

Europe speech.

Prime Minister,
President of the National Assembly,
Ministers,
Commissioner,
Members of the National Assembly and Senate,
Members of the European Parliament,
Prosecutor-General,
Armed Forces Chief of Staff,
Regional Prefect,
Mayor,
Rector,
Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Seven years after the Sorbonne speech, I wanted to come here, to this same place, to come back over our achievements and talk about our future. Our European future, but, by definition, the future of France. They cannot be addressed separately.

Right here, in September 2017, I said that, all too often our Europe no longer wanted to act, or proposed to act, out of either fatigue or conformism. The European spirit was left to those who attacked it.

We proposed to build a more united, more sovereign and more democratic Europe. More united, to assert ourselves among the other powers and in light of the century's transitions; more sovereign, so as not to have our destiny, our values and our ways of life imposed by others; and more democratic, because Europe is the birthplace of liberal democracy, in which its peoples decide for themselves. I set a horizon to take stock of achievements: seven years. And here we are. And we must be clear-sighted: we have not succeeded everywhere, particularly when it has come to making our Europe more democratic. It is clear that progress has been limited on this point, sometimes out of timorousness when it comes to treaty change and to changing our rules and collective organization. And while there have been some innovations in this area, an important Conference on the Future of Europe has been held and reflections conducted, we have not gone far enough.

But there have been successes, particularly in terms of unity and sovereignty, which were not a given. Europe has come through crises, also unprecedented, in this time. Brexit, of course, and we have since seen the damaging effects of this deflagration. And as a result, as I have seen, is that nobody really dares to call for an exit from Europe or the Euro anymore.

There has been the pandemic, the sudden return of death to our lives, and the war in Ukraine, the return of the tragic to our everyday lives and an existential risk for our continent.

But despite all that, and in a context that has always, in recent years, been marked by acceleration of the environmental and technological transitions that are totally shaking up how we live and how we produce, our Europe has been decisive and has moved forwards. And this concept, which, seven years ago, might have seemed very French – sovereignty – has gradually taken route across Europe. And despite this unprecedented accumulation of crises, Europe has rarely made so much progress, which is the fruit of our collective work. And that is thanks to a few steps, which I believe are historic, that we have made in recent years.

Firstly, the choice of financial unity to free ourselves of the pandemic. I want to recall that here, because the subject was never discussed, obviously, before the pandemic hit. But when we proposed, we French, the capacity for common debt, people said, again, a lovely French idea, wonderful, but of course, it's never going to happen. We managed to forge a Franco-German agreement a few weeks after the pandemic broke out. Then, as Europeans, we worked to raise €800 billion. This step forward when it comes to common debt was, in itself, what then Federal Finance Minister, now Chancellor, Scholz quite rightly called a Hamiltonian moment. But it is the choice of a united Europe, and we have seen, across our regions, towns and villages, its direct consequences. Thanks to what we have done at European level, we have implemented recovery and support projects for our companies. And SMEs across France have seen the benefits.

The second decisive choice was that of strategic unity on subjects that had hitherto remained the sole competence of nations. Concerning health, Commission Breton is here, who will remember, he who, alongside the President of the Commission and his colleague responsible for health, steered a policy that had not existed and was not covered by the texts. Producing vaccines at European levels, securing supplies and distributing them across Europe. We did it. And if France was able to start vaccinating in early 2021, that is because it had that European reflex and the ability to build this policy that did not exist in our texts. We did not produce that vaccine on our soil, us, the French. We must have the humility to admit it! It is thanks to Europe and this spurt of effort that we were able to move forward. Similarly, on energy, who would have believed that we might be able to free ourselves of our dependency on Russian hydrocarbons, pool our procurement and reform our electricity market so fast? And on defence, who would have bet on European Union from the very first day of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and on massive military support from the European Union. Yet we did it.

The third decisive step of these last years was us beginning to lay the groundwork for greater technological and industrial sovereignty. Nowhere in the world apart from Europe would have been content to depend on others for vital products and essential components. In 2018, we launched an initiative with Germany to support our battery industry, which was then expanded to hydrogen, electronics and health. We also launched major projects with Germany, including the future tank programme and the Future Combat Air System. And with our friends in the Netherlands we have worked on submarines, with more structural initiatives. But as soon as the pandemic hit, and above all in the first weeks following the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, we built, at the Versailles Summit, a genuine strategy of autonomy. Yes, this strategic autonomy that we talked of at that time, asserting the concept as Europeans, was the choice to end our strategic dependencies in key sectors, from semiconductors to critical raw materials. European texts were adopted, and a policy was upheld for investment, security and relocation. That was unprecedented in our contemporary history. In the last seven years, Europe has started growing out of that technological and industrial naivety, if you will, just as it has also begun to correct its trade policy, even if, on this subject, which I will come back to, we still have a long way to go in my view.

The fourth decisive step of these last years is the fundamental choice we have made, a unique one, I believe, to conceive, prepare and plan for the great challenges Europe faces. There has been a lot of criticism, particularly of the Green Deal that was adopted. But Europe is the only political space in the world that has planned for these transitions. And by adopting legislation on the digital sector, to regulate both content and the market, and by adopting a text laying the groundwork for our energy transition and, if you will, to construct the coherence of our policy at European level in terms of our international commitments, we have made the choice of transparency.

Simply, now, we need to ensure there is flexibility for implementation in each country, and above all the investment policy to accompany it. But we have put in place European planning for these transitions, while, everywhere else in the world, great powers have made commitments but have not yet started explaining how they intend to fulfil them. These are foundations that should now be seen as stable milestones. And I will come back later to how to link them up to make them compatible with a policy of growth, full employment and industrial development.

The fifth crucial step of this last year is that Europe has begun to clearly reassert the existence of its borders. Europe is a generous idea, founded on the free movement of persons and goods. Sometimes, it forgot to assert and protect its external borders, not borders as watertight fortresses, but as limits between within and without. Sovereignty cannot exist without a border. And we have, in doing so, and despite divisions that had blocked progress in this area for almost a decade, designed, particularly during the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, an initial agreement on asylum and migration that was just adopted. I would like to thank all those who made it possible. For the first time, this agreement enables us to improve control of our borders by establishing compulsory registration and screening procedures at our external borders, to identify those who are eligible for international protection and those who will have to return to their country of origin, while enhancing cooperation within our Europe. This is an essential achievement of these last years.

The sixth step forward is that we have started renewing our consideration of our geographic neighbourhood. Europe now conceives itself as a coherent unit, following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, asserting that Ukraine and Moldova are part of our European family and should join the European Union, when the time comes, as should the Western Balkans. As I said in Bratislava last year, it is up to us to ensure they are anchored in Europe, to support, immediately, the reforms needed to prepare this path that can only exist if they incorporate the EU acquis, and to reform our Europe at the same time: it can only be enlarged if it is profoundly reformed and simplified.

We have also for the first time considered our ties with everyone at continental level, in the European Political Community framework. This initiative, which we proposed in May 2022, precisely enables us to go beyond the EU's 27-Member State framework and conceive our Europe, from our British friends to Norway to the Western Balkans, at a continental level at a geographically significant resolution, and to start building tangible cooperation.

Since 2017, all that has been possible thanks to the commitment and action of many of you who are here today. I commend the work of successive ministers and administrations, of all the teams that in particular made the French Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2022 a success, and thank all the European colleagues who have furthered this ambition. Our Members of the European Parliament, who have adopted these texts, and the intense work of the Commission in recent years. This is collective work that I have just sketched out very briefly, and it has made the concept of sovereignty, a concept that seemed somewhat odd, to gradually take root. Yes, Europe has been equal to the challenges of the last seven years. We have also achieved all this using a method that was no doubt different, not a "Brussels method", if you will.

I was keen to visit every European capital during my first term, every single one. And we have also forged special ties, and strengthened our ties with Germany through the Treaty of Aachen, with Italy through the Quirinal Treaty, with Spain, through the Treaty of Barcelona, and will do soon with Poland, once again through a new treaty. We have deployed a policy between equal partners, re-engaged with our Central and Eastern European partners, fostered new dialogue and dialogue in formats like the Weimar Triangle and the MED9, and sought to embody this geography that is, if you will, multiform, creating sympathies and affinities within this Europe, bringing progress, little by little.

