

# Macron's "coalition of the willing" summit in Paris discusses sending European troops to Ukraine against Russia

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Few concrete details emerged on Thursday's summit of over 30 heads of government in Paris chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron, to plan a "coalition of the willing" to deploy troops to Ukraine in what would be a major escalation of the war on Russia.

The inability of the coalition, led by Britain and France, to agree anything of substance at its eighth meeting underscores the European imperialist powers continued military dependence on Washington. They are responding by launching an all-out austerity onslaught on the working class, to raise the resources necessary for rearmament and war with Russia.

Macron, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and leaders from other European countries, Canada, and Australia met before holding a call with US President Donald Trump in the afternoon. Macron—whose government is set to fall for the second time in barely a year Monday—announced that 26 countries had pledged some form of "land, sea, air, or cyberspace" support for Ukraine if there is a ceasefire or peace agreement with Russia.

However, six months after the first "coalition of the willing" meeting in March, only Britain, France, and Estonia have officially confirmed they would send ground troops to Ukraine. It remains entirely unclear how many troops each country could provide.

This coalition was established in response to Trump's attempted accommodation with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The European powers fear this will cut them out of a share of the spoils from Ukrainian and Russian raw materials and markets. Amid the US-provoked Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Britain, France and Germany had bet heavily that the trans-Atlantic alliance with US imperialism would enable them to jointly plunder Ukraine and Russia. They even massively cut imports of cheap Russian gas critical for European industry.

But Washington, guided by Trump's "America first"

policy, increasingly views the European powers not as allies, but as rivals in a rapidly developing redivision of the world. America's would-be dictator has not only raised the prospect of a deal with Putin at the Europeans' expense but also slapped 15 percent tariffs on European Union imports to the US as part of his global trade war. As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote after Trump's summit with Putin in Alaska last month,

Trump, reviving the tradition of the far-right "America Firsters" of the World War II era, speaks for layers of the American ruling class oriented toward war in the Pacific and the confrontation with China. He has coupled this outlook with tariff and trade war measures directed against the European powers. For this faction, disengaging from the conflict with Russia over Ukraine offers potential advantages: securing access to vital resources in Russia and Ukraine, loosening Moscow's alignment with Beijing, and weakening European imperialism.

The European imperialists are determined to reduce their military dependence on Washington through a mad rearmament programme—spending some €800 billion under the European Union's "Rearm Europe" programme and €1 trillion on a German government fund for its military and upgrades to war-relevant infrastructure.

But implementing this agenda, which entails obliterating what remains of the concessions made to the working class in the post-World War II era, takes time. They therefore responded to Trump's shift by trying to sabotage a potential deal between the White House and Kremlin. They kept the US in the war by making demands totally unacceptable to Russia, like sending NATO troops to Ukraine.

Macron, Starmer, and Merz are backing Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky's plan to purchase US weaponry worth \$90 billion with European funds. According to the *New York Times*, a NATO procurement mechanism has been established to facilitate \$1 billion per month in European purchases from US defence contractors. A particular focus is on high-tech weaponry, like cruise missiles and air defence systems. As the European powers pursue their own rearmament, these sums further accelerate the ruling elite's class war on the workers.

The Kremlin reacted to Macron's announcement Thursday, predictably, by threatening to attack Western troops deployed to Ukraine. "We view this as a danger to us—the presence of international or foreign armed forces, of armed forces from NATO countries on Ukrainian territory near our borders," commented Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov from an economic forum in Vladivostok. Putin said any NATO troops on Ukrainian territory would be viewed by Russia as a "legitimate target."

It remains unclear whether Trump will explicitly back Macron and Starmer's proposed "security guarantees" for Ukraine. Macron claimed a pledge from Trump to offer US protection to such a force in case it came under attack by Russia would be secured in the coming days. Without US support, notably on intelligence and air power, a European-Canadian troops deployment to Ukraine currently seems impossible.

What is certain, however, is that the European imperialists are preparing a savage onslaught on the working class to raise the funds to escalate the war with Russia and ruthlessly pursue their own global interests independently of Washington. In Germany, Merz's Christian Democrat/Social Democrat coalition government has announced an "autumn of reforms" as it seeks to slash tens of billions of euros from social spending to cover the cost of rearmament and war.

French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou is set to lose a vote of confidence Monday, when his unpopular minority government tables a budget with planned spending cuts of €44 billion to fund France's own massive rearmament programme. While agreement extends throughout the political establishment on spending more on war, Bayrou is viewed as incapable of carrying through the necessary attacks on the working class.

The cuts announced thus far are only a down payment. Rearming on the scale demanded by the European imperialists amid a rapidly developing third world war would require dictatorial regimes similar to what Trump is trying to establish in the United States.

This is why sections of the ruling class systematically promote far-right parties in every major European country. In Germany, plans are far advanced on bringing the

Alternative for Germany into power. In France, leader of the National Rally (RN), Jordan Bardella, addressed a letter this week to French business leaders pledging that a RN government could carry through €100 billion in cuts—over twice the cuts proposed by Bayrou and Macron.

The parties of the so-called "left" are no less firm in their support for European imperialism's rearmament at the expense of the working class. Germany's Left Party voted for the €1 trillion war credits in the Bundesrat, the country's second chamber of parliament. Moreover, the Left Party used its votes in parliament to ensure that Merz was elected Chancellor. It has done nothing to mobilise workers against his government's assault on their living standards.

In France, Jean-Luc Melenchon's New Popular Front's election programme last year explicitly called to deploy "peacekeeping" troops to Ukraine. Melenchon has advocated a more aggressive assertion of French imperialism's national interests amid the breakdown of the post-war international order. As for the union bureaucracies, they all champion the interests of their "own" national bourgeoisie in a mad scramble to rearm and protect corporate profits.

Opposition to the escalation of imperialist war must be led by the working class across Europe and beyond. There is widespread opposition to the return of imperialist barbarism, and the mass participation in protests over the past two years against Israel's US-backed genocide against the Palestinians.

This opposition must be linked to the resurgent workers struggles against the destruction of jobs and working conditions, driven by the deepening crisis of world capitalism, and the ruling elites' drive everywhere to convert wide swathes of civilian industry to war production. This fight can succeed only on the basis of a socialist and internationalist programme aimed at putting an end to capitalism, the source of war, dictatorship, and mounting social misery for the working class.



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