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Europe's Path To War And Self-Destruction

- [By Fabian Scheidler, Scheer Post.](#)



Above photo: European Union Flag. Håkan Dahlström from Malmö, Sweden, Wikimedia Commons.

Brussels is working hard to boycott Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's EU Council Presidency. The background: Orbán's trips to Kiev, Moscow and Beijing, which were aimed at negotiating a ceasefire agreement, are infuriating EU leaders and the governments in Berlin, Paris and other capitals.

There is certainly a lot that can be said against the right-wing Hungarian head of state and Trump friend, who is responsible for a whole series of rule of law deficits in his home country. But to accuse him of a diplomatic initiative that other member states have so far been unwilling or unable to take shows how far the EU has moved away from its former claim to be a force for peace. The fact that at the highest level of the Union, the bypassing of essential EU rules such as the rotation of the Council presidency is seriously considered in order to punish Orbán for his travels is a portent for the future of the Union.

It is remarkable that the EU, which could be completely devastated by a possible escalation of the war in Ukraine, is not only doing nothing to avert this danger and stop the killing, but is also undermining the diplomatic attempts of a member state. It has long been known that Ukraine cannot win the war and that it is – at best – a stalemate. This was already clearly stated in November 2022 by the then Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, and a year later by the supreme commander of the Ukrainian armed forces, General Valery Zalushnyi. Since then, with every day that the war rages on, Ukraine's prospects of maintaining a sovereign and reasonably functional state diminish.

But the EU does not want to acknowledge this simple reality. As its first official act, the new EU Parliament passed a resolution on July 17 vowing to provide military support to Ukraine until *all* occupied territories are recaptured, regardless of how long this takes (i.e. how many people die in the process). You don't have to be a military expert to understand that the complete reconquest of the Donbass and Crimea is a completely unrealistic perspective, if only because of the massive recruitment problems of the Ukrainian military.

However, the resolution goes even further: it “strongly advocates for the removal of restrictions on the use of Western weapons systems delivered to Ukraine against military targets on Russian territory”. The EU Parliament thus explicitly hazards a Europe-wide escalation, including the possibility of nuclear war. It also calls on all member states to permanently provide at least 0.25 of their economic output for the rearmament of Ukraine (in addition to increasing their own military budgets), to train more Ukrainian soldiers and to “boost” their arms industries. Furthermore, the resolution endorses the “irreversible path of Ukraine to NATO membership”, echoing the wording of the earlier NATO summit. It thus closes the door for any settlement based on future Ukrainian neutrality. Diplomatic initiatives are not mentioned at all.

The resolution is testimony to a highly dangerous mixture of escapism from reality and unbridled militarism, reminiscent of the time of the “sleepwalkers” before the outbreak of the First World War. And yet it's all over town that only negotiations offer a way out. Even Volodimir Zelensky himself said after the failed Swiss peace summit, to which the Russian Federation was not invited, that Russia should be involved in talks next time. The much-vaunted argument that it is impossible to negotiate with someone like Vladimir Putin has long been refuted. Intensive negotiations took place between the two sides from the end of February to the beginning of April 2022 under Turkish mediation, which resulted in a 10-point plan that provided for Ukraine to renounce its NATO membership and for Russia to withdraw to the lines of February 23, 2022. Israeli Prime Minister

Naftali Bennett also conducted secret negotiations at the time, in which the heads of state of Russia and Ukraine were involved. However, the negotiations were broken off after the then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Kiev on April 9. According to everything we know from (pro-Western) media reports, Johnson's message at the time was that Ukraine should stop negotiating and continue fighting.