Yes, we have achieved a lot in the last few years. So, without this action, without this progress on European sovereignty and unity, History would no doubt have left us behind. And if we had responded as we did during the financial crisis, the situation would be catastrophic. We addressed the financial crisis divided, with little sovereignty. That is why it took us, dare I say, four or five years to resolve it, when that took less than a year in the United States of America, where the crisis came from. We have responded swiftly to the crises we have faced, and united, which means today we can stand together and be here.

But is that enough? Can I stand before you and deliver a satisfied speech, saying "We have done everything well, it's wonderful, Europe is strong. Let us continue as we have done"? Clear-sightedness and honesty command me to recognize that the battle is not yet won, far from it, and that as the next decade approaches – for that is the horizon we must look to – there is an immense risk that we might be undermined or relegated. Because we are at an unprecedented time of global upheaval, and great transformations are accelerating.

My message today is simple. Paul Valéry said, at the end of the First World War, that we now know that our civilizations are mortal. We must be clear on the fact that our Europe, today, is mortal. It can die. It can die, and that depends entirely on our choices. But these choices must be made now.

Because it is today that the question of peace and war on our continent is being answered, as is our ability or inability to ensure our own security. Because the great transformations, those of the digital transition, those of artificial intelligence and those of the environment and decarbonization, are at play now, and the redistribution of production factors is underway, now. And the question of whether Europe will be a power of innovation, research and production, or not, is being answered now. Because the outcome of the attack on liberal democracy, on our values, on – and I say this in this place of knowledge – what forms the very substrate of European civilization, a certain relationship with freedom, justice and knowledge, is being decided now.

Yes, we are at a pivotal moment, and our Europe is mortal. But the outcome depends on us, as show some very simple observations to highlight how serious my words are.

Firstly, we are not armed to face the risk that is ahead of us. Despite everything that we have done and that I have just cited, we still have a crucial test of pace and model ahead of us. We have begun to awaken. France, for its part, has doubled its defence budget. We are in the process of doing so, with our second Military Programming Act. But at continental level, this wake-up is too slow and too weak in light of the widespread rearmament of the world and its acceleration. China-US tensions have led to increased spending on armament, technological innovation and increased military capabilities. We now have uninhibited regional powers that are demonstrating their capabilities: Russia and Iran, to mention just two. Europe is being encircled, pressed by many of these powers at and sometimes within its borders. Yes, today we are still too slow and not ambitious enough in light of the reality of this shift, and in a context that must be taken into consideration, regardless of the calendar ahead.

The United States of America has two priorities. The USA first, and that is legitimate, and the China issue, second. And the European issue is not a geopolitical priority for the coming years and decades, notwithstanding the strength of our alliance and the great advantage of today having an administration that is highly engaged on the Ukraine conflict. And so yes, the era when Europe bought its energy and fertilizers from Russia, had its goods manufactured in China, and delegated its security to the United States of America, is over.

We have begun transforming. But we are not yet at scale, because the rules of the game have changed, and because the very fact that war has returned to Europe's soil, and that it is being waged by power with nuclear weapons, changes everything. Because the very fact that Iran is at the threshold of acquiring nuclear weapons changes everything. That is the first change to the rules of the game.

The second observation is that economically, our model as it is conceived today is no longer sustainable, because we legitimately want to have everything, but it doesn't hold together. We obviously want our social model and we have the most generous social model in the world. That is a strength. We want climate action, with decarbonized energy, as I was saying, but we are the only geographical space to have adopted the rules to bring it about. The others are not acting at the same pace.

We want trade that benefits us, but with several others that have begun to change the rules of the game, which are over-subsidizing, from China to the United States of America. We cannot sustain the most stringent environmental and social norms, invest less than our competitors, have a more naive trade policy than them and think that we will continue to generate jobs. This no longer holds together.

Therefore, the risk is that Europe will fall behind. And we are already beginning to see this, despite all of our efforts. The gross domestic product per capita increased in the United States by nearly 60% from 1993 to 2022. Europe's GDP has grown by less than 30%. And this was even before the United States enacted the Inflation Reduction Act, which is a massive policy to attract our industries and subsidize all green technologies and industries. Our challenge today is to go much faster and to reconsider our growth model. Because here too, the rules of the game have changed and they have changed in simple way. The two main global powers have decided to no longer adhere to the rules of trade. I am putting this in very simple terms, but this is the reality since the Inflation Reduction Act. For the last 20 years, we have all collectively been saying that we want to bring China into the WTO and that our aim is basically that the second largest economic and trade power follow our rules. And now it is as if the world-leading economy suddenly decided that it was going to act like the second. That is what has happened. As a result, we can no longer meet our objectives. The risk is clearly our impoverishment, which is dramatic for a continent like ours, which, what's more, has the world's most demanding social model that takes the most from the wealth it produces.

The third observation that highlights the importance of the times in which we are living is the cultural clash, the battle of imaginations, narratives and values, which is increasingly sensitive. We have long thought our model to be irrepressible – democracy spreading, human rights progressing and European soft power triumphing. And democracy continues to be attractive to many in the world. But let's look at things clearly. Our liberal democracy is increasingly criticized, with unfounded arguments, with a kind of reversal of values, because we allow it to happen, because we are vulnerable. But everywhere in our Europe, our values and our culture are threatened, threatened because the fundamentals are being challenged, with people thinking that authoritarian approaches would somehow be more effective and attractive, threatened also because our dreams and our narratives are less and less European. Everywhere the content to which our children and teenagers are being exposed is more and more American or Asian, linked to the advent of digital technology occupying our lives, which is something I will come back to later.

So, yes, our Europe is being increasingly challenged when it comes to its ability to be attractive in terms of its political model, using, I believe, many bad reasons and unfounded arguments. Above all, it is much less powerful in its ability to produce grand narratives. There are grand narratives that make the world dream and the world is increasingly consuming narratives produced elsewhere. This is making it impossible for us to build the future. It is these three observations – geopolitical and security, economic, and cultural and intellectual – that are leading us to say today that basically, the question of our sovereignty, in terms of its very content, is even more important today than it was yesterday.

But what does it mean to be sovereign in this changing world? What does sovereign mean when I am telling you that Europe might die? It means that we must rise to the three challenges of our time, to this acceleration of history and its dramatization.

Hence the solution lies in our ability – because the rules of the game have changed regarding each of these points – to make huge strategic decisions, to embrace paradigm shifts, and to address them with strength, prosperity and humanism. And it is these three points I would like to speak about today. I think that it is with strength, prosperity and humanism that we give substance, if you will, to this European sovereignty and enable Europe to be a continent that will not disappear, a political project that holds its ground in this world and at this time when it is being threatened more than ever.

It's simple, a power Europe is a Europe that commands respects and ensures its security. It is a Europe that recognises that it has borders and protects them. It is a Europe that sees the risks to which it is exposed and prepares for them. To achieve this, we must break out from some kind of strategic guardianship. Why? Because implicitly, we were designed that way. After the Second World War, many European countries agreed – as was often imposed on them – to delegate their security to others because we did not want them to rearm too quickly. And, as I said earlier, we have to a certain extent delegated everything that is strategic in our world: our energy to Russia, our security – not in the case of France, but several of our partners – to the United States and equally critical prospects to China. We need to take them back. That is what strategic autonomy is all about.

The first thing is to scale up defence. Today, the main danger to European security is clearly the war in Ukraine. A sine qua non condition for our security is that Russia does not win the war of aggression it is waging on Ukraine. This is essential.

That is why we have been right from the outset to impose sanctions on Russia, to help the Ukrainians and to continue to do so, and we have been fortunate to have the Americans on our side for this, as we constantly increase our aid and support.

Basically, I totally stand by the decision I made on 26 February to re-introduce strategic ambiguity. Why? We are facing an uninhibited power that has attacked a European country, but is no longer involved in a so called “special operation” and that no longer wants to tell us what its limits are. Why do we need to say every morning what all of our limits are strategically? If we say that Ukraine is the condition for our security, that what is at stake in Ukraine is more than sovereignty and territorial integrity of this already key country, but the security of Europeans, do we have limits? No. And so, we must be credible – to dissuade, be present and continue the effort. But this war, involving a power armed with nuclear weapons, and that uses this in its rhetoric, is undoubtedly the first manifestation of geopolitical tensions with which Europe must learn to live. That is why we are undergoing a paradigm shift in terms of security. The most recent events have shown the importance of anti-missile defences and deep strike capabilities which are crucial to strategic signalling and managing escalation in the face of uninhibited adversaries.

