

## WHAT PEACE?

# EU hypocrisy on Russia prevents a solution

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US President Donald Trump's initiative on Ukraine and the European response have rightly reignited the debate on security in Europe and the possible conditions for a lasting peaceful solution. Ultimately, the real crux of the debate is the dangerousness of Putin's Russia, whether denied or confirmed as the most serious threat we face. It is this second hypothesis that the leaders of the European Union (EU) support, which is why

they have promoted a plan to finance military spending (very pompously called 'Rearm Europe').

**Unfortunately, it seems difficult to escape from this rigid opposition,** which leads to a dead end: according to many in Europe Putin doesn't just want Ukraine, and if he gets his way here, we can expect other military initiatives in the Baltic states and, why not, even in Poland.

**Certainly, we cannot exclude this possibility in principle,** nor can we pretend not to see that threatening statements have been made and that there is also an ideology of the 'Russian world' that is at least worrying. What's more, Ukraine has been truly invaded, suggesting that Moscow really believes it has the right to annex the country, and this violation of international law certainly can't be justified by any hostile act or provocation suffered previously.

**What is misleading, however, is to absolutise the 'evil' that Putin represents,** making all his opponents appear sinless. Painting reality in black and white, as good guys and bad guys, is certainly the key to the success of many Hollywood films and propaganda, but it does a disservice to the truth. The European Union which, in the name of democracy, fights against authoritarianism is the same one which, in these very weeks, is supporting the 'white coup' in Romania; which wanted the change of government in Poland, where it is supporting a regime which is making a mess of democracy, and which would like to do the same in Hungary.

**And the European Union that is outraged by the invasion of Ukraine** and is increasing sanctions against Russia is the same European Union that stood by Rwanda after it invaded the Congo, and that is only now threatening sanctions; it is also the same European Union that has nothing to say about the expropriation of houses and land in the West Bank by Israeli settlers. And above all, it is the same European Union that remains silent, an accomplice, in the face of the massacres that the new Syrian government is carrying out against minorities, including Christians. It is not difficult to understand that the only reason for getting involved in Syria was to get rid of a pro-Russian president, even if it meant supporting a jihadist government: Bashar al-Assad was so 'monstrous', and this is how the massacres of Ahmad al-Shara are justified today.

**And when it is argued that a 'just peace' implies the recognition of Ukraine's pre-2014 borders,** it is certainly an ideal principle to affirm, but it must also be recognised that there has never been a 'just peace' historically speaking, given that all countries have borders that have been drawn by successive wars, with territories gained

and lost depending on whether they were victors or defeated in those wars. Just look at the current borders of Italy or Ireland and the wounds that are still open. And very often we are forced to accept 'unjust' situations because the alternative is much worse.

**We have an example of this right within the borders of the European Union:** the case of Cyprus, invaded by Turkey in 1974 and still divided by a Green Line - patrolled by a UN force - that separates the Turkish-led north from the Greek south. Only Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and yet no one has ever considered going to war against Turkey or arming themselves to defend themselves against Turkey, which has never hidden its imperial ambitions, as we can see today with the prominent role it has acquired in the Middle East and North Africa. Moreover, Turkey is a member of NATO and no one has ever questioned this. In fact, the situation has remained frozen ever since: an 'unjust' and all in all precarious peace was considered better than a war between Turkey and Greece (which would inevitably have involved other countries), with all the casualties that would have entailed.

**But the real question, which must be answered clearly and without hypocrisy, is: what solution do we want?** To defeat Putin militarily? Well, then the only way is to openly go to war against Russia, because - barring extraordinary events that are currently unforeseeable - it's inconceivable that Ukraine, even with Western weapons, could turn the tide on the battlefield. After three years of war, it's clear that arming Ukraine only serves to wear Russia down, to postpone the moment of military victory, in the hope that Putin will be deterred from other adventures: this has indeed been the objective pursued so far, but at the cost of the lives of hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, who will sooner or later find themselves conceding to Russia what could have been resolved through serious negotiations three years ago without a shot being fired.

**On the other hand, if you do not have the will** - and the means and the manpower - to go to war against Russia, you must seek a negotiated solution that will silence the guns as soon as possible. A 30-day ceasefire, as proposed by Trump, is not the final solution, but it could be a start, assuming Putin accepts it after Zelensky. It's clear that any agreement must include guarantees for Ukraine and for the European Union, which is paying dearly for this war it enthusiastically joined under the leadership of the Biden administration.

**This doesn't mean accepting the right of annexation:** the case of Cyprus shows that it is possible to have a permanent ceasefire, however imperfect the solution, without diplomatically accepting or recognising the situation that has arisen on the

ground.

What needs to be decided is not the strategy based on Putin's alleged intentions, but the objective towards which we should direct our efforts: armed confrontation or a negotiated solution?