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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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26.02.2025

After 3 years of war in Ukraine, imperialist war propaganda collapses



Russian soldiers fire artillery at Ukrainian troops at an undisclosed location in the Russian-controlled Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine on October 11, 2022. [AP Photo/Alexei Alexandrov]

Three years after the start of the Ukraine war, the narrative used by the imperialist powers to justify their provocation and escalation of the war is being exposed as a pack of lies.

When Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the NATO powers and their pliant media outlets universally proclaimed the Russian invasion an “unprovoked war,” an unprecedented act of aggression stemming from the psychology of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

By contrast, the *World Socialist Web Site* analyzed its true nature from the very beginning. The WSWS opposed Russia’s invasion as a desperate and reactionary response of the oligarchy to the catastrophic consequences of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It

explained, however, that the imperialist powers provoked the war and relentlessly escalated it in order to cement their domination of the Eurasian landmass. In February 2023, the WSWS Editorial Board wrote:

In the initial stages of virtually every war, governments claim to be acting in self-defense and focus attention on the issue of who fired the “first shot.” This is usually followed by relentless atrocity propaganda aimed at demonizing the enemy. However, inevitably, as casualties pile up and initial expectations of both sides are frustrated, deeper causes and driving factors are revealed. This is the case with the war over Ukraine.

Three years after the start of the war, the “deeper causes and driving factors” of the war are being revealed.

Gone is the rhetoric about “national self-determination” and the defense of “democracy.” Rather, US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron spent the third anniversary of the war squabbling, both in private and in public, over who will get the spoils of what’s left of Ukraine.

“We must have an agreement with Ukraine on critical minerals and rare earths,” Trump said during his meeting with the French president, citing his efforts to force the Zelensky government to hand over Ukraine’s mineral resources to the United States. French President Emmanuel Macron insisted that the European powers provided Ukraine with aid in the form “of grants, loans and loan guarantees,” which are likewise to be recouped—one way or another.

In this falling out among imperialist thieves, all of the lies used to justify the Ukraine war are crashing down. Trump openly stated that Ukraine, not Putin, initiated the war and refused to negotiate a settlement. He admits that America’s interests in the war have been those of raw materials and geopolitics. He openly states that Ukrainian President Zelensky is a “dictator,” ruling through martial law, making a mockery of the claim by the Biden administration that the war was about defending “democracy.”

During their joint press conference, Macron tied himself in knots to explain his own role in opposing any negotiated settlement of the war. He declared: “I always think it’s good to have discussions with other leaders, especially when you disagree. I stopped my discussion with President Putin after Bucha and the war crimes. ... Now there is a big change because there is a new US administration.”

Macron was referencing the Bucha atrocity allegations of March 2022 which were seized upon by the imperialist powers to sabotage any efforts at a negotiated settlement of the war. At the time, the imperialist powers claimed that the alleged atrocities “changed everything,”

rendering any negotiation with the “killer” Vladimir Putin unthinkable. The WSWS explained, by contrast, that the Bucha atrocity allegations were a “pretext for escalating NATO’s war against Russia.”

A serious journalist would have asked Macron, “Did the election of Donald Trump somehow bring the victims of Bucha back to life, or were you simply using their deaths as a pretext to support the Biden administration’s efforts to prolong the war?” To ask the question is to answer it.

The fraudulent pretenses used to justify NATO’s involvement in the Ukraine war are collapsing, as it becomes clear the war is a bloody debacle for the NATO powers. In January 2023, the NATO powers set out as their tactical objective, in the words of General Mark Milley, to “liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine,” by which they meant the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in 2014. More broadly, they intended to impose a “strategic defeat” on Russia, involving the overthrow of the Putin government and the break-up of the Russian federation.

The NATO powers have failed in all of these goals. Ukraine and its NATO powers not only never came close to retaking Crimea and the separatist territories in the Donbas, but Ukraine lost a further 15 percent of its territory.

While the NATO war effort has been a disaster, the effects of the war have been very real. Both the *Wall Street Journal* and NATO have estimated that 1 million people have died or been wounded, and large portions of Ukraine have been destroyed.

The Ukraine war has affected every corner of the globe. Every imperialist country, including Germany and Japan, has used it to massively re-arm, overthrowing pledges they made after the Second World War never to pursue an aggressive foreign policy.

The Ukraine war has put the use of nuclear weapons front and center in international geopolitics. In October 2022, US President Joe Biden said the escalation of the Ukraine war threatened nuclear “armageddon,” while the US intelligence agencies rated the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons as high as 50 percent. Despite these warnings, US and European imperialism continued to expand the war, sending NATO tanks, planes and long-range missiles over Russia’s borders.

Whatever the outcome of the negotiations now taking place between the United States, Russia and the European imperialist powers, the specter of global war cannot be put back in the bottle. Rather, as the International Committee of the Fourth International explained in its 1991 statement opposing the Gulf War:

As in the years before 1914 and 1939, the plundering and enslavement of small and defenseless countries is inextricably linked to the intensification of disputes and struggles among the imperialist powers.

Trump and the faction of the political establishment for which he speaks see the Ukraine war as a costly disaster and a distraction from the central priority of the administration: the domination of the Americas to create a supply base for conflict with China.

Trump's strategy shift on the Ukraine war, however, has brought to the surface significant divisions within the US political establishment. The Democratic Party and its aligned media outlets, who have done nothing to oppose Trump's destruction of democratic rights, his slashing of social spending and his attacks on immigrants and the federal workforce, are vocally opposing Trump's Ukraine policy shift. In an editorial, the *New York Times* declares that Trump's "admiration of the tyrant in the Kremlin goes far beyond any behavior that Americans should tolerate."

The *Times* has never used such language to describe anything else Trump has done during his second administration, no matter how criminal or unconstitutional. These sections of the US political establishment fear that admitting defeat in Ukraine will lead to a disastrous collapse in the global standing and economic dominance of US imperialism. What, they wonder, will happen the next time there is a financial crisis, requiring a massive new government bailout, to the global standing of the dollar?

Whatever the outcome of Trump's Ukraine policy shift, it is only the prelude to an even further eruption of global imperialist violence. The war that erupted between NATO and Russia in Ukraine is metastasizing into a globe-spanning conflict, in which the targets of US imperialism are not only the former colonies and the countries of the former USSR, but also American imperialism's rivals for global domination.

After three years of the Ukraine war, working people all over the world must draw certain critical lessons. All factions of the US and European political establishment are committed to war as a means of the redivision of the world and the subjugation of the former colonies. Capitalism is bringing humanity face to face with the eruption of a global third world war.

The bloody debacle of the Ukraine war vindicates the principled opposition by the International Committee of the Fourth International to both the provocations of the imperialist powers and the reactionary Putin government. In both Russia and Ukraine, the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, a group that has declared its solidarity with the International Committee, has fought to oppose the war and unify the workers and youth of the former Soviet Union with their class brothers and sisters throughout the world.

For this, Bogdan Syrotiuk, the leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists, has been imprisoned by the Zelensky regime. After three years of the brutal war, workers all over the world must redouble their call for the freedom of Comrade Bogdan as a critical component in the struggle against imperialist war!

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