

Nato is dying, warns new German leader

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"Mission impossible": How one former French ambassador to the US described Macron's task of persuading Trump to support Ukraine in their meeting on Monday.

Is this the end of Europe? For years it has relied on the protection of America. Now its friendship with the USA is falling apart.

What's happening?

It has been a difficult week for Europe. France's leader, Emmanuel Macron, is in the **USA**, trying to persuade American leader **Donald Trump** to keep supporting **Ukraine** in its war against **Russia**.

Even so, at a **UN** meeting, the USA voted against blaming Russia for invading Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Germany's new leader **Friedrich Merz** has warned that **Nato** could be dying.

Find out more

Nato is a group of 31 countries in Europe and North America. They agree that they will defend each other if any of them are attacked.

Nato was made after **World War Two**. The war had left Europe in a terrible way. Millions of people had died. Cities had been destroyed. And there was a big danger: the threat of the **USSR**, which controlled much of eastern Europe.

So the **democracies** decided to work together to protect each other. Europeans could sleep easily, knowing they were protected by the strength of the USA.

Meanwhile, Europe could spend less money on defence and more on programs that would make them richer and better off, such as health systems and **pensions**.

Now, this is falling apart. Donald Trump has shown that he does not want to pay to defend Europe anymore.

Some say this could be a good thing for Europe. It could force European countries to work together again and build up their strength.

The problem is that few can agree on what this new Europe should look like. Some think Europe should uphold international **laws**. But when European leaders met this month without Donald Trump, they failed to agree on how they should help Ukraine.

Is this the end of Europe?

Some say

Yes! Most great powers rise and fall. Europe has had its day. It made the wrong choices in the 1900s and now it has no way to becoming as powerful as the USA or China. None of its countries can agree on anything.

Others think

No! Europe has faced far worse in the past. It became successful again after the end of the World War Two. It can be a modern superpower too.

Some people say

“Europe has what we do not have yet, a sense of the mysterious and inexorable limits of life, a sense, in a word, of tragedy. And we have what they sorely need: a sense of life’s possibilities.”

James Baldwin (1924 – 1987), American writer

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Are you worried about the future of Europe?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Should all of Europe be one country?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure about this story.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are the leader of a European country. What countries do you think you should try to make friends with?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Should Europe still think of the USA as a friend? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Get in a small group and work together to design a flag for a United States of Europe that would be able to square up to the US, China, and Russia.

Glossary

USA - The United States of America is a country in North America. It has a population of 329 million.

Donald Trump - An American politician, media personality, and businessman serving as the 47th president of the United States since January 2025. A member of the Republican Party, he previously served as the 45th president from 2017 to 2021.

Ukraine - A country in Eastern Europe. It was invaded by Russia in February 2022.

Russia - The largest country in the world by area. It has a population of 144 million people.

UN - United Nations. An intergovernmental organisation based in New York that aims to maintain international peace and security.

Friedrich Merz - A German politician and member of the Christian Democratic Union. He is expected to become the next leader after the recent German elections.

Nato - The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was founded in 1949 to unite Western democracies in Europe and North America against the perceived growing threat of the USSR. It now has 31 members.

World War Two - A global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945 and included all of the great powers.

USSR - The United Socialist Soviet Republic, the USA's main rival in the Cold War before it collapsed and broke up into a number of smaller states in 1991.

Democracies - Countries which have a system of government based on the idea of rule by the people.

pensions - A regular income paid by a government or a financial organisation to someone who no longer works, usually because of their age or health.

Laws - Rules that everyone must follow.

