



The U.S. and France: The Renewal of an Enduring Alliance

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Paris, France
October 31, 2007

Thank you for that kind introduction, Mr. President [American University President Gerardo della Paolera], I am happy to be back in Paris, here at the American University. The American University in Paris is one of the premier American institutions of learning in Europe. Let me thank former U.S. ambassador to France, Howard Leach, for his leadership and friendship. I must confess to some bias on this matter since my daughter, Sarah, graduated from here in 2005. AUP is unquestionably one of the most important American institutions in France, especially in connecting young Americans to this great country.

Forty years ago, a group of American and French leaders built this institution on a vision that our two democracies must always stay tied to each other. Congratulations to AUP for having become one of the strongest bridges uniting our two countries.

Americans understand and value a basic fact of our 231-year history – France is our oldest and in many ways best friend in the world. The fate of our two countries has long been intertwined. Revolutionary America and Revolutionary France were born of the great ideas of the 18th century Enlightenment. France was America's first ally when we fought to liberate ourselves from the British Empire. Our most famous painting in the U.S. Capitol depicts General Benjamin Lincoln accepting Cornwallis' sound of surrender at Yorktown. We would have never have triumphed in that epic and climactic battle had the French artillery not marched with us to assault British lines and the French fleet not blockaded Yorktown harbor. In America's most critical hour of need, France was there for us. History is not so dim and obscure that we can easily forget this great act of friendship.

Nor will any American whose family emigrated to the United States ever forget France's late nineteenth century tribute and gift of the Statue of Liberty that captures in its grace and dignity our essential national story – people from all over the world seeking refuge, opportunity, hope.

And we Americans have tried to respond in kind. In April 1917, President Woodrow Wilson asked one million American soldiers to cross the Atlantic to turn the tide of the great war in favor of the Allies and just over two decades later our greatest modern President Franklin Roosevelt launched the D-Day invasion to help win back French dignity and independence.

Never more were our fates more intertwined than in the twentieth century, when our countries fought on the same side in two world wars and then during the long struggle to defeat Communism.

As Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner reminded us when he visited Washington in September, what the U.S. and France sometimes find frustrating about each other are not our differences but the things that we have in common, the fact that we are so much alike. Like siblings, we can – and do - quarrel. We had a great disagreement when President Charles de Gaulle removed France from NATO's Integrated Military Command Structure in 1966. When I was a student at the Sorbonne thirty years ago, we didn't always see eye to eye on the great issues of that day – the advent of Euro Communism, the role of human rights in foreign policy. We have an old and certain friendship that allows us to speak frankly and honestly as friends.

Our relationship has had trying days but, even during the most trying, we have found ourselves ultimately on the same side of the big issues.

Take our recent differences over Iraq in which I participated as American Ambassador to NATO in 2002-2003. That was a dark and lamentable period in our relationship. With the perspective of four years, I hope those Americans who re-named French fries into "Freedom Fries" and who poured perfectly good Bordeaux down American drains regret such ill advised actions. And, I suspect that those French citizens who painted Americans in dark and forbidding colors regret such a harsh and unforgiving judgment.

Even through our most heated moments, we continued to work closely together at NATO to combat terrorism in Europe and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Iran, to build stability in the Balkans, to build peace in Lebanon, and to combat the Taliban and build a stable, constitutional democracy in Afghanistan.

We managed to survive that memorably in these few years and the bridges across the Atlantic that shook and even threatened to come down were reinforced and then strengthened by the wisdom of perspective and forgiveness. As we meet here in Paris at the close of an eventful year, the Franco-American friendship and Alliance is secure and strong and vital once again. We are most definitely entering a dynamic new era in U.S.-France relations, one that is full of potential and positive energy. From a global perspective, we have no more vital ally on the great issues of our time – climate change, Darfur, Burma, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq – than France. To paraphrase Robert Graves, we have indeed said, "good-bye to all that" from 2002 to 2003. And we are now back on track in the relationship.

Much of this energy and hope is due to the good will and leadership of President Nicholas Sarkozy. We New Englanders were thrilled to see him spend his summer holiday in the heart of Red Sox Nation in Lake Winnepesake, New Hampshire. We have admired his steadfastness and clarity of vision on Iran, Afghanistan, and the Trans-Atlantic Relationship.

We are thus very much looking forward to President Sarkozy's visit to Washington next week, when President Bush and President Sarkozy will have the opportunity to discuss a number of vital issues at the White House and Mount Vernon. I believe he will be received by our President and Congress with real enthusiasm and friendship.

President Sarkozy's forward looking vision for France's role in the world has generated a great deal of positive energy in our bilateral relationship. He wants to modernize and strengthen France – and a modern, strong France will be a great partner for the United States – bilaterally, within NATO, and in our U.S.-EU relationship. The United States welcomes France's renewed commitment to work together to find common solutions to common problems. And we are ready to meet France every step of the way. We believe a stronger relationship with France is the keystone in a stronger transatlantic relationship.

Our U.S.-France Alliance begins and ends with a dynamic European Union, and a NATO that effectively meets the security challenges of the 21st century. The United States shares France's support for an engaged European Union, and welcomes France's expressions of support for a strong NATO. We are very pleased that President Sarkozy has explicitly stressed that the EU and NATO must be complementary institutions. And look forward to working with him to build a new, stronger Trans-Atlantic partnership.

Our friendship can help to ensure that Europe and the U.S. continue to work together. In September, the German Marshall Fund released a report that showed that Americans and Europeans agree on what the major threats in the world are today. Large majorities of those polled also said they want to see Europe and the United States act together to tackle the world's problems.