That is why what we need to see emerge – and this is the new defence paradigm – is a credible defence for the European continent. Clearly the European pillar in NATO that we are building – the justification of which we have convinced all our partners in recent years – is crucial. But we need to provide substance as to what this credible European defence is, which is the very condition for rebuilding a common security framework. Europe must know how to defend what it holds so dear, with its allies, every time they are ready to do so alongside us, and alone if necessary. Does that mean we need an anti-missile shield to do this? Perhaps. Is it by increasing our defence capabilities, and which ones? Probably. Is this sufficient in the face of Russian missiles? We need to work on this point. But when we have a neighbour that has become aggressive and no longer explains its limits, but that has ballistic capabilities, on which it has greatly innovated in recent years, whose range and technology have been transformed, which possesses nuclear weapons and has increased their capabilities, we clearly see that we must build this strategic concept of a credible European defence for ourselves.

That is why in the coming months, I will invite all my partners to build this European defence initiative, which must first be a strategic concept from which we will derive the relevant capabilities: anti-missiles, deep strikes, and all other useful capabilities. France will play its full part. We have a comprehensive army model, with the aim of being the most effective army in Europe, and also possess nuclear weapons, and therefore the deterrence capacity that goes along with them. Nuclear deterrence is central to France's defence strategy. It is therefore essentially a critical element of defence of the European continent. It is thanks to this credible defence that we will be able to build the security guarantees all our partners expect, throughout Europe, and that will be able to build the common security framework, a security guarantee for each of us. And this security framework will enable us to build neighbourly relations with Russia after the war.

In addition to this extensive and essential paradigm shift for our Europe, a genuine strategic cohesion must be created between European armed forces. This means launching a second stage of the European Intervention Initiative, which I proposed in 2017. It was a true success. Thirteen Member States have joined. We have been able to build pragmatic and operational cooperation. We collaborated in the Sahel region with the Takuba Task Force. This was also the spirit in which we established a European operation, Aspides, in the Red Sea, which was the first of its kind. This ability to conduct coalitions together requires a common culture. It is built through the development of European regional security and defence strategies in the Mediterranean, Africa, the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic, to unify our visions and better distribute our forces between Europeans, but also through the creation of European Military Academy, to train future European military and civil leaders to deal with security and defence issues.

We must also make strides in implementing the Strategic Compass that we adopted under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and especially establish a rapid reaction force to be able to deploy up to 5,000 soldiers rapidly in hostile environments by 2025, particularly to assist our nationals. To do so, we must invest in new areas of conflict, where, as we are seeing in the hybrid war Russia is waging, a portion of the war is already being played out today, and where our infrastructures need to be protected, whether they be transport, hospitals, electricity networks or telecommunications. I would also like us to develop a European cyber security and cyber defence capability. And at a time when we are building these capabilities for our own armed forces, it is a unique opportunity to immediately build European cooperation and act as Europeans in the face of these risks.

As you can see, shouldering our responsibilities means deciding for ourselves and leading our European defence efforts. It means building a new paradigm, more cohesion and concrete initiatives together.

To do so, we already have frameworks, unique partnerships. The United Kingdom is a natural, long-standing ally and the treaties that bind us, including the Lancaster House Treaty, have laid solid foundations. We must build on them. Strengthen them. Brexit has not affected this relationship. Perhaps we should extend them to include other partners? The European Political Community is without a doubt the best place to build this new security paradigm, this additional cohesion, and to build this common security and defence framework.

Lastly, it is clear that there can be no defence without a defence industry. In this respect, support for Ukraine must urgently be transformed into a long-term effort. This is the “war economy” we are pushing so hard for with the Minister. We have a long way to go because we have to admit that we have under-invested in our own production for decades. Basically, the dividends of peace have meant that Europeans have insufficiently manufactured and invested, which has created a strong dependence on non-European industry. Given this situation, we must produce faster, we must produce more and we must produce more as Europeans. This is fundamental. That is why I assert that we need to have a European preference when it comes to the procurement of military equipment.

Look at the European Peace Facility that we established at the start of the war: 75% of it was used to buy non-European equipment. It was an emergency. We could not manufacture everything in Europe. But there were also firmly engrained responses. It is always better to buy, often American, at times Korean, but how can we build our sovereignty, our eventual autonomy if we do not recognize the need to develop a European defence industry?

So, yes, to do so we must successfully build a European preference, successfully build European industrial programmes, provide more support from the European Investment Bank and additional funds, including the most innovative finance, such as the idea of European debt that was put forward by Prime Minister Kaja Kallas.

The aim of a European defence industrial strategy is to produce more quickly, in greater quantities, in Europe. Also, for those of us who have a strong defence industry, this is an extraordinary opportunity because we can also, if we successfully organize our efforts, push our standards. And this is what we have done in recent years with the RAFALE aircraft. From Croatia to Greece, who thought seven years ago that RAFALE would become one of Europe’s air defence solutions? It is becoming one. But that is what will also drive us to develop common standards as Europeans, because one of the problems we have as Europe is that we remain too divided when it comes to the defence industry. Our fragmentation is a weakness. We have experienced this cruelly and concretely, during this war, when we have sometimes discovered ourselves, as Europeans, that our guns were not of the same calibre, that our missiles did not match, and this reduced our ability to work together in a same theatre of operations. So, yes, this effort also requires standardization, to build champions, and therefore European consolidation, in the organization of a genuine industrial defence policy. This is a need that we must recognize.

As you can see, we must not simply move on to the next stage, but truly build a new defence paradigm, from the strategic cohesion concept to the new shared framework, until we achieve the new capabilities. But this Europe as a defence power is naturally supported by accompanying diplomacy.

Each Member State stands up for diplomacy, it is our responsibility. But we can increase it and base it on wider European cohesion. It is for this reason that I think we must keep moving forward in the years ahead, in addition to this approach and this security and defence awakening. We must continue to form partnerships with third countries, in other words to build a Europe which can show that it is never the vassal of the United States and that it can talk to other world regions, to emerging countries, to Africa, to Latin America. Not just through trade agreements, but through genuinely balanced and reciprocal strategic partnerships.

That is what we wanted to build at the EU-Africa Summit from the first half of 2022 up to the EU-Indo Pacific Strategy. To show that we are a balanced power which communicates with the rest of the world and, in a way, rejects the bipolar confrontation in which too many continents are engaging. Our strategies for the Arctic, Indo-Pacific, Latin America and with Africa show that Europe is not simply part of the West, but a global continent which is considering its universality and the major balances of the planet, which is rejecting continental confrontation and wants to build balanced partnerships.

This is absolutely essential and we must continue along this path which allows us, on the issues of education, health, climate and alleviating poverty, to have a single voice, as we did with the Pact for Peoples and the Planet. And to show that we never apply double standards and that, here too, we are fully autonomous.

A power Europe is also one which has control over its borders. I said that when speaking about the Pact on Migration and Asylum, which was a major step forward. But I want to reiterate it now, at a time when, as we all know, the issue of borders and immigration is a genuine concern in all our societies and countries. This is all the more important for France because, if I may use a somewhat technical term, it is a country of secondary movements. In other words, immigrants do not arrive directly in France, they arrive in Europe and particularly in the Schengen Area via other borders.

And so France, sometimes more than others, needs an effective European policy and strong cooperation because immigration begins at the borders of Europe and not simply those of France. Men and women who arrive in France are fleeing poverty, are sometimes victims of people smuggling networks, some are genuine asylum seekers when they are fighting for freedom, but they always initially arrive in Spain, Italy, the Balkans and Greece. They arrive on European soil and then make their way to France. And so in France, no doubt more than elsewhere, we need stronger European cooperation. That is why now that we have this Pact on Migration and Asylum, we must implement it, because it provides us with new instruments. There will be more effective registration, monitoring and conditions for returning to the country of first entry. That in itself is an unprecedented step forward. But we must take firmer action with regard to return operations and readmission for all men and women arriving in France who are not entitled remain here, who are ineligible for asylum. To do this, we need a genuine European policy and genuine coordination. This can be achieved through greater cooperation with countries of origin and transit, stricter conditions and an unwavering combat against the economic model of smugglers and traffickers of human beings.

It is at EU27 level, and particularly within the Schengen Area, that we must cooperate and build these policies. I do not want a naive policy and we cannot just stand by and observe the ineffectiveness of our current return policies because they are too fragmented. But neither do I believe in the model currently being proposed whereby we find third countries in Africa or elsewhere to which we send the immigrants who have arrived illegally in France and who themselves do not come from those countries. We are creating cynical geopolitics which is betraying our values and will create new dependencies, and which will turn out to be completely ineffective. The key is simply to make our visas and our trade preferences conditional upon cooperation from countries of origin and transit, and to make these countries more accountable for migration policy. If we do this together, it will be an effective approach. But at the moment, we are simply too divided. The return of illegal migrants to their countries of origin must be one of the central themes of our visa policy and part of the conditions of our trade preferences. We must also forge new operational partnerships to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in human beings, and also to mobilize Frontex, whose operational staff will soon increase to 10,000 border and coast guards, in order to help with return operations and further ramp up this structure. We believe in this. I have always supported it. I continue to believe in it, even if sometimes those who served it begin to doubt it.

As you know, to protect its citizens, Europe must also combat threats against the networks which ignore borders and States. And this is also an issue of European cohesion, beyond immigration. Terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, online hate and online crime are issues on which European action must be stepped up. That is why, first and foremost, I want the Schengen Council to become a genuine EU Internal Security Council. Our borders are a common good. With the euro, a common good which we created, we were able to build a political form which was decided upon via a credible, intergovernmental process: the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN). Our borders are a common good. We must build a political structure in which members can together make decisions on immigration, combatting organized crime, terrorism, the fight against drug trafficking and cybercrime. Let us change governance to make it much more efficient. As part of the Schengen Information System (SIS), we must also make much more progress on information sharing to prevent departures of terrorist combatants and returns from conflict zones, prevent radicalization, and also have a genuine policy on removing terrorist content, but above all hate, racist and anti-Semitic content. And it is as Europeans that we can secure this from platforms which are not currently honouring their commitments on this issue, whether in terms of moderation or restraint. And it is as Europeans, as part of such a Council, that we can have an effective policy against organized crime and drugs. This is a genuine scourge which is today particularly affecting the most exposed countries as they have major ports and points of entry, or also sometimes because some of them believed that the most liberal policies were those which would prevent criminalization, when the complete opposite is true. On this issue too, we need a European approach.

As you can see, this power Europe is both a Europe of defence and a Europe which protects our borders; it is a paradigm shift based on the fact that if we Europeans want to face up to these changing rules, this escalation in violence, this uninhibited display of capabilities on our continent and beyond, we must adapt in terms of strategic concepts and resources, and we must take full control of and responsibility for our borders.

The second key part of the response is prosperity. Yes, if we want to remain sovereign in these times of profound change which I mentioned, we need to build a new growth and production model. This is essential, as there can be no power without a solid economic foundation. Otherwise, we declare our power, but it very quickly becomes funded by others. Similarly, there can be no economic transition without a solid economic model. And there can be no social model, which is one of the strengths of Europeans, if we don't generate the money which we then want to redistribute. And Europe was for a long time the main asset in our growth, in an ordoliberal model of competition and free trade, and at a time when, in essence, the rules were very different, the raw materials seemed endless, there were no geopolitics in terms of raw materials, climate change was disregarded, there was free trade and everyone observed its rules. Until recently, that was the world we lived in. And in the course of a few years, everything changed – everything. Raw materials, critical materials and energy are limited. And with regard to fossil fuels, we are not producing them on our own soil, unlike the United States and many others, we are dependent. We need critical materials, and China began trading and securing huge capacities thereof. And as I said, the rules of trade are indeed changing. A return to a state of nature.

And yet we have clear objectives: we want to produce more wealth to improve our living standards and create jobs for everyone; we want to safeguard Europeans' purchasing power – that is the very concrete concern of all our compatriots, it is the objective of our European policy – we want to decarbonize our economies and respond to biodiversity and climate challenges; we want to ensure our sovereignty and thus have full control over our strategic production chains; and we want to keep our economy open to maintain our status as a major trading power.

Our objectives are clear, but we are not meeting them and we cannot do so with our current rules. We are not meeting them. We are not meeting them because we are out of step with a shifting world. We are not meeting them because we are over-regulating, under-investing, too open and not sufficiently defending our interests. That is the reality.

And so here too, we must create a new growth and prosperity paradigm if we want to meet the five objectives I have just set out. Because if we do so using our current rules on competition, trade, monetary and fiscal policies, we will not succeed. And that will be seen through a simple adjustment: we will lose production.

And why is it, here too, that I feel a sense of urgency? First, because I can see this gap between Europe and the United States over the past 30 years, and because it is now that the reallocation of production factors is taking place. Because the issue of where green technologies, artificial intelligence and calculation capabilities will be is going to be decided in the next five to ten years, probably mostly within the next five. And so now is the time for historic decisions. And so now is the time to stop the over-regulation, to step up investment, to change our rules and to better protect our interests. That is the objective. That is the new model.

And in essence, it is this prosperity pact which we must build, based on some very simple elements.

First, we must produce more and green, and decarbonized production is an opportunity for us to reindustrialize and maintain our industries in Europe. And in fact we have seen this in recent years: from hydrogen to semi-conductors to electric batteries, France has recreated industrial capacity through the green transition. And so we must stop viewing decarbonization and growth as being mutually exclusive. If we do it properly and if it takes places through new investment sectors, it works, and that is the model we are advocating. We are becoming leaders in the battery sector. The objective for European batteries to cover all our needs by 2030 will be met. And we will also bridge the gap in terms of semi-conductors, with the objective of doubling Europe's market share by 2030. And as I was saying, from Dunkirk to Fos, we can see the results as regards training, economically attractive and innovative territories, and reduced dependencies. And so it is Europe which enables and supports green reindustrialization, and that is how we will regain capacities, and become the first zero plastic pollution continent, a continent at the heart of decarbonization and electrification.

The second condition is simplification. Since Jacques Delors made the internal market 30 years ago, we have been deepening it, expanding it with ever greater integration. And this makes sense, as the single market simplifies things, moving from 27 different systems to just one. In his report, Enrico Letta has just proposed continuing this modernization and this work for our compatriots and our businesses. I indeed support expanding the single market into sectors it has hitherto ignored such as energy, telecommunications and financial services. This is essential as it enables us to make our rules less fragmented in these major sectors and thus to unlock more innovation, reduce transaction costs, increase capacity, as well as increase innovation, investment and better serve our interests.

We must also embrace changes in our competition policy to create European champions and massively support companies in our strategic sectors with new investments at EU27 level – I will come back to this in a moment. But simplification is not just about the single market, it means removing rules which act as borders within the EU27 so that our start-ups can immediately have access to a domestic market which is the European market, because otherwise they are at a real disadvantage against Chinese and American start-ups. Our strength is our internal market, with 450 million consumers. The single market is a choice of simplification.

But it must be said that we also have to put an end to a complicated Europe. We have built useful regulations which serve as markers, reference points and targets. But sometimes we have gone into excessive detail, thus preventing economic actors from making long-term plans and placing them at a disadvantage against their international competitors. We must have the courage to simplify, first by reviewing thresholds and obligations on very small, small and medium-sized enterprises. We must better involve our companies, citizens and territories from the outset, taking into account their constraints from the stage at which the standard is development, but also during implementation. We must return to the principle of proportionality (i.e. more ambition with regard to major issues, more support, more trust and less text) and to the principles of subsidiarity – which enables us to have ambitions, European rules where applicable, but also to allow national flexibility with regard to implementation. And that is also why in the years ahead, the next term must include several waves of simplification of our regulations, without removing any of our ambitions or any of the milestones on the major points upon which we have decided, but by simplifying implementation and enabling us to better support our economic actors.

The third precondition of this prosperity pact is to speed up on industrial policy. That was a dirty word seven years ago, remember.

On industrial policy, people said it wasn't really the point of Europe. And at a time when many people are returning to an – also interesting – concept, namely the “freedom to stay” , industrial policy is providing the answer. It is the opportunity to produce everywhere in the EU, when in a way our Europe, by relying too much on a competitiveness model – including intra-European competitiveness and a model of competition – created its own imbalances which the cohesion policy did not sufficiently compensate for, and which then also created the demographic imbalances many of our partners are experiencing.

