

Following Trump-Putin deal: EU intensifies war offensive against Russia

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In the midst of the most dangerous escalation of the Ukraine war since its outbreak, the European powers on Monday adopted the most extensive expansion of sanctions against the Russian arms industry to date. While US President Donald Trump has struck a diesel deal with Vladimir Putin and is openly demanding the departure of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, the European governments are intensifying their economic and military war offensive against Russia.

The sanctions are part of a strategy to weaken the Putin regime and prepare for a direct war against Russia in order to assert their own imperialist interests in Ukraine and throughout Eastern Europe and Eurasia. At the same time, the conflict with Washington is intensifying, as the Trump administration increasingly pursues different geopolitical and economic objectives.

On Monday, the EU Council added 1,569 individuals and companies to its sanctions lists: 826 Russian companies and 743 of their executives. According to EU figures, the companies affected generate annual revenues of at least €20 billion and employ more than 250,000 people.

The measures target the industrial backbone of Russia's war economy: manufacturers and suppliers of missiles, drones and aircraft, as well as producers of semiconductors, electronics, radar and navigation technology, and ammunition. Their assets will be frozen, and financial and economic transactions with them prohibited. The executives affected will also face travel bans. Altogether, the EU sanctions lists now include almost 4,600 individuals and organizations.

The new measures intensify a comprehensive economic war. According to the EU Council, trade bans cover goods worth €48 billion in exports to Russia and €91.2 billion in imports from Russia, measured against trade volumes in 2021. More than 100 Russian banks are subject to transaction bans. Around €210 billion in Russian central bank assets are frozen in the EU, with proceeds from these assets being used to finance Ukraine.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas declared: "This is not the time to reduce pressure on Moscow, but to increase it." German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) spoke of an "unprecedented sanctions strike against Putin's war economy" and proclaimed: "Russia cannot and will not win this war."

These statements follow renewed Russian nuclear warnings. At the end of September, Moscow threatened to use its entire arsenal, including nuclear weapons, in the event of a NATO blockade of Kaliningrad. Putin warned of a "fatal point of no return." German Chancellor Friedrich Merz responded not with de-escalation but by announcing further arms deliveries and the joint development of weapons systems with ranges exceeding 1,000 kilometers during his

visit to Kyiv on October 4.

Just how concretely NATO is preparing for war with Russia was demonstrated on Monday by its Supreme Allied Commander Europe, US General Alexus Grynkewich, at the Warsaw Security Forum. Under the title "Theory of Victory," he presented a three-stage concept: intercepting an enemy attack ("block"), weakening the attacking forces ("blunt"), and finally destroying the enemy's war-fighting system ("break").

Should the enemy continue its attack or deploy reserves, NATO would target "everything" that "supports, supplies and controls" its armed forces. Grynkewich presented this as a response to an attack on NATO territory. In reality, he was describing operations that could extend far beyond the immediate battlefield and deep into Russia. NATO was ready to "fight tonight," the general boasted.

The NATO nuclear exercise "Steadfast Noon" also begins today, Tuesday. With 17 countries participating, procedures for nuclear operations will be rehearsed in Italy, including operations involving nuclear-capable fighter aircraft. No live nuclear weapons will be used. NATO describes the exercise as a long-planned routine drill that is not directed against any particular country.

Yet in view of the acute confrontation with Russia, its recent nuclear threats and the expiration in February of the New START treaty, which limited the strategic nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia, the danger of a catastrophic escalation and miscalculation is obvious. Under the banner of "nuclear deterrence," procedures are being rehearsed that would serve the actual use of nuclear weapons in a real conflict.

Furious reactions to Trump's diesel deal with Putin

European preparations for war are intensifying as the policy previously coordinated largely with Washington is increasingly breaking apart.

On Friday, Trump announced the resumption of Russian diesel deliveries following a conversation with Putin. Initially, more than 300,000 tons are to reach the American and international markets, with further deliveries to follow. Washington suspended the relevant sanctions until April 2027. "This is a huge deal, and I want to thank Vladimir Putin," Trump declared.

Shortly afterward, he demanded a new Ukrainian president who would be willing to reach an agreement to end the war. At the same time, Washington is demanding that Ukrainian attacks on Russian

refineries cease. According to the *Financial Times*, American negotiators threatened to suspend intelligence sharing and arms deliveries to Kyiv. This would severely undermine Ukraine's war effort, which is heavily dependent on American technology and equipment.

The European reactions were furious. Kallas declared that while the United States remained Europe's most important ally, the war could only be ended through "more pressure on Russia." Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard demanded that the EU increase its support and make use of frozen Russian assets "regardless of what happens with the US." Lithuanian Foreign Minister Kęstutis Budrys spoke of Europe's "vital interest" in continuing to support Ukraine.

The German business daily *Handelsblatt* published a commentary under the headline "Trump's diesel pact with Putin—betrayal of Ukraine and Europe." Another of the newspaper's Morning Briefings was titled "Putin and Trump—joining forces against Europe." Green Party member of the European Parliament Sergey Lagodinsky also spoke of "betrayal." The German government avoided openly criticizing Trump but insisted: "Support for Ukraine in its defensive struggle remains unwavering."

While Washington is once again permitting Russian diesel deliveries and pressing Kyiv to make concessions, the European governments insist on Russia's economic isolation and the continuation of the war.

Trump's course, of course, has nothing to do with a love of peace. It follows the interests of a faction of American imperialism. Faced with soaring energy prices, not least as a consequence of the American war against Iran, the White House is seeking an understanding with Moscow shortly before the midterm elections that will safeguard American economic interests. The European powers see their own geopolitical objectives threatened by this development.

Europe's imperialist interests

Contrary to official propaganda, the European governments are not concerned with defending Ukrainian sovereignty, let alone democracy. Enormous economic and strategic interests are at stake in Ukraine: raw materials, energy and transport routes, agricultural land, markets and the future balance of power in Eastern Europe.

For Germany, Ukraine is of central importance because of its geographical location and resources. It was already at the center of Germany's imperialist war and great-power policies in the First and Second World Wars. Today, its economic and military integration into the European sphere of influence is intended to push back Russia and open up new spheres of influence for European corporations.

In June, the European Council explicitly declared: "Europe has a key role to play in any future peace settlement and stands ready to defend its interests." Berlin, Brussels and Paris fear that Trump will reach an agreement with Putin over their heads that undermines their strategic ambitions.

Merz traveled to Kyiv in early October not only with military officers and diplomats, but also with Economy Minister Katherina Reiche and representatives of German corporations, including Siemens Energy, Hensoldt, Diehl Defence and Quantum Systems. Berlin is pursuing the integration of the German and Ukrainian arms industries. Wadehul explicitly stated that the German defense industry must benefit from military aid.

At the same time, the war serves the fundamental reorientation of German imperialism. Faced with the crisis of its export model, trade conflicts with the United States and competition with China, Berlin is pursuing massive rearmament. Around €140 billion is earmarked for the Bundeswehr and defense in 2027. Germany intends to become Europe's leading military power in order to assert its own interests independently of Washington and, in the future, even against it.

War policy and domestic opposition

The aggressiveness of the war policy is inseparably bound up with explosive social and political tensions. While governments spend billions on war, they destroy jobs and cut social benefits. In France, almost half a million workers and young people demonstrated on October 6; more than 6,600 people were arrested over the course of the movement. In Spain, hundreds of thousands protested against soaring rents and evictions. Strikes and protests are spreading to other European countries.

Under these conditions, the propaganda claiming that Russia is already waging war against Europe takes on its full significance. The head of Germany's foreign intelligence service (BND), Martin Jäger, recently declared that Russia was waging a "shadow war against us." Wadehul justified the new sanctions by citing allegedly increasing "hybrid attacks on EU member states" and referred to an attempted drone attack at Leipzig/Halle Airport.

The claim that the confrontation has been forced upon Europe is intended to legitimize its own escalation as self-defense and discredit domestic opposition. Preparations for war go hand in hand with strengthening the intelligence services, expanding the police and surveillance apparatus, and attacking democratic rights.

War is not simply a diversion from the domestic political crisis. Militarism, social cuts and authoritarian forms of rule arise from the same fundamental contradictions of capitalism. But the ruling class exploits the external confrontation to demand national unity, impose sacrifices and suppress growing social opposition.

The new sanctions, NATO's war plans and the nuclear exercise demonstrate how each stage of escalation prepares the next and raises the danger of a devastating confrontation between nuclear powers. Against this backdrop, the building of an independent socialist anti-war movement that unites the opposition of workers and youth to war, social cuts and repression internationally is a matter of the utmost urgency.



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