
MACRON STUNS US CONGRESS WITH STRONG REBUKE OF TRUMPISM

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French President Emmanuel Macron urged the United States to embrace multilateralism and warned of the perils of trade war and extreme nationalism in an address to Congress on Wednesday (25 April), pushing back against Donald Trump's America First agenda.

The French leader's feisty speech to lawmakers was a dramatic twist near the end of a three-day visit that had showcased his warm personal relationship with Trump, despite the gulf between their visions of world affairs.

The two presidents had literally embraced each other, repeatedly talking up their much-vaunted friendship during the trip, but in his speech to Congress Macron rigorously pushed back against Trump's trade, climate and non-proliferation policies.

We can build the 21st century world order based on a new breed of multilateralism, based on a more effective, accountable, and result-oriented multilateralism, Macron said, defending the rule-based world order.

Trump has threatened to tear up international trade deals, scorns the United Nations, accuses US allies of not pulling their weight, intends to walk away from the Paris climate accord and hates dealing with transnational bodies like the European Union.

But Macron, who one day earlier had appeared hand-in-hand with Trump at the White House, received applause from the US leaders' domestic Democratic opponents by calling for strong multilateralism and avoiding an isolationist approach akin to closing the door to the world.

No progress on trade?

The United States is the one who invented this multilateralism. You're the ones now who have to help to preserve and reinvent it, he said, in a tacit nod to Trump's efforts to shake off international shackles.

In doing so, he flipped the script of the trip – the Trump White House's first full state visit – which was until now dominated by intimate images of the French and US first couples planting trees, exchanging kisses and socializing.

Transatlantic political reality reasserted itself Wednesday, however, as Macron — speaking in an accented but increasingly confident English — recalled the glories of past US-French cooperation.

Trumps trade sanctions against European steel and aluminium will enter into force in the coming weeks unless Trump agrees to sign a waiver. Despite his affection for Macron, he has not yet said he will do so.

Macron hit back.

We need a free and fair trade, for sure, Macron said. A commercial war opposing allies is not consistent with our mission, with our history, with our current commitments for global security.

No progress on Iran?

Together with Trump, Macron called Tuesday for a new deal with Tehran, but made clear to lawmakers that France would not be walking away from the existing accord.

Macron told Congress that the 2015 deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), was not perfect but must remain in place until a replacement was forged.

This agreement may not address all concerns, Macron said. But we should not abandon it without having something substantial and more substantial instead. Thats my position.

Before heading home, Macron acknowledged he expected Trump to pull out of the deal, based on his long opposition to it.

I dont know what the American decision will be, but the rational analysis of all President Trumps statements does not lead me to believe that he will do everything to stay in the JCPOA, Macron said at a final news conference.

He also told a group of U.S. reporters that if Trump pulls out, it will be for domestic reasons.

Trump has also warned he may not renew sanctions waivers on Iran next month, which would effectively torpedo the 2015 nuclear deal, a triumph of multilateral diplomacy.

Macron has more sympathy than perhaps any other foreign leader for Trumps arguments that the deal falls short of sealing off Irans alleged quest for a nuclear weapon — which the French leader vowed before lawmakers that Tehran would not be allowed to possess.

Not now. Not in five years. Not in 10 years. Never, he said.

Uncomfortable moments

Several Democrats said they were impressed by Macrons impassioned call for US engagement on multiple fronts, particularly on climate change and Iran.

House Democrat Adam Schiff judged that Macron had offered more of a direct contradiction of the president than I was expecting.

There were more than a few uncomfortable moments on the GOP side of the aisle, he told AFP.

Macrons words, often at odds with Trump policy, brought Democrats to their feet several times during the speech, with at least one lawmaker shouting Vive la France!

But Republican Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy said he didnt feel Macron had rebuked his host.

He said in there that he believes in free and fair trade. Thats exactly what the president asked for, McCarthy said.

Macrons provocative speech came after he enjoyed an exuberant welcome from the Republican president — an elaborate state dinner, an intimate get together for four with their wives at George Washingtons Virginia estate Mount Vernon, and repeated vows of friendship.

The 40-year-old French leader spoke at length of how deep, how strong, and how intense the relationship is between our two countries, and marveled at the unforeseen rapport he has forged with the 71-year-old Trump.

But while the bromance has provided plenty of material for late night TV comedy, the key question is whether Macron can translate the privileged relationship into concrete results — be it on trade, Iran or the climate.

After his Congress speech, Macron addressed students at George Washington University, where he pledged to help win peace in Syria by defeating Islamic State extremists in the war-scarred nation.

He also spoke of the tremendous challenge facing Americas younger generation as it grapples with global issues like climate change and geo-politics, but offered words of encouragement.

At the end of the day you will be the one to decide, he said.

Kaynak/Source: