Towards barbarism? Climate, war and ecosocialist security dilemmas

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Abstract

The world order of the 1990s, which emerged following the collapse of the bureaucratic dictatorships and was based on a neoliberal restructuring of society that had already begun under US dominance, is disintegrating. Governments are responding to global heating with selective and unequal adaptation strategies that are leading to barbaric conditions. At the same time, imperialist rivalries are intensifying. The Russian leadership is reviving the Tsarist-Greater Russian ideology and combining it with a new form of fascist rule. The war against the Ukrainian people serves to expand Russia's spheres of influence. With Trump's presidency, an authoritarian form of rule is also taking hold in the US. The US government seeks to divide the world into spheres of influence and to fragment the European states. The leaderships around Trump and Putin are driving the rise of national-conservative and fascist forces. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, global rearmament has accelerated dramatically, whilst social and democratic achievements are coming under pressure from austerity policies. But how can we defend Ukraine's resistance against the Russian occupation, as well as the democratic and social achievements in Europe against external and internal threats, whilst at the same time driving forward the socio-ecological transition? We must develop an ecosocialist approach that unites ecological, social and military security for the whole of Europe. This gives rise to various dilemmas.

Keywords:
War – global heating – selective adaptation – fossil capital – rearmament – security – Ukraine – Russia – Europe

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The world order established in 1945 came to an end in 1990 when the bureaucratic dictatorships collapsed and the promises of neoliberalism – which had already begun its triumphant advance 15 years earlier – sparked global expectations of prosperity and freedom. Now this neoliberal world order is also collapsing, having long been held together by the promises of neoliberal globalisation under the military and financial dominance of the USA. Financial capital remains at the helm, banking on high returns in the sectors of fossil fuels, technology, artificial intelligence and armaments (Machado and Louçã 2026). Yet China, as an emerging imperialist power, is preparing to break US dominance. Russia is reviving its own imperialist tradition and – drawing on its oil and gas reserves and employing a mixture of tsarist and fascist methods of rule (Budraitskis 2022) – seeks to expand its own sphere of influence by military means; however, it is overextending itself, has lost key allies and is likely to lose influence. The US is prepared to defend its dominance even through major wars, as it is brutally demonstrating with its campaign against Iran, which began on 28 February 2026. The economic and political implications of this are enormous, though they are yet difficult to assess.[1]

In the 1990s and 2000s, defence spending in Europe declined; armies were downsized and, at the same time, professionalised so that they could be deployed rapidly and flexibly elsewhere in the world to enforce the interests of the imperialist states. From the mid-2010s, a reversal of this trend set in, reinforced by Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea and its de facto occupation of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions in 2014. Defence spending rose again and has been skyrocketing since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion against the Ukrainian population on 24 February 2022. Current fears that the Trump administration will withdraw its security guarantee for Europe are unsettling European governments. They are responding with massive rearmament and a general discourse on militarisation.[2] In December 2025, the German Bundestag and Bundesrat passed measures that could later be extended to include compulsory military service.

1 However, in this article I have only been able to touch upon the US-Israeli war against Iran, which several European governments are tolerating or supporting.

2 Understood in a broad and qualitative sense, militarisation means orienting a society towards the needs of the military or subjecting a community to military requirements. A narrow and quantitative understanding of militarisation refers to the state's provision of military facilities and equipment. 'The Global Militarisation Index of the Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) defines militarisation in a quantitative sense as the resources and capabilities available to the state's armed forces.' (bpb 2011)

This 'turning point' encompasses many dimensions. It has caught ecosocialists and the entire Left unprepared. In the current phase, we[3] find ourselves increasingly confronted with challenges that demand urgent responses, yet for which we cannot simply rely on textbooks or arbitrary historical analogies.

The **aim** of this article is to identify some key dynamics that must be considered in order to unite fundamental ecological and social concerns within a framework of transnational solidarity, in a way that takes account of the security needs of people on the European continent. This analysis highlights the challenge of global heating and abrupt changes to the Earth system, the intensifying imperialist rivalry and the imperialist great powers' efforts to divide the world into spheres of influence, as well as the austerity policies that are being tightened alongside military build-up. The Ukrainian people's resistance to the Russian occupation is a key factor in Europe's future development. Transnational solidarity with democratic struggles against dictatorships and occupying powers, as well as with anti-imperialist resistance – be it in Ukraine, Palestine, Syria, Iran, Venezuela or elsewhere – is an indispensable part of any emancipatory and ecosocialist orientation. From this assessment arises the **question** in Europe of how we can reconcile the need for defossilisation – that is, the socio-ecological restructuring and dismantling of the production and energy systems – and resistance to austerity policies with armed support for the Ukrainian resistance against Russian occupation, and with a European approach that takes the need to protect all people seriously.

In the subsequent article 'Social Security Instead of Imperialist Insecurity in Europe', I outline the challenges involved in resolving this trilemma (Zeller 2026b) . On this basis, I outline an 'Ecosocialist Strategy for Social, Ecological and Military Security', which proposes a programmatic orientation in the sense of a transitional strategy that points beyond capitalist constraints (Zeller 2026c) .

In the *first* section, I identify planetary boundaries and the authoritarian, selective adaptation imposed by capital as the central challenge. In the *second* section, I describe current efforts to redivide the world into imperialist spheres of influence, the wave of rearmament and the resistance to it.

[3] When I write here in the first-person plural, I include everyone who advocates for an ecosocialist transformation of production and reproduction, for democratic and national self-determination, and for the self-organisation of the working classes, and who, transcending geopolitical constellations, stands on the side of the oppressed, the discriminated against and the exploited. See also the concept of *'emancipation'* (https://emanzipation.org/about-1/).

The *third* section briefly addresses the austerity policies being enforced under the pretext of increased defence spending. In the *fourth* section, I explain the need for a transnational perspective based on solidarity. The *fifth* section concludes with an interim assessment regarding the development of a European ecosocialist orientation and strategy that links social, environmental and military security.

1 Planetary boundaries and selective adaptation to global heating

Russia's attack on Ukraine, the State of Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people, and the US-Israeli war against Iran have all contributed to global heating being largely sidelined in public debate. But global heating is accelerating, and the remaining budget for greenhouse gas emissions needed to limit global heating to 1.5 °C with a 50 per cent probability has been used up (Friedlingstein et al. 2025) . In their realistic scenarios, the UNEP (2025) and the IEA (2025) project a further rise in the consumption of fossil fuels (Zeller 2025a) . The Earth system is changing abruptly and will shape all social conflicts. Therefore, any emancipatory perspective must be based on the abrupt changes in the Earth system.

Large parts of the Earth, including numerous megacities, are likely to become uninhabitable within a few decades. If the current lack of climate policy continues, the temperature niche within which human society has been able to develop will change more drastically over the next five decades than at any time in the past 6,000 years. Depending on population growth and global heating, between one and three billion people will no longer be living under the climatic conditions that have prevailed over the last 6,000 years. Billions of people will be forced to leave their homes. The regions potentially most severely affected are among the poorest in the world (Xu et al. 2020; Lenton et al. 2023) .

Global heating will alter the water cycle and lead to water scarcity. Many regions, including those with large reservoirs, could face a high risk of prolonged extreme droughts and water emergencies, with only brief recovery periods between droughts, as early as the 2020s and 2030s. These include the Mediterranean region, southern Africa and parts of North America (Ravinandrasana and Franzke 2025). These diverse and, in some cases, interrelated processes will lead to the extinction of a portion of the world's poor population.

Global economic development must be viewed within this context. The world economy has been in a phase of stagnation since the great crisis of 2008. The crisis, which began in autumn 2019 and was massively exacerbated by the pandemic, also reveals the lack of direction among the ruling capitalist factions. There are no signs that the economic and political crises in the core imperialist countries can be resolved any time soon (Chesnais 2022; Roberts 2025b) . Russia's war against the Ukrainian people, Israel's war against the Palestinian people and the US-Israeli war against Iran are exacerbating these crisis tendencies. Although the hype surrounding artificial intelligence has led to massive investment in this sector in the US, it has had little impact on the rest of the economy to bring about a reversal of the trend (Roberts 2025a) .

Imperialist rivalry and the consumption of materials through the production and deployment of weapons will lead to a massive increase in greenhouse gas emissions. The figures from the US serve as a case in point. The US Department of Defense is the world's largest institutional consumer of petroleum and emitter of greenhouse gases. The US defence industry accounts for around 15 per cent of total industrial greenhouse gas emissions in the US (Crawford 2019) . In most countries, the military sector is a major source of emissions. The current wave of rearmament will make it impossible to achieve a substantial reduction in global heating in the short term, thereby endangering not just millions but billions of people's very survival within a few decades.

War, the arms industry and military logistics have been major causes of environmental disasters since the 19th century. They are an expression of the war against nature (Serfati 2024) . At the same time, in the 21st century, military means have themselves become a central method for responding to these disasters. Cukier(2025) refers to this as *'environmental militarism*'. Militarism is both one of the causes of global heating and its social consequences, and a key response to them.

The University of the German Bundeswehr recently published an 'Interdisciplinary Climate Risk Assessment', which it produced in collaboration with the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, the sustainability think tank adelphi research and the Federal Intelligence Service. The report draws on the findings of Earth system and climate research mentioned above. It describes the economic and human losses caused by global heating, including disruptions to security-critical supply chains. Climate change increases the risk of military conflicts: the loss of livelihoods, rivalry over land and migration trigger violence and state collapse – with consequences

for the security of Germany and Europe. By 2050, food production is expected to fall by between 6 and 14 per cent, and hunger and food insecurity are set to rise again. If temperatures rise by 2.7°C, up to 39 per cent of the world's population could find themselves living outside the 'climate niche'; between 44 and 216 million internal migrants are anticipated by 2050. Competition for raw materials and markets associated with the energy transition is intensifying, particularly with China. The increasingly ice-free Arctic is gaining in importance as a shipping route and source of raw materials. Russia views this as a threat to its northern flank, as hostile forces could utilise these new sea routes. It is therefore strengthening its military presence. The consequences of climate change are also exacerbating social and economic inequalities within the EU, whilst joint disaster response programmes remain limited – a situation which is intensifying intra-European tensions (metis 2025) .

In light of these 'climate risk assessments', imperialist powers are deploying their military might to enforce their claims by force in the intensifying rivalry over oil and gas, rare and expensive minerals, rare earths, arable land and even water, be it in Africa, Asia, Europe or elsewhere. Their method of adapting to global heating is the militarisation of society and borders, as well as the exclusion of an ever-increasing number of people rendered superfluous. This means that the European powers, too, intend to use their military might to assert their colonial ambitions. This is not new, but it will take on a new dimension.

Imperialism inevitably relies on fossil fuels and must, at the same time, meet rising energy demand through renewable energy sources, which, however, are necessarily dependent on cheap resource inputs (Zeller und Kreilinger 2025). Consequently, efforts will intensify to control, exploit and incorporate, at low cost, the production and wealth derived from the labour of dependent and colonised populations. Imperialist powers are increasingly focused on securing or reshaping global energy markets and enforcing an imperialist-controlled, selective adaptation to the social catastrophes arising from changes to the Earth system and global heating. Under these conditions, forthcoming imperialist wars are aimed not only at the exploitation and appropriation of surplus value and the plundering of ecological resources but are also geared towards the survival of the capitalist mode of production and way of life as such. The imperialist powers are seeking strategies to adapt to increasing ecological destruction, at the expense of their rivals and, above all, at the expense of the world's poor. Russia's war of occupation against the Ukrainian people, Israel's genocidal annihilation of Palestinian society in Gaza and systematic terrorisation of the people in the

West Bank, the bloody suppression of the uprising in Iran with thousands of deaths, the US-Israeli war against Iran, and the coup aimed at subjugating Venezuela as a raw materials colony, give an indication of the lengths to which those in power are prepared to go to push through their expansionist projects and secure their rule.

Capitalist rule is increasingly faced with the challenge of managing disasters and disruptions at various levels, minimising their effects and shifting them spatially, socially and temporally. This is taking place in the context of a reconfiguration of global capitalism. Capitalist rule is adapting to global heating. Consequently, production, profit-driven logic and imperialism must be reorganised. The ruling capitalist groups and state bureaucracies are responding to global heating and the abrupt changes in the Earth system with a strategy of unequal 'selective adaptation' (cf. Cukier 2025), which favours the rich at the expense of the working classes and the colonised peoples. At least six trends are undermining the environmental and social security of a large proportion of the world's population.

- The state-established CO_2 markets and offset schemes have not brought about an energy transition but have instead created 'green' financial products with the lowest possible financial risks. New technologies, strategically important raw materials and resources, as well as renewable energies, complement the fossil fuel base of capital. There is no energy transition; rather, there is an **'energy addition**'. The major financial and oil corporations are launching a further round of fossil-fuel extractivism and the associated investments in oil exploration and production. This fossil-fuel offensive is institutionally underpinned by imperialist states and driven by finance capital (Zeller 2023) .
- States are increasingly turning to **climate-tech solutionism.** This includes carbon capture and storage, direct air capture and geoengineering. Even the plans for 'resilient cities' and the debates surrounding 'smart cities' and 'safe cities' do not aim at the necessary decarbonisation of the economy, but rather at unequal, selective adaptation to the coming disasters.
- The **rhetoric of adaptation** has an imperialist and colonialist character. For, underpinned by the world's unequal conditions, wealthy societies will be able to mobilise resources to adapt to global heating. These opportunities remain out of reach for the world's poor societies. Migration is the only form of adaptation left to people. This amounts to a socially and geographically highly unequal, selective adaptation and ultimately leads to the destruction of social cohesion.

- Parts of the capitalist class are tending towards a **form of 'fossil fascism'** – a system of rule designed to authoritatively perpetuate the fossil-based foundations of capitalism. To this end, oppositional social and political networks must be crushed. Patriarchal dominance and masculine ways of life, as well as reactionary and technocratic ideologies of acceleration that seek to technically trivialise and suppress social challenges, underpin this development. This fossil fascism goes hand in hand with white supremacy and racism.
- The three leading **fossil-fuel states** – the US, Russia and Saudi Arabia – base their power on the export of fossil fuels. They now account for around a third of global oil production, having overtaken OPEC. The US has so far been interested in relatively low oil prices, whilst Russia's war machine is dependent on high oil prices. All three states are pursuing a strategy to dominate the energy markets and prevent the transition to renewable energy (Mitrova and Corbeau 2025) . China is focusing more heavily on renewable energy, but is also significantly expanding its fossil fuel infrastructure and strengthening its ties with Saudi Arabia (Hanieh 2024) .
- The **new imperialist wars** – such as the war against Iran – aim, on the one hand, to control energy markets, achieve technological hegemony and to use military force to suppress the social upheavals arising from global heating – namely migration, wars of conquest and plunder, revolts and uprisings. Yet governments by no means start wars solely for economic reasons. The suppression of self-determination that threatens the status quo and the enforcement of reactionary ideologies are powerful motives for launching campaigns to annex territories and weaken or even destroy other societies. The US security strategy published in December 2025 quite openly points in this direction (The White House 2025) .

Any globally oriented, emancipatory ecosocialist perspective must take the changes in the Earth system as the starting point for its concrete stance on a comprehensive understanding of security, including ecological, social and military security. The ongoing militarisation in Europe must also be viewed within this context.

2 The redivision of the world, rearmament and militarisation

Several developments, acting in concert, have led to the issue of military security becoming a central area of political debate. Russia's full-scale invasion against the people of Ukraine has triggered debates about a 'turning

point in history'. The genocide in Gaza orchestrated by the states of North America and Europe, the partition of Ukraine sought by Trump and Putin, the lack of support for the Ukrainian resistance from European states, the US military coup in Venezuela, the threats by the US leadership against other states in Latin America, the announced takeover of Greenland by the US, and the US-Israeli war against Iran are all elements of a fundamental shift in the world order. The intensifying imperialist rivalry, the prolonged economic stagnation, the rise of national-conservative and fascist forces, and the arms race had already begun beforehand. But the Russian war and the ongoing Ukrainian resistance are having a decisive impact on these dynamics for Europe. Here, I outline key elements that need to be addressed in an ecosocialist framework.

2.1 The Russian war and the division of the world

Support for Ukraine from the US and European governments has been half-hearted since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. It was only after the initially poorly organised Ukrainian army, with massive civilian participation, had driven the Russian troops back from Kyiv and the invading army had concentrated on conquering the east and south of Ukraine that Western governments began to support Ukraine with heavy military equipment.[4] Neither the US nor the European states were concerned with helping Ukraine to victory, but rather with relatively weakening the Putin regime so that they could later resume economic relations with that same, then-weakened regime.

US President Trump has effected a change of course. He is seeking an agreement with the Putin regime on the redrawing of spheres of influence. He shares with the regime both a commitment to defending the fossil fuel sector and ideological common ground. Trump made this course clear in the security strategy, published in early December 2025 (The White House 2025; Zeller 2026a). It unequivocally reaffirms the US's traditional claim to complete dominance across its own hemisphere, that is, from Greenland to Tierra del Fuego. With the military coup in Venezuela on 3 January and the war against Iran launched on 28 February 2026, the US has unequivocally demonstrated to the whole world that it is prepared to enforce its in-

[4] Germany, for example, supplied significantly more military equipment to Russia than to Ukraine between 2008 and 2022. Even after the annexation of Crimea, Russia continued to receive more weapons and ammunition from Germany than Ukraine (figures from Destatis 2025: Foreign Trade, Code 51000-0008).

terests by military means. Following this logic, Trump has already threatened further states with violence. Remarkably, most European governments are actively participating in the destruction of international law. Israel's barbarism against the people of Gaza paved the way for further barbaric acts against the people of Lebanon and Iran.

In order to reach a 'deal' with the Putin regime, the Trump administration is seeking to partition Ukraine and possibly other territories in Eastern Europe. It wants to force the Ukrainian people to submit to the socially catastrophic division of their country. In return, Russia accepts US military interventions in South America. The Arctic and the new shipping routes through the Arctic Ocean, which are opening up as a result of global heating, can be developed and controlled more or less cooperatively. Under these circumstances, Russia would hardly oppose US control of Greenland. The leadership of US imperialism wishes to devote greater attention to the confrontation with its emerging rival, China; however, this allows for the possibility of also negotiating the division of spheres of influence in South-East Asia with the Chinese leadership and, within such a framework, ceding Taiwan to the state and party bureaucracy of the People's Republic of China.

The Russian government expects to benefit from global heating and is preparing for a specific form of selective adaptation. For instance, Russia is developing a new shipping route from Asia through the Arctic Ocean to Europe. This will enable it to connect Asia's major industrial centres with Europe more quickly. Thanks to global heating, mineral resources can be extracted more easily. It is estimated that 46 per cent of all Russia's rare earths are located in the Murmansk region and 30 per cent in the Sakha region. Rosatom and Rosneft own the two largest rare-earth deposits, including one in Murmansk, where around 24 per cent of Russia's lithium reserves are believed to be located. The resulting business opportunities are of great geopolitical significance and are the subject of negotiations between the Trump and Putin regimes. As early as September, following the Trump–Putin meeting in Alaska, it was reported that Putin was offering the US the chance to jointly plunder resources in the east of his colonial empire. In return, however, Trump was to persuade Ukraine to cede further parts of the country (Denysenko and Ivanyuk 2025) . In fact, paragraph 13 of the so-called 28-point plan – which Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and Putin's representative Kirill Dmitriev negotiated as a 'working document' and which was made public on 21 November – points precisely in this direction. Russia is to be reintegrated into the global economy, sanctions are to be lifted gradually, and Russia is to be invited back into the G8. Specifically,

the document states: "The United States will enter into a long-term economic cooperation agreement for mutual development in the areas of energy, natural resources, infrastructure, artificial intelligence, data centres, rare earth metal extraction projects in the Arctic, and other mutually beneficial corporate opportunities." (Financial Times 2025; Cancian und Snegovaya 2025). This point was scarcely mentioned in public debate. From the perspective of Russian and US capital, however, it is crucial, not least in the context of global heating. Reportedly, the two governments were negotiating huge joint investment projects amounting to 12 trillion USD (The Economist 2026). The US claim to Greenland is a key component of this geo-economic and geopolitical strategy. It enables the US to challenge Russia's control of the New Northern Route if necessary, which is relevant to European-Chinese relations.

In the context of these efforts, it comes as no surprise that Trump has withdrawn direct military support from Ukraine. In the meantime, he promised to continue supplying it with defensive weapons, provided that European states pay for them. In 2025, the US Department of Defense openly sabotaged Ukraine's defence efforts on several occasions and even blocked arms deliveries that were already in Poland, as documented in a superbly researched analysis by the New York Times (Entous 2025). In March 2025, the US announced that it was suspending the provision of intelligence to Ukraine. On 15 January 2026, French President Macron boasted that France was now providing two-thirds of the intelligence to Ukraine. However, the actual state of relations remains unclear (Irish 2026).

Putin has occasionally hinted at a willingness to negotiate in order to ease the sanctions, and has been partially successful in this regard. However, he has in no way taken up the Trump administration's goodwill offers to allow Russia to annex eastern Ukraine. On the contrary, during the winter months, the Russian leadership significantly intensified its attacks on Ukraine – targeting both civilians in cities and troops on the front line – and deployed new and expensive medium-range ballistic missiles as a signal to European states. Trump responded – at least verbally – by increasing economic pressure on Russia, primarily through sanctions against Russia's key trading partners (such as India) that continue to source oil and gas from Russia. Another strand of Trump's strategy was to lower the price of oil, which would quickly have a detrimental effect on Russia's war effort. However, in December 2025, the US quietly and without comment lifted sanctions against companies that even supply military goods to Russia (USDT 2025; Murdoch 2025).

In the first five days of the war against Iran alone, the US and the Gulf states fired 800 Patriot air defence missiles – more than Ukraine had at its disposal during the entire four years of its defensive struggle (Miller 2026). The US would have been in a position to protect Ukrainian cities. It deliberately chose not to do so. On 6 March 2026, the US government even eased sanctions on Russian oil sales to India in order to counter any potential shortages and price spikes on the oil market (Schipani, et al. 2026) . Beyond the rapidly changing negotiating climate, the Trump administration's strategic objective remains unchanged: to conclude an agreement with the leaders in the Kremlin. The US ended its direct military support for Ukraine in March 2025 (see2.2).

2.2 European ambiguity towards Ukraine

European states have limited their military aid from the outset, and their sanctions against Russia remain inconsistent. Many countries, particularly Germany and Italy, allow companies in their countries to maintain extensive trade relations with their Russian business partners, predominantly via apparent transit points in some neighbouring countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Armenia and Georgia. They also accept that products for arms production are exported to Russia in this way (Brooks 2024; Zeller 2024).[5]

European governments make many promises but remain inconsistent, both in terms of arms deliveries to Ukraine and economic sanctions against Russia. Since the start of Russia's large-scale invasion, European governments have never aimed for Russia's defeat, but rather for its weakening and a new agreement with the Kremlin. They support Ukraine only half-heartedly. The smear campaign against the Ukrainian resistance, in which 'campist'[6] factions of the Left and the reactionary Right portray it as a proxy war, is baseless. It is obvious that the Ukrainians are waging a defensive

[5] In 2025, too, companies from several European countries exported goods to Russia via third countries. See Robin Brooks: Exports from various countries to Kyrgyzstan. 16 Feb. 2026 https://x.com/robin_j_brooks/status/2023416217655255517, Exports from various countries to Armenia, 16 Feb 2026 https://x.com/robin_j_brooks/status/2023428449088774324, Exports from Germany, Italy, Poland and Lithuania to Kyrgyzstan, EU transshipments to Russia, July 07, 2025 https://robinjbrooks.substack.com/p/eu-transshipments-to-russia; The Madness of EU Transshipments to Russia, June 12, 2026 https://robinjbrooks.substack.com/p/the-madness-of-eu-transshipments.

[6] Campist currents within the Left focus primarily on the global geopolitical constellation between the major camps. They argue that US imperialism is the main enemy and that the Left should therefore side with those powers that oppose the US. As a result, these currents also accept brutal dictatorships and do not support the local population's resistance against them.

war for independence, with or without the help of the US and European states, albeit within the context of imperialist rivalry.

Allegedly to support Ukraine and to deter possible further Russian aggression, the European Commission presented the White Paper on the 'Rearm Europe' programme concerning European defence readiness by 2030 in March 2025 (European Commission 2025) . The European Parliament endorsed this document on 12 March as the basis for rearmament policy. The programme, subsequently renamed *'Readiness 2030'*, is primarily intended to facilitate the financing of rearmament by individual states and to reduce the EU's strategic dependence on the US in the field of armaments (Clapp, et al. 2025: 3f). The aforementioned White Paper devotes only the fifth of its nine chapters to military support for Ukraine. It calls for programmes to increase the supply of large-calibre artillery ammunition, air defence systems and drones, as well as the training and equipping of army brigades, and provides for financial support for the Ukrainian defence industry. There is no mention of protecting Ukrainian cities from the mass terror perpetrated by the Russian state. Otherwise, the document has nothing to do with Ukraine. It describes general security requirements and imperialist concerns (European Commission 2025:10–12).

The authors of a study published in March 2025 by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy calculated the costs that European countries and institutions would incur if Trump were to completely withdraw US aid to Ukraine. To fully replace the US as a provider of military, financial and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, EU member states would have to spend an additional 0.21 per cent of GDP. This is far less than the amounts involved in the current wave of rearmament and would be easily manageable (Irto, et al. 2025) .

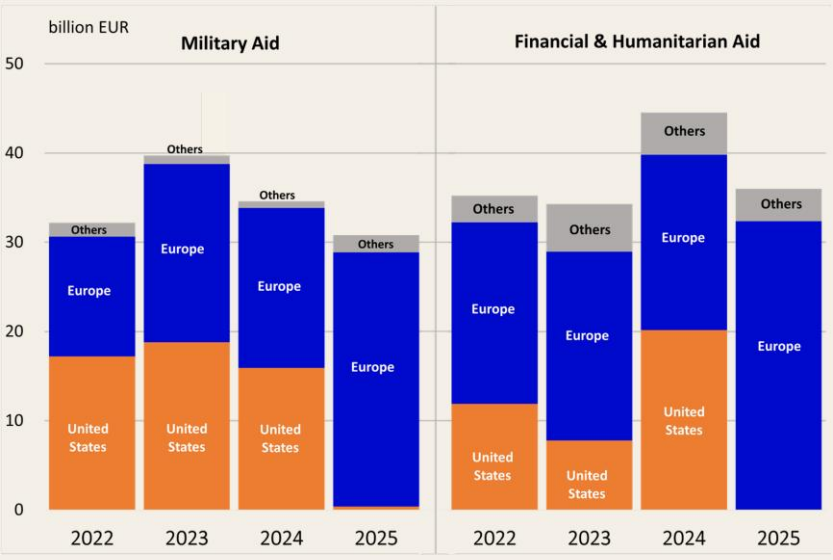
The US immediately and drastically cut its military aid to Ukraine when President Trump took office. Since March 2025, no further funds have been provided, neither for military aid nor for financial and humanitarian support (

Figure1). In the spring of 2025, European countries initially increased their support for Ukraine on a short-term basis but subsequently reduced it again. The decision by EU heads of state and government on 19 December 2025 to provide Ukraine with 90 billion euros in financial aid over the next two years finally increased the total amount of pledged support significantly. At any rate, since March/April 2025, the total military aid provided by European states has exceeded that of the US.

NATO does not supply weapons to Ukraine, but coordinates the bilateral military aid provided by its member states as well as the PURL programme (Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List), under which NATO

countries purchase weapons from the US for delivery to Ukraine (NATO 2025) .

From 24 January 2022 to 31 December 2025, European countries provided EUR 201.35 billion in bilateral government aid, of which EUR 91.29 billion was military aid; the total aid pledged to date amounts to EUR 380.09 billion. The US provided EUR 115.33 billion in government aid and EUR 64.62 billion in military aid to Ukraine. Total military aid to Ukraine in 2025 was therefore lower than in any other year of the war. In September and October, European countries transferred only around EUR 4.2 billion in military aid to Ukraine. Current European military aid is insufficient to replace the discontinued US support. The aid is distributed very unevenly (Figure2). Germany and the Nordic countries are providing the bulk of the aid following the US withdrawal (Trebesch and Nishikawa 2026; Trebesch et al. 2026: Figs. 2, 8; Kiel Institute 2025). However, in relation to the strength of their economies (as at 2021), Denmark (€9.95 billion), the Baltic states (€7.37 billion), Norway (€5.62 billion), Sweden (€7.94 billion)



Note: Europe refers to EU member states and institutions, as well as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK. "Others" refers to the remaining donors tracked in the Tracker, namely Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Taiwan, Türkiye. All figures are inflation adjusted (in real 2021 Euros) using Oct 2025 IMF WEO data.

Figure1 | Aid Allocation to Ukraine 2022-25 – Europe vs. US
(Trebesch and Nishikawa 2026: 4)

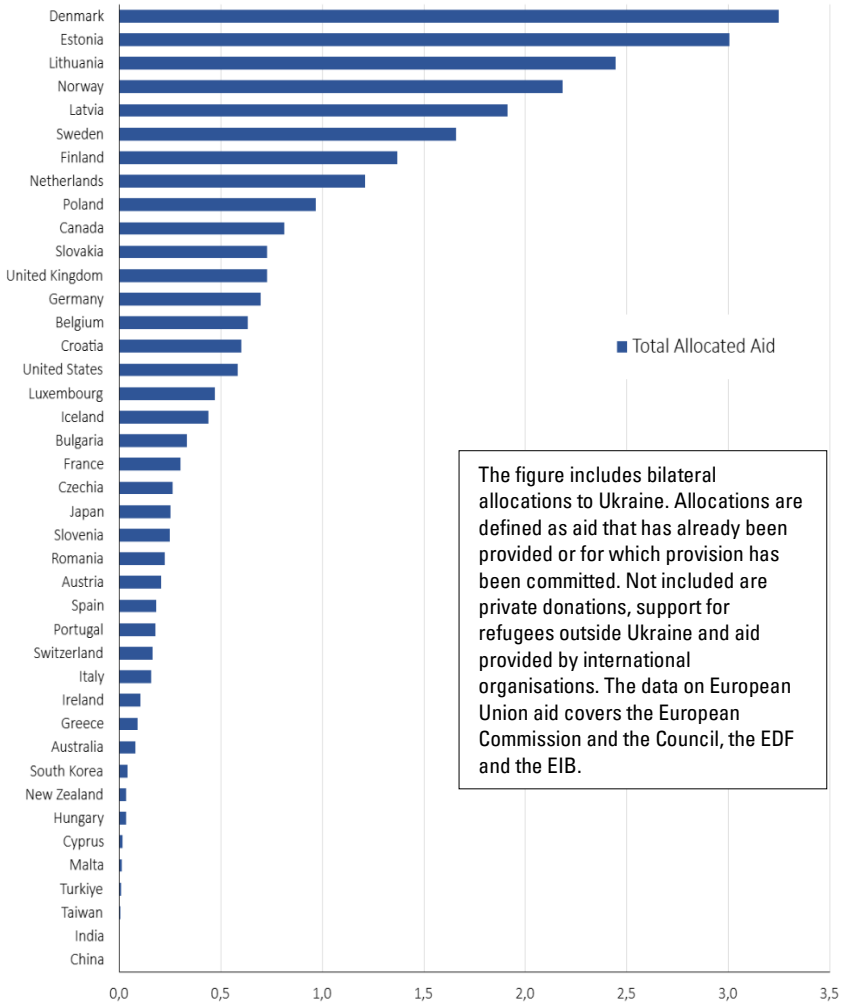


Figure2 | Total aid allocated to Ukraine by donor country as a percentage of gross domestic product

This figure shows total bilateral allocations to Ukraine as a percentage of donor countries' GDP for 2021, between 24 January 2022 and 31 December 2025. The GDP data for 2021 are sourced from the World Bank. Allocations are defined as aid that has already been disbursed or for which disbursement has been committed (Trebesch, et al. 2026) .

and Finland (€3.03 billion) are clearly at the top of the list. They allocated between 1.3 and 3.25 per cent of their 2021 GDP to their total support for Ukraine. The United Kingdom allocated 0.73 per cent (EUR 14.28 billion), Germany 0.70 per cent (EUR 20.01 billion), France 0.30 per cent (EUR 5.97 billion) and Italy 0.16 per cent (EUR 1.7 billion) of their gross domestic product (Trebesch, et al. 2026: Figs. 3, 4).

The EU demonstrated its ambiguity when, on 19 December, its heads of state and government decided to provide Ukraine with 90 billion euros in financial aid over the next two years and, to this end, to raise debt on the financial markets on which interest must be paid. Previously, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had sought to seize the Russian Central Bank's frozen assets, totalling 210 billion euros, in order to use them as collateral for a massive loan to Ukraine. However, under pressure from the Belgian, French and Italian governments, Russian assets remain untouched and continue to generate huge interest income for the financial institutions that manage them. The EU prefers, if necessary, to pass the debt on to its citizens rather than make Russian capital pay for its crimes (Zeller 2025b) . Meanwhile, Hungary even blocked the transfer of this loan to Ukraine.

European governments could support Ukraine more effectively, apply economic sanctions in a targeted manner and prevent numerous European companies from systematically breaching these sanctions. They could lend a helping hand to the Russian anti-war opposition. They are not doing any of this because they are not seeking either the defeat of the Putin regime or its overthrow. Rather, they are keen to resume lucrative economic relations with their then-weakened Russian partners once the war is over – if necessary, at the expense of the Ukrainian people.

2.3 Arms build-up fuels authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies

At the NATO summit on 24 and 25 June 2025, under pressure from Trump, the member states committed to spending five per cent of their gross domestic product on defence. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz wants to make the German army the 'strongest conventional army in Europe'. European governments are exploiting Ukraine's resistance to justify their own wave of rearmament. Neither the European Commission's 800-billion-euro remilitarisation programme nor NATO's 5 per cent GDP target for military spending are necessary to meet Ukraine's urgent military needs. This wave of rearmament began even before the start of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine. The causes of rearmament and militarisation, and their concrete manifestations, extend far beyond Russia's war against the Ukrainian

population. They are also a response to the long-standing trend towards stagnation, the intensification of imperialist rivalry and the obvious impossibility, under capitalist conditions, of substantially slowing down global heating. They are also an expression of the strategy of selective adaptation to global heating (see Section 2 and Serfati 2024, 2025; Cukier 2025) .

