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European Union foreign ministers meet in Ukraine to escalate war with Russia

The foreign ministers of the European Union's (EU) member countries met yesterday in Kiev for a summit to pledge continuing support to NATO's war with Russia in Ukraine. Though the summit came after the bloody failure of Ukraine's counteroffensive and amid mounting divisions in ruling circles over how to finance the war, leading EU governments signaled their intention to escalate war with Russia.



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, right, and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell attend their press conference during the informal EU Foreign Ministers meeting in Kyiv, Ukraine, October 2, 2023. [AP Photo/Efrem Lukatsky] “I am convening today the EU Foreign Ministers in Kyiv, for the first-ever meeting of all 27 Member States outside the EU,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell wrote on

X/Twitter. Borrell added, “Ukraine’s future lies within the EU.” Borrell announced that the summit had agreed to spend a further €5 billion on the war.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba echoed Borrell’s remarks, tweeting, “Glad to welcome EU foreign ministers at the historic meeting in Ukraine... For the first time in history, outside current EU borders. But also within its future borders.”

With Ukraine’s army shattered, an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 Ukrainian soldiers dead and many more maimed, such statements amount to a reckless, open-ended pledge to escalate war with Russia, a nuclear-armed power. Before the EU summit, UK officials indicated that British troops could deploy directly to Ukraine, ostensibly to advise Ukrainian soldiers. Plans to announce EU military deployments to Ukraine are no doubt also at an advanced stage.

The EU has emerged as the top financier of the war, having given Kiev €84.8 billion, including €5.6 billion in arms, by the end of July 2023, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. This is on top of spending by individual European states, led by Germany (€20.87 billion), Britain (€13.77 billion), Norway (€7.45 billion), Poland (€4.27 billion), and the Netherlands (€4.08 billion). These figures include €17 billion in weaponry from Germany, €6.6 billion from Britain, €3.7 billion from Norway, €3 billion from Poland and €2.5 billion from the Netherlands.

In Kiev, German Defense Minister Annalena Baerbock called to further arm Ukraine. She said, “We must now further intensify all our efforts to prepare Ukraine for this winter. When I was here in September, I already made it clear that Ukraine needs a protective shield for winter... that consists of air defense but also generators and strengthening energy supply.”

The summit came amid signs of mounting divisions in European ruling circles over the financing and planning of the war. The foreign ministers of Hungary and Poland did not attend the Kiev summit, after Warsaw announced last week that it would send no new arms shipments to Ukraine.

At the Kiev summit, the leading EU imperialist powers were intent on signaling that they will allow no climbdown in participation in the war. They replied in particular to Kremlin spokesman Dmitri Peskov, who said that “fatigue from this conflict, fatigue from the completely absurd sponsorship of the Kyiv regime, will grow in various countries, including the United States.”

At a press conference in Kiev, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna pledged French support for war on Russia. Colonna called the Kiev summit “a demonstration of our

resolute and lasting support for Ukraine, until it can win. It is also a message to Russia that it should not count on our weariness. We will be there for a long time to come.”

Borrell added, “The EU remains united in its support to Ukraine... I don’t see any member state folding on their engagement.”

EU officials stressed their close collaboration with Washington on the war. Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen said the EU must arm Ukraine “to support Ukraine, but also to send a strong trans-Atlantic signal that what’s going on on our own soil is something we have to take on a great responsibility for.”

The EU was founded in 1992, the year after the Stalinist bureaucracy dissolved the Soviet Union, as a free-market, pro-austerity economic bloc. NATO’s war with Russia is accelerating its emergence as a military alliance asserting European imperialist interests on the world stage. This has gone hand-in-hand with the rehabilitation of neo-fascist parties and the emergence of police-state regimes in Europe that violently repress strikes and protests against the austerity measures and wage freezes that serve to finance war spending.

The political and class character of this war was exposed last week, when the Canadian parliament unanimously applauded Yaroslav Hunka, a 98-year-old Ukrainian ex-member of the Nazi Waffen-SS, as a Ukrainian patriot for fighting against the Soviet Union in World War II. The Waffen SS played a central role in the Holocaust of European Jewry, Hitler’s war of annihilation against the Soviet Union, and the repression of resistance to Nazi occupation in Europe.

This exposed the close ties between NATO and far-right Ukrainian forces, like the Right Sector militia that led the 2014 NATO-backed coup in Kiev that brought NATO’s current Ukrainian puppet regime to power. With other far-right militias, like the Azov Battalion, it now plays a central role inside the Kiev regime. Stepan Bandera, the leader of the Ukrainian collaboration with Nazism, is regularly hailed by top Ukrainian officials.

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The Canadian parliament's politically-criminal applause for a Waffen-SS fighter also speaks to the character and political implications of the EU's redefinition as a militarist bloc dedicated to war with Russia until total victory.

"The EU has changed. There is no turning back. We have turned out the lights behind us and there is basically only one way," Danish EU commissioner Margrethe Vestager declared at a May 2023 EU summit in Brussels. Waging the Ukraine war, she continued, "is absolutely Europe's top priority, and we will stay supportive of Ukraine until the war is won and Ukraine has been rebuilt, and become a member of the European Union."

Commenting on Vestager's remarks, the *Guardian* cited top advisors of Borrell who asserted that the Russian war overcame the conflicts between the European powers in the 20th century. "The European project was first and foremost intended to prevent a new conflict between France and Germany. It aimed to pacify intra-European relations through exchange and economic cooperation," wrote Zaki Laïdi, a professor at Sciences-Politiques university in Paris.

Now, however, argued Nicole Gnesotto of the Jacques Delors Institute, war with Russia is overcoming conflicts inside Europe. "In one night, Russia killed all EU philosophy since 1956," she said.

Claims that the EU will overcome historically-rooted contradictions of European capitalism via war with Russia testify to the reckless, fascistic moods seizing the ruling class. In reality, divisions are mounting in ruling circles across the continent, as was seen with the absence of Hungarian and Polish officials in Kiev. Moreover, it is notable that France, Italy and Spain, historically more oriented to imperialist conquest in Africa than in Eastern Europe, have spent less on Ukraine than their northern European allies (€1.69 billion, €1.29 billion and €900 million, respectively).

The working class must intervene independently to stop the war. Workers cannot rely on conflicts inside the bourgeoisie to avert the catastrophe that the EU has set into motion. They must base its policy on the fact that the European bourgeoisie is staking everything on a NATO war with Russia that threatens Europe and the world with escalation all the way to nuclear war. In the ruling class, there is broad awareness that this entails legitimizing far-right politics and forms of rule.

This spring saw a powerful movement of strikes erupt across Europe against the wage austerity and social cuts used to finance war with Russia. During mass protests in France against pension cuts, a large majority of workers declared their support for mass strikes to block the economy and bring down President Emmanuel Macron. This explosive

opposition must be developed consciously as an international movement of the working class in opposition to imperialist war and the capitalist system that gives rise to it.

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