I believe very strongly that industrial policy is a key milestone in our prosperity in relation to the outside world, but also in the proper organization of European territory. “Made in Europe” is an area of great convergence between France and Germany. Chancellor Scholz called for it during his Prague speech in August 2022. It's been central to our strategy for seven years and it's central to the Versailles agenda we built as Europeans. This industrial policy that we've built in recent years through innovation – from the Chips Act to everything that's been done in clean tech and other areas – must have production targets on European soil, training initiatives and joint investments, and must strengthen what we've already done on strategic sectors: strategic raw materials, semiconductors, digital technology and health, where Europe's policy, again, is a response to our compatriots' needs, because this policy alone will enable us to address the medicine shortages we are experiencing, and also on the issue of access to patients.

So as you see, yes, we must continue strengthening this industrial strategy in these sectors. The approach works and we must extend it to the strategic industries of tomorrow, without waiting for dependencies to form. Let's decide now to make Europe a global leader by 2030 in five of the most emerging and strategic sectors. Artificial intelligence, by investing massively in talent, but also calculation capacity. We have 3% of global calculation capacity. Imagine: we Europeans, 3%. So the goal is to catch up, but by 2030-2035 we must reach at least 20% if we want to be credible players. Quantum computing. Space, where we must consolidate Ariane 6, and I say this at a time when we're hearing so many things. Ariane 6 is the prerequisite for European access to space. It's an absolute necessity. But in addition to NewSpace and human space missions, we must have a Europe with ambition for space. Biotechnology, obviously, and new forms of energy: hydrogen, modular reactors and nuclear fusion.

The European Union must create dedicated strategies for finance in these five strategic industries at least. To this end, we need the right instruments. So we must define and invest in these industries and take action together, but as I said, we need the right instruments. We have started creating appropriate instruments, such as the well-known Important Projects of Common European Interest, IPCEIs; our manufacturers know them well. And they were really crucial when, with Germany in 2018, we decided to move forward. But here again, we must get back in sync. In the wake of the US Inflation Reduction Act and Chinese over-investment, this is no longer working because it is too slow and too uncertain. So we need to devise new IPCEIs, if you will. In other words, we must give our manufacturers greater visibility, reduce lead times by at least half, have mechanisms as simple as tax credit mechanisms, giving manufacturers an idea of the way ahead over five to 10 years, while responding in very short periods, three to six months, and making a success of the key industries to support.

But we can see clearly, in industries like critical medicines and chemicals, that we're currently losing capacity because our instruments are not fast, efficient and transparent enough. But we must also accept different rules for industrial policy and competition policy. We need to include in our treaties the European preference in strategic sectors such as defence and space. Because in fact our competitors have done so already. If there is no European preference for space, there will be no more space industry. The same goes for nuclear power. Who has seen the US Defence Department or the US Energy Department finance an emerging European player? I have seen many American start-ups said to be created solely from the natural genius of entrepreneurs, being massively subsidized by American institutional policy. Let's do the same. We're in competition. A European preference in the strategic defence and space sectors and derogation from free competition to support key sectors in transition – this is essential for artificial intelligence and green technologies. This is essential. It's the only thing that will allow me to respond to Chinese and American over-subsidization.

Among the strategic sectors, there are two on which I want to say a few more specific words: energy and agriculture. Energy, because it is probably the sector we've reformed the most, but it's also here where we need to make the most fundamental changes in the future. We must be proud to build a nuclear Europe, highlighting, moreover, that the Euratom project is one of the founding ambitions of the 1957 treaties. And the challenges are huge, but we need this. Europe, today, with its price-competitiveness problems, has a problem with the labour factor. We're trying to address this through our reforms, but given our social model, we know that we have limits on this point. We've got a problem of price competitiveness when it comes to energy, because we depend on fossil fuels but don't produce them today. The sooner we make the transition, the sooner we will regain this competitiveness. So, yes, low-carbon energy produced in Europe is the key to reconciling climate, sovereignty and job creation. So we need a strategy that combines energy efficiency, the deployment of renewable energies and the deployment of nuclear power. That's what's going to make Europe a genuine power in terms of electricity. And that's the key.

We have made mistakes in recent years by starting a fragmentation of the European hydrogen and electricity markets. We need absolute technological neutrality. Basically, we need to build a Europe of free movement of carbon-free electrons. Sorry to put it like that, but that's exactly what has to be done. It doesn't matter whether they're produced by renewable or nuclear energy. If we can produce decarbonized electricity on European soil, this is an opportunity because it avoids the use of carbonized electricity and of imported electricity. So we need technological neutrality, we need to take responsibility for building a lot more renewable and nuclear capacity. We need to consolidate this nuclear alliance that we've built and that brings together some 15 Member States, we need to stand for this nuclear Europe and invest in electricity interconnections in Europe – that's the key – so that all over Europe, manufacturers and private individuals alike can sign contracts that provide visibility and security for the supply of low-cost, carbon-free electricity produced on European soil.

The other strategic sector I want to come back to is agriculture. We've talked a lot about it, a little defensively given the anger that has been expressed. But the anger of our farmers wasn't directed against Europe, and they are well aware – especially in France, where Europe subsidizes our agriculture to the tune of nearly €10 billion and is the only relevant market. We also have an agricultural sector that is powerful in terms of exports. The anger was directed at over-regulation, complexity, aberrant standards and the poor implementation of European and French law. And so the Prime Minister and ministers made a huge effort on this issue to draw up a roadmap which – with more than three quarters of it already implemented – is precisely about simplifying and providing support.

But Europe is key when it comes to agriculture because, here too, it concerns industrial policy and sovereignty. I said this back in the COVID period. Who would be foolish enough to delegate responsibility for their food? We have a duty not to allow food dependencies to set in. We have already had them, and we've started to rectify them, particularly as regards animal proteins, which were an old post-war geostrategic choice, with us delegating them in a way to other continents. But we absolutely must continue to consolidate our food sovereignty.

And it makes no sense, when I listen to so many of my colleagues, for agriculture to always be the negotiating token in trade contracts. No! No! We need to produce our own food, we need to continue importing and exporting, and we need to do so openly, but we need to not be dependent. Good luck on the day you, as a European, become totally dependent for plant protein, the day you become totally dependent for part of your diet! Then it will be all very well explaining that we have recreated sovereignty over semiconductors and so on. Can you imagine? We'll go to our compatriots and say we've done everything right, we just thought that food could always move around freely. Food is also a geopolitical issue. So agriculture is a question of sovereignty, employment and production.

We need a strong, simplified CAP that reduces complexity and the administrative burden. But for our agriculture and our fisheries, we need to support sustainable transitions, we need to support changes in practices, we need to move away from phytosanitary products wherever there are technological solutions, we need to renew our fishing fleets to decarbonize them, as we did just recently for our Overseas. But there is a very clear need to defend this sector and to adopt a policy where consumers are better informed and which provides support for managing the impact on the climate and the environment, as well as protecting our producers from unfair practices, and protecting them through genuinely consistent implementation at European level. This is what we are calling for through European health and control authorities, which prevent unfair practices between Europeans, and a genuine European customs force to ensure that the products we import, which are sometimes just relabelled in a port and then come back onto the European market, are subject to the same production rules as us, when this is required.

That's the key to an ambitious industrial policy.

This leads me to the fourth aspect of this prosperity pact: the review of our trade policy. And this is where we undoubtedly have one of the most fundamental paradigm shifts, in my view. Openness, yes, but while defending our interests. As I was saying, this cannot work if we are the only ones in the world to comply with the rules of trade as they were written 15 years ago. If the Chinese and the Americans no longer comply with them, by over-subsidizing critical sectors, we can't be the only ones to do so. It won't work. And it isn't working. And in this respect too, we are either too naïve or too weak.

We have real leverage. We are a market of 450 million consumers. That's a huge strength. So we have to protect our health by strictly applying our health standards. We must also protect our social model by applying our social standards. And we must protect our climate ambitions by defending our environmental standards. Otherwise, we are going to invent a continent that places too many constraints on producers on its own soil and, through its trade policy, removes constraints on the products it imports. Great, we're going to become a consumer market where there will no longer be any producers who comply with our objectives and which, because of the dependencies created, will be obliged to consume products that don't meet our standards. That's the reality. So if we want to be consistent with our ambitions, we need to readjust our trade policy very thoroughly.

