

## Address given by John F. Kennedy (Philadelphia, 4 July 1962)

**Caption:** On 4 July 1962, US Independence Day, the US President, John F. Kennedy, gives an address in Philadelphia in which he calls for the transatlantic link between the United States and a free and democratic Europe to be strengthened.

**Source:** Office of the Federal Register (Ed.). John F. Kennedy, Containing the public messages, speeches and statements of the president : January 1 to December 31, 1962. Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1963. 1018 p. (Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States).

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**Publication date:** 23/10/2012

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If there is a single issue that divides the world today, it is independence – the independence of Berlin or Laos or Viet-nam; the longing for independence behind the Iron Curtain; the peaceful transition to independence, in those newly emerging areas whose troubles some hope to exploit.

The theory of independence is as old as man himself, and it was not invented in this hall. But it was in this hall that the theory became a practice; that the word went out to all, in Thomas Jefferson's phrase, that "the God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time." And today this Nation – conceived in revolution, nurtured in liberty, maturing in independence – has no intention of abdicating its leadership in that worldwide movement for independence to any nation or society committed to systematic human oppression.

As apt and applicable as the Declaration of Independence is today, we would do well to honor that other historic document drafted in this hall – the Constitution of the United States. For it stressed not independence but interdependence – not the individual liberty of one but the indivisible liberty of all.

In most of the old colonial world, the struggle for independence is coming to an end. Even in areas behind the Curtain, that which Jefferson called "the disease of liberty" still appears to be infectious. With the passing of ancient empires, today less than 2 percent of the world's population lives in territories officially termed "dependent." As this effort for independence, inspired by the American Declaration of Independence, now approaches a successful close, a great new effort – for interdependence – is transforming the world about us. And the spirit of that new effort is the same spirit which gave birth to the American Constitution.

That spirit is today most clearly seen across the Atlantic Ocean. The nations of Western Europe, long divided by feuds far more bitter than any which existed among the 13 colonies, are today joining together, seeking, as our forefathers sought, to find freedom in diversity and in unity, strength.

The United States looks on this vast new enterprise with hope and admiration. We do not regard a strong and united Europe as a rival but as a partner. To aid its progress has been the basic object of our foreign policy for 17 years. We believe that a united Europe will be capable of playing a greater role in the common defense, of responding more generously to the needs of poorer nations, of joining with the United States and others in lowering trade barriers, resolving problems of commerce, commodities, and currency, and developing coordinated policies in all economic, political, and diplomatic areas. We see in such a Europe a partner with whom we can deal on a basis of full equality in all the great and burdensome tasks of building and defending a community of free nations.

It would be premature at this time to do more than indicate the high regard with which we view the formation of this partnership. The first order of business is for our European friends to go forward in forming the more perfect union which will someday make this partnership possible.

A great new edifice is not built overnight. It was 11 years from the Declaration of Independence to the writing of the Constitution. The construction of workable federal institutions required still another generation. The greatest works of our Nation's founders lay not in documents and in declarations, but in creative, determined action. The building of the new house of Europe has followed the same practical, purposeful course. Building the Atlantic partnership now will not be easily or cheaply finished.

But I will say here and now, on this Day of Independence, that the United States will be ready for a Declaration of Interdependence, that we will be prepared to discuss with a united Europe the ways and means of forming a concrete Atlantic partnership, a mutually beneficial partnership between the new union now emerging in Europe and the old American Union founded here 175 years ago.

All this will not be completed in a year, but let the world know it is our goal.

In urging the adoption of the United States Constitution, Alexander Hamilton told his fellow New Yorkers “to think continentally.” Today Americans must learn to think intercontinentally.

Acting on our own, by ourselves, we cannot establish justice throughout the world; we cannot insure its domestic tranquility, or provide for its common defense, or promote its general welfare, or secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. But joined with other free nations, we can do all this and more. We can assist the developing nations to throw off the yoke of poverty. We can balance our worldwide trade and payments at the highest possible level of growth. We can amount a deterrent powerful enough to deter any aggression. And ultimately we can help to achieve a world of law and free choice, banishing the world of war and coercion.

For the Atlantic partnership of which I speak would not look inward only, preoccupied with its own welfare and advancement. It must look outward to cooperate with all nations in meeting their common concern. It would serve as a nucleus for the eventual union of all free men – those who are now free and those who are vowing that some day they will be free.

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