Still today, more than two years and many tens of thousands of deaths later, the EU states have committed themselves to a senseless program of rearmament and confrontation instead of diplomacy. Following the decisions taken at the NATO summit in Washington D.C., new medium-range missiles that can be equipped with nuclear warheads are to be stationed in Germany – for the first time since the 1980s. Instead of making Germany any safer, this will turn the country all the more into a potential target for attacks in the event of an escalation. There was no public debate or involvement of the German parliament on this momentous step. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, whose social-democratic party achieved just 13.9 percent in the EU elections and whose legitimacy has been massively weakened, has rubber-stamped another wave of armament with a wave of his hand. The possibility of reviving the INF Treaty on the dismantling and prohibition of medium-range missiles in Europe, which was signed by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987 and terminated by Donald Trump in 2019, has thus been abandoned.

It is not clear how this massive rearmament is supposed to make Europe safer. NATO already has more than ten times Russia's military budget: 1470 billion US dollars compared to an estimated 140 billion on the Russian side. Russia's leadership would already have to be suicidal to attack a NATO country, and a 20-fold superiority would not change that.

Moreover, the armament will continue to be at the expense of social cohesion and political stability. Instead of investing appropriately in the education and healthcare systems, which have been severely undermined by decades of austerity, and making public transport fit for the future, more money is being pumped into the most destructive and climate-damaging of all economic sectors: the military-industrial complex. If the political system no longer offers citizens any prospects for the future, but only social cuts and war, trust in political institutions will continue to erode and right-wing nationalist forces will gain even more support.

Instead of development aid – which is to be massively cut in the draft federal budget of Germany for 2025 – even more weapons from German and European production will reach the countries of the Global South and fuel conflicts there, leading to further instability. Civil conflict resolution is playing an increasingly minor role in the foreign policy of the EU, which was once awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Europe's armament is no longer just aimed at Russia, but increasingly also at China. The re-elected President of the EU Commission, Ursula von der Leyen announced that she would use *all* means against China in a conflict over Taiwan. The EU is thus once again following strategic guidelines from Washington. President Barack Obama had already issued the motto of a "pivot to Asia" in 2012 and massively armed the Pacific region. In the meantime, German warships are cruising with the US navy in the South China Sea, much to Beijing's concern. What would EU politicians say if Chinese warships appeared in the Mediterranean or the North Sea?

The military build-up against Beijing has a simple background: the USA fears that it will soon be replaced as the globally dominant economic power by China. In terms of purchasing power, China's gross domestic product is already higher than that of the USA, and the BRICS' GDP surpasses the

economic output of the G7 countries. The US must also fear that it will lose the US dollar's reserve currency bonus in the long term, as US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen recently admitted. This would deprive the US of a crucial instrument for financing its exorbitant foreign trade deficits. Fueled by the sanctions against Russia, China, Russia and other countries in the Global South are developing new international payment systems that can bypass the US dollar. China is also catching up technologically. The quadrupling of US tariffs on Chinese electric cars to a whopping 100 percent shows that the American car industry is no longer a match for the competition.

In view of these developments, both Republicans and Democrats are increasingly relying on the military card to put China in its place. In doing so, they are trying to urge the EU states to rearm themselves in order to keep Russia in check and take joint action against China. However, the idea that the "collective West" can militarily prevent China from gaining more economic and political weight is a highly dangerous illusion. Do we seriously want to wage war against the world's third largest nuclear power with a population of 1.3 billion? Not only is such a war unwinnable, it would probably also mean the end of humanity as we know it.

The only rational option in this situation is to work on a new global security architecture that also includes China – and in the long term, when the Ukraine war will be ended, Russia too. Such a perspective is also imperative because the major tasks of the future, above all overcoming the ecological crisis and the divide between rich and poor, necessitate intensive cooperation. There is nothing the world needs less than a new bloc confrontation.

The EU – still – has a choice. Does it want to plunge into a hopeless and highly dangerous escalation alongside a crumbling US empire, thereby destroying the foundations of its own social and peace model for good? Or can it adopt an independent, mediating peacemaking position that focuses on diplomacy and cooperation rather than confrontation? Not only the fate of Europe depends on this choice, but also that of a considerable part of the rest of the world.

- Europe, European Union (EU), Hungary, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine