différend franco-américain*.”<sup>12</sup>

Why is it that in a world such as ours, with 193 sovereign states belonging to the United Nations, some observers can assert, with little risk of exposing themselves to ridicule, that the Franco-American tandem “may well be the most perverse relationship in modern global relations”?<sup>13</sup> It certainly seems to be the most perverse relationship between *allies*, and has been so for as long as NATO has been in existence, such that one can find little reason today to dismiss as outdated the comment made by one prominent NATO-watcher from France four decades ago: the “most acute transatlantic antagonisms,” insisted Alfred Grosser, had been and still were those between the French and the Americans.<sup>14</sup> He might have added, “and they always *will* be.”

There are many reasons for the antagonisms. Some analysts will draw attention to the phenomenon of “anti-Americanism,” and **while** there is doubtless some element of reasonableness in the contention that if only the French thought better of the Americans than they do, relations between the two states would be smoother. Much the same, *mutatis mutandis*, could be said of American attitudes toward the French. The reality is that both tropisms—anti-Americanism and “francophobia”—have at times reared their ugly heads to trouble bilateral relations. But they are not central to the argument I make here. Instead, the one recurring theme to which I draw attention



is that of French incredulity when it comes to taking at face value American assurances of support for their security. This incredulity is long-standing, and a glance at history gives us reason for believing that the French have not necessarily been wrong to express skepticism whether they could count on unwavering American support, when it was most needed.

The history between the two countries, as they say, “goes deep,” and if it would be inaccurate to conceive of them as being, in any profound sense, adversaries,<sup>15</sup> it would be equally misguided to think of them as representing great friends. Even during the Cold War, when it seemed more apparent than it does today that Western Europeans desperately needed American backing for their collective defense, there had never been a shortage of analysts wondering if France and the United States truly were on the same “page” when it came to coordinating the common defense. This is why during the long years of Soviet-American ideological struggle, relations between the United States and France could so routinely be characterized by the imagery of “reluctant” ally and “guarded friend” in what had degenerated into a “cold alliance.”<sup>16</sup>

Nor did the ending of the Cold War bring about positive change in the relationship. Instead, new strains appeared, once the old ones associated with combating the Soviet threat vanished. These new strains were even being regarded as more dangerous for intra-alliance amity than had been the older ones, if for no other reason than that the Cold War had constituted such a credible basis for holding the allies together.<sup>17</sup> With that superpower rivalry a thing of the past, the transatlantic allies might presumably be tempted to go their separate ways, and worst of all, to Washington, was that France looked only too eager to shepherd them on their pilgrimage.

By the early 1990s a more acerbic tone was becoming discernible in what passed for transatlantic dialogue, and to some France appeared to have gone on a footing of permanent opposition to the United States, reflected in the quixotic assertion of President François Mitterrand that “we are at war against America.”<sup>18</sup> In this increasingly poisonous atmosphere, it should have surprised no one that an American secretary of state could in 1992 bluntly put to his French counterpart the very undiplomatic question, “Is France for us or against us?”<sup>19</sup> Paris, suspect in Washington’s (and several other NATO capitals’) thinking for so many years, now grew even more worrisome, to the point that Thierry de Montbrial would exaggerate only slightly when he concluded in that same year that his country apparently had emerged as America’s new “public enemy number one.”<sup>20</sup>

Particularly bothersome, for those in Washington and some other allied capitals who continued to take inspiration from a common set of atlanticist values held to incarnate liberal democracy’s creedal and normative foundations, was the suspicion, solidifying during the 1990s and carrying down to today, that “realist” France had defected from universalistic western undertakings it had once espoused, and might be throwing itself into building an exclusionary Europe. This Europe, once constructed, would be bound to widen the distance separating France from America. As explained by one British scholar of strong atlanticist proclivities, there was a very thin line separating the ontological entity called “Not-America” from one that resembled “anti-America,” so thin that Americans might fail altogether to notice it. Because, continued Timothy Garton Ash, there was an unmistakable “Euro-Gaullist” model being flaunted on the

continent's ideational construction site, "Americans have not been wrong to see in France the political leader of Europe as Not-America."<sup>21</sup>