We've started to do that. CETA, that we concluded with the Canadians, thanks to the work we have done and, precisely because of the adjustments we have made, is a good agreement. I say this because we must not give in to demagoguery. I'm saddened by what I have seen, including in the French debate, in recent weeks. We must not fall into the trap of rejecting all trade agreements, because then, good luck, we open the door to demagoguery. All those who tell us that trade is bad can go and explain that to all our farmers who gain from CETA with Canada. And why are we winners with CETA? Because we've included mirror clauses. Because it's a new-generation trade agreement which allows our cheese and milk producers to export to Canada, but which, where there were different standards for meat, avoids importing meat that does not meet European standards.

But we're not in favour of shutting ourselves off. That would be detrimental to European manufacturers, farmers and producers. We are in favour of fair competition and therefore a revised trade policy, as we've done with New Zealand. Modern and fair trade agreements are those in which compliance with the Paris Agreement on the climate is an essential clause, and which include strong clauses on the conditions for producing certain sensitive goods, particularly agricultural goods. This makes all the difference, particularly with the old-generation draft Mercosur agreement, as negotiated to date.

We must make systematic use of fair-competition instruments, we must incorporate mirror clauses into our trade agreements, we must launch a major reciprocity strategy to impose mirror measures in new European standards and review existing standards. In doing so, we must also display the carbon footprint of products so that it is known by consumers, who will then realise that "Made in Europe" is almost always better for the planet. And let's be clear, if goods don't meet the key standards, then they must not be allowed to enter the EU as if it were business as usual.

Clear rules, clear controls too, with common customs forces. That's the only credible trade policy, which also ensures, if you will, fair protection of our borders and our producers, so that we don't give in to deindustrialization. The carbon border tax is a tool that opens the way. We need to extend it, complete it, improve it to ensure that it can't be circumvented and that it applies to processed products.

Finally, we need to strengthen our economic security instruments. This is what I talked about alongside Prime Minister Rutte in The Hague: the security of our jobs, our companies and our creative output. Better protection of our industrial and intellectual property, better filtering of non-European investment in sensitive sectors, better protection against physical attacks, for example on our submarine cables and telecommunications or our European satellite constellations such as Galileo, Copernicus and, tomorrow, Iris. Economic security is also at the heart of this trade strategy.

The fifth pillar for this shared prosperity is the battle for innovation and research. We need to have an overriding obsession with productivity. And for that, we need to be a major innovation and research power.

Now, for many of our countries – speaking in this place of knowledge – we are already such a power, but we need to train even more talents and above all we need to keep them in our laboratories, our universities and major research centres and attract others to them. And we need to understand, in this regard, that the risks are there, that there is American competition, but also Asian competition.

For this, we need to reaffirm the goal of 3% of European GDP assigned to research. That is a priority. We, in France, have reinvested, but we need to continue with the effort in terms of public financing, but especially private financing, with more research partnerships. Yet throughout Europe, we now need to consolidate and show that this is a key element of this prosperity pact. The Horizon Europe programme, which our researchers know well, should be taken to the next level concentrating on the most effective programmes, especially the European Research Council.

A paradigm shift in this area is also about daring once again to take risks. The European Innovation Council has done just that, reaching new milestones in recent years, but we need to really raise the game in breakthrough innovations. And we need to really follow through with this European DARPA, which is not yet fully fledged, but which, with the best scientific teams in each discipline – accepting risk and therefore capital losses when projects do not work, because that is the very key to breakthrough research projects – in short, commit to being a continent that invests in breakthrough innovations and in the most advanced basic research. It is through these discoveries that quantum computing, future materials, microchips and low-power batteries could reposition Europe on the geopolitical growth map. And whether it is about bringing out phytosanitary products, whether it is precisely about meeting this objective for "one health" and thereby the interconnection between the environment and human health, whether it is about bringing a real response with a European research and investment plan for treatment for cancer, Alzheimer's disease and neurodegenerative diseases, or rare and orphan diseases, Europe is the right scale for these major areas for research, reinvestment and common programmes.

We therefore need clear, ambitious goals and the key is training and the capacity to attract and keep our talents. I have said a great deal about rare resources, critical materials, but probably in the future even more than today, the rarest resource is human capital, talent. And that is why this training, research and higher education policy is absolutely decisive for our Europe.

It obviously also needs to be flanked by a policy for the deployment and development of our innovative and tech start-ups, with what we have started to launch, with Scale-up Europe, and of our talent and capital precisely to be an innovative continent.

And the last condition for this prosperity pact is precisely the capacity to invest – not to put too fine a point on it – money. Let's face it, the rules of the game we have in Europe today are no longer suitable because if you take defence and security, artificial intelligence, the decarbonization of our economies and clean tech, you have a wall of investment.

All the figures tally across the reports. And I read all the reports. I look at what Mr Letta and Mr Draghi are writing, at what the commission has written, and there is a consensus. Everyone says that the figure is between 650 billion and 1 trillion more per year. That's a lot, and this investment cannot be put off. Because we cannot put off our security until tomorrow. You can't cry over spilt milk. You can't put off these investments until tomorrow, because it is now that they are being made and that the investment decisions are being made or not. So it is now, in the decade, that this massive investment needs to be made – and we are behind the United States and China.

Now, this massive investment also in some way calls for a paradigm shift in our collective rules.

There is one first thing I believe to be obsolete: you cannot have a monetary policy whose sole objective is to address inflation, particularly in an economic environment where decarbonization is a source for structural price increases. We should leverage theoretical and political debate to find how to include in the European Central Bank's objectives at least a growth goal and, if not a decarbonization goal, in any case a climate goal for our economies. That is absolutely essential. The second thing is that we clearly need to build our shared investment capacities. We need, as I said, to invest hundreds of billions of euros more per year. Now, the answer given at European level in recent years has been to grant national flexibility: state aid. This is not a sustainable answer, because it fragments the single market. It is at odds with what I was saying earlier. We need common capacity and, therefore, we need a new common investment shock, a grand plan for collective budgetary investment. We need subsidies.

Now, I do not mean to jump the gun here and I do want these matters to be discussed with all our partners. Are we talking about a common borrowing capacity? Are we talking about using existing mechanisms, European stability mechanisms or others? But basically, we need to double our Europe's financial action capacity, at least double it in budgetary terms. We need this public investment shock to invest public money in these sectors, which implies reopening the rather delicate question of the Union's own resources. I am in favour of it and I think that we should have additional own resources without burdening European citizens: carbon border tax, revenues from the European carbon emissions trading system, taxing financial transactions as France does, taxing multinationals' profits where they are really made, and using the revenue from ETIAS, the tax paid by non-EU nationals when they enter the EU. There are many own resources that do not affect EU nationals and can be used for this budget.

In addition to the monetary policy, in addition to our common fiscal policy, which needs to be made much stronger and ambitious by this additional €1 trillion plan, we need to leverage private investment and our private financing capacities more. Every year, our Europe presents two main shortcomings; I would even say three.

The first is that it makes a lot of savings. We accumulate savings. We are a very rich continent with very competitive players. Yet because our capital market system is not integrated, these savings do not go to the right sectors and the right places.

That is the first shortcoming.

The second shortcoming is that we lack appetite for risk. Because we have a highly intermediated economy, 75% channels through the banks and insurance firms, and they have been given rules that prevent them from going into equity and risk.

The third shortcoming is that every year, our savings, to the tune of some €300 billion per year, finance the Americans. In any case, non-Europeans and especially the Americans, whether in treasury bonds or venture capital. It's absurd. So we need to correct these three absurdities by having a real "savings and investment Union", that is to say by creating the elements of solidarity to make it work, so that our investment funds and all of our capital market players can circulate savings so that they are properly allocated in our economy.

So, we are trying to move forwards. We have started. And I think we need to give ourselves 12 months, no longer, because we've been promising this for too many years. And either in the 12 months, we manage to build a system with single supervision, common bankruptcy rules and areas of taxation convergence in order to build a system comparable to what we have done in banking supervision. Or, as some propose, we should maybe design a system as we have done in competition, which makes for more flexible revocation systems, but also for union and which in any case creates circulation. I do not mean to pre-empt the technical solution, but we need to create this union that is key to the circulation of capital.

