

Macron: Open to offer N-umbrella to Europe

France And UK Only Countries In Europe With Own N-Weapons

Aurelien Breeden



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Ukraine opposition rejects wartime polls as Trump officials meet Zelensky rivals

Ukrainian opposition leaders have dismissed the idea of holding a wartime election, after a media report of contacts between them and US officials and in the wake of President Trump calling his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky a "dictator" for not holding one. Former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko said on Thursday his team was working with US "partners" to maintain support for Ukraine — but he added that he was opposed to a wartime election. In a written statement published on Telegram, Poroshenko said elections should only happen after peace had been established and that a vote should take place no later than 180 days after the end of the war. Yulia Tymoshenko, another opposition leader, said her team "is talking with all our allies who can help in securing a just peace as soon as possible," and said that elections should not take place before this had been achieved. Politico reported on Wednesday that four senior members of Trump's entourage had held discussions with some of Zelensky's top political opponents. The talks focused on whether Ukraine could have quick presidential elections, according to the report. REUTERS

have come to rely on America's nuclear capabilities.

Now, though, US President Trump's decisions to drop support for Ukraine, pull back US's traditional security blanket in Europe and pressure allies to spend more on defence have forced the continent to rapidly rethink its security architecture.

In his speech, Macron painted a stark picture of Europe caught between an unreliable American ally and an increasingly aggressive Russia, which he said was now pouring 40%

of its state budget into military spending. "Russia has become a threat to France and Europe for years to come," he said.

"I want to believe that the US will remain by our side, but we need to be ready if that were no longer the case," said Macron, as he announced that France would convene a meeting of European army chiefs in Paris next week to discuss the possible deployment of peacekeeping troops in Ukraine after the war ends. "The future of Europe should not be decided

in Washington or in Moscow," he added.

EU holds emergency summit on defence and Ukraine aid

Brussels: Facing the prospect that the US might pull them adrift under President Trump, EU leaders launched a day of emergency talks on Thursday in a bid to beef up their own security and ensure that Ukraine will still be properly protected.

Friedrich Merz, the likely next chancellor of Germany, and summit chairman Antonio Costa discussed over breakfast in Brussels ways to fortify Europe's defences on a short deadline. Merz pushed plans this week to loosen the nation's rules on running up debt to allow for higher defence spending.

Meanwhile, the 27-nation bloc was waking up to news that French President Emmanuel Macron would confer with EU leaders about the possibility of using France's nuclear deterrent to protect the continent from Russian threats.

"Spend, spend, spend on defence and deterrence. That's the most important message," said Danish PM Mette Frederiksen. The call is a sharp departure from decades of decline in mili-

ty spending in Europe, where defence often came last in many budgetary considerations.

The bloc will "take decisive steps forward," Macron told the French nation Wednesday. "Member states will be able to increase their military spending" and "massive joint funding will be provided to buy and produce some of the most innovative munitions, tanks, weapons and equipment in Europe," he said.

Ukraine President Zelensky, who was attending the summit, received warm bonhomie from most leaders. "I want to thank all our European leaders," he said. "Strong support from the very beginning of the war. During all this period, and last week, you stayed with us." AP



Zelensky with European Commission prez Ursula von der Leyen in Brussels

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Macron said of France's European allies in an interview with Le Parisien last week. "And they can no longer depend on the American nuclear deterrent. We need a strategic dialogue with those who don't have it, and that would make France stronger."

Macron has said that France could partner with other countries for joint deterrence drills, although the exact contours of a French or French-British nuclear umbrella for Europe are still fuzzy. NYT

Mocking him as 'Micron', Russia warns Macron not to threaten it

Moscow: Russia warned President Macron Thursday not to threaten it with nuclear rhetoric and, mocking his height by calling him 'Micron', ruled out European proposals to send peacekeeping forces from Nato members to Ukraine.

The Kremlin said Macron's address to the nation on Wednesday was extremely confrontational and that he wanted the war in Ukraine to continue. "This (speech) is, of course, a threat against Russia," foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said. "Unlike their predecessors, who also wanted to fight against Russia, Napoleon, Hitler, Mr Macron does not act very gracefully, because at least they said it bluntly: 'We must conquer Russia, we must defeat Russia!'"

Russian officials and lawmakers accused Macron of rhetoric that could push the world closer to the abyss. Russian cartoons cast him as Napoleon Bonaparte riding towards defeat in Russia in 1812. "Micron himself poses no big threat though. He'll disappear forever no later than May 14, 2027. And he won't be missed," former President Dmitry Medvedev wrote on X.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova suggested Macron might want help measuring his true military size, and her ministry said his speech contained "notes of nuclear blackmail" and amounted to a threat directed towards Russia. REUTERS

Trump cannot unilaterally terminate EB-5: Attorneys

Lubna Kably | TNN

Immigration attorneys and experts have allayed fears of existing EB-5 investors and of those who are contemplating opting for this investment-linked green card.

US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick had indicated, during an announcement of the Gold Card initiative, that it would replace the existing EB-5 programme, raising concerns of an executive order to end it abruptly.

But immigration experts explained that in 2022 Cong-

ress reauthorised the EB-5 programme through Sept 30, 2027, by passing the EB-5 Reform and Integrity Act (RIA), which contains grandfather provisions protecting investors who file EB-5 applications before Sept 30, 2026 from any future lapses in the programme. Kripa Upadhyay, immigration attorney said, "Trump cannot unilaterally end the EB-5 programme. It was created by Congress in 1990 and is codified in the Immigration and Nationality Act. Any attempt to eliminate or replace it requires legi-

slative action, an unlikely scenario in a divided Congress."

Of late, the EB-5 programme has caught the attention of H-1B holders already in the US, who are tired of waiting for an employment-linked green card. It is also popular among rich Indians who want their children to have a future in America. For Indians, the entire process of obtaining an unconditional green card under the EB-5 can take between 6-7 years, or on a more conservative estimate up to 10 years.

Post Trump's announcement of a Gold Card, several

who had invested feared that they would not get a green card, as this programme would be terminated. An investment of \$800,000 for projects in Targeted Employment Areas, which are rural and high-unemployment areas, and infrastructure projects, or \$1.05 million if located elsewhere is not cheap, even if relatively smaller than the \$5 million requirement for the proposed Gold Card.

Some investors are worried that the Trump administration will order the USCIS to reduce or completely pause the processing of EB-5 petitions.

Trade deal with India key to Trump's bid to boost exports

Pact Will Enable Direct Imports From America

Pankaj Doval & Sidhartha | TNN

New Delhi: A bilateral trade deal is critical not just for India but also for the US as it is seen to be key to Donald Trump's focus on boosting production and exports from America. An across-the-board duty reduction will mean that carmakers, bourbon producers or handset manufacturers will ship goods into In-

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dia from the most competitive source, likely to be China or south-east Asia, instead of an American factory.

Neither Harley Davidson, a favourite with US presidents, or Tesla, run by Trump aide Elon Musk, source their vehicles from US. While Harley import its bikes from its manufacturing set-up in Tha-

TRUMP TIMES

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- ▶ New Trump travel ban may bar Pakistanis, Afghans from entering US as soon as next week, say sources
- ▶ Trump wants his new edu chief, Linda McMahon, to 'put herself out of job' and shut the education dept
- ▶ Don issues 'last warning' to Hamas to release remaining Gaza hostages. Hamas says only in return for lasting truce
- ▶ After a reported meeting with Trump aides, Zelensky's political opponents dismiss idea of wartime polls

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iland, Tesla, which is close to launching its cars in India, is likely to ship its electrics from Germany after authorities requested the firm not to import the vehicles from China.

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Macron offers to extend nuclear shield to EU allies

French President Emmanuel Macron said his country was willing to discuss extending protection afforded by its nuclear arsenal to its European allies, as the continent scrambled to fend off heightened Russian aggression and diminishing US support.



France and Britain are the only countries in Europe with their own nuclear weapons and only France is in the EU.

Meanwhile, EU's heads of govt launched a day of emergency talks in a bid to find ways to fortify Europe's defences on a short deadline. German chancellor-in-waiting Friedrich Merz pushed plans this week to loosen the nation's rules on running up debt for higher defence spends. P 22

India bought 112 bn euro worth of Russian oil since Ukraine war

NEW DELHI, Mar 6 (PTI)

INDIA, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, spent 102.5 billion euro (about Rs 1.5 lakh crore) on buying crude oil from Russia since the start of the Ukraine war, a European think tank said on Thursday.

The Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) released a report on payments to Russia for fossil fuels since February 24, 2022.

"According to our estimates, since the beginning of the war, Russia earned EUR 835 billion in revenue from fossil fuel exports," it said.

China was the biggest buyer of Russian fossil fuel at EUR 235 billion (made up of EUR 170 billion for oil, EUR 34.3 billion for coal and EUR 30.5 billion for gas).

India, according to CREA, bought fossil fuel worth EUR 205.84 billion from Russia from the beginning of the war until March 2, 2025. This comprised EUR 112.5 billion (USD 121.59 billion) for purchase



of crude oil, which is refined into fuels like petrol and diesel at refineries, and EUR 13.25 billion for coal.

India, which is more than 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its crude oil needs, spent USD 232.7 billion on crude imports in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023) and USD 234.3 billion in 2023-24. In the first 10 months of the current fiscal, it spent USD 195.2 billion.

India, which has traditionally sourced its oil from the Middle East, began importing a large volume of oil from Russia soon

after the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. This is primarily because Russian oil was available at a significant discount to other international benchmarks due to Western sanctions and some European countries shunning purchases.

This led to India's imports of Russian oil seeing a dramatic rise, growing from less than 1 per cent of its total crude oil imports to a staggering 40 per cent in a short period.

Some of the refineries in India turned Russian crude oil into fuels like petrol and diesel which were exported to Europe and other G7 countries, according to CREA.

Latest sanctions by the US have, however, led to a fall in imports after India shunned cargoes in sanctioned ships or insured by banned entities.

Russia, however, continues to be India's top oil source. India imported 1.48 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil from Russia in February, against 1.67 million bpd in the previous month.

China tones down 'READY TO FIGHT WITH US' remark

BEIJING, Mar 6 (PTI)

DAYS after its assertion to fight trade or "any other type" of war with the US, China on Thursday toned down its stand saying that no such wars should be fought because they cannot be won.

"The US must no longer seek to contain or go after China in the name of strategic competition," Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian told the media here responding to US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth's remark that his country doesn't seek a war with China, but will rebuild the military and prepare for war.

"We've always held the clear cut view that whatever kind of war it is, a tariff war or a trade war, a cold war or a hot war, they should not be fought and cannot be won," Lin said. In contrast, on Tuesday Lin



had said: "Let me reiterate that intimidation does not scare us. Bullying does not work on us. Pressuring, coercion or threats are not the right way of dealing with China. Anyone using maximum pressure on China is picking the

wrong guy and miscalculating."

"If the US has other agenda in mind and if war is what the US wants, be it a tariff war, a trade war or any other type of war, we're ready to fight till the end," he said, replying to a question on US tar-

iffs on Chinese goods.

Reacting to Lin's comments, Hegseth said on Wednesday on Fox News: "Those who long for peace must prepare for war, [and] that's why we're rebuilding our military. That's why we're establishing deterrence."

President Donald Trump understands peace comes through strength, and he also has a good relationship with the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Hegseth's comments posted on the US Defence Department website on Wednesday said.

He said the US is not actively seeking conflict with China. "We don't seek that war," Hegseth said. "But my job as Secretary of Defence is to make sure we're ready. [So], we need the defence spending, the capabilities, the weapons and the

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3-language policy in NEP is good for whole country: Kiren Rijiju

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Mar 6 (PTI)

UNION Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday said the three-language formula in the New Education Policy (NEP) is good for the whole country.

Responding to a query regarding the ongoing serious debate on the three-language policy in the NEP, especially from the southern States, he said that there are some miscommunications or some people deliberately “trying to play politics”.

“The three-language policy in the National Education Policy is good for the whole country,” the Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs told reporters here. Rijiju was in Thiruvananthapuram to attend the regional review meeting and training

workshop on the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) for the States and Union Territories of the Southern Region. “Today, honourable PM Modi Ji is the PM of India, but Hindi is not his mother tongue; his mother tongue is Gujarati. Our Home Minister Amit Shah ji his mother tongue is Gujarati.

The Education Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan, has Odia as his mother tongue and my mother tongue is Arunachali, but we are working as a team with the interest of our country foremost,” Rijiju said.