Claude Serfati points out that there is a considerable theoretical shortfall in the understanding of the relationship between the state, capital and the military apparatus, even amongst critical materialist theorists of the state. The military-industrial systems of the most powerful states lie at the central intersection of the economic and political spheres and thus occupy a very special position of power. Serfati argues that the organic integration of political legitimacy with industrial and technological power makes the military-industrial systems the totalitarian core of societies. By 'totalitarian', he does not mean that modern societies are today ruled by fascist regimes, but rather an ongoing process that arises from the logic of these systems. The state bureaucracy and the military-industrial systems that emerged after the Second World War have developed into a distinct power apparatus with its own interests and logic of action. The major digital corporations (Apple, Microsoft, Amazon, Alphabet, Meta, Nvidia and Tesla) have become a central component of this power apparatus; they are a dominant feature of contemporary finance capital. They control technologies that make them key players in the US military-industrial complex, thereby exerting a decisive influence on the state's foreign and domestic policies (Serfati 2026).

The wave of rearmament is global (Table1). Global defence spending rose from 2.24 trillion US dollars in 2023 to 2.46 trillion US dollars in 2024. Real growth rose from 3.5 per cent in 2022 and 6.5 per cent in 2023 to 7.4 per cent in 2024. The US accounts for by far the largest share of defence spending. In 2024, it spent US$968 billion on defence equipment. This is only slightly less than the combined expenditure of the other top 15 countries. The defence spending of NATO countries significantly exceeds that of Russia (IISS 2025: 13) . On 8 January 2026, US President Trump even announced plans to ramp up defence spending to USD 1.5 trillion in 2027, up from USD 1 trillion in 2026, in order to create the 'Dream Military' (The White House 2026; McLeary, et al. 2026).[7] These staggering increases indicate that the US is preparing for large-scale imperialist wars in the long term. China has doubled its defence spending, adjusted for inflation, since 2010 to USD 309 billion in 2025.

[7] See the informative Wikipedia page 'Military budget of the United States' at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_budget_of_the_United_States

However, an international comparison of expenditure in US dollars does not reflect the actual arms build-up efforts. This is because some countries can produce military equipment much more cheaply and procure it from allied countries more favourably than others. For this reason, a comparison based on purchasing power parity – which is adjusted for the purchasing power of currencies in their home countries – must be used. However, the methods used differ both in the calculation of military expenditure at current prices and in the conversion to purchasing power parities. The differences are particularly striking in the cases of China and Ukraine.

Total Russian defence expenditure rose by 42 per cent in real terms in 2024 to 13.1 trillion roubles. This equates to 146 billion US dollars at current prices and exchange rates, but 462 billion US dollars on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis. By comparison, the European defence budgets, including those of the United Kingdom and the EU Member States, rose by almost 12 per cent last year to 457 billion US dollars. As the US may scale back or reduce its security guarantees for European states, it makes sense to exclude the US from the equation (McGerty and Dewey 2025; Rathbone 2025) . It also makes sense to exclude Turkey – with its largest military

Table1 | The largest military budgets in 2024

	Billions of US dollars at current prices and exchange rates (IISS)	Billions of US dollars at current prices and exchange rates (Robertson)	Billions of US dollars in PPP (purchasing power parity) according to the IISS	Billions of US dollars in PPP (Robertson)	Per capita military budget (current USD) (IISS)	Military budget as a percentage of GDP (IISS)
USA	968.0	997	968.0	997	2,831	3.32
China	235.0	313.7	476.7	567	166	1.29
Russia	145.9	149	461.6	401	854	5.51
Germany	96.0	88.5		96	1022	1.83
United Kingdom	81.1	81.8		86	1,184	2.26
India	74.4	86		308	53	1.91
Saudi Arabia	71.7				1963	6.52
France	64.0	64.7		91	937	2.02
Japan	53.0	55.3		91	430	1.30
South Korea	43.9	47.9		99	842	2.35
Australia	36.4	33.9			1,360	2.02
Italy	35.2	38.0		60	578	1.48
Israel	33.7				3,589	6.39
Ukraine	28.4	64.8		183	797	15.43
Poland	28.4	38.0		62	723	3.25
Europe total	457.0				632	

(IISS 2025: 13, 52, 152, 520–525; Robertson 2022, 2025)

force – from the European total, as it is likely to stay out of an escalating conflict between Russia and European states.

The 'Rearm Europe' programme calls on EU Member States to rearm militarily in order to strengthen their own international position. However, it also reveals that there is no such thing as European imperialism and that national imperialisms persist. The establishment of a European army is not on the agenda.

Through this massive build-up of armaments, the European states are seeking to consolidate their position in the global imperialist rivalry and to strengthen their deterrent against Russia. However, this build-up is by no means intended merely for defence; rather, it is designed to secure the position of the national imperialist powers in Europe in the global struggle for spheres of influence, markets and access to strategic raw materials, and to guarantee so-called 'energy security'. On 21 December 2025, French President Macron announced that, despite strained public finances, France would spend around ten billion euros, a new nuclear-powered aircraft carrier was to be built, which is due to replace its predecessor, the Charles de Gaulle, from 2038. On the same day, Macron announced the intensification of the 'strategic partnership' with the United Arab Emirates, which possess the French Leclerc tank and the Rafale fighter jet (Le Monde 2025) and are expanding their influence as an expansionist power in parts of Africa (including Sudan). It is obvious that such arms deals and 'strategic partnerships' have nothing to do with the defence of Ukraine, security in Eastern Europe or the Baltic states, nor indeed in France or the EU, but rather serve the imperialist ambitions and projects of French capital. In this regard, it should be emphasised once again that this rearmament project is exclusively French in nature, not European. However, a more detailed analysis of the weapons systems is required to assess these plans more accurately.

The military potential of European states faces several challenges. The central problem is that strategic weapons systems in Europe are largely dependent on the US. Furthermore, hardly any army in Europe is keeping pace with the rapid development of drone warfare. The use of drones in combat is now changing on a monthly basis in the war in Ukraine.

Leading figures within the EU apparatus and political advisers of various political persuasions are arguing for the European Union to achieve "strategic autonomy" from the US in terms of military capabilities and in numerous economic matters. The term has appeared in EU documents since 2013 and expresses the EU's independent international interests in terms of influence, power and security, but is interpreted in different ways (Borrell

2020) . Since the Trump administration has increasingly called into question NATO's cohesion, discussions on the EU's strategic autonomy in the military sphere have taken on particular urgency. However, due to the intertwined production and innovation systems, the long-standing systemic integration and subordination of European states to US weapons systems and the financial sector, and the resulting path dependencies, this goal is unattainable in the short term. In early March, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte aptly described NATO as a "power protection projection platform for the United States" (Reuters 2026) . Not to mention: the US dollar remains the world's reserve currency. European states are still a long way from achieving strategic autonomy in energy supply. Furthermore, due to their differing economic and political interdependencies and interests, European governments are hardly in a position to agree on a common approach to strategic autonomy.

2.4 Blackmail with nuclear weapons brings us closer to barbarism

During the course of the war, the Putin regime threatened on several occasions – most explicitly in the wake of the successful Ukrainian counter-offensive in autumn 2022 – to use nuclear weapons, thereby effectively influencing public debate in several European countries. This raises a number of far-reaching questions. If a nuclear power can stifle support for resistance against its occupation wars merely by hinting at threats, this amounts to the other powers taking this threat seriously and accepting it. Ultimately, this would mean that resistance and social change against such a state would be virtually impossible. Those under attack or members of the opposition would be forced to back down as soon as the nuclear power credibly threatens to use nuclear weapons or merely hints at doing so. That is why the voices within the peace movement and on the left who believe that Ukraine cannot win against the nuclear power Russia and must surrender are highly problematic. Ultimately, they disarm any resistance against a nuclear power. However, abandoning legitimate resistance against a nuclear power sets in motion a dangerous dynamic that ultimately amounts to a monopoly on the use of force by nuclear powers and leads the world one step closer to geopolitical barbarism.

For this reason, there is scarcely any other option but to vigorously oppose nuclear threats and refuse to accept the leverage afforded by nuclear power – or, alternatively, to drive up the political cost of using nuclear weapons to immeasurable heights. The extent to which the concept of *mutually as-*

sured destruction – as during the so-called Cold War – has enhanced security through nuclear weapons remains a matter of debate. Let us not forget that, in the shadow of the Cold War's mutually assured destruction, numerous wars involving immeasurable destruction took place, such as the French war in Algeria, the US war in Vietnam, the Russian war in Afghanistan and numerous wars in Asia and Africa (Pelopidas 2024, 2025).

Nuclear powers could be tempted to deploy tactical nuclear weapons with a limited destructive effect. 'Conventional' weapons with great destructive power, chemical and biological weapons, and tactical nuclear weapons cannot be clearly distinguished from one another. The more precisely they can be targeted, the lower the threshold for actually deploying them. Moreover, the mere possession of these systems confers not only deterrent potential but also the potential for threats and blackmail.

As a safeguard against attacks and invasions, more countries are therefore seeking to acquire nuclear weapons. Had Ukraine not surrendered its own under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum in exchange for security guarantees that were worthless, the Russian leadership would probably have hesitated more before launching the full-scale invasion in February 2022 – but only if the threat of their use had been truly credible.

The demand for a mutual and simultaneously guaranteed abolition of nuclear weapons remains important; however, this can only be placed on the agenda of political debate by building a global movement. In view of the intensifying imperialist rivalry, the demand for the abolition of nuclear weapons is a transitional demand equivalent to the disempowerment of the ruling classes and capital.

3 Austerity brings social insecurity

Merz and Macron explicitly place the impending wave of social cuts and attacks on workers within the context of 'common security' in Europe. As they do not wish to increase the tax burden on the wealthy, and as rising debt in some countries is reaching the limits of sustainability, they intend to pass on the costs of the massive rearmament to workers. Most European governments are preparing a new, comprehensive wave of austerity.

At the end of August 2025, German Chancellor Merz declared: "We have been living beyond our means for years." He called for vigorous reforms of the social welfare systems. He explicitly placed these threats within the European context and the framework of security policy. "Foreign policy is security policy and a policy of peace and freedom for Germany. European policy in Brussels and Strasbourg is domestic policy and economic policy for

Germany."[8] Marcon has made similar comments on several occasions.

The leading capital groups and governments want to dismantle the remaining social achievments that the labour movement secured in earlier decades and during the prosperous period of the long post-Second World War boom. Workers are expected to submit completely to the primacy of competitiveness and the drive to increase profit margins. Trade unions and social movements are barely able to mount any meaningful resistance, and the traditional left-wing parties are failing to develop a credible alternative. This is bringing fascist, national-conservative and social-conservative demagogues onto the scene. They are distorting the situation: they claim that social cuts are now being made because of support for Ukraine. Tragically, those sections of the Left who reserve their international solidarity only selectively for those movements that rebel against Western imperialism are making the same kind of polemics.

In summary, two points must be clarified: *firstly*, the real reasons for the wave of rearmament do not lie in Russia's war against Ukraine. *Secondly*, the new wave of austerity cannot be justified on the grounds of support for Ukraine. From an emancipatory and ecosocialist perspective, these rearmament projects must be rejected on principle. It is fundamentally unacceptable to side with imperialist claims, including those of Europe.

We need to take a closer look. The contrast drawn by conservatives and liberals between military security and social security – which large sections of the Left merely counter with opposing arguments – provides the populist right and fascists with an opening for their polemics against support for Ukraine. It gives them the opportunity to use social cutbacks as a pretext for their xenophobic and racist campaigns.

A policy based on solidarity must, firstly, involve scrutinising arms projects closely to determine their purpose – do they help Ukraine or not? – and, secondly, strictly draw on the wealth of the rich to finance them.

4 Transnational solidarity, including in Europe

Solidarity with the threatened Palestinian people, with the Kurdish self-administration in north-eastern Syria and with the popular movements in Latin America has been a matter of course for the left for decades. Many left-wing currents, by contrast, denigrate the Ukrainian resistance against

[8] "Living beyond our means for years": "Chancellor Merz calls for decisive social reforms – SPD irritated", *Tagesspiegel*, 30 August 2025 https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/leben-seit-jahren-uber-unsere-verhaltnisse-kanzler-merz-mahnt-entschiedene-sozialreformen-an-14251319.html

Russian imperialism as a proxy war in the service of NATO. This reflects a one-sided understanding of imperialism, a disregard for the principle of self-determination and, above all, a mockery of the struggling people. The fact that the left in Europe has failed to build a broad solidarity movement with the Ukrainian resistance against Russian imperialism is a failure of historic proportions and necessitates a reorganisation of forces committed to solidarity and emancipation.

International solidarity with the oppressed, the exploited and the discriminated is one of the fundamental principles of emancipatory politics and has always been an integral part of the classical labour movement. At certain times, solidarity movements with striking workers and liberation struggles played a major role. I recall, for example, the miners' strike in England in 1984, or the solidarity movements with the liberation struggles in Ireland, Algeria, Vietnam, Palestine and Kurdistan, the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa, and with the liberation movements in Latin America. Although these national liberation movements all had – and continue to have – problematic and authoritarian aspects, their struggle was justified. The resistance of the Ukrainian people against the Russian occupying forces is a justified national defensive struggle, regardless of the policies pursued by the Ukrainian government under President Zelenskyy and the extent to which he is supported or opposed by imperialist powers.

Solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian invading forces, and with the socialist, feminist, democratic and anarchist forces, the trade unions, women's initiatives and environmental organisations in Ukraine that are fighting against the Russian invasion whilst simultaneously opposing the neoliberal policies of the Zelenskyy government, is crucial for the future of all emancipatory movements across Europe. Transnational solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance is not only of fundamental importance but is also of immediate practical necessity for workers across Europe.

The Russian occupying forces are advancing slowly in Ukraine, suffering heavy losses. The fascist regime in Russia is focused on restoring and expanding the Tsarist empire (Budraitskis 2022, 2023). An independent and reasonably democratic Ukraine, whose population has seen its democratic self-confidence greatly strengthened by the uprisings of the 'Orange Revolution' in 2004 and the 'Maidan Revolution' in 2013–14, poses a constant threat to an authoritarian Russia (Pirani 2022). The democratic movements in Georgia and Kazakhstan, and the aspirations of the oppressed nations within Russia itself, also pose a threat to the Kremlin's system of rule. That is why the Kremlin wants to eliminate them.

