

EU head Von der Leyen announces European security pact, including Canada and independent of NATO

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European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen used her annual State of the (European) Union address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg Wednesday to unveil plans for a European security bloc operating independently of NATO.

It was a declaration that the European bourgeoisie must act independently of the Trump administration to assert its predatory interests on a world scale, above all by waging war against Russia in Ukraine and a trade war against China. In a direct challenge to the US, this plan includes forming an economic and military alliance with Canadian imperialism.

Quoting Charles Dickens' description of Europe during the French Revolution, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," von der Leyen declared, "The state of our Union is the strongest it has ever been" but also "as precarious as it has ever been."

Addressing Russia first, she declared that Europe faces "an openly hostile world," in which "a territorial war of aggression is raging on our continent" and "a fight for industrial capacities is shaping global competition." This meant alliances the EU chose were now in response "to the fracture in the international rules-based system." In a speech never mentioning the United States, everyone knew whom she meant when hailing a Europe that "stood up for Greenland when threatened".

"In the cold fragility of today's world," she insisted, "only Europe can provide true sovereignty to Europeans."

That "rules-based system"—which the WSWS has analysed as "a euphemism for the right of the imperialist powers to make war on whomever they choose"—was the post-war order established under American hegemony. Washington is now tearing that order apart. Only the day before von der Leyen's address, Washington sent EU legislators a paper threatening to revoke "Buy American"

waivers for 19 member states unless "European preference" rules favouring European arms makers are scrapped from a proposed €402 billion competitiveness fund. At issue is which ruling class will pocket the profits from Europe's rearmament—a central plank of von der Leyen's call, with the expansion of the war against Russia pivotal to her speech.

She described the discovery of a drone at Leipzig Airport, with no proof offered, as "an attack using military-grade material, carried out by Russian operatives on European soil." Pointing to incursions on "our soil" in Denmark, Lithuania and Poland, she declared, "We should be under no illusions about what is happening here: hybrid threats facing Europe are less and less hybrid and less and less threats."

In response "Europe will defend each and every single square metre of its territory," von der Leyen vowed.

She then proposed a European Security Council, a leaders' format "with partners like Canada, Norway, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and others involved." It would be accompanied by an "Emergency Security Protocol" modelled on NATO's Article 4—which allows allies to demand consultations when their security is threatened.

"We are strengthening our work with NATO," she said. "But our doctrine, our institutions and our decision-making have not kept pace with the new reality."

The EU now required "a consensus on how to respond to certain incidents. Those which fall below armed aggression but clearly threaten our national security. In other words, a mechanism to flank NATO's Article 4."

The *Euractiv* website described the proposal as "a radical change to Europe's security architecture." The council "would emerge as a potential rival to NATO, and it's unclear whether [NATO chief] Mark Rutte, the

NATO secretary-general, or Donald Trump, the US president, would welcome such a format.”

In February, von der Leyen publicly rebuked Rutte for insisting Europe could not defend itself without Washington.

The European powers are hellbent on escalating the conflict with Russia. Von der Leyen delivered the Ukraine war section of her speech in German. She pledged the “strongest-ever support to Ukraine over the toughest winter of the war.” She noted that for the first time, last week, “we approved the purchase of American Patriot air defence missiles”, declaring that “these must now be delivered urgently.”

However, this again exposed Europe’s continued military dependence on the US. In response von der Leyen insisted that “we must also jointly reduce our dependence on a single supplier.” Firstly, there would be the rapid development of “an affordable, modular missile-defence system with Ukraine.” Known as Freyja, this would “bring together the combat experience and innovation capacity of the Ukrainians with Europe’s technological leadership. And, of course, our substantial production capacity.”

Referring to European arms spending increasing by 80 percent in five years, she boasted, “The surge in defence spending has led to record levels of investment in our capabilities and forces.” This meant “We are spending more European than ever before. Bigger orders for our industry, more interoperability and more economies of scale. Now we need to take that approach to the next level.”

Von der Leyen announced “a new European Instrument for Strategic Enablers—fully aligned with NATO,” for air-to-air refuelling, strategic transport, air and missile defence, space and cyber in order to lessen reliance on US technology.

Trade war would accompany military readiness, with von der Leyen targeting China, who she declared was responsible for “deindustrialisation in the industrial heartlands of Europe”. A €1 billion-a-day trade deficit with Beijing had reached a “tipping point” and was “unsustainable”.

With “dialogue with China to rebalance our trade” at an end, it was time for “results”. A new European Corporation on Critical Raw Materials would procure and stockpile rare earths—a trade war measure against Beijing’s dominance of supply. “Let me be clear: we will use all tools at our disposal to rebalance our relationship. Words are good. But deeds are better,” she threatened.

The most naked expression of the rift with Washington was the presence in the chamber of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, who received a standing ovation.

Carney has called for a “unique alliance” with the EU, a move critical in reducing its heavy dependence on US trade. Last month, after trade talks collapsed and Trump imposed new 50 percent tariffs, while continuing to call Canada the 51st state, Carney declared, “You’re at war when you’re attacked, and we got attacked.”

Von der Leyen directly addressed “Dear Mark, I said we must urgently reimagine our partnerships... so I would like to work with you on opening the door for Canada to being the first associate member of the European Union.”

She continued, “We share one ocean, one set of values, one way of seeing the world. And we will now build our shared future as well”, bringing “the relationship with Canada to the highest level possible”. Underscoring the breakdown in the post-war order regulating global trade, no such associate status exists within EU treaties.

Von der Leyen made the fight against Russia and trade supremacy over China central to her call for closes ties to Ottawa: “We see the world with the same eyes: from AI to climate change, from the Arctic to geopolitics. And we have stood together: on Ukraine, on defence, on raw materials and on supply chains.” Therefore, “We will move from CETA [existing Canada/EU trade deal] to an Alliance for the Future... We will integrate defence industrial bases. We will work on energy, critical minerals and batteries.”

Von der Leyen’s speech was echoed by German Social Democrat MEP Bernd Lange, chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on International Trade, who said, “It is totally unpredictable what the United States are doing.” Europe must build a bloc, he stated, otherwise, in a reference to Carney’s statement at Davos earlier this year as Trump stepped up trade war measures, “you will be part of the menu.

The leader of the right-wing European People’s Party bloc Manfred Weber stated that “Putin won’t stop,” which required the creation of “joint command structures, European drones, European satellites,” so that Europe does not field “27 bonsai armies.”



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