

EU summit in Brussels: European powers intensify war drive against Russia

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The EU summit held on Thursday and Friday in Brussels was an expression of the dangerous escalation of the international war crisis. While the Trump administration, amid its conflict with the European powers, is seeking at least for the moment a certain accommodation with Russia, the EU governments, led by Berlin, are pressing for the continuation and expansion of the Ukraine war. They want to shoulder an increasing share of the financial and military burdens themselves and build Europe into an independent military power.

This is accompanied by an escalation that threatens to provoke a direct war between NATO and Russia, including nuclear war. At the same time, the summit discussions on rearmament, “competitiveness,” trade war and migration underscore that the war drive abroad is inseparably linked to intensified social attacks and authoritarian measures at home.

Conflicts between Washington and Europe

At the center of the summit was the demonstrative support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Following an agreement with Putin on Russian diesel supplies, Trump had eased sanctions and criticized Ukrainian attacks on Russian oil refineries. He also demanded a change in Ukraine’s leadership. The European governments, by contrast, are determined to continue attacks on Russia’s energy infrastructure and tighten sanctions.

European Council President António Costa declared on Friday, standing alongside Zelensky: “Now is not the time to withdraw support for Ukraine. Now is not the time to ease sanctions against Russia.” Instead, the EU must increase its support and pressure on Russia. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced preparations for a 22nd package of sanctions.

The German government is taking a particularly aggressive stance. Chancellor Friedrich Merz declared that the EU must “once again ... increase” its funding for Kiev in order to “provide lasting support” to Ukraine. This was necessary, he said, to defend “the political order of Europe.” The conflict with Washington now also concerns control over approximately €210 billion in frozen Russian central bank assets in Europe. According to reports, US negotiators want to use part of these assets in negotiations with Moscow. Merz brusquely rejected this: “That is our affair, and we

will decide on it.”

Behind these differences lie rival geostrategic and economic interests. The European powers fear that Trump could conclude an agreement with Putin that would undermine their own war aims and influence in Eastern Europe. At the same time, Ukraine’s war effort remains dependent on American military technology and intelligence support. Reports of restrictions on the satellite-based Starshield system demonstrate this dependence particularly starkly.

Ever more billions for war

Zelensky put Ukraine’s war costs for 2027 at €155 billion and demanded at least €70 billion in additional European support. With this money, Ukraine could produce two to three times as many drones and massively increase military pressure on Russia. The EU has already set in motion a €90 billion loan for 2026 and 2027. No decision was reached in Brussels on the new demands for billions; the Commission has been tasked with developing financing options.

The scale of the sums already mobilized is enormous. According to a study by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, the German government puts its Ukraine support to date, including commitments, at around €100 billion. Approximately €41.7 billion is recorded as direct aid to Ukraine, while another €22 billion consists of future military commitments and possible expenditures. Together, this amounts to €63.7 billion, of which approximately €56.3 billion is military aid. In addition, €35.9 billion has been spent predominantly on Ukrainian refugees in Germany. Not all of the budgeted funds recorded have yet been disbursed.

The political thrust of the Kiel study is revealing. Under a headline emphasizing that “only” €41.7 billion actually went to Ukraine, it stresses that spending on refugees does “not support the Ukrainian government in its defense.” This juxtaposition alone makes the political orientation clear: While support for refugees and other social expenditures face growing pressure for cuts, ever larger sums are to be mobilized for the war effort. Added to this are hundreds of billions more that are to flow into military budgets in the coming years.

Concrete preparations for a NATO-Russia war

Parallel to the summit, the military confrontation is intensifying. NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe Alexis Grynkeuich presented his “Theory of Victory” in Warsaw: “Block, Blunt, Break.” A potential attack is first to be repelled, then the opposing armed forces smashed, and finally the command, supply and production structures supporting them disabled. Grynkeuich describes the strategy as defensive, but in a major war the planned operations could extend deep into Russian territory. He praised Germany as the “engine of NATO.”

At the same time, NATO conducted the nuclear war exercise “Steadfast Noon” in Italy this week, involving 17 countries, including German Tornado fighter jets. NATO describes it as a routine exercise without live nuclear weapons. Yet it rehearsed procedures for nuclear operations at a time when the risks of escalation are rapidly increasing.

Russia is responding to NATO’s constant provocations with nuclear threats. In early October, Putin warned that Russia could use its entire arsenal in the event of a blockade of Kaliningrad. Now, State Duma Deputy Alexei Zhuravlyov has told *Lenta.ru* that, in the event of a NATO attack, Russian nuclear strikes could target NATO headquarters, as well as US nuclear weapons bases in Germany, Belgium, Italy and Turkey. Zhuravlyov’s threat is not an official government statement. His remarks nevertheless demonstrate how concretely sections of the Russian establishment are discussing nuclear war in Europe.

Russian military commentators warn that NATO’s strategy could serve as a cover for “preemptive” strikes. They draw parallels to Hitler’s war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, which Nazi propaganda likewise justified as “defense” against an allegedly planned Soviet attack.

Regardless of NATO’s specific timetable for war, the mutual threats already demonstrate that an escalation could rapidly spiral out of control. In the Black Sea, Romania and Bulgaria are demanding additional NATO measures against Russia following drone attacks on merchant ships.

Rearmament and social devastation

Europe’s response to the war and the crisis of its alliance with Washington is a gigantic rearmament program. “ReArm Europe” is intended to make possible up to €800 billion in additional defense spending by 2030, while the SAFE program provides €150 billion in loans. In Germany, defense spending is to rise to approximately €140 billion in 2027—and to well over €200 billion in 2029. The German government wants to build the Bundeswehr into Europe’s strongest conventional army.

These sums have immediate social consequences. While debt rules are relaxed for rearmament, European governments are organizing historic cuts to social benefits and public services. Under the slogan of “competitiveness,” the EU summit adopted

measures for deregulation, accelerated approval procedures and further economic restructuring. Jobs are being eliminated on a massive scale, wages cut and working conditions worsened.

The EU also wants to create new trade policy instruments to take tougher action, particularly against China. Merz stated that the Commission had been given a mandate to this end. Von der Leyen announced additional import restrictions.

The migration debate at the summit also revealed its reactionary direction. Italy, Denmark and Poland attacked Spain’s planned legalization of the residence status of around 600,000 migrants. Discussions included tightening detention provisions in border procedures and suspending asylum applications in times of crisis. In the Middle East, against the backdrop of the US-Israeli war of aggression against Iran, the summit focused above all on securing trade and energy routes.

As the EU advances its global war offensive and reactionary domestic agenda, tensions among the European imperialist powers are growing. The dispute over the next EU budget for 2028 to 2034 exposed these rivalries. Net contributors, such as Sweden, are refusing the higher contributions being demanded, while the EU seeks to mobilize additional funds for strategic and military projects. No agreement has yet been reached.

The extreme escalation of war is also a response to growing social and political opposition in Europe. In France, Spain and other countries, mass protests and strikes are developing against social cuts, militarism and authoritarian measures. Confronted with the deep crisis of the established parties, the ruling classes are attempting to divert this opposition outward through war propaganda and nationalism and force the population to rally behind their war policies.

But this course will only further intensify social antagonisms. The gigantic military expenditures, the destruction of jobs and social benefits, and the increasing attacks on democratic rights will not extinguish the resistance of the working class and youth but further fuel it. At the same time, the escalating confrontation with Russia threatens to plunge all of Europe into a nuclear world war.

The decisive task is to arm the growing opposition with an independent socialist perspective. The working class must organize independently of the established parties and unite its struggles across all national borders against capitalism, militarism and war. The nationalist and militarist project of the European governments must be opposed with the struggle for the United Socialist States of Europe.



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