The Putin regime has now become trapped in its own logic of war and a 'headlong rush'. It cannot agree to any arrangement that would enshrine Ukraine's current independent status whilst it continues to control around 80 per cent of the territory. That would amount to a political defeat. That is why the regime has long since prepared itself for a protracted war, converted the economy to a war economy and militarised the Russian population. The war economy fuels the war and relies on it; it is dependent on the war. The intensifying rivalry over the redrawing of imperialist spheres of influence, coupled with the need to compensate for economic weakness through military strength and the project of restoring the Russian Empire, now combine with the aforementioned self-perpetuating logic of war. This is why Russian propaganda is threatening the Baltic states and Moldova. This does not necessarily mean that Russia will launch an open military attack on these states. Rather, the threat is aimed at systematic destabilisation, combining various propagandistic, political and military methods (Perekhoda 2025) . In this way, the Putin regime may succeed in destabilising both NATO and the EU – both of which are fragile and unstable – whilst simultaneously strengthening forces across Europe that pursue a national-conservative, fascistoid or fascist agenda. The threat to European societies is therefore primarily a political one. Conservative, liberal and even social-democratic parties are by no means resolutely opposing this development; rather, they are exploiting these authoritarian tendencies themselves to prolong the fossil-fuel-based development path and enforce austerity policies. This is in line with their ideas of selective adaptation to global heating.

What would a Russian victory in the war against the Ukrainian people mean? The establishment of a brutal occupying power across large swathes of Ukrainian territory, a massive exodus within the country and towards the West, widespread repression, deportations and prison camps. This would lead to the demoralisation of the population in Ukraine, a strengthening of Russian fascism, and a rise in fascist forces in Ukraine and across Europe. If the Putin regime prevails, other authoritarian regimes will feel emboldened to launch further wars of conquest. If the current form of this war in Ukraine ends in a Russian victory, it will drive the redivision of the world into spheres of influence amongst the US, China, Russia, the EU and sub-imperialist powers such as India, Turkey and Brazil. The multipolar world order, welcomed by some on the left, does not democratise global society, but rather opens up a new round of wars over zones of influence.

The leaderships of the US, China and Russia are each, in their own way, driving forward the division of the world into spheres of influence within which they seek to assert their unrestricted dominance. The US leadership is laying claim to Greenland, Panama and Canada. The US attacked Venezuela

and abducted the authoritarian President Maduro, who had already assured them of extensive influence in the oil sector. Now, under the threat of force and with the cooperation of parts of the regime, the US is transforming Venezuela into a resource colony. However, the US is not primarily interested in the oil itself, but rather in controlling the oil and resource markets and supply chains, in order to impose its own rules on rivals, above all China and Russia. With the war against Iran, which began on 28 February, the US aims not only to install a regime friendly to it (involving elements of the previous regime), but also to gain control over oil resources and disrupt China's oil supply.

Putin, Trump and Netanyahu are the spearhead of the national conservatives and fascists. They have thrown open the gates to barbarism. If they prevail, their imitators will attempt to drive out entire populations and, if necessary, annihilate them. This is their specific, selective adaptation to global heating, the intensifying imperialist rivalries and the obvious impossibility of a stable growth model that would allow for both satisfactory profitability and stabilising demand under the constraints of energy and environmental restrictions (Zeller and Kreilinger 2025) .

It is right to side with the Ukrainian resistance and to support it with all necessary means and weapons, so that it can repel the Russian occupying forces and put itself in the best possible negotiating position, not only vis-à-vis Russia but also vis-à-vis the supporting states in the 'West', all of which seek to assert their own interests.

5 Conclusion: Bringing global heating, rearmament and solidarity together

Global heating and the abrupt changes to the Earth's system will leave their mark on every social conflict. Those in power are responding with a strategy of unequal, selective adaptation. This will be accompanied by mass displacement and threats to the lives of millions of people, thereby normalising barbaric conditions. Intensified imperialist rivalry over resources of all kinds, logistics systems and markets will manifest itself in land grabs, coups and the military enforcement of spheres of influence. The long-standing trends towards economic stagnation – which even a boom in artificial intelligence, certain raw materials and the arms sector cannot reverse – are intensifying competitive pressure in many sectors, thereby exacerbating geo-economic and geopolitical rivalry. The Trump administration is attempting to tackle this challenge implementing protectionist measures,

whilst European states and China continue to favour open markets – though by no means across the board.

Militarisation and rearmament are both a source of greenhouse gas emissions and a means for those in power to survive or prevail in the intensifying rivalry. The various forms of imperialism rely on fossil fuels. Without coal, oil and gas, they would be unable to pursue their expansionist strategies. Yet the rivalry over control of oil and gas – and, above all, their prices and transport routes – is in turn a driving force behind the push for rearmament and militarisation. This applies particularly to Russia and the USA.

The Russian leadership under Putin is waging war against the Ukrainian people because it regards an independent and reasonably democratic Ukraine, with a self-confident population, as a threat to its own rule. It draws ideological parallels with the Tsarist Empire and bases its rule on modern fascist methods. A Russian victory over Ukraine's resistance would have devastating consequences, first and foremost for the people of Ukraine. Many would be forced to flee their homes. Should Russia prevail, this would give a significant boost to national-conservative and fascist forces in Russia, Ukraine and across Europe. The Russian leadership is already threatening societies in the Baltic states and Moldova.

Although European governments are providing financial and military support to Ukraine, this falls far short of what is needed to effectively protect the Ukrainian population and repel the Russian invasion. However, they are using the war as a pretext to enforce a policy of rearmament which does not serve the defence of Ukraine, but is an expression of intensifying imperialist rivalry and economic stagnation. The governments are now cynically demanding that people 'tighten their belts', claiming they have been living beyond their means. They want to impose harsh cuts and austerity measures.

From an ecosocialist perspective, resistance to austerity policies, the struggle for wages and decent working conditions, the fight against environmental destruction and for a socio-ecological industrial transition and conversion, as well as transnational solidarity with people fighting against occupation and discrimination and for self-determination, are inextricably linked. But what does this mean in concrete terms in the current complex situation facing Europe? On the one hand, it is essential to provide effective support for the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian occupying forces in such a way that the Putin regime comes to realise it must not continue the war. This naturally includes the supply of effective weapons. Foremost

among our priorities is solidarity with the socialists, feminists and anarchists in Ukraine who are resisting the Russian occupation whilst simultaneously opposing the neoliberal policies of President Zelenskyy's government.

If we advocate a perspective based on solidarity and environmental justice for the whole of Europe – which is not the same as the EU – we must also address the security of people, which is under threat in many ways, and develop concrete political strategies. These responses must aim to ensure security for all people in Europe, based on a sense of global solidarity and shared responsibility. Inevitably, this security concern also has a military component. At the same time, we must oppose rearmament on social and ecological grounds. How can this tension or dilemma be resolved? In the following article, 'Societal security in Europe instead of imperial insecurity in Europe', I attempt to lay the foundations for a coherent response (Zeller 2026b) and ultimately to distil these into an 'Ecosocialist strategy for social, ecological and military security' for discussion (Zeller 2026c).

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