

Profit over peace: European capitalists push for war

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German battle tanks in Ukraine.

In the wake of his election, incoming German Chancellor Frederick Merz proclaimed

on Jan. 22 that Europe's defense would be his [highest priority](#). Merz moved quickly, securing a deal in the German legislature on March 5 to spend hundreds of billions on "defense" and loosen the limit on German borrowing for military spending. Merz's Christian Democratic Union and the opposition Social Democratic Party of Germany joined forces to ensure the war budget spike.

Merz followed this with another deal on March 14. This time, Merz allied with the Green Party to ensure that Merz's government could change the German constitution to allow the government to take [endless loans](#) to increase military expenditure. The message is clear: Germany is back on its war horse. Upon this supposed triumph, Merz proclaimed, "[Germany is back!](#)" This proclamation has [eerie echoes](#) of the last time Germany rearmed in 1935, upon the order of Chancellor Adolf Hitler.

This momentous political shift in Germany was quickly followed by action from another prominent German politician: European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen, a fellow Christian Democrat and Ukraine hawk, along with Merz. Von Der Leyen proposed a broader "[ReArm Europe Plan](#)" on March 3. The plan aims to "help member states quickly and significantly increase expenditures in defence capabilities." On [March 21](#), top EU officials announced a deal to secure the funding for Von Der Leyen's rearmament plan. Again, the message is clear: European capitalism is in a full drive towards war.

So, why this spike in German and European military spending? Merz and Von Der Leyen would have the public believe that this shift towards war is a response to Trump's move away from Ukraine.

The European leaders have maintained this line even as the Trump administration has restored full military funding and assistance to fascist Ukraine. Trump has even begun to threaten more sanctions against Russia based on allegations of sabotaging peace talks. Yet, Europe continues to push for war.

The answer can at least be partially found in the absurd profits that the German arms industry has reaped since the beginning of NATO's proxy war in Ukraine against Russia. Since the beginning of Russia's special military operation in Ukraine, German arms manufacturers have experienced a boon unseen since World War II. The largest German benefactor of NATO's proxy war against Russia so far has been Rheinmetall AG, an automobile and arms manufacturer.

Rheinmetall has experienced a [1000%](#) increase in stock price since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February of 2022. While Europe had not taken steps towards complete rearmament until now, Germany and many other European countries had already increased military spending to support Ukraine's fascist military.

This increase in military expenditure alone created a massive boon for Rheinmetall, driving the company to 9.8 billion euros in profit in 2024. These numbers represent billions upon billions of dollars and euros being pocketed by German and American war financiers. And to think, all this profit was **before** Merz's election and the move towards complete rearmament in Europe.

Rheinmetall is not the only German defense magnate that has profited handsomely from the war in Ukraine or who would profit further from a complete European rearmament. The KNDS Group, a defense conglomerate of German and French arms manufacturers, has recorded 11.2 billion euros in profit selling tanks, artillery, and armored vehicles to various European governments, who have then sent the equipment to Ukraine as military aid. That is billions upon billions made off the suffering of the Russian and Ukrainian people.

If capitalism has taught the world anything, it's that its wealthiest individuals will never stop in their dogged pursuit of profit. Given their record profits from the war in Ukraine, it makes sense these German and European defense magnates would want to escalate the war climate to increase profits. Enter the rearmament of Germany and Europe more broadly.

In fact, the rearmament of Europe, led by Germany, has little to do with Trump “abandoning” Europe and everything to do with European war capitalists expanding their profit base. And when Europe makes money, [wealthy U.S. investors](#) almost always make money.

Germany’s rearmament has not come without a heap of fascist symbolism. It began with cat-named (Leopard) tanks rolling into Eastern Europe to fight the Russian military. Now, Rheinmetall seeks to acquire a closing Volkswagen plant to convert it for arms production. This almost feels cosmic, as Volkswagen itself would not have existed without [German fascism](#). As if icing on the cake, Donald Trump’s connection with electric car magnate Elon Musk [conjures images](#) of a similar alliance between Adolf Hitler and Henry Ford.

Europe’s move towards military investment signals a dangerous escalation towards Russia and should be broadly condemned. The money of the working class does not need to be plundered to fuel the profits of blood sucking arms manufacturers like Rheinmetall and the NDS Group. All workers need jobs, health care, and self-determination – not capitalist war.

