



Speech by French Senator Claude Malhuret on Ukraine and European security
Google translation: March 5, 2025
French Senate

Mr. President,
Mr. Prime Minister
Ladies and Gentlemen Ministers,
My dear colleagues,

Europe is at a critical turning point in its history. The American shield is slipping away, Ukraine risks being abandoned, Russia strengthened.

Washington became Nero's court, an incendiary emperor, submissive courtiers and a ketamine-fueled buffoon charged with purging the civil service.

It is a tragedy for the free world, but it is first and foremost a tragedy for the United States. Trump's message is that there is no point in being his ally since he will not defend you, he will impose more customs duties on you than on his enemies and will threaten to seize your territories while supporting the dictatorships that invade you.

The king of the deal is showing what the art of the deal is. He thinks he is going to intimidate China by lying down in front of Putin, but Xi Jinping, faced with such a disaster, is undoubtedly accelerating preparations for the invasion of Taiwan.

Never in history has a president of the United States capitulated to the enemy. No one has ever supported an aggressor against an ally. Never has anyone trampled on the American Constitution, issued so many illegal decrees, dismissed the judges who could prevent them, suddenly dismissed the military staff, weakened all counter-powers and taken control of social networks.

This is not an illiberal drift, it is the beginning of the confiscation of democracy. Let us remember that it only took one month, three weeks and two days to bring down the Weimar Republic and its Constitution.

I have confidence in the strength of American democracy and the country is already protesting. But in one month, Trump has done more harm to America than in four years of his last presidency. We were at war against a dictator, now we are fighting against a dictator supported by a traitor.

Eight days ago, just as Trump was putting his hand behind Macron's back at the White House, the United States was voting at the UN with Russia and North Korea against the Europeans demanding the departure of Russian troops.

Two days later, in the Oval Office, the military service hideout gave moral and strategy lessons to war hero Zelensky before dismissing him like a groom, ordering him to submit or resign. Last night, he took another step into infamy by stopping the promised delivery of weapons. What to do in the face of this betrayal? The answer is simple: cope.

And first of all, don't make a mistake. The defeat of Ukraine would be the defeat of Europe. The Baltic States, Georgia, Moldova are already on the list. Putin's goal is the return to Yalta where half of the continent was ceded to Stalin.

The countries of the South are waiting for the outcome of the conflict to decide whether they should continue to respect Europe or whether they are now free to trample on it. What Putin wants is the end of the order put in place by the United States and its allies 80 years ago, with as its first principle the prohibition of acquiring territories by force. This idea is at the very source of the UN, where today Americans vote in favor of the aggressor and against the attacked, because the Trumpian vision coincides with that of Putin: a return to the spheres of influence, the great powers dictating the fate of small countries. Greenland, Panama and Canada are mine, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eastern Europe are yours, Taiwan and the China Sea are his.

This is called, in the evenings of the Gulf oligarchs of Mar-a-Lago, “diplomatic realism”. So we are alone. But the narrative that Putin cannot be resisted is false. Contrary to Kremlin propaganda, Russia is in bad shape. In three years, the so-called second army in the world has only managed to grab crumbs from a country three times less populated.

Interest rates at 25%, the collapse of currency and gold reserves, and demographic collapse show that it is on the brink of the abyss. America's nudge to Putin is the greatest strategic mistake ever made in war.

The shock is violent, but it has a virtue. Europeans are coming out of denial. They understood in one day in Munich that the survival of Ukraine and the future of Europe are in their hands and that they have three imperatives.

Accelerate military aid to Ukraine to compensate for American neglect, so that it can hold on, and of course to impose its presence and that of Europe in any negotiation.

It will be expensive. We must put an end to the taboo of using frozen Russian assets. It will be necessary to circumvent Moscow's accomplices within Europe itself by a coalition of only willing countries, with of course the United Kingdom.

Second, demand that any agreement be accompanied by the return of kidnapped children, prisoners and absolute security guarantees. After Budapest, Georgia and Minsk, we know what agreements with Putin are worth. These guarantees require sufficient military force to prevent a new invasion.

Finally, and this is the most urgent, because it is what will take the longest, we must build the European defense that has been neglected, for the benefit of the American umbrella since 1945 and scuttled since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It is a Herculean task, but it is on its success or failure that the leaders of today's democratic Europe will be judged in the history books.

Friedrich Merz has just declared that Europe needs its own military alliance. It recognizes that France has been right for decades in pleading for strategic autonomy.

It remains to be built. It will be necessary to invest massively, strengthen the European Defense Fund outside the Maastricht debt criteria, harmonize weapons and munitions systems, accelerate the entry into the Union of Ukraine, which is today the leading European army, rethink the place and conditions of nuclear deterrence based on French and British capabilities, relaunch the anti-missile shield and satellite programs.

The plan announced yesterday by Ursula von der Leyen is a very good starting point. And it will take a lot more.

Europe will only become a military power again by becoming an industrial power again. In a word, the Draghi report will have to be applied. For good.

But the real rearmament of Europe is its moral rearmament.

We must convince public opinion in the face of weariness and fear of war, and especially in the face of Putin's cronies, the extreme right and the extreme left.

They pleaded again yesterday in the National Assembly, Mr. Prime Minister, before you, against European unity, against European defense.

They say they want peace. What neither they nor Trump are saying is that their peace is capitulation, the peace of defeat, the replacement of de Gaulle Zelensky by a Ukrainian Pétain following Putin.

Peace for the collaborators who have refused any aid to the Ukrainians for three years. Is this the end of the Atlantic Alliance? The risk is great. But in recent days, Zelensky's public humiliation and all the crazy decisions taken over the past month have finally made the Americans react.

The polls are falling. Republican elected officials are greeted by hostile crowds in their constituencies. Even Fox News is getting critical.

The Trumpists are no longer in majesty. They control the executive, Parliament, the Supreme Court and social media.

But in American history, those who favor freedom have always won. They start to raise their heads.

The fate of Ukraine is being played out in the trenches, but it also depends on those in the United States who want to defend democracy, and here on our ability to unite Europeans, to find the means of their common defense, and to remake Europe into the power that it once was in history and that it hesitates to become again.

Our parents defeated fascism and communism at the cost of all sacrifices.

The task of our generation is to defeat the totalitarianisms of the 21st century.

Long live free Ukraine, long live democratic Europe.