

Ukraine's Zelensky in Berlin: Germany escalates its war offensive against Russia

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was received Tuesday with military honours outside the Chancellery in Berlin. The imposing scene, featuring dozens of uniformed and armed soldiers, underscored the character of the visit. Snipers were positioned on the surrounding rooftops to provide security for the first German-Ukrainian government consultations in 20 years. The focus of the meeting was the signing of a new “strategic partnership” between Germany and Ukraine.

Then on Wednesday, the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG) met in Berlin. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, together with his British counterpart John Healey, welcomed NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and Ukrainian Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov to the 34th ministerial meeting of the UDCG. Other participants joined the meeting online. The focus was on coordinating the NATO offensive in the war in Ukraine and expanding military support for Kiev.

Both events illustrate the aggressiveness with which German imperialism is driving the war against Russia. The official propaganda that the war is about defending democracy and freedom was a lie from the outset. The NATO powers systematically provoked the Russian invasion—through the continued eastward expansion of the military alliance right up to the Russian border and the transformation of Ukraine into a military outpost against the nuclear-armed power Russia.

With the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East and Donald Trump's open threats of annihilation against Iran—which German Chancellor Friedrich Merz cynically justified as “diplomatic war tactics”—all pretences are now being dropped in the war in Ukraine as well. Merz and Zelensky visited arms factories together and agreed on measures to return fit-for-service Ukrainian men in Germany to the front line.

It must be stated openly: de facto, Germany is once again at war with Russia—and is continuing a disastrous

historical tradition. In the 20th century, German imperialism twice attempted to subjugate Russia militarily, committing appalling crimes in the process. Today, the ruling class is making a third attempt. As in both world wars, Ukraine is a central battlefield.

During a joint press conference, Merz openly threatened Russia. He claimed the new strategic partnership was “a very clear signal to Russia,” that Germany would “not slacken in its efforts to defend Ukraine,” and that Russia had “no chance” of winning this war.

The agreement involves a massive expansion of military cooperation. Since the start of the war, Germany has supported Ukraine with military aid amounting to €55 billion. According to the government, a further €11.5 billion is earmarked for this year. Specifically, the decisions reached between Berlin and Kiev include:

- Joint production and further development of drones, particularly for reconnaissance and for attacks deep behind the front lines
- Expansion of cooperation between German defence contractors and the Ukrainian war industry, including joint production sites directly in Ukraine
- Concrete plans by the defence contractor Diehl Defence to supply additional IRIS-T air defence systems and to produce launchers and components jointly with Ukraine in future
- Massive expansion of munitions production to compensate for the high losses in the war of attrition against Russia
- Development and manufacture of long-range weapon systems designed to enable targeted strikes deep into the Russian hinterland
- Continued supply of heavy weapons, air defence systems, tanks, artillery and military logistics

This is not a matter of “defence cooperation,” as official propaganda claims, but rather comprehensive war cooperation. The aim is to further escalate the conflict,

militarise Europe and, under crisis conditions, shift the economy to war production—a prospect that has long been openly discussed in strategic papers by European think tanks.

An official report by the Ministry of Defence explicitly states that cooperation with Ukraine will contribute “to the development of industrial capacity and technological innovation in Germany ... thereby enhancing the Bundeswehr’s [German army] security of supply.”

At the same time, the aim is to exert economic control over and systematically plunder Ukraine under the guise of “reconstruction.” The strategic partnership agreement explicitly stipulates cooperation in the extraction of “critical minerals.” An agreement between the Ukrainian Geological Service and the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources provides for joint projects to exploit Ukraine’s mineral deposits and to advise state and industrial actors.

With this renewed drive towards the East, German imperialism is reviving its historical plans for great-power status. In the First World War, control over resource-rich and geostrategically critical Ukraine was one of the German Empire’s declared war aims. In the Second World War, the Nazi regime took up this objective and radicalised it in the war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, which cost the lives of over 27 million people.

The historian Fritz Fischer highlighted the continuity of this policy. In his work *Hitler war kein Betriebsunfall* (Hitler Was No Accident) he emphasised that the geostrategic and economic objectives of Nazism were directly linked to Wilhelmian expansionism.

Today, the German ruling class is again pursuing the goal of removing Ukraine and other states formerly part of the Soviet Union from Moscow’s sphere of influence and bringing them under the control of a European Union dominated by Berlin. In 2022, the then Social Democratic Chancellor Olaf Scholz declared that Ukraine’s integration marked a “starting point” for closer European integration—including the states of the Western Balkans, Moldova and, in the long term, Georgia.

In other words: behind the German military offensive lie the same imperialist interests as in the 20th century. Since reunification, the ruling class has been working systematically to reorganise Europe under German leadership to assert its global economic and geostrategic interests—increasingly by military means.

Germany played a key role in the break-up of Yugoslavia and the NATO bombing of Serbia. This was followed by military interventions in Afghanistan, the

Middle East and Africa, as well as the ongoing support for Israel’s genocidal war against the Palestinians and Lebanon and the US-led war of aggression against Iran.

Regarding Russia, it is not only economic interests—particularly in raw materials—but also a historical thirst for revenge that is driving the escalation. While all parties in the Bundestag (German parliament) essentially support the course of war and rearmament, the Socialist Equality Party (SGP) warned of this development from the outset. As early as 2014, we stated:

History is returning with a vengeance. Almost 70 years after the crimes of the Nazis and its defeat in World War II, the German ruling class is once again adopting the imperialist great power politics of the Kaiser’s Empire and Hitler... In Ukraine, the German government is cooperating with the fascists of Svoboda and the Right Sector, which stand in the tradition of Nazi collaborators in the Second World War.

This warning has been confirmed. Germany is now at the forefront of Ukraine’s military rearmament—including support for far-right and fascist forces within the state and military apparatus.

At the same time, this policy is exacerbating tensions between the imperialist powers themselves, particularly between Germany and the United States. From the perspective of the German bourgeoisie, the struggle for supremacy in Europe and over Ukraine is ultimately part of the preparation for a future confrontation with Washington as well.

The only way to prevent the catastrophe of a Third World War is to build an international socialist movement of the working class—in Russia, Ukraine, Germany, across Europe, in the US and worldwide—against war and its root cause: the capitalist system.



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