

Germany's Merkel joins France's Macron in call for European Union army

German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on Tuesday for an integrated European Union military, echoing language used by French President Emmanuel Macron last week that infuriated U.S. President Donald Trump.

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Merkel told the European Parliament such an army would not undermine the U.S.-led military alliance NATO but would be complementary to it, remarks that were met with loud applause in the legislature though also with boos from nationalist members.

"The times when we could rely on others are over. This means we Europeans have to take our fate fully into our own hands," Merkel said.

"We should work on a vision of one day establishing a real European army."

Macron's call, which reflected a broad trend of EU thinking but is not universally accepted, was meant to show European willingness to meet U.S. demands that Europe do more for its own security and rely less on America's security umbrella.

However, on Twitter on Nov. 9, Trump accused Macron of seeking to develop the EU's own military to defend itself from the United States, which EU and French officials said was a misunderstanding.

On Tuesday Trump took aim at Macron again, blasting France over its near defeat to Germany in two world wars, its wine industry and Macron's approval ratings.

In his remarks on Nov. 6, Macron had been referring to computer hackers who could attack Europe from anywhere, including from inside the United States, officials said.

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First proposed in the 1950s and taken up four years ago by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker as a response to fraying EU unity, an EU armed forces is seen as strengthening the global power of the bloc, which is an economic giant but a geopolitical minnow.

With Britain's pending departure from the EU, there may be more momentum for remaining member states to find common ground on defense, although there remain divisions.

Supporters of a European defense union say the EU has struggled in military and humanitarian missions in the Balkans, Libya and Africa, and that it was caught off guard by Russia's annexation of Crimea.

“No place for nationalism”

Merkel's address comes at a time when the EU is searching for answers to a U.S. president who views the EU with contempt, to the rise of illiberal democracies and nationalist parties within its borders, and to Britain's vote to leave the bloc.

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She made appeals for tolerance and solidarity, saying “nationalism and egotism should no longer have a place in Europe” to a sustained applause.

As a deadline looms for Italy's eurosceptic government to re-submit budget plans to the European Union, Merkel said the euro zone would only work if all member states meet their treaty responsibilities.

“Our common currency can only function if every individual member fulfills their responsibility for sustainable finances,” Merkel said, adding that otherwise the strength and the stability of the euro zone were at risk.

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“We want to extend a hand to Italy,” she later said. “But Italy also agreed to all

sorts of rules and it can't just tear them up."

Merkel dominated European politics for over a decade, but she is now a diminished force, weakened by the fragility of her coalition and the rise of the far-right in Germany. She announced in late October that she would step down as leader of her party, though remain chancellor.

Her foot-dragging over far-reaching reforms to the euro zone has frustrated the energetic Macron. In the summer, they agreed to a budget for the single currency area but failed to deliver any big-bang reforms. Few concrete steps have been taken since.

On Tuesday, she kept her vision for deeper monetary cooperation vague: "We need to develop our monetary policy better. We're working on a banking union," she said. "We have to look at responsibility and control, a banking union and then later a European insurance system."

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Merkel also trained her sights on Poland and Hungary, two countries whose leaders other member states worry are undercutting democratic institutions.

The European Parliament in September voted to sanction Hungary for flouting EU rules on democracy, civil rights and corruption, while concerns have grown in the EU over Warsaw's accelerated judicial overhaul.

"Solidarity is always linked to commitments of the community, and the principles based on rule of law," Merkel said.

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