

Europe's defence roadmap 2030 lays the groundwork for dictatorship and global war

Johannes Stern
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The events of the past days mark a new stage in the imperialist military escalation against Russia and the preparations for a third world war. The meetings of the European Council in Brussels on Thursday and the so-called “Coalition of the Willing” in London on Friday were not ordinary diplomatic gatherings but war summits. Together they approved new sanctions, further military aid to Ukraine and a “Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030” that sets out a five-year plan for the militarisation of the entire continent.

At the same time, Washington escalated its direct involvement. The Trump administration lifted key restrictions on Ukraine’s use of Western-supplied long-range missiles, enabling Kiev to strike deep inside Russian territory. On Tuesday, Ukraine used a British-supplied *Storm Shadow* cruise missile to attack a plant in Bryansk that produces explosives and rocket fuel. The Ukrainian general staff celebrated the “successful hit.” Such operations risk triggering an open confrontation between the NATO powers and Russia, which could rapidly spiral into a nuclear exchange.

The United States and its European allies are deliberately escalating the conflict. Both Washington and London announced new sanctions against Russia’s largest oil and gas producers, Rosneft and Lukoil, while the European Union agreed to tighten its own economic war. The Brussels summit resolved to expand export bans on dual-use goods, restrict Russian access to European capital markets, ban 117 ships of the Russian “shadow fleet” from EU ports and impose new travel and financial limits on Russian diplomats. By 2027, the import of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) will be completely prohibited—one year earlier than previously planned.

Even more provocative is the EU’s plan to seize and repurpose the frozen assets of the Russian central bank to fund weapons for Ukraine. Although Belgium raised legal objections, the European Council instructed the Commission to “present a proposal as soon as possible.” This constitutes nothing less than an act of international theft—an imperialist expropriation that signals to every nation on earth that its reserves are not safe if they conflict with Western interests.

The European Council’s declaration on Ukraine boasts that the EU has already provided €177.5 billion since 2022 and “commits to meeting Ukraine’s urgent financial needs for

2026–2027, including for its military and defence efforts.” Hundreds of billions more will follow.

The so-called *Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030*, presented alongside the summit, makes absolutely clear what this money is for. It opens with the declaration:

“Defence readiness entails developing and acquiring the capabilities that are needed for modern warfare. It means ensuring that Europe has a defence industrial base that gives it a strategic advantage and the independence needed. And it means being ready to deliver cutting-edge innovation and fast, mass production at critical times.”

This is a blueprint for a European war economy—a coordinated mobilisation of industry, finance and technology for mass armament. “The need to speed up and ramp up efforts,” the Roadmap states, “reflects the increasing dangers of today.”

Russia is being identified as the main enemy and called a “persistent threat to European security for the foreseeable future,” but the document’s scope is global:

“Europe’s readiness must be rooted in the wider global context with a 360° approach. … We cannot be blind to threats from other parts of the world—from Gaza and the Middle East to several latent or open conflicts in Africa, from increasing tensions in the Asia-Pacific to the Arctic.”

In other words, the EU is preparing for worldwide war to pursue its economic and geostrategic interests independently of the US. It explicitly notes that “traditional allies and partners are shifting their focus to other regions of the world” and concludes that “Europe’s defence posture and capabilities must … be ready for the battlefields of tomorrow, in line with the changing nature of warfare.”

The *Roadmap* sets quantitative targets that rival the rearmament programmes of the 1930s. It celebrates the rise of European defence expenditure from €218 billion in 2021 to €392 billion in 2025 and calls for a further acceleration. Under the “ReArm Europe” agenda, up to €800 billion will be mobilised for armaments through new funding mechanisms, such as the SAFE instrument. Commitments made at the June NATO summit to reach a defence spending target of 3.5 percent of GDP by 2035 will require at least an additional €288 billion annually.

These astronomical sums can only be financed through brutal austerity, the destruction of social programmes, and the plundering of public funds. “Defence readiness,” the document explains, requires not only money and weapons but the reorganisation of the entire continent for war. Under the section “*Towards an EU-wide military mobility area*,” it proposes:

“By end 2027 an EU-wide military mobility area will be set up, with harmonised rules and procedures and a network of land corridors, airports, seaports, and support elements ensuring unhindered transport of troops and military equipment across the Union, in close coordination with NATO.”

The goal is to transform Europe into a single battlefield—an integrated logistical zone where troops and armour can move freely from the Baltic to the Black Sea. Civilian infrastructure is being subordinated to military needs. Exercises such as *Red Storm Bravo* in Hamburg, which practised the movement of tens of thousands of NATO troops and the deployment of soldiers against antiwar demonstrators, already anticipate the domestic dimension of this militarisation: the suppression of internal opposition.

Germany stands at the forefront of this transformation. With the support of the Greens and the Left Party, the ruling coalition has created a trillion-euro framework for rearmament. The 2025 defence budget totals €86.5 billion—more than at any time since the end of the Second World War—and is set to rise to over €150 billion by 2029, roughly 3.5 percent of GDP. If infrastructure “military readiness” expenditures are included, total war-related spending will reach 5 percent of GDP, around €215 billion annually.

Tens of thousands of new military and civilian posts are being created and the draft will be reinstated. Billions are flowing into the production of fighter jets, transport helicopters, new tanks, armoured vehicles, warships, drones, missile systems and even a dedicated space command. Chancellor Friedrich Merz has openly declared his goal of making Germany the “strongest conventional army in Europe.”

These policies recall the preparations of German imperialism in the 1930s, when the drive to rearmament and world power required the installation of a fascist regime, the destruction of democratic rights and the suppression of the working class. The same logic is asserting itself again. Across Europe, ruling elites are cultivating fascist forces—Farage in Britain, Le Pen in France, Meloni in Italy and the AfD in Germany—to suppress social anger and prepare for war.

The objective tendencies are unmistakable. The integration of the EU, NATO and the arms industry into a unified war apparatus goes hand in hand with the turn toward authoritarian rule. The assault on democratic rights, the criminalisation of protests against the Gaza genocide, and the militarisation of police forces all reflect the ruling class’s fear of mass opposition.

The same contradictions that drive imperialism to war—above all, the deep crisis of the capitalist system—also produce the

conditions for revolutionary upheaval. The vast reallocation of wealth to finance rearmament, the destruction of living standards, and the ever-growing danger of nuclear annihilation will provoke resistance throughout the working class. In the United States, more than 7 million people joined the “No Kings” protests against Trump’s fascistic policies on October 18. In Europe, strikes and demonstrations have erupted among other places in Greece, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and France against austerity and militarism. These are signs of an explosive global resurgence of class struggle.

But spontaneous opposition is not enough. It must be armed with a conscious political programme that connects the fight against war and dictatorship to the struggle against their root cause: the capitalist system itself. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) in its 2016 statement “Socialism and the Fight Against War” laid out the principles that now acquire burning urgency:

- **The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.**
- **The new antiwar movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and to put an end to the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.**
- **The new antiwar movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.**
- **The new antiwar movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism.**

The task facing workers, youth and intellectuals across Europe and internationally is clear: to build independent rank-and-file committees in every workplace and neighbourhood, to link their struggles across borders, and to develop a conscious revolutionary leadership in the fight for socialism—the Socialist Equality Parties as sections of the ICFI. Only by overthrowing the capitalist system and replacing it with the United Socialist States of Europe as part of a socialist world federation—where the resources of the planet are used rationally and democratically for human need, not profit—can humanity avert the catastrophe of world war.



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