Secondly, we need, again, to revise the application of what is done with Basel and Solvency. We cannot be the only economic area in the world that applies it. The Americans, who were at the source of the 2008-2010 financial crisis, have chosen not to apply it to their players. I am not for doing away with it altogether, I am not for resuming a culture of financial irresponsibility. I am just for putting the risk culture back in the management of our savings. Without a risk culture, there can be no investment in research, in innovation, in innovative and tech start-ups, in our businesses. And then, I am for putting in place, here too, products, European solutions for our savings to go into financing our economy. A real single market, a savings and investment union, an easing of the rules that drive away risk, and European products that enable us to prevent this drain.

Clearly, what I am outlining here is really a new model for growth and prosperity based on simplification: embrace a massive industrial decarbonization policy, a deep-reaching change to our industrial, competitive and especially our trade policy, a real and even more ambitious innovation research policy, and this monetary, budgetary and financial paradigm shift.

To conclude, why do all of that? I said at the start that our Europe could die. It can die if it does not protect its borders. It does not know how to respond to external security risks. It can die if it starts to depend on others. It cannot produce to create its wealth and redistribute. Yet it stands at a point where it could die of itself. Because we find ourselves again in a time that our Europe has known. Peter Sloterdijk describes it very well in his lectures at the Collège de France, with his customary wry sense of pessimism, saying that we are once again in one of those moments when Europe fears its decline, is doubting itself.

Once again, our Europe has lost its self-esteem. That is strange when you look at everything it has done and what we owe it, but there it is. It would take too long here to explain that our Europe in fact structurally always has this doubt about itself. We are the continent, the civilization that probably invented doubt and self-questioning, the culture of confession and I believe that he will come back to this himself in his lectures. And we are stricken with doubts also because our democracy is being rocked, as I said earlier in terms of its rules, because our demographic decline is a source of deep-seated concern. So, the risk for our Europe would be, as it were, to get used to this belittlement.

That is why what I would like to propose to you today, the promise that I want to make, if you will, is that we will try to defend the European humanism that unites us. If we want to protect our borders, if we want our continent to stay strong, produce, and create, it's because after all, we're not like the others. We must never forget that. We're not like the others. Camus has this wonderful sentence in Letters to a German Friend: "Our Europe is a shared adventure that we continue to pursue, despite you, in the wind of intelligence." That's what Europe is. It's an adventure that we continue to pursue, despite all those who doubt, in the wind of intelligence. What does that mean? That means that being a European doesn't simply mean living somewhere - whether in the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic or the Black Sea regions. It means defending a certain idea of humankind that places free, rational, enlightened individuals above all else. It means saying that from Paris to Warsaw, from Lisbon to Odessa, we have a unique relationship with freedom and justice. We have always chosen to place humankind, in the broadest sense of the word, above all else. From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment and the end of totalitarian regimes, that is what has defined Europe.

It's the choice we have made time and again and it's what has set us apart from others. It's not some naïve choice where we delegate our lives to industrial heavyweights on the grounds that they're too powerful. That doesn't align with Europe's choices and humanism. It's the choice not to delegate our lives to powers of state control, which have no respect for the freedom of rational individuals. It means believing in individuals who are free and endowed with reason. It means believing in knowledge, freedom, and culture. It means the constant tension between tradition and permanence and modernity. Being European involves an imbalance, and that is what we must defend. This humanism is very fragile but it is what sets us apart from others. And I'm here to argue that that's what is at stake right now. We must defend it because, as I was saying, liberal democracy is not a given. I'm saying this today, on a very important day, and I'm thinking of our Portuguese friends, 50 years to the day after the Carnation Revolution.

Freedom must be won. All across our continent, freedom has been constructed by combat, including early this century. We must never forget this. Freedom is not a given. It means that we can't sit idly by. That is why we must continue to defend the fundamental aspects of the rule of law: the separation of powers, the rights of oppositions and minorities, the independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, the autonomy of universities, and academic freedom. Freedom has been relinquished in too many European countries. That is why I am here defending rule of law budget conditionality for EU fund disbursement. And that is why we must strengthen it even more with determination and sanctions procedures in the case of serious violations. Europe is not some kind of shop where you can pick and choose your principles.

That is why we must also bolster our ability to combat interference and propaganda, especially with elections coming up. Our Czech friends have seen this first-hand. Our Belgian friends have spoken out against it. Today, on our TV channels and social networks, we're seeing the resurgence of a certain disingenuous approach toward rules that were established for those who respected democratic civility. We are seeing a resurgence of propaganda and fake news that is disrupting our liberal democracies and promoting a different model. So, we must combat them, demand full transparency, and above all, ban this content when it's destabilizing elections. And yet, we have every reason to be optimistic. We have seen this in Poland, where just a few months ago, some were saying that the die had been cast. Not only did the country have the largest turnout for a democratic election in its history, but Poland re-elected a party that is both patriotic and a champion of liberal democracy. Therefore, we must bring this fight for liberal democracy and political openness to all of Europe and make it as European as possible.

I don't want to go on for too long about this. During the conclusion of the Conference on the Future of Europe, I advocated for greater citizen participation, citizens' panels, the European Citizens' Initiative, and European referendums. I think that we should develop these initiatives together as Europeans and that they are essential when it comes to rejuvenating the European demos. We should also allow for transnational lists in elections, which are simply an opportunity, in European elections, to see real democratic debate in Europe. Look at the elections we have now. They're all national elections. That is the reality. Because we don't have a Europe-wide lists. For now, that idea has not been unanimously embraced by our partners, shall we say. But the key thing here is that we can't have a continent, we can't have bodies that make more and more decisions while democratic participation stays stuck at the 1979 levels. We also need the courage to strengthen European democracy, as well as revised rules. Here once again, there's a very strong Franco-German agreement on qualified majority voting in taxation and foreign policy. That's one of the essential reforms, even if we need to do much further. But I don't want to overwhelm you today.

Above all, as I was saying before, defending this European humanism means that we have to realize that, beyond our institutions, this liberal democracy that we care so much about is something we must defend and strengthen. It's where our citizens are forged by knowledge, culture, and science. That's what's at stake in our Europe. To be European means believing that there is nothing more important than being a free, knowledgeable individual endowed with reason. And, at a time when we see a rise in scepticism, conspiracy theories, the questioning of science and scientific authority, we Europeans have the responsibility to defend it and teach people about it, and also to defend and share free and open scientific information. This fight is one that we will take up at the international level, but we also need to strengthen its instruments.

Seven years ago, I put forth a proposal on university alliances. Over 50 alliances have been created since then with the help of university presidents, students and professors, who I would like to take this opportunity to thank. These alliances make it possible to share knowledge and ideas. Now it's time for us to move on to the second phase: consolidating funding while strengthening these universities' integration and moving towards fully joint European degrees. European excellence also depends on skills. That's why we need to expand the Erasmus Vocational Education and Training programme with the goal of providing European mobility opportunities to at least 15% of trainees and apprentices by 2030.

Sharing also means creating alliances among European museums and libraries to facilitate partnerships, encourage digitalization, and improve circulation and access to books and other materials in Europe. Sharing this European spirit also allows us to foster a shared culture and mindset. To this end, I want for us to make ARTE, the reference among European audiovisual platforms, the platform for every European, offering high-quality content in all of the languages throughout Europe, even more so than it does today. In order to promote our rich cultural heritage in Europe, promote the study of European languages, and defend our model for copyright protections and arts funding, as we've done increasingly over these last few years. Sharing the European spirit with the next generations also means giving them the chance to experience our continent first-hand by traveling and sharing. So, beyond Erasmus and the Erasmus Vocational Education and Training programme, as Enrico Letta rightly said in his report, this is about the very tangible ability to get around all Europe by train. Our capital cities aren't as well connected as they should be yet. The Interrail Pass is a success. It needs to be backed by a Railway Europe, which is as much about travel connections as it is about culture. That means allowing students, young people, and knowledge to circulate among our capitals. Personally, I would like it to be backed by the extension throughout Europe of the Culture Pass, which France did not invent. You know how proud we are of our country, but this pass was invented by Italy and Matteo Renzi and we copied it. We tried to improve on it and others have followed suit. That's what Europe is about – drawing inspiration from others' success. Now we need to extend its reach because the Culture Pass offers phenomenal access to culture for young people and many families.

As you can see, once again, we are very ambitious when it comes to this Europe of knowledge, culture, and intelligence. However, we need to defend it right here and right now. Here we are today at this university, this building where we can talk under the auspices of great minds at a time and with a civility that we know well. However, everyone knows that today, our lives, the lives of our children, and especially the lives of our teenagers, are taking place in another space: cyber space.