Given this convergence, there are many things Europe and America should be able to accomplish together in 2008, led by the U.S. and France. Here are our major priorities:

In **Afghanistan**, France and all the members of NATO are contributing to NATO's International Security Assistance Force. This is an essential mission for peace in South Asia and it may continue for many years to come. We welcome France's recent announcement to send an additional mentoring and training team of 50 soldiers to support NATO forces in southern Afghanistan. This is a tangible demonstration of France's commitment to NATO and its willingness to come to the aid of an ally. We appreciate it and hope all our Allies will consider making similar commitments.

NATO faces an existential challenge in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the U.S., UK, Canada, the Netherlands are shouldering nearly all the burden in facing the Taliban and Al-Qaida in the South and East of the country. We need greater leadership and more substantial military contributions from NATO's West European Allies to promote a sustained and effective NATO mission.

We also appreciate French leadership in the EU's decision to help train Afghan police. The EU, along with the United States, provides substantial reconstruction and development assistance in Afghanistan. While there is still a long way to go, our commitment should not falter. We have accomplished a great deal. We have witnessed a nation's emergence from the brutal Taliban regime. The Afghan economy is growing. There is a constitution. There is an elected government. We must continue to help strengthen the Afghan state, support its institutions and build on the security and reconstruction already in place.

Iran is a major issue in our relationship. Last week, the U.S. announced new financial sanctions against Iran's government agencies and banks that finance the nuclear industry and Iran's supply of arms to the Middle East's most vicious terrorist groups – Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Taliban. These sanctions are designed to strengthen a faltering, international diplomatic effort to deny Iran a nuclear capability. They are designed to help diplomacy succeed and to avoid a situation in the future where we are left with only one option. Conflict with Iran is not inevitable. It is not desirable. We wish, instead, to see negotiations succeed. We wish a peaceful outcome of this dispute. But only strong diplomacy will get us there.

I will meet with my French, British, German, Russian, and Chinese colleagues in London this Friday to negotiate the elements of a third UN Security Council Chapter VII sanctions resolution.

This is a time of testing for all of us who wish to work diplomatically and peacefully to convince Iran to forgo a nuclear capability. We need to pass a third UN Security Council resolution against Iran. But, we also need to see complimentary and supportive efforts such as those sanctions announced the U.S. last week. We hope very much that the European Union will adopt strong measures in the next thirty days. We hope Japan, South Korea, and the Gulf Arab states will consider the same type of sanctions. Most of all, we hope Russia and China will now act to meet their UN commitments to diminish their own trade with Iran, stop arms sales to Iran, and join us in a third resolution.

We are also working together on the historic effort to produce a peace between Israel and the Palestinian people. The United States will host later this year a meeting in Annapolis, Maryland aimed at helping to advance a peace settlement. The United States and France share a vision of a democratic Palestinian state, and a democratic Israel, living side by side in peace and security, and are working together toward this goal.

Let us not forget **Iraq**. Although the French government at the time disagreed with the U.S. decision to go into Iraq, today we share common goals for Iraq: a stable, secure, democratic society, with territorial integrity, a growing economy, and no dependence on foreign forces for its long-term security. Helping the Iraqi government achieve these objectives is extremely difficult, dangerous work given the number of armed groups aiming to stop such progress. But the Iraqi people deserve help, and we all must act in whatever ways we can to support them. This is the purpose behind the Iraq neighbors conference to be held later this week in Istanbul, which both Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Kouchner will attend for our respective governments.

In Burma, the world is watching a courageous fight for freedom to unfold. As Foreign Minister Kouchner's visit highlighted, the international community needs to keep the spotlight focused on the Burmese regime. We support increased engagement by the United Nations in Burma. We advocate for tougher sanctions on Burmese regime, including by the European Union.

Closer to home, in Europe, France and Europe are both trying to find a solution to the question of **Kosovo's** future status, and this is an area where President Sarkozy has already had an impact. Following his proposal at the G8 Summit, we have launched a final, 130-day effort to reach an agreement between the parties. A U.S./EU/Russia negotiating Troika has launched a final round of negotiations that will end on December 10, and we hope that the parties will find an agreement on Kosovo's future.

Our view is that the Ahtisaari plan that calls for supervised independence for Kosovo is the only outcome compatible with long term stability in the Balkans. The future of Kosovo is the key piece of unfinished business in the region. When this process is completed, the region will finally be able to look forward to a future based on peace, democracy, market economy, rising prosperity, and integration into NATO and the European Union.

Our countries are also working beyond Europe on the global stage. **Climate change** is a major concern for all of us. Just last week, President Sarkozy launched an ambitious new program of environmental initiatives in France. The United States is also focused on the need for an effective global response to the challenge posed to all of the Earth's inhabitants by Climate Change. Last month, President Bush and Secretary Rice convened the first Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change at the State Department in the United States. It presented an opportunity for participants to share their perspectives on a way forward after Kyoto, and to commit to the global efforts underway to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The United States, a major economy and therefore major emitter, takes this issue very seriously. As Secretary Rice has said, "It is our responsibility as global leaders to forge a new international consensus on how to address climate change."

This comprehensive dialogue brought together government, industry, and the NGO community in an effort to bolster the development of clean energy technologies. We will continue to work together on this issue within the United Nations and its Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Our work as partners in multilateral forums like NATO and the United Nations Security Council succeeds because the U.S. and France, and Europe, share common goals and values that bind us together. There will, of course, be differences between us. Friends do not always agree. As President Sarkozy himself said, "I feel free to express our agreements and disagreements forthrightly and candidly – precisely because I fully embrace the fact that France is a friend and an ally of the United States." We Americans could not agree more.

Let's continue the dialogue. Let's keep working together. This is the spirit which has sustained our alliance for two centuries, and that will continue to motivate and guide us for the years and decades to come. Thank you.

Released on November 2, 2007

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