

France: President Macron Calls for a European Army to Counter Perceived Threats from Russia, China and Donald Trump

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President Macron of France, now the ostensible leader of the EU since Merkel's fall, is calling for a "true European army" to allow the EU defend itself from threats Russia, China and even Donald Trump in the US. Macron cited Trump's announcement to quit a cold-war era disarmament treaty with Russia was as a threat to Europe. Europe is dependent on the US as Americans finance more than 22% of NATO's budget.

Emmanuel Macron has called for the creation of a "true European army" to allow the EU defend itself from threats ranging from Donald Trump to Vladimir Putin.

The French president has pushed for closer EU defence union since coming to power last year but has been so far met with limited success amid foot-dragging by other member states.

"We have to protect ourselves with respect to China, Russia and even the United States of America," Mr Macron told France's Europe 1 radio in an interview.

"When I see President Trump announcing that he's quitting a major disarmament treaty which was formed after the 1980s Euro-missile crisis that hit Europe, who is the main victim? Europe and its security."

The French president continued: "We will not protect the Europeans unless we decide to have a true European army.

"We need a Europe which defends itself better alone, without just depending on the United States, in a more sovereign manner."

Mr Macron was speaking in Verdun, northeast France, as part of a week-long tour of battlefields leading up to First World War Armistice centenary commemorations on Sunday.

The French head of state will receive world leaders including Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin for commemoration ceremonies in Paris on Remembrance Sunday.

The election of Mr Trump to the White House appears to have given more urgency to the cause of boosting the EU's defence capabilities, with leaders warning they cannot simply rely on the United States.

European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker said last year that "deference to Nato can no longer be used as a convenient alibi to argue against greater European efforts".

France is the strongest and most vocal proponent of an EU army but Germany has also tentatively endorsed Mr Macron's proposals for a joint command structure for military interventions.

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