

European powers denounce proposed US peace deal on Ukraine

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The major European powers have reacted with dismay to the Trump administration's proposed peace plan, worked out in US negotiations with Moscow. Desperate to continue the war with Russia in Ukraine, which they have made a central justification for their own remilitarization and cuts to social spending to fund the "war economy," they rejected the plan as a "capitulation" to Russia.

At a meeting of European foreign ministers last Thursday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said: "Peace cannot be capitulation. You must understand that Ukrainians who have mounted heroic resistance for over three years against a shameless act of aggression from Russia will always refuse any form of capitulation."

While Barrot's Swedish counterpart Maria Stenergard dismissed the US-Russian deal, stating, "There cannot be peace without Ukraine, and Europe must be at the negotiating table," German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul insisted that peace required a Russian surrender. He said: "The precondition [for peace] is that Vladimir Putin end his war of aggression against Ukraine, that we arrive at a ceasefire without preconditions and that we then negotiate together equitably."

The European powers have little hope, however, of convincing Moscow to surrender and give up the position it now holds on the battlefield. Wadephul's remark underscores the complete disconnect between official propaganda in Europe and military-political realities in Ukraine. Washington's signing of a deal with Moscow behind the backs of its nominal European "allies" shows the narrative of the war presented to the European public was a pack of lies.

It was not a war to preserve Western democracy from Russian aggression, nor were Russian troops bumbling fools suffering lopsided losses at the hands of superior, NATO-backed Ukrainian forces. The NATO imperialist powers armed the Ukrainian regime to the teeth,

successfully goading the reactionary post-Soviet Russian capitalist regime to attack it. They all competed in a war aiming to crush Russia and secure domination of Eurasia. This war has now failed, leaving Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky deeply unpopular, and Ukraine bled white.

Trump's deal would leave much of eastern Ukraine in Russian hands, rule out NATO membership for Ukraine and force Zelensky—who has collapsed in the polls and cancelled elections—to suddenly hold new elections. It would cement raw material deals that give Washington, not the European powers, the lion's share of rare earth minerals in Ukraine. Washington would get 50 percent of the profits from the reconstruction of Ukraine, which Europe would have to fund to the tune of \$100 billion.

Bitter conflicts erupted at a meeting last Friday between US and European diplomats in Kiev, chaired by US Army Secretary Daniel Driscoll. According to transcripts European officials present at the meeting gave the *Financial Times*, Driscoll bluntly informed European negotiators they would have no say in the terms of the peace deal.

"We are not negotiating details," Driscoll told them in a foul-mouthed tirade, declaring: "We need to get this shit done." He said, "The US Armed Forces love Ukraine and stand behind Ukraine, but it is the honest US military assessment that Ukraine is in a very bad position and now is the best time for peace."

The top US diplomat in Kiev, US Chargé d'Affaires Julie Davis, argued similarly. "As much as we can support Ukraine continuing the war, there are limits," she told the European officials assembled at the meeting. "There are strong indications that Russia has a strong industrial base and it is a matter of time until Ukraine has to cut a deal."

European newspapers and officials denounced the deal, from the reckless standpoint that peace with Russia is

unacceptable. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* called the proposed deal “a complete surrender not only of Ukraine but also of the free West to the aggressor,” while France’s *Libération* called it a “terrible ultimatum [that] would probably sound better in Sicilian.” European politicians, for their part, issued calls for military escalation against Russia.

While German Chancellor Friedrich Merz again called last week to give Ukraine Taurus missiles for long-range strikes on Russia, French President Emmanuel Macron said he would keep trying to send French or European ground troops to Ukraine despite mass popular opposition. French head of the army general staff General Fabien Mandon demanded that French people be prepared “to sacrifice their children” in a war against Russia.

Such remarks underscore the enormous danger of military escalation that still exists, particularly as the Trump administration threatens to launch new wars, from Iran to Venezuela.

Europe’s hysterical war propaganda is not driven by any real military threat facing Europe but by the imperialist interests and antidemocratic political agenda of European capitalism. The European Union has more than three times Russia’s population of 143 million and more than seven times its economy of approximately US\$2 trillion. Russian forces have neither the capacity nor the intention to conquer Europe.

By waging the Ukraine war, the European powers hope to enforce both their commercial and military interests in Eurasia, and—inextricably bound up with this—an ultra-reactionary political climate at home. Fully 89 percent of Western Europeans opposed sending troops to Ukraine, and there was explosive social anger at pension cuts and other austerity measures used to fund the war. Yet the war proceeded, plunging US and European governments ever deeper into debt, and working class opposition to war was politically suppressed.

Some of the political calculations underlying the militarism of the European powers were laid out in an interview by former French President François Hollande in *Le Monde*. With Macron massively unpopular amid a deep social crisis in France, Hollande laid out a nightmare scenario for European capitalism: the fall of Zelensky could trigger a domino effect, with governments collapsing across Europe, including in France.

Denouncing the Trump administration’s plan as making “a complete break with Europe and with the order that has prevailed for 75 years,” Hollande bemoaned that the European powers had not more aggressively armed

Ukraine with long-range weapons. “We must say we will send as many weapons as possible,” he said. “We were too careful with arms deliveries. We thought that Putin would use the nuclear threat if we sent missiles and missile batteries.”

Hollande stressed that he had the gravest fears about the survival of the unpopular Ukrainian regime, in which the European powers have invested hundreds of billions of euros: “If Zelensky signs, he is finished; if he does not sign, he can be crushed. The Trump plan already foresees eliminating him, as it proposes elections in 100 days.”

Given the deep unpopularity and the insoluble budget crisis in France and other European countries, Hollande feared the fall of Zelensky could bring down other governments, too. He said, “Everything is connected: the state of our democracy, the strength of our defense and the credibility of our security. ... [Zelensky] has become the first line of defense of the European continent. For that reason, our obligation is to support him. If he falls, our security is threatened. And, one day or other, we also will fall.”

The defense of the interests of the working class in Europe requires building a socialist anti-war movement in the working class. The bloodshed and the looting of the working population of the warring countries must stop. Furthermore, far-reaching political and historical conclusions must be drawn from this war, which has caused millions of Ukrainian and Russian casualties.

In the period since the Stalinist bureaucracies dissolved the Soviet Union and restored capitalism in Eastern Europe, capitalism has utterly failed to provide prosperity and peace. The fratricidal Ukrainian-Russian war incited by NATO exemplifies the catastrophes it has produced. Averting even greater disasters requires the unification of the struggles of the working class, bringing down governments across Europe in a struggle to replace the European Union with the United Socialist States of Europe as part of an international struggle for socialism.



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