

Trump's call with Putin plunges European powers into crisis

Peter Schwarz
14 February 2025

The announcement by President Donald Trump that the United States would "immediately" begin negotiations with Russia to end the war in Ukraine has plunged European politics into a deep crisis.

Before his "long and very productive" phone call with Putin on Wednesday, Trump had informed neither the Ukrainian government nor European leaders. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky only learned about it afterward from Trump himself. The Europeans received the news through social media. It appears they will also play no role in the planned negotiations.

Prior to this, US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth had made it unequivocally clear at a meeting of the Ukraine Contact Group in Brussels that it was unrealistic to expect Ukraine to return to its 2014 borders—reclaiming Crimea and Donbas—or to become a NATO member. Both of these had previously been considered non-negotiable conditions for ending the war by Kyiv and Brussels. Hegseth also emphasized that ensuring future peace would be Europe's responsibility; the US would provide neither troops nor financial support for this purpose.

Under Trump's predecessor, Joe Biden, the US and Europe had jointly pursued the war against Russia. Their goal was to integrate Ukraine into NATO's and the EU's sphere of influence and weaken Russia strategically to ensure unrestricted access to its vast resources.

However, despite providing Ukraine with military and financial aid exceeding €200 billion (\$209 billion US)—most of it from Europe—the Ukrainian army remains on the defensive. After suffering hundreds of thousands of casualties and facing increasing desertions, Ukraine is struggling even to recruit the necessary soldiers for the front line.

Now, the Europeans fear that Trump may strike a deal with Putin at their expense and without their involvement. Numerous high-ranking politicians have protested against Trump's unilateral approach.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned against excessive concessions to Russia. "We must ensure that there is no dictated peace," he told *Politico*, insisting that the US must continue its military involvement.

German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius stated, "It should be clear to everyone that we cannot be left sitting at the kids' table." He criticized the Trump administration for revealing publicly concessions to Putin before negotiations had even begun. "From my perspective, it would have been better to discuss a potential NATO membership for Ukraine or territorial losses at the negotiating table," he said. "Peace can only be secured from a position of strength."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk wrote in capital letters on X that Ukraine, Europe, and the United States should work together for a "JUST PEACE. TOGETHER".

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte stressed that "it is important that Ukraine is closely involved in everything that concerns Ukraine."

Earlier this week, President Zelensky had already attempted to persuade Trump with economic incentives. In a lengthy *Guardian* interview, he offered lucrative business opportunities in exchange for continued US military support, promising Trump preferential access to rare earth minerals worth \$500 billion, as well as Ukraine's substantial uranium and titanium reserves.

"It is not in the interests of the United States for these reserves to fall into Russian hands and potentially be shared with North Korea, China, or Iran," Zelensky said. "This is not just about security but also about money... Valuable natural resources where we can offer our partners investment opportunities that did not exist before... For us, this will create jobs, and for American companies, it will generate profits."

At the same time, Zelensky made it clear that he did not believe the European powers were capable of replacing

the US militarily. “There are voices saying that Europe could provide security guarantees without the Americans, and I always say no,” he told the *Guardian*. According to Zelensky, ensuring Ukraine’s security would require 100,000 to 150,000 foreign soldiers—a number that Europe cannot muster.

It is currently difficult to predict how far Trump’s initiative will go. It is unlikely that Moscow would agree to a deal that includes the deployment of European or American troops in Ukraine, as NATO’s eastward expansion was the primary reason for the war’s outbreak three years ago.

Nevertheless, Trump’s initiative and the alarmed European reactions mark a political turning point. Neither of these developments is about peace. Instead, they signal the fragmentation of the power blocs and alliances that have dominated global politics since World War II in favor of imperialist conflicts where everyone fights for their own interests.

As *Der Spiegel* concluded in its coverage of “Trump’s Call to the Kremlin”: “The US has begun its shift away from Europe. Trump’s conversation with Putin and Hegseth’s appearance in Brussels have dispelled any remaining doubts.”

The former head of Britain’s MI6 commented: “We’ve moved from a world of rules and multilateral structures and institutions to strongmen making deals over the heads of weaker and smaller countries.”

Trump’s Secretary of State Marco Rubio summed up the “America First” policy as follows: “The interest of American foreign policy is to further the national interest of the United States of America.” Under the banner of rejecting a “unipolar world,” Rubio is turning his back on Europe’s traditional “partners” in order to refocus US military power on territorial expansion and competition with China.

At the Munich Security Conference, which takes place from Friday to Sunday, this debate will play out in public. Alongside numerous European politicians and military officials, US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Rubio will also be in attendance.

The *Munich Security Report 2025*, which serves as the basis for the conference, is titled “Multipolarization” and describes a world where the emergence of competing power blocs “increases the risk of disorder and conflict and undermines effective cooperation.”

Regarding the US, the report states: “Donald Trump’s presidential victory has buried the US post–Cold War foreign policy consensus that a grand strategy of liberal

internationalism would best serve US interests. For Trump and many of his supporters, the US-created international order constitutes a bad deal. As a consequence, the US may be abdicating its historic role as Europe’s security guarantor—with significant consequences for Ukraine. US foreign policy in the coming years will likely be shaped by Washington’s bipolar contest with Beijing.”

Europe’s only response appears to be massive rearment in pursuit of its own imperialist interests, combined with the increasingly harsh exploitation and repression of the working class to cover the costs of militarization. In this, Europe is moving in the same direction as Trump.

A prime example of the prevailing war hysteria is a guest article in *Der Spiegel* by Green Party politician Ralf Fücks. As the former head of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Fücks played a leading role in the 2014 right-wing coup in Kyiv that laid the groundwork for the current war.

Now, he accuses Trump of “throwing Ukraine under the bus.” He blames German and European policies for failing to support Ukraine sufficiently. “If Europeans do not pull themselves together now and do everything to defend Ukraine’s sovereignty and the foundations of the European peace order, they will seal their own political insignificance. Europe will become nothing more than a pawn of the great powers,” Fücks argues.

This approach is also shaping Germany’s upcoming federal election. All major parties—from the Left Party, Social Democrats, Greens, Liberal Democrats, and Christian Democrats to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD)—agree that Germany must drastically increase its military spending while cutting social programs accordingly. The Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance, (BSW) an anti-migrant split-off from the Left Party, meanwhile, praises Trump as an alleged peacemaker.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is the only party that consistently opposes war and militarism in the election campaign, advocating the unity of the international working class on the basis of an anti-capitalist, socialist program.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact