

Germany, Second Arms Supplier to Ukraine. Unspoken Agenda? The History of Germany's Eastern Territories Ceded to Poland

It is entirely conceivable that the ongoing Ukraine war will radically change the territorial boundaries of Ukraine in the east and south.

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The hypothesis that the Anglo-Saxon axis is pivotal to the proxy war in Ukraine against Russia is only partly true. Germany is actually Ukraine's second largest arms supplier, after the United States. Chancellor Olaf Scholz [pledged a new arms package](#) worth 700 million euros, including additional tanks, munitions and Patriot air defence systems at the Nato summit in Vilnius, putting Berlin, as he said, at the very forefront of military support for Ukraine.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius stressed, "By doing this, we're making a significant contribution to strengthening Ukraine's staying power." However, the pantomime playing out may have multiple motives.

Fundamentally, Germany's motivation is traceable to the crushing defeat by the Red Army and has little to do with Ukraine as such. The Ukraine crisis has provided the context for accelerating Germany's militarisation. Meanwhile, revanchist feelings are rearing their head and there is a "bipartisan consensus" between Germany's leading centrist parties — CDU, SPD and Green Party — in this regard.

In an [interview](#) in the weekend, the CDU's leading foreign and defence expert Roderich Kiesewetter (an ex-colonel who headed the Association of Reservists of the Bundeswehr from 2011 to 2016) suggested that if conditions warrant in the Ukraine situation, Nato should consider to "cut off Kaliningrad from the Russian supply lines. We see how Putin

reacts when he is under pressure.” Berlin is still smarting under the surrender of the ancient Prussian city of Königsberg in April 1945.

Stalin ordered 1.5 million Soviet troops supported by several thousand tanks and aircraft to attack the crack Nazi Panzer divisions deeply entrenched in Königsberg. The capture of the heavily fortified stronghold of Königsberg by the Soviet army was celebrated in Moscow with an artillery salvo by 324 cannons firing 24 shells each.

Evidently, Kiesewetter’s remarks show that nothing is forgotten or forgiven in Berlin even after 8 decades. Thus, Germany is the Biden Administration’s closest ally in the war against Russia. The German government has stated its understanding for the Biden administration’s controversial decision to supply Ukraine with cluster ammunition. The government spokesman commented in Berlin, “We are certain that our US friends did not make their decision lightly, to deliver this sort of munition.”

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier remarked, “In the current situation, one should not obstruct the USA.” Indeed, the top CDU figure Kiesewetter suggested in an interview with the Green Party-affiliated daily “taz” that not only should Ukraine be given “guarantees, and if necessary, even provided with nuclear assistance, as an intermediary step to NATO membership.”

Coinciding with the NATO summit in Vilnius (July 11-12), Rheinmetal, the great 135-year old German arms manufacturing company, has disclosed that it is opening an armoured vehicle plant in western Ukraine at an undisclosed location in the next twelve weeks. To begin with, German Fuchs armoured personnel carriers will be built and repaired while there are plans afoot to manufacture ammunition and possibly even air defence systems and tanks.

[Rheinmetall’s CEO told CNN](#) on Monday that like other Ukrainian arms factories, the new plant could be protected from Russian air attack. Germany has more than doubled the 2022 allocation of €2 billion for upgrading Ukraine’s armed forces. It now touches around €5.4 billion with further plans to increase to €10.5 billion.

Now, is this all about Russia? Germany cannot be unaware that Ukraine has simply no hope on earth to defeat Russia militarily.

Germany is playing the long game. It is creating equity in western Ukraine where it is not Russia but Poland that is its contender. Ever since the Tsarist army advanced into Galicia in 1914, Russia has had a difficult history with Ukrainian nationalists. If the current war in Ukraine spreads to western Ukraine, that cannot be Russia’s choice but out of some necessity forced upon it.

The Soviet victory in Ukraine in October 1944, the Red Army’s occupation of eastern Europe, and Allied diplomacy resulted in a redrawing of Poland’s western frontiers with Germany and Ukraine’s with Poland. Simply put, with compensation of German territories in the west, Poland agreed to the cession of Volhynia and Galicia in western Ukraine; a mutual population exchange created for the first time in centuries a clear ethnic, as well as political, Polish-Ukrainian border.



The Oder-Neisse Line and Germany's postwar territorial losses

- Territory lost to Poland 1945
- Territory lost to Soviet Union 1945
- Postwar Germany

Pre-1945 German Administrative Units

1. Border Mark
2. Brandenburg
3. East Prussia
4. Lower Silesia
5. Mecklenburg
6. Pomerania
7. Prussian Saxony
8. Saxony
9. Upper Silesia
10. West Prussia

1. The Border Mark included those parts of the former Prussian districts of Posen and West Prussia which were not lost to Poland in 1918, apart from the area of West Prussia around Elbing.
2. All the areas of Germany on this map apart from Saxony were part of the prewar State of Prussia.
3. Danzig was a Free City administered by the League of Nations 1919-39
4. Stettin and the surrounding area were annexed by Poland despite being west of the Oder-Neisse Line.
5. This map uses the English forms of the German names of the cities and regions annexed by Poland in 1945. This does not imply any position on the "correct" form of these names.

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Possibly, it can re-open the post-World War 2 settlement with regard to western Ukraine as well. Russia has repeatedly warned that Poland aims to reverse the cession of Volhynia and Galicia in western Ukraine. Such a turn of events will most certainly bring to the fore the issue of the German territories that are part of Poland today.

Perhaps, it was in anticipation of turbulence ahead that last October, eight months after the Russian intervention began in February, Warsaw [demanded WWII reparations](#) from Berlin — an issue which Germany says was settled in 1990 — to the tune of €1.3 trillion.

Under the [Potsdam Conference](#) (1945), the “former eastern territories of Germany” comprising nearly one quarter (23.8 percent) of the Weimar Republic with the majority ceded to Poland. The remainder, consisting of northern East Prussia including the German city of Königsberg (renamed Kaliningrad), was allocated to the Soviet Union.

Make no mistake about the importance of the Eastern border for German culture and politics. Indeed, there is always something volatile about a “handicapped” Great Power when a whole new intensity appears in political, economic and historical circumstances, which prompts those in power to turn ideas into reality, and revanchist and imperialistic discourses that were quietly but steadily streaming below the surface of the carefully considered diplomatic efforts begin to probe pan-nationalist expansion.

In retrospect, Germany’s — in particular, then foreign minister and current president Steinmeier’s — diabolical role to align Germany with the neo-Nazi elements during the regime change in Kiev in 2014 and the subsequent German perfidy in the implementation of the Minsk Agreement (“Steinmeier formula”), as [admitted recently in February](#) by former Chancellor Angela Merkel should not be forgotten.

Suffice to say, even as Russia is winning the Ukraine war, the concern of the German foreign policy makers once again faces the need to redefine what was German. Thus, the war in Ukraine is only the means to an end. [Recent reports](#) suggest that Berlin may be moving, finally, toward meeting Ukraine's pending demand for Taurus cruise missiles with a range exceeding 500 kms and unique "multi-effect war head" that can be a game changer in the the combat dynamics on the battlefield and create the prerequisites for victory.

Equally, German soldiers already comprise about half of the Nato battlegroup already present in Lithuania. Defense Minister Boris Pistorius [said two weeks ago](#) while on a visit to Vilnius that Germany is preparing the infrastructure to permanently base 4,000 soldiers ("a robust brigade") to Lithuania so as to have the capability to maintain military flexibility at the Eastern flank. The decision has support from both Germany's governing coalition and its main opposition.

The CDU foreign policy expert and member of the Bundestag, Kiesewetter called the idea of establishing German base in the Baltics a "decision of reason and reliability." Indeed, there have been past attempts, [historically speaking](#), to create German rule in the Baltics based on revisionist claims towards the new states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania where German colonists had settled as far back as in the 12th and 13th centuries.

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Featured image: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (L) met Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky on the sidelines of NATO summit, Vilnius, Lithuania, July 12, 2023 (Source: IP)

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