One contemporary term of art best summed up this new, French-conceived Europe: it was *autonomy*. It was hardly necessary in France to specify the identity of that "significant Other" without whom the dream of an autonomous Europe would lack all meaning. That Other was, and *had* to be, the United States. Nor were French analysts hesitant about making explicit the referent, should the occasion call for it.<sup>22</sup> By the close of the 1990s, such occasions were becoming more frequent than ever, and for many observers in the United States, more worrisome than ever.<sup>23</sup>

Tellingly, even during the Clinton administration which, in the glare of the dumpster fire that was the Trump interlude, has come to be recollected as some kind of Franco-American golden age, there had been French criticism of America. In many ways this outpouring resembled, and occasionally even surpassed, the criticisms of America that would be made during the Trump administration. True, although French observers did not find Bill Clinton to be personally repugnant in the manner of Donald Trump, they certainly did not regard Clinton's presidency as being notably "pro-French." Nor was it simply an elite perspective; opinion polls conducted in France in the Clinton years regularly revealed that more of that country's population had an unfavorable view of America than a favorable one.<sup>24</sup> Admittedly, the impulse to regard America as the country's foremost challenge would gather quite a head of steam under Clinton's successor, George W. Bush, who easily became such a *bête noire* for many French defense and security commentators that they could almost forget what had been annoying them about the Clinton administration.<sup>25</sup>

### From Bush and Obama to Trump

Alphonse Karr never meant his epigram about recurring tendencies to be taken literally, for while things in general (what I have been calling above the "structure" of Franco-American relations) may remain invariant, there has always been a great deal of shifting around of details within the general framework. And so it had been for the Franco-American tandem in the dozen or so years leading up to the election of Donald Trump. Three developments during those years attract our attention in this section, as they set the stage for the penultimate section's discussion of the collapse of Franco-American cordiality during the final two Trump years.

The first of these stage-setting events, of course, was the acrimonious dispute between the two countries occasioned by their different approaches to dealing with Saddam Hussein. Tension mounted in the autumn of 2002, as the administration of George W. Bush sought unsuccessfully to muster as broad a coalition against Iraq as his father had been able to put together between the summer of 1990, when Saddam Hussein occupied Kuwait, and early 1991, when his occupation was reversed, with the blessing of the UN Security Council and the injection of substantial American and allied military force. Much has been written about the Franco-American rift during the administration of George W. Bush, and there is no need to revisit it here.<sup>26</sup> Although it appeared to some that the tensions over Iraq would be the straw that eventually broke the Franco-American camel's back, managing in the process to drag down NATO as well,<sup>27</sup> things turned out otherwise, and the relationship managed to settle back into its

customary place of bounded rationality, bespeaking neither great friendship nor great animosity, but simply a willingness to cooperate when necessary, though not necessarily to cooperate very consistently or well.<sup>28</sup>

Thus the second important development in the dozen years leading up to Trump's election was the rapprochement that followed the Iraq dust-up. That improvement gathered momentum upon Nicolas Sarkozy's election as French president, which took place in May 2007, while George W. Bush still occupied the Oval Office.<sup>29</sup> The warming trend had actually begun a bit earlier, at the start of Bush's second term in office. It seemed as if it might continue uninterrupted for some time to come, as Sarkozy's election was followed a year and a half later by that of Barack Obama, who proved to be very popular with French and other European public opinion. Although French political elites and other pundits would shortly begin to worry about Obama's continued willingness to backstop European security, France's public welcomed the arrival in power of America's forty-fourth president, whom they took to be much more congenial than almost any of his predecessors.<sup>30</sup>

Observers in France were just as taken by surprise with Trump's victory in November 2016 as those elsewhere. But less evident than in other countries was any sense of alarm accompanying the surprise. Notwithstanding Obama's popularity among the public, the policy elites had been taking a dimmer view of his grand strategy, not least because of its ballyhooed "pivot to Asia."<sup>31</sup> This growing, if sotto voce, criticism of Obama constituted the third important development leading up to the election of Donald Trump. Briefly, the grand strategy of the Obama administration, or if one prefers, the "Obama Doctrine,"<sup>32</sup> was showing itself to be, insofar as concerned many analysts in France, too diffident when it came to this business of mounting interventions when necessary (such as in Libya, Syria, or the Sahel). Some chose to stylize the new U.S. grand strategy as being highlighted by "smart power."<sup>33</sup> Still others chose to stress the aspiration of "leading from behind" (LFB).<sup>34</sup> Often this latter label was applied contemptuously by domestic critics of the Obama administration, who sought to draw attention to what they considered to be its wrong, craven, and dangerous foreign policy. It was not difficult for the swelling number of critics in the United States itself to trace any number of misfortunes at the president's doorstep as a result of diffident method of leadership.<sup>35</sup>

So too were French observers growing more anxious about Obama's strategy. They were beginning to worry, not for the first time, about the durability of America's commitment to European security. These observers thought Obama to be too fixated on parts of the world other than Europe, or simply too fixated on "nation-building" at home.<sup>36</sup> As one French commentator observed, apropos the growing disenchantment of Americans with international leadership so evident during the 2016 campaign, there was a common thread linking such otherwise disparate members of America's political class as Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Bernie Sanders—and yes, even Barack Obama: all had been promoting the idea that America's role in the world needed to be reduced.<sup>37</sup>

### **The (Very) Odd Couple: Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump**

The French may not have swooned over the thought of Donald Trump occupying the Oval Office, but there was absolutely no reason for anyone in Paris to imagine that

the unexpected November 2016 election result need occasion any deterioration in the quality of the bilateral relationship since the Iraq war. There were several reasons for their relative insouciance at Trump's election. The first of these had been the nearly contemporaneous arrival in power of another political neophyte, Emmanuel Macron, who gained France's presidency a mere half year after Trump won America's, in May 2017. For a while, an expectation flourished that if any western leader could work with (i.e., "manage") Trump, it would be France's political *Wunderkind*. Macron began to be seen as the emergent "star" European interlocutor with, and partner for, America.<sup>38</sup> Best of all, he was no "Gaullist" bent on cutting down America by "soft" or any other kind of balancing behavior. To the contrary, he was being hailed in many quarters as the most atlanticist leader France had ever had.<sup>39</sup>

A second reason existed for the early optimism in France: not only was the youthful French leader determined to get on well with his older American counterpart, but—*mirabile dictu!*—it looked as if Donald Trump really took a shine to Macron. As Célia Belin noted in 2018, "[t]here 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."<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Trump took advantage of that fairly successful July 2017 visit to signal that he could be, as he had sometimes promised to be during his campaign, "presidential" if given the opportunity. His remarks in Paris were quite consistent with what one would expect any visiting American president to say. For someone who otherwise burned with a desire to distance himself from whatever his recent predecessors (especially Barack Obama) had ever said, done, or apparently even *thought* of doing, Trump showed himself to be quite content to parrot traditional diplomatic niceties such as the "old-ally" trope, as part of his lavishing of praise upon the French, while in Paris.<sup>41</sup>

The timing of that first visit had been especially fortuitous, because July 14, 2017, marked the hundredth anniversary of the sealing of World War I alliance between the United States, France, and Britain. The celebration came at a time when few other Western European leaders were evincing much of a desire to get close to Trump, and it provided Macron with an opportunity to work some personal magic with his American counterpart.<sup>42</sup> Though not because he was less committed than previous French leaders had been to the vision of greater European autonomy in security and defense; he simply thought he would be better able to promote that autonomy agenda if he had America's support and even blessing, instead of its opposition.

