

European powers denounce proposed US ceasefire in Ukraine

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Denunciations are rapidly mounting in Europe of the ceasefire that factions within Washington are trying to broker to end the three-year NATO-Russia war in Ukraine. Behind these attacks lie bitter rivalries between Washington and the European imperialist powers over the plunder of Ukraine and more broadly over how to divide the world economy between them amid the accelerating global trade war over Trump's tariffs.

Yesterday, US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow to continue the ceasefire talks. On his Truth Social network, Trump claimed talks were "very close to a deal," as "most of the major points are agreed to," calling on Russian and Ukrainian officials to "finish it off" and hold direct negotiations to seal a deal. Putin aide Yuri Ushakov called the talks "very useful," claiming Washington and Moscow are "closer together, not just on Ukraine but also on a range of other international issues."

The US negotiating position, published yesterday in Reuters, puts paid to all the imperialist propaganda hailing the NATO war in Ukraine against Russia as a war for freedom. It demands an economically devastating minerals deal with Washington, plundering Ukraine to send hundreds of billions of dollars in mining revenues to the United States. At the same time, it acquiesces, at least for now, to Russia's jurisdiction over areas it currently controls militarily—abandoning NATO's war goal of reconquering all formerly Ukrainian territory controlled by Russian troops.

The document calls for a "permanent ceasefire," calling its terms a non-negotiable "final offer from the United States to both sides." It proposes to legally recognize Russian sovereignty over Crimea, and not to contest Russian control over the Luhansk regions and the parts of the Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, and Kherson regions that Moscow controls. It states that Ukraine should not join NATO, can join the European Union, and that its security will be guaranteed by "an ad hoc grouping of European states plus willing non-European states."

The proposal imposes on Ukraine a US-Ukrainian

"economic cooperation/minerals agreement," expected to allow Washington to pocket a staggering \$500 billion in Ukrainian revenue. It also demands US control of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is currently inoperative in Russian-held territory. In exchange, it would remove economic sanctions imposed on Russia since the 2014 NATO-backed putsch in Kiev and pledge "US-Russian cooperation" on energy.

The ceasefire would not prepare a lasting peace but would freeze a war that has claimed millions of Ukrainian and Russian lives. It aims primarily to recoup the vast sums of money Washington spent on a war in Ukraine that the NATO imperialist powers lost. It does so firstly at the expense of the Ukrainian people, whose country has been shattered and whose revenues are to be looted by US imperialism. But it is also at the expense of the European imperialist powers' ambitions to seize a large part of the mineral resources and other booty to be plundered from Ukraine.

US-European relations are suffering a historic collapse as the NATO powers vie for domination of Ukrainian and world resources and threaten each other with trade war tariffs that undermine the agreements that have governed their relations since the end of World War II in 1945. The European powers are launching a historic rearmament drive, including an €800 billion European Union military plan, to prepare to wage war independently of America. This underlies the vitriolic denunciations of the proposed US ceasefire in European media.

In Germany, *Der Spiegel* compared the ceasefire plan to the vindictive "treaty of Versailles" after the German defeat in World War I, which imposed vast financial penalties on Germany and paved the way for France's occupation of Germany's Ruhr valley in 1923. It complained, "The United States is proposing to Ukraine a peace that principally benefits Russia, the aggressor."

The *Tagesspiegel* interviewed former Social Democratic Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, who denounced the Trump administration for abandoning previous NATO calls to

reconquer all Russian-held territory in Ukraine.

“All this is simply a means for the US government of Trump to withdraw as quickly as possible and to escape its responsibilities,” Gabriel told *Tagesspiegel*. He added that it is “inherently absurd that the United States negotiate with Russia, the aggressive party in the conflict, without the country that fell victim to aggression, that is, Ukraine being involved in the negotiations.”

For good measure, Gabriel also demanded that the Trump administration withdraw US troops from Europe: “The earlier this farewell comes, the better. Then, Putin will be forced to negotiate with Europe.” Pressing for more EU military spending, Gabriel continued: “This also means Europe’s responsibilities will increase. ... But it would be even worse if Donald Trump’s administration continued to sow chaos in Europe.”

In Britain, the *Guardian* denounced the ceasefire plan as “a carve-up in gift wrapping,” stating that “Trump’s peace plan puts the sacrifice on Ukraine.” It attacked the ceasefire as “redolent of great power thinking at the end of previous wars: the carve-ups of Versailles in 1919, where a country that had only been narrowly defeated was treated as if it were conquered, or Potsdam in 1945, which divided Europe into west and east.”

Perhaps the most hysterical response came from France, where President Emmanuel Macron launched a tirade against Putin on Thursday, demanding an “unconditional ceasefire” by Russia. Telling Putin to “stop lying,” Macron complained: “When [Putin] speaks to US negotiators, he says ‘I want peace’ ... But he keeps bombing Ukraine, killing lives.”

In reality, the conflict exposed above all the reactionary implications of the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. By dividing the Soviet working class between the different former Soviet republics, it paved the way for imperialist intrigue and bloody war, most bloodily of all within Ukraine itself. The NATO imperialist powers with their proxy regime in Kiev, and the capitalist oligarchy around Putin, pursued thoroughly reactionary policies.

Not only Washington but also its European allies have, over the last decade, played the most aggressive and incendiary role in Ukraine. They backed in 2014 a fascist-led putsch that installed the current far-right regime in Kiev, which tried to ban the speaking of Russian in Ukraine. When, after eight years of fighting and unstable truces in Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine, Putin launched his reactionary invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the NATO powers also torpedoed a peace deal that Russian and Ukrainian negotiators agreed to in Istanbul in April 2022.

Now, the war—waged at a massive cost in Russian but above all in Ukrainian lives—has led to a debacle for NATO,

placing Ukraine in an even worse position than what it would have seen, had it stopped the war three years ago.

As for Britain and France, who pledged to send troops to fill the gap left by Trump’s withdrawal from Ukraine, they are now rapidly and unceremoniously abandoning their promises.

Anonymous British officials told *The Times* of London:

The risks are too high and the forces inadequate for such a task. This was always the UK’s thought. It was France who wanted a more muscular approach.

These officials added that Britain and France are currently planning to send a small force of “military trainers,” not a large military deployment. “The trainers ‘reassure’ by being there but aren’t a deterrence or protection force,” they said. They added that this fulfills “a commitment to deploy personnel without engaging in direct defense roles.”

In reality, both the British and French governments bombarded their populations with massively unpopular calls to send troops to Ukraine for what would be war with Russia. UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer called to send 10,000 troops to Ukraine at a virtual summit in London on March 15, and met Macron and other European officials for war summits in Paris. The British government in particular tied this to the formulation of its own plans, competing with Washington, to snatch mineral resources in Ukraine.

Workers cannot stop the bloodshed and accelerating international conflicts by lining up with any one of the bankrupt national governments involved in this war. The militarist capitalist oligarchies who dictate policy in each national state have proven themselves bankrupt and reckless. The decisive question today is unifying workers in the former Soviet Union, Europe and the Americas in struggle based on socialist internationalist opposition to war.



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