

# Europe Shifting from Proxy War to War Mobilization Against Russia

by Carl Osgood

Jan. 27—The obvious failure of the NATO-led proxy war against Russia in Ukraine is leading to a shift in strategy. Not only has Ukraine lost the military conflict in the southeast of the country, despite hundreds of billions of dollars in military support provided by NATO countries—but that flow of money itself is now drying up, as the U.S. Congress has been unable to pass President Joe Biden’s \$106 billion war budget request—\$60 billion of which is intended for Ukraine. Despite this, NATO has no intention of backing away from its objective—the strategic defeat of Russia—and is now increasing pressure on European countries to engage in an all-out war mobilization, both militarily and also economically. However, as can be seen from recent statements by European officials, this strategy depends on gaining the support of an already war-weary population, and therefore new, more dramatic methods are being employed to terrorize the public into accepting that a full-blown war with Russia is necessary in order to preserve “Western civilization.”

Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche warned on Nov. 26, 2023, during an online emergency forum entitled “No More War Crimes! Economic Development, Not Depopulation!” that such a shift was already underway. In her opening remarks, Zepp-LaRouche referred to the specifics of the situation in Germany, but stressed that the shift is not limited to there:

In a recent speech, the Defense Minister of Germany Boris Pistorius made, maybe, a slip of the tongue. Maybe it was intended, but he said that the key task was to make Germany “war ready.”

Behind this remark by Pistorius, Zepp-LaRouche continued,

There is a broad discussion among the think

tanks and certain so-called analysts and moderators and talk shows which is best expressed in a paper published by the German Council on Foreign Relations, the DGAP, in a policy brief which says that there needs to be a ‘quantum leap’ in the mentality and the whole armament policy of Germany,



White House/Adam Schultz

*Despite Congress’ refusal to pass President Joe Biden’s \$106 billion war budget, \$60 billion of which is intended for Ukraine, NATO has no intention of backing away from its objective—the strategic defeat of Russia.*

The [DGAP Policy Brief](#), published Nov. 8, 2023, opens with the following proposals:

Germany must deliver a quantum leap: Within the shortest time possible, it must build up the Bundeswehr in terms of personnel, expand arms production, and improve resilience. This will only be possible if there is a change of mentality in society....

The window for a possible Russian attack will open as soon as Russia believes that an attack, for instance on the Baltic states, could

meet with success. Germany and NATO can only reliably influence their own ability to deter and defend—not whether Russia wants to wage another war. The time Russia needs to reconstitute its armed forces determines NATO’s need for speed. The alliance must be able to fend off a Russian attack in six years. The longer timeline already increases the risk of war....

NATO must therefore reach war capability within five to nine years to be able to deter Russia from going to war.

Zepp-LaRouche noted that the German Council on Foreign Relations is basically a sibling of the New York Council on Foreign Relations, so it is not speaking on its own:

That is clearly what is behind those forces that think that Russia has to be ruined—as [German Foreign Minister Annalena] Baerbock has said many times; that China must be contained, which is impossible because China already is the strongest economic power and [has] bypassed the United States in actual physical economic power.

The DGAP report followed the release of a new German [Defense Policy Guidelines 2023](#) last year, which echoed Pistorius’ call for the German military to become “war-ready.” This “readiness” requires changing the mentality within society, the new Policy Guidelines outlines, including developing the willingness among its soldiers to “have the will to bravely defend the rights and freedom of the German people, consciously accepting the risk to life and limb.” The report also calls for the “expansion of robust and secure defense industry capacity” for the economy, as well as bringing the war-ready culture “in the center of society” to mentally prepare the public for war.



Bundeswehr/Tom Twardy

*German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius: The key task is to make Germany “war ready” again, for another war with Russia.*

Pistorius continues to call for a war mobilization of Germany. In a speech at the Bundeswehr Command and Staff College in Hamburg on Jan. 25, Pistorius called for a “serious national debate” about the future of the country’s military, arguing that in its current state it is not fit to tackle the (alleged) array of security policy challenges facing Europe. “Are we seriously ready to defend this country?” Pistorius asked. “And who is this ‘we’? This debate has to be had.”

Pistorius, sounding much like his colleagues in London and Stockholm, claimed that the peace and freedom that most of Europe had enjoyed for decades was “no longer an irrefutable certainty” and that Germany was being “more strongly and actively challenged than ever as an active participant in security and policy.”

### NATO’s War Drive

At the same time, NATO has decided that its security sphere extends much further than Europe and the “North-Atlantic,” and is increasingly expanding to become the global enforcer of the “rules-based international order.” In addition to the confrontation with Russia, NATO is now moving to confront China in Asia, and is even threatening to engage in all-out confrontation with Iran in Southwest Asia.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg made this clear during [remarks](#) at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland Jan. 16. When asked how the West should deal with China, he [responded](#):

NATO is a transatlantic alliance.... But the transatlantic region faces global threats. Security is no longer regional; security is global. So what happens in Asia matters for Europe and what happens in Europe matters for Asia. And therefore of course, we don’t regard China as an adversary. But China’s heavy investments in modern military capabilities, including war and more advanced nuclear weapons, China’s way



NATO

While NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (left) insists that the more President Vladimir Putin succeeds in Ukraine, the more likely it is that China will use force, Admiral Rob Bauer, Chair of the NATO Military Committee (right), is calling for transforming the mindset of NATO and Europe to one of war-fighting.

of behavior especially in the South China Sea, and the way China is actually violating core principles for NATO democracy, the rule of law, journalism, freedom of expression, as we have seen in Hong Kong, all of that matters for NATO.

But it's not about NATO moving into Asia, Stoltenberg claimed. Instead, it's "about the fact that China is coming close to us." Therefore:

NATO has to address what happens in Asia, not because of global security lines, but because what happens there [is] not just for us, and vice versa.... Japan and South Korea ... are concerned about what happens in Ukraine, because they know that the more success Putin has in Ukraine, the more likely it is that Beijing will use force.

The following day, NATO's Military Committee, chaired by Dutch Admiral Rob Bauer, began two days of meetings with the chiefs of defense of NATO members to extend Stoltenberg's madness into the

military realm. Bauer [said](#):

Together, we have to make sure that political will is matched with military capabilities. And with the rules-based international order being under immense pressure, the importance of this cannot be overstated.... The tectonic plates of power are shifting. And as a result: we face the most dangerous world in decades.

In order to be fully effective, also in the future, we need a war-fighting transformation of NATO.... We need public and private actors to change their mindset from an era in which everything was plannable, foreseeable, controllable, focused on efficiency... to an era in which anything can happen at any time. An era in which we need to expect the unexpected.

The next day, following the conclusion of the two days of meetings, NATO Commander Christopher Cavoli, alongside Bauer, [announced](#) the kickoff of Exercise Steadfast Defender 2024, which runs through May.



U.S. Army/Tamika Dillard

Lt. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, NATO Commander of U.S. Army Europe, announced the start of Steadfast Defender 2024.

Exercise Steadfast Defender 2024 will be the largest NATO exercise in decades, with participation from approximately 90,000 forces from all 31 Allies and our good partner Sweden. The Alliance will demonstrate its ability to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic area via trans-Atlantic movement of forces from North America. This reinforcement will occur during a simulated emerging conflict scenario

against a near-peer adversary.

Steadfast Defender 2024 will be a clear demonstration of our unity, strength, and determination to protect each other, our values and the rules based international order. NATO has entered into a new era of collective defense. And together we are defending much more than the





DIVIDS

*The departure of USS Gunston Hall from Virginia marks the first tactical movement of Steadfast Defender 2024, the largest NATO exercise in decades.*

physical safety of our 1 billion people and 31, soon to be 32, nations—We are defending freedom and democracy.

Steadfast Defender kicked off on Jan. 24 with the departure from Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia of the assault ship USS *Gunston Hall*, which “marks the first tactical movement of Steadfast Defender 2024,” said a NATO press release.

### Psychologically Preparing the Population

Grant Shapps, UK Secretary of State for Defence, appeared at Lancaster House Jan. 15, the same West London venue where then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher delivered a speech just before the fall of the Berlin Wall on the coming peace dividend. This time, however, Shapps was there to announce that “the era of the peace dividend is over.” Looking ahead, he said, “we are in a new era, and we must be prepared to deter our enemies, lead our allies, and defend our nation.”

The main “enemy” that Shapps was hyperventilating about was, not surprisingly, Russian President Vladimir Putin. The demonization of Putin is central to the London-led Western war drive. “Putin believes the West lacks staying power,” Shapps claimed, as if he knew what’s going on inside Putin’s head. “And since the future of the world or-

der is at stake, we must prove him wrong,” he continued. “Rewarding his war with victory would only increase the risk of escalation, not only because he’s hell bent on rebuilding the Russian empire, but because it would signal weakness to other would-be aggressors.”

Shapps also claimed that “In five years” time we could be looking at multiple theaters involving Russia, China, Iran and North Korea,” saying that today must be an “inflection point” for the UK.

This was the context in which Shapps announced that Britain would be contributing

20,000 troops to the NATO Steadfast Defender 2024 exercise. Over 16,000 of those troops will be from the British Army, marking Britain’s largest troop deployment to the European mainland in decades. Aside from the ground troops, the deployment will include the HMS *Queen Elizabeth* aircraft carrier strike group and contingents from the Royal Air Force.

The same day that Shapps delivered his speech at Lancaster House, the German tabloid *Bild-Zeitung* splashed all over its pages a leaked “secret” German Defense Ministry report purporting to outline in detail



CC/No. 10 Downing Street/Simon Dawson

*UK Secretary of State for Defence Grant Shapps: “The era of the peace dividend is over. We must be prepared to deter our enemies, lead our allies, and defend our nation.”*

a hypothetical “path to conflict” between Russia and the Western defense alliance. A month-by-month scenario for both Russian and Western actions is described, painting a terrifying—yet imaginary—timeline for a direct war with Russia by 2025.

In the context of this scenario, the German military, the Bundeswehr, is planning to mobilize hundreds of thousands of NATO soldiers by the summer of 2025, according to *Bild*. *Fox News*, meanwhile, in that understated style for which American tabloid journalism is admired throughout the world, headlined its story, “Leaked German Documents Show Leaders Are Preparing Should Russia Launch World War 3: Reports.”

*Fox*, referencing the *Bild-Zeitung* report, then lists a set of hysterical hypotheticals.

*Bild* described a scenario that shows Russia, by July, could begin launching “severe cyberattacks” in the Baltics, drawing dissatisfaction from Russians living in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Then in September, clashes could escalate, according to the classified documents, and be used by Putin as a reason to launch the next phase called, “Zapad 2024,” which is described as a large-scale military exercise involving about 50,000 Russian troops in Western Russia and Belarus.

But even *Fox News* could take lessons in tabloid journalism from London’s *Daily Mail*, which declared in an overly lengthy headline that “Germany’s fears Putin could start WW3 are justified, and Vladimir WILL do the unthinkable if he feels NATO are unprepared....” The *Daily Mail* interviewed retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, former commander of U.S. Army Europe and a leading anti-Russian propagandist



Courtesy photo

*Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, former Commander of U.S. Army forces in Europe: “The plans that Germany is making demonstrate they are taking the [Russian] threat seriously.”*

ability to move fast enough. But if we are prepared, they still have a long way to go.

Hodges claimed further that though they seemed scary, “the plans outlined by Germany demonstrate that they are taking the threat ‘seriously’.”

The best way to prevent a war from ever happening is to demonstrate that you’re prepared for it. The UK has always been aware of the threat from Russia but now Germany is realizing that this is something that’s only going to get worse if they’re not prepared. So readiness—with all the right equipment and capabilities—is exactly what nations should be doing. And Germany is doing that.



Government of Sweden/Kristian Pohl

*Carl-Oskar Bohlin, Sweden’s Minister for Civil Defense, has called for the mass improvement of “situational awareness” and a cultural preparedness for war.*

Moscow dismissed the *Bild* report as not worthy of comment. “I would not comment on this *Bild* report,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, reported TASS. “Recently, this newspaper has regularly stooped to publishing various fake news items and canards.” Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova dismissed the *Bild* report as “last year’s horoscope.”

Even more over the top was Carl-Oskar Bohlin, Sweden’s Minister of Civil Defense, who delivered a

even before he retired in 2018. Hodges agreed with the hysteria from Germany’s supposed leak, and took it even further:

They [Russia] only respect strength. If they sense any weakness then they will continue to move forward. If they did it (that is, attack NATO), it would be because they made the assessment that we were not ready or unified inside the Alliance or that we did not have adequate ammunition or the

[speech](#) Jan. 7, telling Swedes that they'd better be prepared to fight Russian troops on Swedish soil:

For a nation for whom peace has been a pleasant companion for almost 210 years, the idea that it is an immovable constant is conveniently close at hand. But taking comfort in this conclusion has become more dangerous than it has been for a very long time.... There could be war in Sweden.... The world is facing a security outlook with greater risks than at any time since the end of the Second World War.

Bohlin called for the mass improvement of “situational awareness” and a cultural preparedness for war. Going down the list of different positions in society, Bohlin barked orders for how each should prepare for the apparently imminent war with Russia.

For officials in emergency preparedness organizations: “Have you built your war organization and defined which activities need to be maintained and which do not? Have you ensured compliance with protective security and necessary access to alternative command locations?”

For municipal officials: “Have you secured the war organization, refuge points, the emergency water plan and the redundancy supply of foodstuffs, heating and electricity for health and social care?”

Bohlin’s recommendation for all average citizens was: “Have you taken responsibility for your home preparedness? Have you considered whether you have time to join a voluntary defense organization?”

For each one, he ended with the refrain: “Get moving!”

These remarks, along with similar ones made by Sweden’s Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson, not surprisingly led to a panic throughout Swedish society. In the days following it was reported that sales of emergency supplies such as flashlights and water cans soared by 800%, and there was even a report from the children’s rights organization Bris that their mental health hotline was flooded with calls from young adults worried about an impending war.

These events came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was in Vilnius, Lithuania warning that Vladimir Putin would not stop at Ukraine. “He won’t finish this, until we all finish him together,” Zelensky claimed during a news conference, adding “Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova may be next” if Ukraine did



Royal Logistic Corps/Rebecca Brown

*British Lt. Gen. Patrick Sanders, Chief of the General Staff: “Taking preparatory steps to enable placing our societies on a war footing when needed are now not merely desirable, but essential.”*

not withstand Russia’s onslaught.

Meanwhile, British Gen. Sir Patrick Sanders, Chief of the General Staff, added his voice to the war hysteria in Europe in a speech Jan. 24, warning that the ongoing Russian “invasion” of Ukraine showed it was “citizen armies” that make the difference in conflicts, reported *CBS News*:

Taking preparatory steps to enable placing our societies on a war footing when needed are now not merely desirable but essential. Our friends in eastern and northern Europe, who feel the proximity of the Russian threat more acutely, are already acting prudently, laying the foundations for national mobilization.

Sanders’ remarks, along with those of other senior defense officials, made such a stir that it prompted a response from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s office ruling out any return to conscription, which the UK abolished in 1960.

At the same time, the U.S. is telling the Brits they need a bigger military. U.S. Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro said during a visit to London that more investment should be considered for the Royal Navy, and it may also be necessary to strengthen the Army. In a speech at the Royal United Services Institute delivered one day after that of Sanders, he expressed “tremen-



dous respect for” the UK military but commented: “I think it is important for the United Kingdom to reassess where they are today given the threats that exist today,” reported *The Independent*. While he said it was entirely up to the British government to choose its own policies, “I would argue, quite frankly, that given the near-term, economic threats to the United Kingdom and the United States that investments in their Navy are significantly important.”

*The Independent* reports that the actual size of the British Army is 73,520 troops, which Sanders had said would not be large enough to defend the country if there is a war with Russia, and that plans for national mobilization were essential.

*The Independent* also notes that the Ministry of Defence is planning to decommission two Royal Navy frigates, not because they’ve exceeded their service lives, but because of a lack of personnel stemming from problems with recruitment and retention.

The reality against which all of this war talk is taking place is not that Russia is about to attack Europe, but rather that Europe is bankrupt and will never be able to deliver on mobilizing the full-blown war

economies they are claiming are needed.

Swiss Lt. Col. Ralph Bosshard (ret.), a senior military analyst, when asked by *EIR* to comment on all the recent pronouncements by military and political officials that Europe must be prepared for a war against Russia by as early as 2025, replied that Russia has no intention to attack Europe in the first place. But more importantly, Bosshard said, is that all the talk about war mobilization, including a massive buildup of weaponry and even re-instituting conscription, will eventually come up against reality—the productive capability is not there, and would require huge sums of money which Europe doesn’t have. In addition, attempts to reintroduce conscription would be highly controversial and could take as long as 10 years, if at all possible.

Therefore, because of such manifest weakness, European nations may begin to discuss the use of tactical nuclear weapons instead. It is from this desperation, of a dying neoliberal system dead set on perpetual hegemony, that the real danger of war is coming—not Russia, China, nor any other of the scarecrows being used to whip up Western populations.

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