

# EU adopts White Paper demanding €800 billion defense spending increase

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This week, the European Union (EU) Commission released its Joint White Paper for European Defense Readiness 2030. Endorsed by the European Council of EU heads of state at a meeting on Thursday, the White Paper calls for a staggering increase in EU military spending of €800 billion to prepare Europe for high-intensity war with Russia, a major nuclear-armed state.

This anti-democratic and militarily suicidal policy is setting up an explosive confrontation with the European working class. Last year, a Eurasia Group poll found that 89 percent of people in Western Europe opposed sending ground troops to Ukraine to fight Russia. French President Emmanuel Macron's funding of military budget increases with social austerity, including a massive pension cut in 2023, provoked overwhelming popular opposition and mass strikes.

Nonetheless, with contempt for public opinion, the EU is signaling a massive military spending increase that could only be financed by devastating social austerity against workers and youth. Hailing the vast increase in EU military spending during the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine, it lays out a framework for doubling military spending and so-called "military investment" in weaponry and equipment in the next four years.

EU "Member States' defence spending has grown by more than 31 percent since 2021, reaching 1.9 percent of the EU's combined GDP or €326 billion in 2024. Specifically, defence investment reached an unprecedented €102 billion in 2024, almost doubling the amount spent in 2021," the White Paper boasts, adding: "Based on projections of gradual take-up, defence investment could reach at least €800 billion over the next four years."

The White Paper lays out five basic mechanisms for increasing military spending:

- \* A Security and Action For Europe (SAFE) loan program granting EU member states €150 billion in loans to finance military spending.

- \* Invoking the "National Escape Clause of the Stability and Growth Pact" to allow EU states to run budget deficits

above 3 percent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), so long as the resulting deficit spending is used to fund the military. The White Paper claims that this could "mobilise additional defence expenditure of up to 1.5 percent of GDP."

- \* Using EU "Cohesion policy" funds, normally reserved for poorer EU countries to spend on key infrastructure or education, to increase defense spending.

- \* Using the European Investment Bank to fund the building of high-tech weapons such as drones, space weapons and cyber warfare.

- \* "Mobilizing private capital," including with measures like seizing the balances of private EU citizens' savings accounts and using them to invest in arms manufacturers.

These confusing references to "investment" and "loans" obscure one fact: The EU intends to finance its military build-up via debt and for these debts to be repaid by the workers. Military spending differs crucially from investment in productive capacity like a factory: It produces no new wealth. The cost to the state of building drone bombers or guided missiles, or of employing them on the battlefield, can be repaid either out of its revenues at home or by plundering new revenues abroad.

Europe's economy has stagnated for nearly two decades since the 2008 Wall Street crash, bled white by repeated bank bailouts handing trillions of euros in public funds to the wealthy. All EU states are heavily indebted, and several are effectively bankrupt: France's public debt stands at 110 percent of GDP, Spain at 104 percent, and Italy at 137 percent. With EU governments rejecting tax increases on the capitalists, their military spending will be financed by plundering workers either through imperialist war abroad, or class war at home.

After millions of Ukrainians and hundreds of thousands of Russians have been killed or wounded in the war, the White Paper ghoulishly calls on the EU to "profit from Ukraine's war experience." It callously treats Ukraine as a testing ground for the best use of modern technologies like artificial intelligence to the purpose of drone murder:

Ukraine is today using its experience from the frontline to continuously adapt and upgrade equipment to the point that Ukraine has become the world's leading defence and technology innovation laboratory. Closer cooperation between the Ukrainian and European defence industries will enable first-hand knowledge transfer on how to best use innovation to achieve military superiority on the battlefield, including on rapidly scaling up production and updating existing capabilities. ...

Innovations in drone technology are already dictating the way battles are fought, and the role of robotics is poised to grow, with autonomous ground vehicles taking the lead in early combat operations. These machines, capable of reconnaissance, direct assaults, and logistical support, are already having an impact on battlefields. AI powered military robots are still in early stages of development and there is ample opportunity for Europe to excel in robot weapons ...

From the experience of the Ukraine war so far, the White Paper calls for massively increasing EU spending on seven key areas of military technology. These include: air and missile defense, artillery and long-range missile systems, ammunitions stockpiles, drone and counter-drone systems, military logistics, cyber warfare, airlift and "strategic enablers" like space-based surveillance and warfare. To ensure that this military build-up is profitable for private companies, the White Paper adds, the build-up must occur on a massive scale.

Calling for the "acquisition of capabilities for high-intensity warfare in line with EU and NATO capability processes," it adds, "scaling up production capacities depends on companies having a steady stream of solid, multi-year orders to steer investment in additional production lines." It calls for the pre-positioning of large "Defense Industrial Readiness Pools" of ammunition and military supplies and industrial capacity so they can be rapidly used if and when the war in Ukraine explodes across all of Europe.

It also advocates building an "Eastern Border Shield" to "strengthen the EU's external land border with Russia and Belarus against military and hybrid threats. That would include a comprehensive mix of physical barriers, infrastructure development and modern surveillance systems."

The alarm must be sounded among workers and youth. What the EU is preparing is the largest European military build-up and the largest European war since the rearmament

of Nazi Germany and Hitler's genocidal invasion of the Soviet Union. The cost in lives of such a conflict, even before it escalates to nuclear war, would be astronomical. It must be stopped, and stopping it requires in the first instance rejecting the concocted arguments the EU advances to present its military build-up as forced upon it by the threat of Russia and China.

"The political equilibrium that emerged from the end of the Second World War and then the conclusion of the Cold War has been severely disrupted," it declares. "If Russia is allowed to achieve its goals in Ukraine, its territorial ambition will extend beyond. Russia will remain a fundamental threat to Europe's security for the foreseeable future ... Authoritarian states like China increasingly seek to assert their authority and control in our economy and society."

In reality, throughout the post-Cold War era following the Stalinist bureaucracy's 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, the European imperialist powers have been on the warpath. Whether rivaling US imperialism or working closely with it, they have bombed, invaded or occupied countries from Yugoslavia and Afghanistan to Syria, Libya and Mali. The current EU military program builds on this blood-soaked history, including NATO's provocative decision to heavily arm Ukrainian forces on Russia's borders that led to the Kremlin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The struggle against military aggression, social austerity and attacks on democratic rights begins at home. The coming struggles of the working class against austerity and police state violence in Europe must be armed with the perspective of building a socialist, anti-war movement across Europe and internationally against European imperialism's plans for World War III.



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