

UNTIE NOOSE AROUND KIEV, GERMANY TELLS RUSSIA

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Germany's President on Sunday said "responsibility" for the risk of "war" in Ukraine lay with Russia, bringing greater clarity to Berlin's position on the crisis which has been criticised as too lenient towards Moscow.

Speaking after his re-election for a second five year term, Frank-Walter Steinmeier called directly on Russian President Vladimir Putin to "untie the noose around Ukraine's neck".

On the eve of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's trip to Kiev and Moscow, the continent was confronted with the "danger of a military conflict, of war in eastern Europe — and Russia carries the responsibility for that," Social Democrat Steinmeier said.

"Peace cannot be taken for granted. It must be worked on in dialogue and when necessary, with clear words, deterrence and determination," the former Foreign Minister said.

Speaking shortly afterwards, the Chancellor echoed his party colleague Steinmeier, saying there was a "serious threat to peace in Europe".

"In the event of a military aggression against Ukraine that threatens its territorial integrity and sovereignty, that will lead to tough sanctions that we have carefully prepared and which we can immediately put into force, together with our allies in NATO and Europe," Mr. Scholz said.

Mr. Scholz travels to Kiev on Monday, where he will meet with the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. He will then move on to Moscow on Tuesday for talks with Mr. Putin.

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