

Zelensky arrives in Paris for European war summit targeting Russia

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived last night in Paris before today's summit hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron on European military intervention in Ukraine against Russia.

The conference, coming after the European Union (EU) adopted an €800 billion rearmament plan, marks a further drastic escalation of the war on Russia in Ukraine. As explosive conflicts arise with their nominal US ally, the European powers are responding to the Trump administration's opening of negotiations with Russia has been to become the most aggressive advocates of war. This exposes the EU's cynical presentation of its policy as a defense of freedom and democracy against Russia.

Macron and the EU are acting with flagrant contempt for the working class. There is no support in the European population for total war with Russia, and a Eurasia Group poll last year found that 89 percent of Western Europeans opposed war with Russia. When Macron in 2023 tried to finance a €100 billion increase in France's military budget via a corresponding cut to pensions opposed by 91 percent of the population, this provoked mass strikes. Yet Macron, in line with the other major European powers, is doubling down on unpopular policies of war and austerity.

After talks with Zelensky at the Elysée presidential palace, Macron pledged €2 billion in new military aid to Ukraine. France, Macron said, would deliver "Milan anti-tank missiles, air defense weapons like MICA missiles for use on the Mirage fighters we have delivered, or also Mistral surface-to-air weapons." He promised old fighting vehicles, like "VAB armored vehicles, AMX-10 RC tanks, and also a lot of ammunition, some of which are guided or drones."

Macron presented himself as preparing the deployment of French peacekeepers to Ukraine amid an upcoming peace deal. He said he would demand that Russia provide Ukraine with a "a lasting cease-fire." He pledged that France would ensure that Ukraine retains "a credible

army format that allows to dissuade any new aggression" by Russia. Finally, he said that the meeting would discuss the sending to Ukraine of European "peacekeeping forces in the context of a peace accord."

Only such policies, Macron claimed, can defend against the threat of Russian military intervention from Ukraine into Europe itself. "We are and will remain at the side of Ukraine," he said. "We are in a changed epoch, and Russia's aggressiveness is not only a threat to the global order and the stability of the world. It also very directly impacts our security in Europe."

This is a pack of lies, first and foremost as it covers up the danger of catastrophic military escalation. The simple fact that Trump has opened talks with Russian officials does not mean peace will be reached. Indeed, news broke yesterday that Washington, having briefly suspended its military aid to Ukraine, had resumed flights of military equipment to Reszow, Poland—a key transshipment point for arms for Ukraine—from US bases in the Persian Gulf.

Moreover, amid a historic breakdown in European imperialism's relations with Washington and Trump's mounting tariff war against Europe, even a return by Trump to a policy of all-out war with Russia would not resolve bitter and deepening trans-Atlantic conflicts.

The European powers are pushing ahead with plans to send troops to Ukraine—though Russian officials have warned that these troops would become the target of Russian military action.

Macron's pretext—that Russia is threatening to conquer all of Europe—is a fraud. For three years, the Russian army has struggled to seize a strip of eastern Ukraine, home to a largely Russian-speaking population. It has no realistic hope of mounting a military conquest of all of Europe, a continent of over 500 million people whose economy is far larger than that of Russia's 140 million citizens.

Indeed, Macron's proposals to send "peacekeepers" to Ukraine makes clear the calculations underlying the

Kremlin's bankrupt and reactionary decision to invade Ukraine. Moscow demands that Ukraine not become a part of NATO or receive NATO military aid because it fears the arrival of large NATO armies directly on its borders. The Kremlin's February 2022 invasion, followed by its attempt to negotiate a peace with Ukraine in April 2022 Turkey, aimed to convince its "Western partners" in the NATO imperialist governments to take its concerns seriously.

The Kremlin's maneuvers failed, however, as the Biden administration and the major European powers sought to justify war and continued austerity measures against the working class by presenting Russian President Vladimir Putin as hell-bent on world conquest. Even as Washington now holds talks with Moscow, Zelensky and his European backers are doubling down on European rearmament and military escalation against Russia.

Zelensky, a dictator who has suspended elections and rules through martial law, told *Le Figaro* that Ukraine and Europe must wage a war for freedom and democracy and based on hatred of Russian people. He said, "I want our children and grandchildren to live in a free world, a free world in Ukraine, not outside its borders, not in Europe... The second motivation is the hatred of the Russians, who have killed so many Ukrainian citizens."

Zelensky hailed Macron's utterly reckless plans for direct deployment of European ground troops to Ukraine against Russia. At the Paris summit, he told *Le Figaro*, "We must define our needs, know who is ready to send troops, which ones, how many, and to go where? How many countries are really ready to do this? It is a difficult and important subject."

Zelensky called for a vast commitment of industrial and financial resources to build weapons for total war on Russia: "Indeed, we have less artillery and shells than Russia. The Kremlin has kamikaze drones provided by Iran, artillery and missiles produced by North Korea."

He called to finance the war by illegally grabbing €300 billion in frozen Russian oil revenues held in European banks: "We would like the frozen Russian assets to be used to equip our army. A reinforced and solid Ukrainian army is our greatest guarantee of security. We need troops deployments. And we need air defenses. The Americans have them. We raised this with Donald Trump. But if the Americans do not provide this system, we must see with the Europeans what similar equipment they could deliver so we can totally close our skies."

Plans for a further, catastrophic military escalation are far advanced. Even as political and military tensions surge

with the US, the major European powers are setting a course towards war with Russia. They have rallied to the positions of Polish President Andrzej Duda, a key negotiating partner of Macron in preparing today's Paris summit. Last year, Duda called for Russia to be broken up into a mosaic of ethnic mini-states—whose vast resources in oil, gas and strategic minerals could then be easily controlled and plundered by the NATO powers. He said:

Russia is often called the prison of nations, and for a good reason. It is home to over 200 ethnic groups, most of whom became residents of Russia as a result of the methods used in Ukraine today. Russia remains the largest colonial empire in the world today, which unlike the European powers has never undergone the process of decolonization, and has never been able to deal with the demons of its past. There is no more space for colonialism in the modern world.

The alarm must be sounded. The pursuit of European military intervention in Ukraine as planned and advocated by Macron poses an imminent threat of military escalation, including direct strikes by Russia and France on each other's soil. Workers must reject plans for war with Russia, the austerity measures used to finance them and build a movement tying opposition to social austerity to socialist opposition to the wars of the European imperialist powers.



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