

White House summit exposes deep rift within NATO

Peter Schwarz
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There is no historical parallel for the summit meeting that took place in Washington on Monday. With only 24 hours' notice, the heads of government of the four economically strongest European countries, the head of the European Union (EU) Commission and the Secretary General of NATO traveled to the American capital to support Ukrainian President Zelensky in his meeting with US President Trump.

Such a gathering of high-ranking politicians is usually only seen at state funerals, excepting regular summit meetings that are prepared months in advance. The meeting in Washington may indeed be the prelude to a funeral: the funeral of NATO, which has shaped transatlantic relations for 76 years.

The bizarre façade of the meeting—the adulation and gestures of humility towards Trump, the Europeans' desperate efforts to present a united front, the assurances that they were in agreement and only wanted peace—concealed the deep cracks in the NATO alliance. In fact, the differences have never been so sharp.

While European leaders groveled and bowed before Trump, a figure despised worldwide, as if in a Molière comedy, they could see the heavily armed soldiers in front of the White House that Trump had brought to the capital to demonstrate: “I am the dictator here.”

What prompted European leaders to cut short their vacations and rush to Washington was the fear that Trump might reach an agreement with Russian President Putin at their expense.

For years, they have invested enormous resources in arming Ukraine and stepping up pressure on Russia. They have demonized Russian President Putin as the incarnation of evil, with whom it is impossible to negotiate because he only understands the language of force.

They believed themselves to be in agreement with the US, at least as long as Joe Biden was in the White House. According to figures from the Kiel Institute (IFW), Europe has supported Ukraine with military and financial aid totaling €167 billion since the war began three and a half years ago and has pledged a further €90 billion. The US has

provided €114 billion and pledged a further €4 billion.

The US was initially the driving force. Even Germany, the largest donor to Ukraine after the US, hesitated for a long time to stop purchasing cheap natural gas from Russia until American pressure and the destruction of the Nord Stream pipelines left it with no other choice.

But now, Trump is carrying out a sharp turn in US foreign policy. On Friday, he welcomed Putin with open arms in Alaska and agreed to negotiations on ending the war. Trump hopes this will give him access to strategic raw materials in Russia and Ukraine, weaken his European rivals against whom he has already imposed punitive tariffs and undermine the alliance between Russia and China. The US would be able to focus its military forces even more strongly than before on preparing for war against China.

Since the meeting between Trump and Putin, the lines between Kiev, Brussels, Berlin, Paris and London have been buzzing. The Europeans feel betrayed. Their goal of bringing Ukraine and Russia under their control with American support has proven to be a disastrous miscalculation.

The European imperialist powers are still too weak militarily to continue the war against Russia without US support. Ukraine, which itself has recently suffered heavy territorial losses, is battling with a shortage of soldiers, and public sentiment is shifting. According to a recent Gallup poll, 69 percent of Ukrainians are in favor of a quick negotiated peace, while only 24 percent want to continue fighting. Three years ago, the ratio was reversed.

Under these circumstances, the European powers are trying to influence Trump, whose policy is also controversial in the US, in their favor. The trip to Washington served this purpose. If they fail to prevent Trump from withdrawing from the war, then Ukraine should at least be turned into a heavily armed fortress that maintains pressure on Russia.

However, the meeting did not result in an agreement. The European leaders considered it a success that there was no scandal and that they were not thrown out of the White House, as Zelensky was six months ago. “It could have

turned out very differently,” German Chancellor Friedrich Merz commented afterwards.

When Merz repeated the European demand in front of the cameras that Russia must agree to a ceasefire before negotiations could begin, Trump brusquely dismissed him. “I’ll say it again, in the six wars I’ve settled, there was no ceasefire,” he replied.

The European powers felt hopeful when Trump and his Special Envoy Steve Witkoff announced that Putin was prepared to accept Western security guarantees for Ukraine and that the US would support such guarantees in some form. But it has quickly become apparent that the term “security guarantees” is interpreted in completely different ways.

Trump has already rejected Ukraine’s admission to NATO. A mutual defense clause for Ukraine, similar to the one NATO countries grant each other under Article 5, is under discussion. However, it would be of little value unless backed up by military force.

French President Macron and British Prime Minister Starmer have long been advocating the deployment of a Western “peacekeeping force” in Ukraine to deter Russia. Macron repeated this to the BBC after the meeting in Washington: “We will need to help Ukraine with boots on the ground.”

However, neither France nor the UK can mobilise easily the many thousands of soldiers that would be needed for a robust force. Chancellor Merz has indicated for the first time that the German Armed Forces could also participate. But it also lacks resources, and the opposition to such plans is enormous.

The US rejects the deployment of its own troops in Ukraine. President Trump confirmed this once again on Fox News after the meeting in Washington. Neither the US nor NATO would participate in a force, he said. If there were to be one, it would have to come from the European countries.

There is also talk of a so-called “tripwire” force, consisting of a smaller number of soldiers, which would trigger NATO intervention in the event of a confrontation with Russia. A third option is a purely observer force, which would hardly be accepted as a “security guarantee” by Ukraine and its closest allies.

It is hard to imagine that Russia will accept the deployment of Western troops on Ukrainian soil in any form, given that NATO’s advance eastwards was the reason for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The demand for “boots on the ground” therefore serves also to sabotage a negotiated solution and continue the war. Macron confirmed this when he told NBC that reports that Ukraine was losing the war were “total fake news.”

Another proposal for how Ukraine could obtain “security

guarantees” from the US came from Kiev. The Ukrainian government has proposed to purchase US weapons worth \$100 billion in return and to produce drones worth \$50 billion jointly with the US. Europe is to pay for the arms deal. The proposal was made in a document prepared for the Washington summit, quoted by the *Financial Times*.

For the European powers, this would mean paying for a Pax Americana that excludes them and undermines their efforts to develop their own arms industry.

The working class must not support either side in this conflict. A deal between Trump and Putin would not be a step toward “peace” but rather a further escalation toward a third world war, directed primarily against China and also being pushed forward in the Middle East. For their part, the Europeans are determined to continue the war against Russia in Ukraine, which has already claimed hundreds of thousands of victims and threatens to escalate into a direct confrontation with the nuclear-armed power Russia.

Both possibilities can only be achieved through massive attacks on the social and democratic rights of the working class. In the US, Trump is in the midst of establishing an authoritarian dictatorship, and in Europe, the ruling elites are suppressing opposition to war and militarism and shifting the enormous costs of rearmament onto the population.

Resistance to war and militarism coincides directly with the struggle against social cuts, layoffs and dictatorship. The threat of war can only be stopped by an independent movement of the international working class fighting to overthrow capitalism and build a socialist society.



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