

# Boris Johnson pushes anti-Russia war rhetoric in Ukraine amid UK government crisis

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Boris Johnson continues to respond to the crisis facing his premiership by escalating the UK's involvement in the US war drive against Russia.

After again rejecting calls for his resignation over the “partygate” scandal in Parliament Monday, Johnson flew to the Ukrainian capital Kyiv yesterday, where he met President Volodymyr Zelensky for talks in the Mariinsky Palace.

He tweeted ahead of his trip, “As a friend and a democratic partner, the UK will continue to uphold Ukraine’s sovereignty in the face of those who seek to destroy it.” In his opening statement to the press conferences following the talks, he warned of “perhaps the biggest demonstration of hostility towards Ukraine in our lifetimes.”

Johnson boasted of Britain’s pole position in the anti-Russian campaign. “The UK and other countries will be judged by the people of Ukraine and the world by how we respond and how we help,” he said, and it was “absolutely vital that the UK government should step up now [and] bring together our friends and partners in the West in the way that we are.”

But his efforts to strike a Churchillian pose on the world stage quickly ran into trouble. In a rare example of journalistic competence, the first questions posed to Johnson, by the BBC, were, “Have you done enough to survive? Have you done enough to persuade enough colleagues to rescue your premiership? And on the issue of Ukraine, why should the international community take your diplomacy seriously when you’re so preoccupied at home you put talking to MPs ahead of talking to President Putin?”

Johnson had been forced to cancel a scheduled phone call with Putin on Monday to deal with release of the

senior civil servant Sue Gray’s inquiry report into parties held at Downing Street during pandemic lockdowns. The call with the Russian President has been rearranged for today after Putin refused a request for Tuesday.

Johnson blustered, “My focus is entirely on delivering the priorities of the British people and they include ensuring that our relations with our friends and allies, and that our friends and allies are secure.”

The same journalist asked Zelensky, “Do you believe that the prime minister and his American allies are exaggerating the threat from Russia?”

This was a pointed reference to the recent public clash between the Ukrainian president and US President Joe Biden, with the US insisting a Russian invasion was imminent and Zelensky answering that this was not his government’s assessment and telling the NATO powers not to spread “panic”.

Zelensky fudged his answer to spare Johnson’s blushes but did not reverse his earlier statements, replying, “In terms of exaggerating or underestimating the threats it’s difficult to answer your question. No one can predict or know what will happen next.”

Johnson was put on the defensive and forced to return to the issue later in the conference.

“I think somebody asked a question earlier: ‘were we exaggerating the threat, were the US and UK in any way trying to big this up?’ I’ve just got say that is not the intelligence that’s we’re seeing. There is a clear and present danger. We see large numbers of troops massing; we see all kinds of operations that are consistent with an imminent military campaign.”

Assertions of nondescript “intelligence” seen by UK officials and a “clear and present danger” recall nothing

so much as Britain's role in 2002-3 as bagman for the US war against Iraq, justified with lying claims of an imminent threat from Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The UK is directly responsible for the most widely discredited "intelligence", asserting that a Russian invasion is imminent, the January 22 Foreign Office press release claiming that Putin's government was "looking to install a pro-Russian leader in Kyiv as it considers whether to invade and occupy Ukraine."

This was not the only embarrassment suffered by Johnson over Ukraine. On Monday his defence secretary Ben Wallace participated in a joint press conference with his Hungarian counterpart Tibor Benko.

Wallace attempted to further reported plans for NATO to send additional battle groups to Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Hungary, saying it was "important to signal to Putin that the very thing he fears, that is, more NATO close to Russia, would be the consequence of invading Ukraine... This is why the UK offered NATO more ground forces, more readiness as a deterrent."

But in the same conference Benko refused the deployment of NATO troops to Hungary. The country's president, Viktor Orban, visited Moscow yesterday for high-profile talks with Putin.

Johnson's performance in yesterday's press conference made clear that his response to these setbacks will be to double down on the UK's commitment to the imperialist aggression.

With customary hypocrisy, he claimed that Russia was trying to "redraw the security map of Europe and impose a new Yalta, new zones of influence" by "holding a gun to the head of Ukraine". It is NATO which has "redrawn the security map of Europe" by advancing hundreds of miles to Russia's border and NATO which has used Russia's request that this threat to its security be withdrawn as a pretext for a massive militarist campaign.

Demanding Russia "steps back and chooses the path of diplomacy," Johnson made clear that this meant recognising Ukraine's right to decide "which organisations they aspire to join", i.e., NATO.

He also threatened that in the event of any provoked conflict "Ukraine will fight... There are 200,000 men and women under arms in Ukraine, they will put up a very, very fierce and bloody resistance." Johnson went

on, "I think that parents, mothers in Russia should reflect on that."

He once again turned to nationalist boasting, stating, "Since 2015, the UK has trained over 22,000 Ukrainian military personal and provided £2.2 million worth of non-lethal military equipment to Ukraine, two weeks ago, we sent anti-tank weaponry to strengthen Ukrainian defences further, and today I've announced a further £88 million of UK funding to support good governance and energy independence."

There are currently around 100 British personnel in Ukrainian still conducting military training.

Last week, the Ukrainian parliament ratified a £1.7 billion loan from the UK designed to fund the development of the country's navy, including two minesweepers, eight gunboats, a frigate and other naval infrastructure.

Zelensky also emphasised the "high risk for anyone who tries to occupy even a tiny bit of our territory," adding the warning, "This is going to be a European war, a full-fledged war."

The danger of a rapidly expanding conflict was underscored by the formal announcement of a trilateral alliance between the UK, Ukraine, and Poland. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba commented, "We cannot expect safety and prosperity somewhere in the future when we become members of the EU and NATO. We need them today."

At a meeting last week of the Ukrainian and Polish prime ministers, the Polish PM Mateusz Morawiecki said, "Living close to a neighbour like Russia we have the feeling of living at the foot of a volcano," and promised to provide Ukraine with mortars, artillery ammunition, air-defence systems, and surveillance drones.



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