

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson stakes his claim as Europe's top warmonger

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UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kiev Saturday in an unannounced visit that was weeks in planning.

For Johnson, representing NATO powers funnelling staggering amounts of lethal weaponry to Ukraine, the visit was a sickening photo op designed to present him as Europe's most fervent warmonger.

A compliant media led their front pages with celebrations of the visit. The *Sunday Times* ran a photo of Johnson and Zelensky with a menacing armed guard behind them below a headline reading, "BROTHERS IN ARMS".

Johnson also calculated that the trip into a war zone would divert attention from a government mired in crisis, which has overseen over 190,000 COVID deaths and is being investigated by the Metropolitan Police over parties held during pandemic lockdowns. Millions of workers are facing a cost-of-living crisis and what the governor of the Bank and England described as a "historic shock" to their incomes. Even as Johnson left for Kiev, Chancellor Rishi Sunak faced political oblivion as a result of the non-domiciliary, non-UK-taxpaying, status of his wife, who is from one of India's richest families.

How desperate Johnson was to get to Kiev was detailed in the *Mail on Sunday* which noted, "Last month, it was reported that the Prime Minister had asked officials to examine the practicality and value of the trip to the Ukrainian capital for talks with his Ukrainian counterpart... At the time, security officials were said to be 'having kittens' at the prospect of Mr Johnson travelling to a war zone. But a Whitehall source said the Prime Minister 'wants to go' if it can be made to work."

No matter what, the dangerous trip went ahead. It followed Friday's visit by European Commission

President Ursula von der Leyen, alongside EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. The Ukrainian defence ministry tweeted, "We welcome Boris Johnson in Kyiv, the first G7 leader to arrive in Ukraine since the beginning of the large-scale war. We are strengthening our union of democracies. Be brave, like Boris. Be brave, like Ukraine."

Johnson set the militarist agenda for his visit the previous day with a Downing Street press conference alongside German Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The UK prime minister made another dig at Germany's reliance on Russian energy supplies, stating, "We cannot transform our respective energy systems overnight, but we also know that Putin's war will not end overnight. That's why Britain and Germany have joined dozens of allies to supply Ukraine with defensive weapons. Last week, the UK convened a donor conference which raised weapons and equipment for Ukraine worth over £1.5 billion—or 2.5 million items of military kit."

Johnson's comments confirm that a proxy war is being waged by NATO against Russia, with the military hardware supplied by the western powers and Ukrainian troops doing the fighting. Announcing the pouring in of yet more weapons, he said, "The UK will send a further £100 million worth of high-grade military equipment to Ukraine's armed forces, including more Starstreak anti-aircraft missiles, which fly at three times the speed of sound, another 800 anti-tank missiles, and precision munitions, capable of lingering in the sky until directed to their target.

"We will also send more helmets, night vision and body armour, on top of the 200,000 pieces of non-lethal military equipment the UK has already dispatched."

In Ukraine, Johnson said of Moscow's decision to withdraw from Kiev's boundaries that Putin "has suffered a defeat but his retreat is tactical and he is

going to intensify the pressure now in Donbas and in the east.”

Britain would more than double its loan guarantee to Ukraine through the World Bank to \$1bn, subject to parliamentary approval, Johnson pledged. Tariffs would be liberalised on most Ukrainian exports to the UK and customs checks eased.

Ukraine’s Ministry of Defence tweeted of a short walkabout by Zelensky and Johnson, “This is what democracy looks like.”

What a sham! Zelensky’s government, elected in 2019, has developed the closest ties with far-right shock troops such as the Right Sector and the neo-Nazi Svoboda Party. These forces led the 2014 US-backed coup which deposed the pro-Russian President Viktor Yanukovich. Today Zelensky is the poster boy of fascist forces, including the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion which played a critical role in the coup.

On Thursday, just two days before Johnson’s Kiev visit, Zelensky addressed the Greek parliament in a video message. Finishing his speech, Zelensky added, “I am confident that with the help of Greece we will win. Do not listen to me alone. Listen to two fighters.”

One of the soldiers who then spoke was from the Azov Battalion. He addressed the parliament of a country occupied by Hitler’s fascist armies, which killed 59,000 Greek Jews (83 percent of the total Jewish population, one of the highest percentages in Europe). The fascist declared, “I was born in Mariupol, and I take part in the defence of the city from the Russian Nazis.”

The crucial role played by armed fascists under Zelensky has been all but expunged from Britain’s media, with the incident in Greece reported nowhere. Rather, Johnson’s visit triggered yet more hysterical demands that the war against Russia must be stepped up. The *Observer*, the Sunday sister paper of the pro-war *Guardian*, editorialised, “In the face of Vladimir Putin’s cruelty, Nato must consider taking much tougher options.”

It complains, “Sanctions on Russia and arms for Ukraine are celebrated by western governments as an unprecedented, unifying success. They tell each other what a good job they’re doing. But it’s not working.”

The “continued, shaming, ineffectual western shouting from the sidelines is unacceptable. The sooner [US President] Biden and the rest stop wringing their

hands and start calling the shots the better.”

There were “hard choices western leaders must urgently consider. First, direct intervention to create a safe haven in western Ukraine, where displaced people may congregate instead of fleeing abroad. Inform Moscow in advance of its location and boundaries. Be clear it will be protected by Nato air power and ground forces invited in by Kyiv.” Other options included NATO strikes on Russian artillery.

This diatribe for upscaled war, backed by legions of Nato’s warplanes, concluded, “If the west is serious about stopping the war[!], these and similarly robust actions may be the only way left.”

Former *Daily Telegraph* editor Charles Moore could disagree with none of this. Writing Friday in the Conservative government’s house newspaper, he declared that among the European powers only the UK was prepared to defeat Moscow militarily. “In the case of France and Germany, the feeling is not so much that the country should triumph, but that the killing must stop... Jaw-jaw not war-war is the cliché.”

Tobias Ellwood MP, chair of parliament’s defence select committee, said Johnson’s visit was a “powerful message directly to Putin that we won’t be intimidated”. Britain was leading other nations including Poland and Slovakia in “breaking away from NATO’s self-imposed limits” and providing greater military support to Ukraine.

Ellwood boasted, “I called for a division of NATO to go in prior to the invasion, but NATO didn’t want to know. And I think they’re now regretting that decision... So seeing the prime minister step forward, take some leadership” was necessary “because much of NATO is consolidated within the NATO architecture that they’ve left Ukraine outside of that support.”



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