
FRENCH DIPLOMACY AND THE WAR IN UKRAINE

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Abstract: Since the beginning of the Ukrainian file marked by the Orange Revolution (2004) The expulsion of the pro-Russian President Yanukovich followed by Russia's retaliation with the annexation of Crimea and the signing of the Minsk I and Minsk II Agreements, French diplomacy has sought to impose itself as a mediator state to find peaceful solutions to this conflict. When Russia started the war in February 2022 and there was a meeting between President Putin and President Macron in the Kremlin, at which the French president was somewhat humiliated, France began to openly support Ukraine and its President Zelensky.. French diplomacy's explanations regarding France's role in the Ukrainian crisis were as follows: After the illegal annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014, the Russian Federation made the deliberate and unjustifiable choice to launch a war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. From the first day of the conflict, France, along with its European Union partners, chose to resolutely stand alongside Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. By waging war against a sovereign country, Russia deliberately decided to violate the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Supporting the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Ukraine is not only a matter of helping a free people, but also of defending international law and the security of the European continent. This is why, since the first day of the war, France, together with its partners, has unambiguously supported Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. There is no doubt that French diplomacy has evolved significantly between 2014 and 2025. Élysée Matignon has become the strongest supporter of Ukraine after that of the US under Joe Biden. With the arrival of Donald Trump at the helm of the US and his bombastic promises to “calm down the war in Ukraine in 24 hours”, President Macron has shown discreet animosity towards Trump and even greater animosity towards Putin and his aggressive military strategy. France and Great Britain have become the strongest supporters of Ukraine, but also in the ambitions to build a military defense system for Europe. (Peillon, L. (2025) While American diplomacy talks about peace, French diplomacy is constantly burdened with the “revenge against Russia”. French diplomacy believes that Putin’s aggression requires European aggression, by sending European military forces to Ukraine.

Keywords: French diplomacy, Russia, Ukraine, Putin, Zelensky, Macron

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the first day of Russia's war of aggression on February 24, 2022, France has supported Ukraine and the neighboring countries most severely affected by the conflict. As of September 1, 2024, it has allocated more than €434 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine, enabling it to finance direct assistance to Ukrainians, as well as projects led by international organizations, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in numerous sectors. Diplomatically, France has been mobilizing since 2022 to rally support for the Ukrainian people and propose a humanitarian response commensurate with their needs. On December 13, 2022, an international conference in support of the Ukrainian people was held in Paris, at the joint initiative of France and Ukraine. Co-chaired by Presidents Emmanuel Macron and Volodymyr Zelensky, in the presence of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, it brought together 70 representatives of international organizations and foreign governments. Participants pledged to provide emergency aid to Ukraine worth more than €1 billion in the form of donations, grants, or technical assistance. The conference established the "Paris Mechanism" to facilitate donor coordination and tailor their response to Ukraine's priority needs. Immediately following the advance of the Russian troops, President Makron confirmed that "France does not recognize and will never recognize Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories, nor the results of the sham elections held there.(Duclos, M.,(2022) Since 2014, France has condemned Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. On September 30, 2022, France condemned in the strongest terms President Putin's announcement of the illegal annexation of the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, and parts of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions into the Russian Federation. It will continue to denounce Russia's actions and condemn its continued war of aggression against Ukraine. Alongside its partners, France will continue to provide assistance in the humanitarian, economic, civilian, and military fields, and in the fight against impunity, to meet the needs expressed by Ukraine in its fight for its sovereignty. and its territorial integrity. Fontaine, C. (2022/3)Throughout the three-year war, French diplomacy sought to help Ukraine with direct and indirect assistance, and this strategy was particularly effective during the Joe Biden administration (2020-2024). After Donald Trump's election victory in 2024 and the establishment of dialogue between the Kremlin and the White

House, and especially after the difficult dialogue in the Oval Office between Trump and Zelensky, French diplomacy gradually began to change its position towards the military conflict. Thanks to friendly relations with President Trump, President Macron constantly lobbied for "better treatment of Zelensky and Ukraine" by the Trump administration, "intensification of military and financial assistance to Ukraine" and "strengthening the European defense system." (Ben Amor, F. (2025)

2. FRENCH DIPLOMACY ACCUSES RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

During the period of Russia's intervention in Ukraine, when Prime Minister Gabriel Attal was then, he declared that Russia was solely responsible for the conflict. Consequently, French diplomacy also adopted very clear positions on the war in Ukraine, concluding: "Russia coldly attacked a free and democratic nation, which did not threaten it, which did not attack it, in violation of all the rules of international law and the United Nations Charter." This observation has been shared among EU and NATO members, as well as within parliamentary institutions. We have shared this observation, these facts, and all the developments that have occurred with Parliament and with the political forces regularly and with the greatest possible transparency since the outbreak of the conflict. One cannot understand Russia's massive and coordinated offensive against Ukraine on February 24, 2022, without revisiting the origins of the conflict. From such an understanding flows everything we decide to do to help Ukraine. (Pennargue, C.(2023).Some in Russia, nostalgic for the Empire or Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe, have never accepted the breakup of the USSR and Ukraine's independence. Led by Vladimir Putin, these imperialists cannot bear to see former Soviet republics, Ukraine in particular, taking their destiny into their own hands, sovereignly choosing their alliances, and opting for democracy. Ten years ago, in February 2014, a wind of freedom blew from Maidan Square across Ukraine, which turned its gaze toward Europe. At that time, Ukraine's goal was not to move closer to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but to sign an association agreement with the European Union. Russia refused to accept this, and on February 28, 2014, Russian troops entered Crimea, occupied the territory, and annexed it, in violation of all international rules. Eight years later, on February 24, 2022, despite the unprecedented efforts of the President of the Republic to avoid war, the Kremlin launched its so-called "special operation" against Ukraine. Moscow was banking on a lightning war and expected to bring down Kyiv in a few days; this was not the case. The resilience of the Ukrainian people has been and remains exceptional. The determination of the Ukrainian armies is impressive. Ukrainians have not given in. They have fought and are fighting for every village, for every house, for every meter of their territory. They refused to submit to the law of the strongest, refused to bow to brutality and cynicism. Faced with Ukrainian resistance, Russia has stopped at nothing, at no abuse, no violence, no crime. For two years, Ukrainian civilians have been targeted by Russian strikes. In recent weeks, in Kyiv and Kharkiv, Russian drones and bombings have deliberately targeted residential neighborhoods, killing families and children, without qualms or distinction. The list of examples is long and chilling. Since the beginning of the conflict, an estimated 13,000 civilians have died as a result of Russian strikes. For two years, Russia has been practicing a scorched earth policy, which it previously implemented in Syria and Chechnya. Entire neighborhoods and cities have been destroyed: Mariupol and Marinka, completely razed in March 2023, as well as Bakhmut and Avdiivka.([Leroux](#),J-B. (2024)

3. FRANCE'S DIPLOMACY SUPPORTS UKRAINE WITHOUT RESERVATIONS

For two years, gruesome discoveries have multiplied. In Buchah and Izium, unspeakable massacres took place. Russia committed barbaric war crimes and left behind monstrous mass graves. It will have to answer for them: we are committed to this. For two years, unbearable atrocities have multiplied; they target the youngest. We know that several thousand Ukrainian children have been abducted and taken to military camps to be "re-educated." In Ukraine, Russia has crossed all lines. No horror stops it. No massacre repels it, noted Prime Minister G. Attal. Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine, but, much more broadly, he is attacking all civilizing values by declaring war. To believe that this is solely a territorial conflict, a dispute between neighbors that does not concern the European Union, would be misguided. With this attack, Vladimir Putin sought to change the world order and impose his law, the law of the strongest, which would authorize any power seeking self-assertion to subjugate a free nation, either through blackmail or force of arms. With this attack, the Kremlin sought to undermine European values and demonstrate the weakness of democracies. Let us make no mistake: it is freedom and pluralism that it is challenging, our ways of life and our values that it is attacking and seeking to overthrow. (Cuordifede, C./ Richard Duclos,R./ Stoll, G.(2025) Turning our backs on Ukraine would be turning our backs on our values, betraying the trust of our allies, and demonstrating weakness. This would certainly not be a step toward peace; it would open the door to new conflicts, new wounds, and new wars. Therefore, from the very first moment, along with the President of the Republic, we have stood firmly by Ukraine's side; we will help it as much as necessary. By launching his offensive, Vladimir Putin thought he would divide Europe. He was wrong. From the very first hours of the conflict,

particularly under the leadership of the President of the Republic, Europe reacted. It united and imposed strong sanctions in record time. Since then, despite our differences, despite Russian blackmail over energy and food security, despite disinformation and threats, the Kremlin has failed to force the European Union to bend. It has failed to divide Europe. In fact, the opposite has happened: through the test of this war, Europe has been transformed and strengthened. Through the test of this war, everyone in Europe has understood that what the EU had built was fragile, that peace in Europe was not achieved and probably never would be. Collective destiny can influence certain EU members from one moment to the next, but this aggression has shown that Europe must rely on itself and not just on the goodwill of other powers. (Peillon, L. (2025) In these years, based on the commitments made at the Versailles Summit in March 2022, Europe's sovereignty has made giant strides: industrial sovereignty, with an unprecedented commitment by the European Union to overcome all its strategic vulnerabilities—I'm thinking of semiconductors and critical raw materials; energy sovereignty, with the end of certain European countries' dependence on Russian gas; and strategic sovereignty, finally, with the adoption of the common compass represented by the first White Paper on European Defense. The result has been clear. The European Union is more united, stronger, and more independent than before. A powerful Europe is building and moving forward; it is protecting France and the French people. Vladimir Putin didn't believe it. French diplomacy was shown that he was wrong. By launching his war, Vladimir Putin also thought he was dividing NATO. Once again, he was wrong. The Atlantic Alliance has grown stronger, and countries whose membership would have been unthinkable just two years ago, Sweden and Finland, have since joined. (Lefebvre, M. (2025)

4. POLITICAL, HUMANITARIAN, MILITARY, AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM FRANCE

Since the very beginning, France has been at the forefront of the international community, organizing and mobilizing support for Ukraine. It listens to its ally's requests and strives to respond as best it can. Indeed, it was in Paris, at the initiative of the President of the Republic, that a conference in support of Ukraine was held in recent weeks, bringing together twenty-seven heads of state or government or their representatives. France's support is humanitarian. The Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs will have the opportunity to discuss this in more detail. France has provided more than 210 tons of equipment and medicines and conducted more than fifty emergency operations in response to the priorities set by Kyiv: medical shipments and medical evacuations, support for Ukrainian civil security, and shipments of agricultural seeds and food products. Under the coordination of the interministerial crisis unit, France welcomed 100,000 Ukrainian refugees and educated nearly 18,000 children in France. France was able to successfully welcome them without the mobilization and solidarity of the French people, whose response was commendable. France also could not have achieved this without the exceptional commitment of local authorities, who took numerous initiatives, collected donations, and made the reception of Ukrainian refugees possible. France's support was also military. France delivered equipment to Ukraine, always respecting the same three criteria: delivering what Ukraine needed without weakening its own armed forces and doing everything possible to avoid escalation. Since the beginning of the conflict, France has delivered more than €2.6 billion worth of military equipment to Ukraine, always with the same objective: to meet, above all, the operational needs of Ukrainians on the ground by providing them with comprehensive equipment, enabling them to train for their use, and ensuring their continued operational readiness. In this regard, France has only one word: what France has committed to deliver to the Ukrainians has indeed been delivered to Kyiv. Furthermore, France has participated particularly actively in the European mechanisms established to provide equipment to Ukraine. France has thus become the second-largest contributor to the European Peace Facility, with more than €1.2 billion committed between the start of the war and the end of 2023. In total, in 2022 and 2023, bilaterally and through Europe, France has provided military aid to Ukraine amounting to €3.8 billion. Specifically, from the very first hours of the offensive, France delivered crucial equipment to enable Ukraine to defend itself and resist: anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, protective equipment, and individual weapons. France then delivered decisive, heavier and more complex equipment to strengthen Ukrainian air defense, with the Crotale surface-to-air missile systems. (Madelaine, N. (2025)

5. FRANCE HAS INFLUENCED THE EU TO INTENSIFY ITS ENGAGEMENT IN UKRAINE

France has also helped strengthen Ukraine's artillery with Caesar guns (trucks equipped with an artillery system) and unitary rocket launchers. France is also providing Ukraine with weapons to recapture lost territories, including light armored vehicles and Scalp missiles (a long-range autonomous conventional cruise system), crucial for deep strikes. France will continue these deliveries, which are essential to Ukraine. President Makron has asked manufacturers to accelerate their transition to a war economy and increase their production capacity. In 2024, France will deliver 150 drones, 100 remotely operated munitions, and six Caesar guns to Ukraine—with 12 more to be financed by France. France produced up to 3,000 shells per month for Ukraine. Thus, nearly 600 A2SM (Air-to-Ground Modular

Weapon) bombs were delivered, at a rate of about fifty per month, as well as about forty Scalp missiles. At the same time, France participated in financing the mass purchase of shells proposed by its Czech ally. The French diplomatic corps rushed to support Ukraine at the European level. Europe's reaction was immediate and powerful. France first acted to sanction Russia. Thirteen packages of sanctions, all adopted unanimously by the states, strike at the heart of the Russian economy and weaken it profoundly and structurally, despite the Kremlin, which is orchestrating a disinformation campaign to make people believe the opposite. At the same time, French diplomacy has decided to take strong action to support Ukraine. This aid covers all areas: temporary protection granted to Ukrainian refugees, economic aid, humanitarian aid, and military aid. In total, the Twenty-Seven have so far provided more than €85 billion in aid to Ukraine. This support continues resolutely. In 2024, the European Council decided on new aid for Ukraine, amounting to €50 billion. This essential support will enable the country to maintain its daily operations, but also to carry out the investments and reforms necessary for its recovery. France has also decided to go further in the Union's military support for Ukraine. By agreeing to supply weapons, Europe has undertaken a truly Copernican revolution. The EU could never have envisaged this in previous years. Europe's enemies were counting on it; they saw it as proof of its impotence. Things have changed. Thanks to the European Peace Facility, €7.1 billion in arms has already been committed to Ukraine. France, with its partners, has now taken a new step and reformed this instrument to make it a truly European military production tool. This is the purpose of the ongoing negotiations, which should conclude at the European Council. Finally, supporting Ukraine means recognizing that it fights every day for European values and, consequently, Ukraine is part of the European family. (Zemrani, H. (2025)

6. FRENCH DIPLOMACY:WHAT DOES A POSSIBLE RUSSIAN VICTORY MEAN?

For Russia, time is now an ally. It is counting on the weariness of Ukraine's friends and on public opinion misinformed by pro-Russian organizations. It is counting on upcoming elections, both in the United States and in Europe. It is counting on the long-term effectiveness of its undermining and disinformation efforts. At the same time, Russia is hardening its position. It is doing so first and foremost on its national territory, further strengthening the blanket of silence that weighs on Russian society. (Jolly, V. (2025) Domestically, several Russians who opposed Russia's intervention in Ukraine have been imprisoned, and the most high-profile victim is Alexei Navalny. With the tragic death in prison of this opposition figure, a death that bears the hallmarks of the Kremlin's responsibility, and with the ban on any opposition candidate from participating in the next presidential election, the message is clear and compelling to all, it seems to me: the Russian authoritarian regime is determined to combat European values. On the ground, in Ukraine, Russia is also hardening its position, increasing attacks and abuses. Because Russian forces have recaptured the town of Avdiivka, at an exorbitant cost to them, they want to make people believe they have regained the initiative. Russia is also hardening its position by becoming a methodical player in the destabilization of the world, in Syria, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Africa, notably thanks to its false agents and mercenaries in the Sahel. Russia has also hardened its attacks in the information field, not hesitating to spread fake news in an attempt to divide people. France is no exception: it is a prime target for Russia, which does not hesitate to intervene in our country in an attempt to sow discord. Russia is hardening its position in cyberspace, launching increasingly numerous cyberattacks. It is hardening its position by embarking on a militarization of space that could endanger our satellites, despite all international rules and conventions. France is therefore at a decisive moment, concluded President Makron. (Gélie, Ph, (2025). For French diplomacy, Russia is a threat, not only to Ukraine, but also, directly, to Europe, to France, and to the French people. If France shows weakness in the face of this imperialist and revisionist power, the consequences will be harsh. Only political determination and strategic posture count to keep it in check. And the first line of defense is in Ukraine. According to French analysts, Russia cannot and should not win. What would a Russian victory mean in concrete terms for the French? It's not just a question of moral arguments, the abandonment of democracy, or the betrayal of European values. We must consider the concrete consequences, which would weigh heavily on the lives of the French. French diplomacy has concluded what a Russian victory means: A Russian victory means the end of an international order based on law and a *carte blanche* given to all powers driven by revisionist instincts. A Russian victory is the signal that authoritarian regimes are waiting for to signal the end of the history of liberal democracies. A Russian victory means the constant danger of insatiable appetites, weakened European security, and an ever-increasing number of cyberattacks, to the point of preventing our public services from functioning. A Russian victory means the risk of new conflicts, closer and even more threatening, as well as proliferation within a few hundred kilometers of our borders. A Russian victory means the largest wave of migration in history on the European continent: millions of refugees from Ukraine and neighboring countries, fearing for their own safety, would move to the European continent. A Russian victory poses a direct threat to our food security. Russia and Ukraine are the two largest grain producers in the world. If Russia were to take control of Ukrainian grain, it would be free to set prices as it saw fit, in response to our sanctions, directly threatening our farmers and the purchasing power of the French people. A Russian victory also poses the

risk of widespread energy blackouts. We have managed to withstand Russia's gas blackmail, but if Russia were to find itself in a position of strength after winning over Ukraine, it would be able to further destabilize the market, resulting in even higher energy bills and pump prices for the French.

7. THE BILATERAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN FRANCE AND UKRAINE

The war obviously already has consequences for the daily lives of our compatriots, but a Russian victory would be a catastrophe for the purchasing power of the French. The list goes on. We could go on for a long time, listing, one by one, the concrete, tangible, and direct risks of a Russian victory for the daily lives of the French. In a world where Russia were to win, the French would live less well, with more expensive food, more expensive energy, and growing insecurity. This war obviously has a cost in our daily lives, but this cost would be multiplied, immeasurably, if Russia were to win over Ukraine. Ukraine's success is also in the interest of the French people. This is why President Emmanuel Macron has called for a collective effort to help Ukraine and avoid the worst-case scenario. Russia cannot and must not win the war. In a spirit of lucidity, while ensuring that any escalation is rejected, France must therefore assume its responsibilities. This is the meaning of the security agreement concluded between the President of the Republic and President Zelensky in Paris on February 16, 2023. This bilateral agreement, on which France also addresses public opinion, concerns mutual commitments between France and Ukraine. (Machecourt, C. (2024) It is, first and foremost, a very strong political commitment by France to structurally and long-term strengthen Ukraine's capabilities on all fronts: military, economic, but also for the reconstruction of the country. The objective is to increase Ukraine's capacity to resist, strengthen its resilience, and deter any future acts of aggression. In line with the commitments made by the G7 countries in a declaration adopted on July 12, 2023, and at the NATO summit in Vilnius, this agreement is part of a collective approach. In addition to the G7 countries, twenty-five countries have signed this initiative. Including France, seven countries have already concluded similar agreements: Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, and Denmark. It is therefore a surge of international solidarity that France is calling for, supported by all citizens, by political party, intellectuals, and others. What is the commitment of the signatory countries to an agreement of this type? In the event of renewed Russian aggression against Ukraine, it is a commitment to provide rapid assistance, particularly in terms of security, military equipment, and economic assistance. In terms of military aid, this agreement provides for up to €3 billion in additional military support for 2024, almost one and a half times what France provided in 2023 and nearly twice what it provided in 2022. In return for these significant financial commitments, Ukraine, for its part, commits to pursuing its ambitious reform path. This implies continuing the significant efforts undertaken by the Ukrainian authorities in the fight against corruption, judicial reform, consolidation of the rule of law, decentralization, modernization of its defense sector, and the transformation of its agriculture towards European standards. (Ibid. Machecourt, C. (2024)

8. CONCLUSION

This agreement is a powerful act. It reaffirms France's long-term support for Ukraine. And while it is not legally subject to ratification by Parliament, the President of the Republic requested that it be presented to you, so that you can debate it, and vote on it, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate. Indeed, behind this agreement, it is not only the future of Ukraine that is at stake, but also the defense of our interests and our security. This agreement protects them. I appeal to everyone to exercise responsibility when voting. Ladies and gentlemen of the Senate, beyond this agreement, which will be the subject of your vote, France is fulfilling its responsibilities by mobilizing the international community. During the meeting held in Paris on February 26th 2024 with the heads of state and government of the twenty-seven states and their representatives, new commitments were made. Collectively, France has decided to continue strengthening our support for Ukraine and has chosen to strengthen its efforts to provide the Ukrainian army with the munitions it needs. France has also decided to strengthen the air defense and deep strike capabilities of the Ukrainian forces. (Ibid. Machecourt, C. (2024) A ninth international coalition has been created for this purpose. Finally, new areas of effort were identified and proposed, in which each country can engage as and to the extent they wish: strengthening Ukrainian cyber defense and mine clearance capabilities, co-producing weapons in Ukraine, ensuring the defense of countries directly threatened by the Russian offensive, such as Moldova, and supporting Ukraine so that it can continue to secure its border with Belarus. These commitments have borne fruit. Far from the caricatures of advocates of permanent defeat and decline, France has given new impetus to support Ukraine. At the follow-up ministerial conference organized last week under the auspices of the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Armed Forces, dozens of partner states agreed to take up our discussions, to commit themselves, and even to take the lead on certain projects. Thanks to the will of President Macron and the commitment of the Government, France's initiative, as he recalls, is a driving force. France put all options on the table, without escalation or pretense. This provided a welcome shock, which accelerated the

international response. France also assumed its role as an important country in Europe and the world. France offered its partners the freedom to participate, move forward, and contribute. French diplomacy was clear: in such a serious moment, in such a complex situation, there is no room for manipulation.

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