

European Parliament to Join the Militarisation Path

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The European Union is "in urgent war mode," [said Josep Borrell](#), the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy at the Munich Security Conference in February 2023. The man spoke the truth, as the European Union has so far made no diplomatic attempt to intervene in Russia's war against Ukraine. On the contrary, the EU is fully committed to supplying more and more and heavier weapons to Ukraine, whose military victory over Russia is seen as the only guarantee of a lasting peace.

This was also echoed in a European Parliament [resolution](#) approved by a large majority on 16 February. In it, one reads, e.g., that "the main objective for Ukraine is to win the war against Russia, understood as its ability to drive all the forces of Russia, its proxies and allies out of the internationally recognised territory of Ukraine; considers that this objective can be met only through the continued, sustained and steadily increasing supply of all types of weapons to Ukraine, without exception."

Ukraine is fighting, still according to the resolution, not only for its sovereignty, but also for "freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and European values against a brutal regime that seeks to undermine our democracy and weaken and divide our Union." Our European values defended without one EU citizen risking his or her life in the process, unless being maybe a journalist; that certainly seems to call for a generous contribution from the European purse, doesn't it?



Three-Stage Rocket With More Ammunition

And that is what happened. Whoever wants to wage war must have ammunition, bullets, shells, and missiles. Ukraine would use some 7,000 every day, while for Russia it would be about 50,000.¹ So European 'solidarity' means ammunition for Ukraine. In early March, [a three-step action plan](#) was proposed to this end, the work of the European Commission, the European Defence Agency, and Borrell's diplomatic service (EEAS).

- The first step was to increase the financial pot from which member states are reimbursed for donating ammunition from their own stocks to Ukraine. That pot, with the surreal name [European Peace Facility](#), got an additional €1-billion, together with which the 'facility' will have supplied €4.6-billion worth of weapons to Ukraine.
- Not to be hampered by legal or democratic objections (the EU is forbidden by treaty law to use the EU budget for military purposes), the European Peace Facility was set up outside the official EU institutions. It is an international agreement between member states, in which the European Parliament does not intervene. National parliaments could, but given the large consensus among mainstream parties that Kiev defends European values, there is little danger of that.
- The [second component](#) is the joint procurement by member states, through the European Defence Agency, of munitions, including 155 mm shells and possibly missiles. The plan should be finalised by 30 September 2023, and €1-billion was provided for this purpose as well. However, while the principle of arming Ukraine hardly elicited a European debate, the question of which arms manufacturers get to walk away with the profits is the subject of disputes. Restricting the candidates to the European arms industry (including Norway, not a member state but part of the European Economic Area) would be a small counter to Biden's industrial protectionism. But what if the munitions supply chain includes non-European companies? An [agreement](#) appears to have been reached on 5 May regarding this issue, with foreign links in the supply chain not being an objection to European procurement.
- The first and second steps deal with the short term, but the 'war mode' Borrell mentioned does not end, in the eyes of European leaders, with the end of the war in Ukraine; Europe's militarisation is there to last. The third step is to make the European munitions industry ready to respond smoothly to future demand. On 3 May, Thierry Breton, the French commissioner responsible for the internal market, proposed the [ASAP plan](#), which stands for Act in Support of Ammunition Production. With a European subsidy pot of €500-million, the EU aims to support

European ammunition producers to increase annual production to 1 million units within a year (worth some €3 to €4-billion). Commissioner Breton even visited several munitions factories in Europe in recent weeks. On the composition of the €500-million, [Breton added](#) that, in addition to the direct EU budget, member states can also use monies from the cohesion fund (earmarked to support Europe's poorer regions) and from the Recovery and Resilience Facility, earmarked to counter the economic impact of the corona crisis. Munitions "factories are built in isolated areas," Breton said, so cohesion money is "entirely appropriate" there...

ASAP

What needs to be underlined about this ASAP plan is that it will be part of ordinary EU legislation, once it is approved by the Council of Ministers (member states) and the European Parliament. We already mentioned that step 1 and 2 are intergovernmental agreements which are, strictly speaking, legally outside the EU institutions. One reason why this is not the case for ASAP is that part of the money will come from the European Defence Fund, with a budget that has to be approved by the Parliament. But in the meantime, European leaders will have been sufficiently reassured that little opposition to European militarisation is to be expected from Parliament. Indeed, Parliament had previously given [carte blanche](#) to the European Defence Fund on how the approved budget would be spent over the seven-year budget period.

As a further sign of goodwill, the vast majority of the Parliament agreed with the Commission's wish to complete the legislative procedure for admitting the ASAP plan at an [accelerated pace](#) - the so-called *fast track*. On 9 May, Parliament gave the [green light](#) to do so. Speech time, etc. will be [reduced to the minimum](#), and things are likely to wrap up with a special session of Parliament at the end of this month.

Not All MEPs Like Gunpowder Fumes

At the time, then Commission President José Manuel Barroso [said of the neoliberal economic straitjacket](#), the 'economic governance' of which the Commission had acquired the power: "What is going on is a silent revolution, a silent revolution in terms of stronger economic governance, by small steps. Member States have accepted - and I hope they have understood it correctly - they have accepted that a very important power is going to rest with the European institutions in terms of surveillance, and a much stricter control of public finances." That was in June 2010. Should one not also ask whether MEPs have correctly understood what they are agreeing to? Is it not a 'quiet revolution' if the EU machinery can now be enabled, bit by bit, to fulfil the ambitions of a snooty political elite dreaming of a European Pentagon and a European military-industrial complex?

The few who have spoken out against this perfidious European course deserve our admiration and encouragement. There is, for instance, [Clare Daly](#), Irish MEP for Independents4change, along with her colleague [Mick Wallace](#), as well as German anti-militarist [Özlem Demirel](#) (*Die Linke*). Nor does [Marc Botenga](#) (Belgium, PVDA/PTB) support it: "Commissioner Breton wants to give huge amounts of taxpayers' money to highly profitable multinationals, but refuses any democratic debate. The proposal goes beyond supporting Ukraine and contributes to the creation of a European network of arms manufacturers, a veritable EU military-industrial complex." He also points out that ASAP undermines workers'

rights. “Article 18 of the law proposes to circumvent the Working Time Directive, which prescribes minimum daily and weekly rest periods, annual leave, breaks, maximum weekly working time and night work.”

Reasons enough exist for the people in Europe to oppose EU-militarisation, which will not only further reduce social and climate-related budgets but also seriously endanger peace and security in Europe.



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This article was translated from Dutch by the Socialist Project's [The Bullet](#).

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Note

1. [Another source](#) speaks of 60,000-210,000 per month on the Ukrainian side, 600,000-1.8 million on the Russian side.

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