

# Poland on a war course: government and opposition close ranks

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Recent statements by European officials have shown that the plans of the NATO states to intervene directly in the war against Russia are well advanced. After French President Emmanuel Macron brought up the possibility of sending NATO soldiers to Ukraine, a veritable competition broke out to see who could issue the most bellicose declaration.

Donald Tusk's new Polish government was also involved. To mark the 25th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO, the Sejm (parliament) held a panel discussion in which the Foreign and Defence Ministers took part. Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski confirmed that NATO soldiers have already been deployed in Ukraine for some time. He reiterated Macron's initiative: "NATO troops in Ukraine are not unthinkable."

In an interview with *Super Express* at the beginning of February, Defence Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz had already stated that it was necessary to prepare for war in view of the recent Ukrainian defeats. When asked, he emphasised that this was "not just something that was just being said." His ministry had already taken concrete preparatory steps.

At the meeting of the European People's Party (EPP) in Bucharest, Prime Minister Tusk declared last week: "The times of blissful calm are over. The post-war era is over. We are living in new times, in a pre-war era. ... Today we have to say clearly that we are faced with a simple choice: Either we take up the fight ... or we will fall."

The former EU council president added that it was therefore necessary to believe in Europe's "economic, financial, demographic and moral potential."

While the politicians were talking about war, it was being practised at the same time. With "Dragon 24," the most important part of the large-scale NATO manoeuvres "Steadfast Defender" took place in Poland. 20,000 soldiers from nine NATO states—including Germany, Poland, France, the USA and the UK—are taking part in the manoeuvres around 70 kilometres south of Gdansk and 170 kilometres from the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad.

Among other things, the German-British Pioneer Bridge

Battalion 130 practised crossing the Vistula, which is 320 metres wide at this point, using the M3 floating bridge. As NATO military officials explained, recent experiences from the war in Ukraine are also being incorporated into the exercises. There, the front line repeatedly runs along wide rivers that cannot be crossed without technical equipment.

Poland's President Andrzej Duda also visited the manoeuvres and subsequently convened a meeting of the National Security Council to "prepare a new national security strategy" before travelling to Washington for talks. The meeting was attended by the presidents of the Sejm and the Senate, the head of government, the foreign, defence, interior and intelligence ministers and representatives of all parliamentary groups.

Duda explained that the meeting was intended to "send a signal to the world" that "we are united on the security of our country." Tusk also emphasised that despite all other disagreements, they would act together on security issues. Back in 2022, when Tusk was still leader of the opposition, all parties had voted unanimously in favour of the "Law on the Defence of the Fatherland," a huge militarisation and rearmament programme for Poland.

However, since Tusk came to power, Polish domestic politics has been characterised by bitter power struggles and crises. President Duda plays a leading role in this. Nominally, he is supposed to stand outside the parties, but in reality he is the president of the ultra-right PiS party, which was voted out of office after eight years. Using his vetoes against laws and the government budget and declaring an amnesty for convicted ex-ministers, he is driving Poland to the brink of a constitutional crisis.

At the same time, social conflicts are intensifying, with farmers and lorry drivers currently taking centre stage. Farmers are repeatedly blocking the border crossings to Ukraine to prevent imported grain from depressing prices and ruining them economically. The extent of the Polish farmers' anger and desperation is expressed in the fact that they are dumping Ukrainian grain out of lorries or freight wagons. For people who know how much labour, effort and

above all time goes into growing grain, this is not a thoughtless, trivial gesture.

Although the Tusk government is still hoping for a compromise with the EU on import conditions from Ukraine, it has also announced that the police will crack down on the protests. The ruling circles reacted particularly hysterically to the action of a farmer in Gorzyczki, Silesia, who, carrying a Soviet flag, appealed to Russian President Putin: “Create order in Ukraine and Brussels, and with our rulers.”

In Poland, where a reactionary mixture of anti-communism and Russophobia is the state ideology, this is worse than blasphemy.

On Tuesday, the leaders of the Polish state arrived in Washington to mark the 25th anniversary of Poland’s accession to NATO. In addition to new arms purchases, including 96 Apache combat helicopters, and the concretisation of the Polish-US nuclear agreement for the new Lubiatowo-Kopalino nuclear power plant, plans for the deployment of NATO troops were certainly also discussed.

At a meeting Duda and Tusk held with President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin at the White House, Duda also called for all NATO members to commit to spending 3 percent of their economic output (GDP) on armaments in the future instead of the targeted 2 percent.

Poland itself has doubled its military spending from 2 to 4 percent of GDP within two years and has ordered thousands of tanks and self-propelled howitzers from South Korea, among other things.

Those who had hoped that the rearmament madness would end or slow down with Tusk’s new government are mistaken. Poland is rearming at breakneck speed. At a meeting with his Swedish counterpart in Gdansk at the beginning of March, Defence Minister Kosiniak-Kamysz announced the purchase of 6,000 Carl Gustaf M4 anti-tank weapons from the Swedish Saab Group for the equivalent of €1.1 billion. According to Deputy Minister Paweł Bejda, Poland intends to sign more than 150 new contracts for “the purchase of a wide range of military equipment” this year.

The exorbitant arms purchases will inevitably exacerbate the political crisis in Poland. A year ago, the *Financial Times* asked: “Who will pay the bill?”

Indeed, who will pay? The billions and billions that Poland is spending on war and armaments are being squeezed out of the Polish working class, which is already suffering from inflation and price increases. The farmers’ protests are just the tip of the iceberg.

The situation of teachers and hospital staff, who protested en masse during the PiS era, has not improved, but rather worsened. The Tusk government’s promises to the contrary

are worth nothing.

The government has also announced that it will not extend the previous government’s measures to cushion the social impact of inflation, such as the cancellation of VAT (sales tax) on food and the energy price brake. In view of the deepening crisis in the global economy, Poland cannot hope for rising revenues from strong economic growth either. The billions released by the EU Commission from the reconstruction fund will at best give the Tusk government a brief respite.

The collaboration between the Tusk government and PiS on war and rearmament shows that the Polish working class is facing the most serious social attacks since the introduction of capitalism, regardless of the government constellation. The disputes between the government and opposition camps revolve primarily around the question of which strategy can be used to realise these attacks.

The PiS is pushing for the establishment of an authoritarian regime, while the government camp is pushing for economic liberalisation and social cuts. However, this contrast is relative. Both insist that there can be no hesitation or dithering in the war against Russia. Or as Tusk happily explained in Washington: “The West as a whole is mobilising.”

What applies to the conflict between Biden and Trump in the US also applies similarly to the disputes within the Polish bourgeoisie: “Their aims complement each other. Fascist dictatorship prepares the ground for war, and the brutal assault on workers’ living conditions required for war creates the necessity for fascist dictatorship,” as the Socialist Equality Party US presidential candidate Joseph Kishore explained.

Polish workers and youth must have no illusions that it is they who will have to foot the bill for the escalation of war and militarism—through wage and social cuts, as cannon fodder for NATO and as civilian victims of an expansion and nuclear escalation of the war.

The social struggles of farmers, lorry drivers, teachers, doctors and carers are directed against the same evil, the burgeoning capitalist barbarism. They can only be led to success under a common socialist programme and as part of an international anti-war movement.



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