And this was the third reason for the early optimism about Macron's ability to work with Trump. By 2017, the planets in the European solar system seemed to be aligning in a way favoring France's interests. With Obama out of the picture and Trump now in it, Germany would no longer benefit from having the closest relationship of any European country with America's leader.<sup>43</sup> Not only this, but 2016 had also delivered another outcome favoring France: the pesky British had voted in June to take themselves out of the EU altogether! If this was not seen as an unmixed blessing by the French, it nevertheless did have some beneficial aspects, as it would enhance the relative significance of their voice in European as well as (presumably) transatlantic

councils. These two developments, coupled with the rise of nationalism and “illiberal” democracy within much of Europe (and not just the continent’s easterly reaches), accounted for what some observers dubbed Macron’s “gamble.”<sup>44</sup> It was a gamble whose chances of paying off required good relations with Trump, which if they could be arranged were expected to pay dividends for France’s diplomatic image in Europe and elsewhere.

For a while, the gamble looked to be succeeding. Not only had Trump expressed his fondness for Macron, but he also seemed to be signaling in 2017 a willingness for the United States to play a less central role in Europe than had been, prior to the Obama years at least, the norm for most of the post-World War II decades. This was certainly how French observers read the American president’s comments at the NATO summit in Brussels that had taken place nearly two months prior to Trump’s Bastille Day trip. That summit late in May featured some sharp discussions concerning the allies’ collective-defense obligations (their “article 5” commitments), suggesting to European leaders that President Trump might be less than fully committed to their security and defense, and might possibly even be coming to regard the EU as something of a rival to America.<sup>45</sup> The same sense of American “disengagement” was perceived at the G-7 summit, which took place a couple of days later in Taormina, Sicily. It was not entirely a pleasant perception, for some Europeans were beginning to convince themselves that the Trump administration’s transatlantic policy reflected not just a lack of interest in European integration, but a disdain for it. All the more reason, then, for Macron to cultivate good relations with Trump, to enable him to steer the autonomy project in the least disruptive manner. Besides, for all the unsubtlety that characterized Trump’s hectoring of the Europeans to spend more on defense, the message itself was not unwelcome to Macron, who had himself been engaging in similar, albeit politer, messaging of his own, encouraging the Europeans to develop a “strategic culture,” which would entail their becoming much more serious about spending on defense.<sup>46</sup>

So what went wrong with Macron’s cultivation of Trump? To borrow an expression Irving Kristol, the American Trotskyite-turned-neoconservative, used when speaking of his own political trajectory, the Macron-Trump bromance got “mugged by reality.”<sup>47</sup> Increasingly erratic and sometimes downright boorish behavior on the part of Trump throughout the remainder of 2017 raised eyebrows in the Elysée, as elsewhere; but the wheels only really fell off the Franco-American cart toward the middle of 2018, following the Trump administration’s decision to pull out of the Iranian nuclear deal. By this time, it was clear in Paris that Donald Trump was going to be a challenge not even Macron could handle. The abandonment of the Iranian deal was taken as a personal affront by the French and other Europeans who were becoming convinced that when Trump sang the praises of bilateralism and “transactionalism” in diplomacy, and denigrated multilateralism, he was in earnest.<sup>48</sup>

Coming at roughly the same time as the Trump administration was imposing tariffs on imports of aluminum and steel from European countries (and Canada) on “national security” [!] grounds, it was growing obvious to everyone that this American president was “not for turning.” He was not going to be cajoled or convinced into recanting his denunciations of multilateralism.<sup>49</sup> By the summer of 2018, the new tone in relations had been cemented, with nearly everyone accepting that the Macronian gamble was not going to pan out.<sup>50</sup>



What demonstrated more than any other act this new, more critical French outlook on Trump was a remarkable tongue-lashing Macron delivered, not against the American president directly, but against NATO. This came in the form of a November 2019 interview Macron granted to his most enthusiastic cheerleader in the world's English-language press, the *Economist*. In that interview, Macron doubled down on the need for the Europeans to take more seriously than ever before their autonomy in security and defense matters, because they could no longer count on the U.S. backstopping them, through NATO. The alliance, said Macron, was suffering from "brain-death." As a result, the Europeans needed to wake up and realize that they were sitting "on the edge of a precipice." They had no other choice but to "reassess the reality of what NATO is in light of the commitment of the United States" (i.e., in light of Donald Trump).<sup>51</sup>

