

## VESTED INTERESTS

# Four truths revealed by the war in Ukraine

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US President Donald Trump's decision to accelerate a resolution on the Ukraine issue reveals some truths that have been buried under a sea of rhetoric and propaganda on all fronts in recent years.

**First, it is now clear that the real contenders in the conflict are Russia and the United States.** Trump has always claimed that this war would not have broken out with

him as president, and he was probably right. His priorities in 2020 would have been different, and he would have at least tried to reach some sort of preventive accord with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Biden administration, on the other hand, focused on Ukraine's resistance in order to weaken Moscow and render it harmless for many years to come.

**To guarantee Europe's security? It seems not.** Europe has only been used to help the US in this strategy aimed at eliminating a threat that, together with that of China, would have jeopardised American hegemony in the world.

**From an economic point of view, too, the Biden administration killed two birds with one stone:** it replaced the energy supplies that Russia had guaranteed to Europe and, at the same time, economically weakened Europe itself, which was forced to pay much higher energy costs. For a while, Washington also toyed with the idea of a *regime change* in Moscow, but that was an illusion. We will see over time how much Russia is actually suffering from the unforeseen length of the war, both economically and politically, but the result is this strategy has tied Russia even more closely to China in an anti-American way and has proved to be a dead end.

**Trump has taken a different path, preferring good relations with Russia** and focusing on China, and is therefore in a hurry to resolve the Ukrainian issue: Zelensky, who won't give up the war, has become an obstacle. The Ukrainian president realised too late that the situation had changed, and after the sensational clash in Washington he is now rapidly backtracking, partly because he has realised that Europe without the United States can guarantee nothing (apart from proclamations). In fact, it is Moscow and Washington that are deciding the fate of the war. This is a sad thought, because in the end it is the Ukrainian population that is paying dearly for a conflict that others wanted and managed.

**Linked to this is a second aspect:** despite European and Ukrainian rhetoric about the war 'to the last victory', it was realistically impossible to believe that the heroic Ukrainian resistance had any chance of pushing back the Russians and restoring the pre-2014 borders. The only possibility of Russian defeat was - and is - direct NATO intervention, which would have meant World War III and, in any case, the risk of nuclear use. A risk that even Biden (or anyone else) did not really want to take. In the end, in the most realistic calculation, it wasn't so much Russia's victory that was in doubt, but the time and the human, military and political costs that Putin would have to pay to achieve it. Zelensky has always been aware of this situation and has even repeatedly tried to involve NATO, which is why Trump accused him of "playing with World War III" during

the tough confrontation on 28 February.

**A third truth concerns the inconsistency of Europe,** which is totally displaced and disunited in the face of the rapid changes that are taking place. Susceptible to the policies of the Biden administration to the point of self-harm - forgetting that European interests do not coincide with those of the United States - it continues to fantasise about a Ukrainian 'total victory' for which Trump should continue to fight.

**The call to arms that followed the announced American withdrawal** has further highlighted the inadequacy of European leaders who are unable to read reality: alternative peace plans announced by one and rejected by the other, French President Macron and British Prime Minister Starmer vying for continental leadership with proclamations that the one contradicts the other. And both were ultimately ridiculed by Zelensky's U-turn, preferring to repent and return to Trump rather than trust these two half-baked characters.

With his speech to the French nation last night, in which he presents himself as Europe's greatest defender against the probable Russian attack or invasion, Macron surely thought he had earned a place in history, but it is more likely that he will be remembered as Europe's greatest bluff, another outburst by a leader who has shrinking credibility at home.

**There is a fourth truth that needs to be faced:** the division of the world into good and bad, the rhetoric of Western democracies fighting against authoritarianism and dictatorship; and, on the contrary, Russia with its traditional and Christian values against the corruption of the West, are arguments that serve to unite public opinion around the decisions of their governments or to divide the opposing side; but they are not the real reasons for the conflict. In other words, it's propaganda. Western democracies have never hesitated to form alliances with dictatorships when it suits them (see Saudi Arabia); likewise, 'Christian' Putin has no qualms about exterminating other Christians who, like him, are Orthodox.

**The reality is that every country, and even more so the great powers,** act according to their national interests - political, economic or even ideological - which they defend at all costs and against everyone. These interests must be understood and dealt with. Peace - insofar as it can be conceived by human beings - depends on the reconciliation of these interests, as happened in Western Europe after the Second World War. In this sense, a "just peace" is not an ideal peace in which a supposedly primitive order is restored - every state today is the result of many boundary changes that have taken place over the centuries - but the peace that is possible given the circumstances.