And that is a space that we Europeans don't have control over. And in that space, first of all, we don't produce enough content – that is one part of the ambition that I'm talking about and defending – but we aren't even setting the rules for it any more. And that's a profound, anthropological, civilizational change. When children spend hours in front of their screens; when teenagers are introduced to culture, intimacy and relationships via these screens and the content they might be exposed to; when democratic debate takes place in that space, the digital space that we inhabit, the space that at the end of the day, is the one we inhabit the most in our lives today, are we Europeans seriously going to entrust others with this space? No.

When I say that this is a cultural and civilizational combat, I mean it. Because that is where our democracy is played out; that is where public opinion is forged. A democracy with a free vote is a wonderful thing. However, if this vote is influenced, if people's minds are warped, if choices are swayed by positions taken by this or that camp, then what kind of democracy do we have? So, I want to say this very forcefully: this isn't a technical matter, this isn't a matter of public policy. The ability to create public, democratic, digital order is a matter of survival for us.

And it's a matter of survival, in order to defend that humanism. Because nowadays there are basically two dominant models: the Anglo-American model, which means handing that part of your lives over to the private sector; there will be changes, but you trust them. Big corporations own social networks and platforms; they have algorithms that make everything seem very complicated, but that's something we consumers like – it seems efficient. But it's a choice that places citizens in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis consumers. And then there's another choice: control. In other words, exercising control over this disorder, this anomie. And that control is exercised by the State. That's the model used by China, and several other authoritarian powers are also moving in that direction.

The humanist model that Europe must develop – and it can exist as a model only if we follow it together, as Europeans – is one that fosters a democratic order; a model that's transparent and fair, in which we discuss and choose our own rules. That is why I'm in favour of changing the age of digital majority in Europe to 15. Before age 15, parents have to control their children's access to online activities, because otherwise they're exposed to all kinds of risks and warped ways of thinking that provide justifications for every sort of hatred. We have to – it's what you do for your children, it's common sense. Would you send a child alone into the jungle at age 5, age 10, age 12? Nobody in their right mind would do that. You protect them inside the family; you drop them off at the school gates, and you entrust them to responsible people who educate them. Then you organize activities for them, whenever possible, so that they might learn more and become independent. And now, for several hours a day, you also release them to the jungle. There they may encounter cyber bullying; they may even be exposed to pornographic content or paedophiles. That's what that space is, because it's neither regulated nor moderated. Do you want me to tell you how many of these platforms and networks have French-language moderators? Some don't even have ten. As Europeans, we must therefore regain control over the lives of our children and teens and impose a digital majority of 15 – no younger – and require platforms to have moderators or shut down certain sites.

Next, we must make a much more concerted effort to restore civility to cyber space. Just as we ban racist comments, anti-Semitic remarks and hate speech, we must resolutely ban them in the online, where the presumption of anonymity allows people to spew hatred without inhibitions. It's a battle for civilization and democracy – one that we must wage together as Europeans. And it's an essential part of the battle we must fight.

Dignity and justice are also part of European humanism, of course. We love freedom and knowledge, and we have an unparalleled attachment to justice and equality. That's what differentiates us from other continents.

Gender equality is central to this project. France and Europe have achieved a great deal with regard to work-life balance, parents, carers, pay transparency and parity, for example. I want us to go even further by enshrining the right to an abortion in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, just as we have enshrined it in our Constitution. Because gender equality is central to this humanist project; it is central to Europe's very substance.

Europe is also built on social cohesion, that is, the desire to build cohesion within our society. In keeping with the legacy of Jacques Delors and his European aid programme for the neediest, I propose to create a "European solidarity programme". Based on the European Social Fund, it would provide funding for EU member state initiatives aimed at assisting the most vulnerable, and thereby help to provide social support for the transitions we are conducting.

Europe therefore must have new instruments to assist individuals and regions during this social transition; they are essential. Let us therefore protect and assist Europeans through this policy that promotes justice, so that we can guarantee a Europe where it's possible to exercise all one's rights – free movement, accessibility, the fight against discrimination – and progress.

Speaking of justice, I won't go into the discussion about income tax – which is a good debate to have, given the accumulation of wealth in this era of globalization – but my belief is that it's not a debate we need to have at the European level; it is a debate we must launch at the international level, as we have on the minimum tax, which France succeeded in bringing forward. That's why President Lula and I forged an alliance at the G20 in support of taxing the very highest earnings. It's within the G20, within the greater OECD, that this existential fight must take place.

Ultimately, this European humanism, this certain idea of Europe that George Steiner talked about, is made up of very tangible things: the idea of the freedom of the rule of law; the desire to preserve knowledge; culture; and the relationship with equality that I just talked about. But the Europe of cafes, the Europe of our capitals, which are palimpsests, means there's a constant tension between the heritage we want to pass on and disruptive modernity. That's why our Europe exists in this constant state of tension, but it also has a say.

It has a say in its choice to continue defending our culture and its transmission of that culture, which is unique; in maintaining a dialogue between its universities, gathering places and cafes; in being the patch of earth that seeks to protect its landscapes. I believe that the ambition that we must have, that we've begun to have, for our forests, seas and oceans, begins with thinking about them in this way. It's not some kind of random modernist fad that's out of touch with reality – a caricature that I've sometimes come across. Not at all! Protecting our forests, protecting our biodiversity, protecting our seas and oceans just shows that we European humanists are able to count to three – the generation before us, our generation and the generation coming after us – and that our Europe is a jewel that we inherited and that we will pass on. And that can't be done by destroying irreplaceable natural resources, which is why the ambition of biodiversity, the ambition of protecting our forests and our oceans, and everything we will have to develop in the policies we implement for our Europe are humanistic aims first and foremost.

I say this too because I am not one of those people who believes that the rights of nature trump those of mankind. For me, it's a matter of European humanism to protect nature, because it is part of our balance and it's what has been handed down to us, and it's a way to promote humanism for us and for our children.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have gone on too long, I know, but there is so much more that I could say. And I know full well that after this speech, some will complain that I spoke too little of the African continent, of our neighbourhood and of treaty reform and modernization, and about everything I did not say.

Europe is a never-ending conversation. And it is, moreover, a project with no limits. That is true from a philosophical and civilizational point of view. We must never forget that the "rape of Europa" was carried out on land claimed to be Asian by a Greek god. There is a sort of ambiguity, and that is why it is never-ending. Right here, at the Sorbonne, Ernest Renan wondered about the substance of a nation. And the time has come for Europe to ask itself what it intends to become.

In my view, talking about Europe always means talking about France. But as you will have understood, we are at a crossroads. Our Europe can die, as I was saying, and it can die from a sort of historical ruse. For it has done incredible things in recent decades. For, if you will, European ideas have won the Gramscian fight. For all the nationalist movements across Europe no longer dare say they wish to leave the Euro and Europe. But they have all got us used to a "yes, but..." discourse, meaning "I will take everything Europe has done, but I will make it simpler, but I will do it while not respecting the rules, but I will do it to the full while trampling its foundations". Ultimately, they no longer propose to leave or demolish the building. They propose simply not to retain any communal rules, not to invest, and not to pay the rent. And they say that it will work.

And the risk is that everyone else is starting to become shy, saying that the nationalists and anti-Europeans are very strong across all our countries. That is normal, there are fears, there is anger in these tumultuous times we are living in, precisely because our citizens, across Europe, can sense that we might die or disappear.

The response is not that we must be shy. The response is daring. The response is not to say that they are on the up everywhere, and that and that we have a choice. This year, the British people will choose their future, and the Americans will choose their future. On 9 June, the Europeans will too.

But the choice is not to do as we have always done, nor is it simply to adjust. It is to proudly promote new paradigms. So I know, after Voltaire, it is difficult to be optimistic, for some this is even a matter of credibility, I know. But it is a form of optimism and will.

Yes, I believe we can take back control of our lives and destiny, through the power, prosperity and humanism of our Europe. And ultimately, when times are uncertain, to paraphrase what Hannah Arendt said in *The Human Condition*: the best way to know the future when events return and when the unexpected arises, the best way to know to know the future, is the making and keeping of promises.

And so, what I propose, is that in our clear-sightedness, we should make these great promises for Europe for the coming decade, and fight bravely to keep them. In doing so, we may have a chance of knowing the future. In any case, we will have fought to choose our own.

Long live Europe! Long live the Republic and long live France!