Macron's comments disturbed fellow European leaders, more for the words than for the thoughts the words were conveying. Even Donald Trump took offense, seeing in Macron's verbiage reason to *defend* NATO! Turning to his well-thumbed thesaurus to find just the right denunciatory adverbs and adjectives, Trump lashed out at the "very, very nasty" words Macron had uttered about NATO. Not only was NATO in excellent cerebral health, but it had even ceased being the "obsolete" entity Trump *himself* had so often said it was; for now, thanks entirely to his own leadership, NATO "serves a great purpose."<sup>52</sup>

## CONCLUSION

By the time his administration jolted to its end, Trump had worn down the French, who showed themselves as irritated by his behavior as were people nearly everywhere; there was only so much rudeness and double-dealing that could be tolerated, on the part of the leader one French critic dubbed "the man of 20,000 lies."<sup>53</sup> So in this regard, Joe Biden has an easy act to follow. That does not mean, however, that all will be "well" in the long-running melodrama that is the France-U.S. special relationship. It only means that the damage inflicted by Trump will be reparable, such that we have every reason to expect to see a return to the "normal" state of affairs. Of course, that normal state never did display any excess of camaraderie, but was rather characterized by the kind of suboptimal cooperation that has flowed inexorably from the bounded rationality of their interaction.

Troubling signs can already be glimpsed on the transatlantic horizon, ones that will have direct bearing upon the Franco-American special relationship. For starters, there is Macron's stated willingness to try to foster closer EU cooperation with Russia at a time when the United States under Biden, along with other western countries, has been showing every sign of hardening positions toward Moscow.<sup>54</sup> Then there is the even bigger issue of China, with which the EU, in a move hardly calculated to impress favorably the incoming Biden administration, signed an investment agreement a few weeks prior to inauguration day in January 2021—an agreement one Berlin-based analyst rightly described as a "geopolitical coup" for Xi Jinping.<sup>55</sup> Finally, there is Alphonse Karr, for notwithstanding what will likely be a more dulcet tone to Franco-American diplomatic dialoguing, especially when the sweeter words are being

delivered by a perfectly bilingual secretary of state like Anthony Blinken, the two countries are going to find it all too easy to tumble once again into bickering over the meaning and consequences of autonomy.

Thus to Alain Frachon's above-mentioned quip about Trump as Europe's obstetrician, we can add a second ironic comment. Biden will be less of a gift for those Europeans in quest of the holy grail of autonomy than they might imagine him to be. His pledge that "America is back," even more than Trump's transactionalism, spells trouble for that quest, so much so that we can expect to see taking shape a sustained campaign on Washington's part to extract the European allies as much as possible from France's geopolitical gravitational field.

Plus ça change, indeed.

## NOTES

1. E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1939).

2. It appeared in the January 1849 number of his monthly review, *Les Guêpes*.

3. Though there is one aspect of the 1848 events that seems more than apposite, after the Trump *Putsch* attempt of January 6, 2021; it was captured in one historian's description of the publicity campaign that had been mounted against the republican cause by the French government, whose Big Lie was being aimed at rallying a "downtrodden and uneducated population, at illiterates who would believe any slanders that were uttered by those above them." Georges Duvau, *1848: The Making of a Revolution*, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 81.

4. Alain Frachon, "Donald Trump a révélé aux Européens le monde tel qu'il est: une affaire de rapports de force," *Le Monde*, 17 December 2020, available at [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/12/17/trump-a-revele-aux-europeens-le-monde-tel-qu-il-est-une-affaire-de-rapports-de-force\\_6063747\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/12/17/trump-a-revele-aux-europeens-le-monde-tel-qu-il-est-une-affaire-de-rapports-de-force_6063747_3232.html).

5. David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt, "Biden Signals Break with Trump Foreign Policy in a Wide-Ranging State Dept. Speech," *New York Times*, 4 February 2021; available at [https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/04/us/politics/biden-foreign-policy.html?campaign\\_id=2&emc=edit\\_th\\_20210205&instance\\_id=26786&nl=todaysheadlines&regi\\_id=62171838&segment\\_id=51046&user\\_id=23a0e0df85dc5b50fc649eea833dabd0](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/04/us/politics/biden-foreign-policy.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20210205&instance_id=26786&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=62171838&segment_id=51046&user_id=23a0e0df85dc5b50fc649eea833dabd0).

6. Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer, "L'Europe doit l'admettre, le Trumpisme survivra à Trump," *Le Monde*, 13 November 2017, p. 2.

7. Jonathan Kirshner, "Gone but Not Forgotten: Trump's Long Shadow and the End of American Credibility," *Foreign Affairs* 100 (March/April 2021): 18–26, quote at p. 26.

8. A useful metric for gauging the quality of ties between the United States and its European allies is the "transatlantic scorecard" published quarterly by the Brookings Institution's Center on the United States and Europe (CUSE), as part of a transatlantic initiative it cosponsors with the Robert Bosch Foundation, in Germany. Quarterly scorecards issued throughout the Trump years regularly attested to a strong consensus that transatlantic relations could benefit greatly from an upgrade. These quarterly scorecards are available at [https://www.brookings.edu/research/trans-atlantic-scorecard-april-2020/?utm\\_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=86981260](https://www.brookings.edu/research/trans-atlantic-scorecard-april-2020/?utm_campaign=Brookings%20Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=86981260).

9. Bill Grantham, "America the Menace: France's Feud with Hollywood," *World Policy Journal* 15 (Summer 1998): 58–65, quote at p. 58.

10. Jean Guisnel, *Les Pires Amis du monde: Les relations franco-américaines à la fin du XXe siècle* (Paris: Stock, 1999).
11. Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man – Social and Rational: Mathematical Essays on Rational Human Behavior* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1957).
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17. As argued in Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and the New World Order* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), pp. 29–31.
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19. James Baker to Roland Dumas, quoted in Emil Bölte, “Zwischen Paris und Washington geht zur Zeit kaum etwas,” *General-Anzeiger* (Bonn), 30 May 1992, p. 2.
20. Thierry de Montbrial, “La France est-elle ‘l’ennemie numéro 1’ des États-Unis?” *Le Figaro*, 16 June 1992, p. 3.
21. Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World: America, Europe, and the Surprising Future of the West* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 59.
22. For example, see Pierre Biarnès, *Le XXIe siècle ne sera pas américain* (Paris: Éd. du Rocher, 1998). Also see Jean-Marie Guéhenno, “Américanisation du monde ou mondialisation de l’Amérique?” *Politique étrangère* 64 (Spring 1999): 7–20.
23. See William Pfaff, “The Coming Clash of Europe with America,” *World Policy Journal* 15 (Winter 1998/99): 1–9.
24. See Richard Kuisel, “The Gallic Rooster Crows Again: The Paradox of French Anti-Americanism,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 19 (Fall 2001): 1–16; as well as Gilles Delafon and Thomas Sancton, *Dear Jacques, Cher Bill: Au cœur de l’Élysée et de la Maison Blanche, 1995-1999* (Paris: Plon, 1999), pp. 351–52. For examples of downright hostile assessments of America published during the Clinton years, see Edward Behr, *Une Amérique qui fait peur* (Paris: Plon, 1995); Viviane Forrester, *L’Horreur économique* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); Michel Bugnon-Mordant, *L’Amérique totalitaire: Les États-Unis et la maîtrise du monde* (Paris: Favre, 1998); and Patrick Gofman, *Le Cauchemar américain* (Lausanne: L’Âge d’homme, 2000).
25. See Richard Kuisel, “What Do the French Think of Us? The Deteriorating Image of the United States, 2000-2004,” *French Politics, Culture & Society* 22 (Fall 2004): 91–119; as well as Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, *America Is Back: Les Nouveaux Césars du Pentagone* (Paris: Bayard, 2003).

26. The best source on the impact of Iraq upon Franco-American relations is Frédéric Bozo, *A History of the Iraq Crisis: France, the United States, and Iraq, 1991–2003*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Washington and New York: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Columbia University Press, 2017).

27. See Elizabeth Pond, *Friendly Fire: The Near-Death of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press/European Union Studies Association, 2004). Similarly reflecting the alarmist mood at the time is Pierre Melandri, “L’unilatéralisme, stade suprême de l’exceptionnalisme?” *Le Débat*, no. 127 (November–December 2003), pp. 21–45; and Patrick Jarreau, Sylvie Kauffmann, and Corine Lesnes, “Paris–Washington: les dessous d’une rupture,” *Le Monde*, 27 March 2003, pp. 12–13.

28. Two analysts, referring to that customary resting place, have called the United States and France, “foul-weather friends.” See Michel Fortmann and Hélène Viau, “A Model Ally? France and the US During the Kosovo Crisis of 1998–99,” in *The France-US Leadership Race: Closely Watched Allies*, ed. David G. Haglund (Kingston, ON: Queen’s Quarterly, 2000), pp. 87–110, quote at p. 97. Also see on the theme of sticking together when times get tough, Michel Tatu, “France–États-Unis: Pour le meilleure et pour le pire,” *Politique internationale*, no. 75 (Spring 1997), pp. 321–32; and Jean d’Ormesson, “Nos amis américains,” *Revue des Deux Mondes* 145 (January 1974): 3–11.

29. See Frédéric Bozo, “France and NATO Under Sarkozy: End of the French Exception?” *FIP Working Paper* (Paris: Fondation pour l’Innovation Politique, March 2008). Commented one analyst during the Obama years, “critics of Obama like Dick Cheney and John Bolton really are criticizing him for following the path laid out by Bush in his last three years in office.” Robert Jervis, “Do Leaders Matter and How Would We Know?” *Security Studies* 22 (April 2013): 153–79, quote at p. 178.

30. For instance, a poll conducted by the German Marshall Fund in July 2009 revealed that 77 percent of Europeans (as opposed to 57% of Americans) had a favorable opinion of Obama.

31. See J. C. Casanova, “Le temps est venu pour l’Europe de s’émanciper des États-Unis,” *Le Monde*, 17 November 2009, p. 21; and Roger Cohen, “Obama in His Labyrinth,” *International Herald Tribune*, 24 November 2009, p. 9.

32. Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

33. See Maya Kandel and Maud Quessard-Salvaing, eds., *Les Stratégies du Smart Power Américain: Redéfinir le leadership dans un monde post-Américain*, Études de l’IRSEM, no. 32 (Paris: Ministère de la Défense/Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l’École Militaire, 2014).

34. See Omer Aziz and David G. Haglund, “An ‘Obama Doctrine’?” in *Perspectives on Presidential Leadership: An International View of the White House*, ed. Michael Patrick Cul-  
linane and Clare Elliott (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 211–29.

35. See, for instance, the sarcastically titled critique penned by former Obama supporter, Vali Nasr, *The Dispensable Nation: American Foreign Policy in Retreat* (New York: Doubleday, 2013). The sarcasm inheres in Nasr’s paraphrase of Madeleine Albright’s well-known assertion about American exceptionalism, made while the secretary of state was being interviewed on NBC’s “Today” show in February 1998, some ten months before Operation Desert Fox was unleashed against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq: “[I]f we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us.” In fact, Albright was merely repeating a phrase used by President Bill Clinton the year before, in his second inaugural address in January 1997: “America stands alone as the world’s indispensable nation.” Quoted in Robert J. Lieber, *Power and Willpower in the American Future: Why the United States Is Not Destined to Decline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 67. Also see, for



a commentator blaming Brexit on Obama [!], John Kornblum, “Amerexit,” *American Interest* 12 (September/October 2016): 32–39.

36. For reflections of this concern, exacerbated by worry about an Obama “pivot to Asia” redounding negatively for European interests, see Arnaud Leparmentier and Corine Lesnes, “Les Européens ébranlés par l’indifférence d’Obama,” *Le Monde*, 4 February 2010, pp. 1, 6; and Maud Quessard and Maya Kandel, eds., *Les États-Unis et la fin de la grande stratégie? Un bilan de la politique étrangère d’Obama* (Paris: Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l’École Militaire, 2017). Also see Frédéric Charillon and Célia Belin, eds., *Les États-Unis dans le monde* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2016).

37. Maya Kandel, *Les États-Unis et le monde, de George Washington à Donald Trump* (Paris: Perrin, 2018), pp. 174–75.

38. See, for this sense of great expectations, Emile Simpson, “Macron the Conqueror,” *FP*, 18 January 2018; available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2018/01/18/macron-the-conqueror/>.

39. For one particularly enthusiastic endorsement, see Ronald Tiersky, “Macron’s World: How the New President Is Remaking France,” *Foreign Affairs* 97 (January/February 2018): 87–96. Also favorably taking the measure of the French president is William Drozdiak, *The Last President of Europe: Emmanuel Macron’s Race to Revive France and Save the World* (New York: Public Affairs/Hachette, 2020).

40. See Célia Belin, *Balancing Act: The Limits of Pragmatism in the Franco-American Relationship and the Way Forward* (Washington: Brookings Institution/Robert Bosch Foundation Transatlantic Initiative, October 2018), p. 2.

41. Maggie Haberman and Mark Landler, “In Paris, Trump Stands by His Son, and Praises Macron,” *New York Times*, 14 July 2017, p. A15.

42. Tara McKelvey, “Trump and Macron: An Unlikely Friendship Is Born,” *BBC News Online*, 14 July 2017; available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-40613719>.

43. Former Obama advisor, Benjamin J. Rhodes, recalls poignantly in his newly published book, *The World as It Is: A Memoir of the Obama White House* (New York: Random House, 2018), the sorrow felt both by Obama and Merkel subsequent to the November 2016 election. “When they parted for the final time, Ms. Merkel had a single tear in her eye. ‘She’s all alone,’ Mr. Obama noted.” Peter Baker, “How Election Shook Obama,” *New York Times International Edition*, 1 June 2018, p. 5.

44. Natalie Nougayrède, “France’s Gamble: As America Retreats, Macron Steps Up,” *Foreign Affairs* 96 (September/October 2017): 2–8. Also see Célia Belin, “The Macron/Trump Co-Dependency,” 18 September 2017; available at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/09/18/the-macrontrump-co-dependency/>.

45. Jeremy Diamond, “Trump Scolds NATO Allies over Defense Spending,” *CNN Online*, 27 May 2017; available at <http://www.cnn.com/2017/05/25/politics/trump-nato-financial-payments/index.html>.

46. “Le discours de Macron sur l’Europe divise la presse européenne,” *Libération*, 27 September 2017; available at [http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/09/27/le-discours-de-macron-sur-l-europe-divise-la-presse-europeenne\\_1599294](http://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/09/27/le-discours-de-macron-sur-l-europe-divise-la-presse-europeenne_1599294); and Arthur Berdah, “Ce qu’il faut retenir des premier vœux aux Français d’Emmanuel Macron,” *Le Figaro*, 1 January 2018; available at <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2017/12/31/25001-20171231ARTFIG00096-ce-qu-i-l-faut-retenir-des-premiers-voeux-aux-francais-d-emmanuel-macron.php>.

47. Quoted in Douglas Murray, “A Liberal Mugged by Reality,” *Spectator*; available at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/-a-liberal-mugged-by-reality->.

48. On Trump’s preference for “transactionalism” as his diplomatic modus operandi, see David G. Haglund, “America’s Surprisingly ‘Constrained’ Presidency: Implications for Transatlantic Relations,” in *Alliances and Power Politics in the Trump Era: America in Retreat?*, ed.



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50. Marc Semo, “Macron, les limites d’une diplomatie jupitérienne,” *Le Monde*, 20–22 May 2018, pp. 12–13; Adam Nossiter, “Trump’s Best Buddy? It Doesn’t Play Well in France,” *New York Times International Edition*, 19–20 May 2018, p. 3.

51. Quoted in “A Continent in Peril,” *Economist*, 9 November 2019, p. 9.

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