

ANALYSIS

NATO summit puts Europe on warpath

WORLD

14_07_2024



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The outcome of the NATO summit in Washington for the 75th anniversary of the Atlantic Alliance seems to confirm the West's inclination to seek military confrontation with Russia and that of the United States and its allies to leave an increasingly politically, militarily, socially and economically weakened Europe.

Among the summit's protagonists was President Biden judged by some to be

undoubtedly in need of replacement in the race for the White House and by others to be "on the ball" despite a few gaffes, above all by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who will soon relinquish his seat to Dutchman Mark Rutte, another loyal squire of Washington's interests.

After announcing that Ukraine's membership in NATO is a matter "of when, not if," Stoltenberg described Kiev's accession to the alliance as "irreversible." A matter peremptorily reiterated by Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, always in the forefront of the anti-Russian front. Certainly this is a political commitment that still has no concreteness: there is no date or plan, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky himself has admitted that membership is impossible as long as the war continues.

In real terms, however, two aspects have been ignored by the NATO secretary general and member states. First, Ukraine's membership in NATO, even if only announced, means a state of all-out (perhaps we should say "irreversible") war with Russia, since it would mean U.S. troops and bases 500 kilometers from Moscow just as the U.S. was given the green light from Helsinki to access a dozen bases on Finnish territory, a stone's throw from St. Petersburg and Russian Karelia.

It doesn't take much common sense to imagine how Washington would react to the presence of Russian (or Chinese) bases in Canada or Mexico to understand the context in which Europe is putting itself.

Are the rulers of the 32 allied states aware of this? Are they all in agreement with Ukraine joining NATO? Hungary and Slovakia are not, at least not with their current governments, but it would be useful for all European governments to make a clear and public statement on this issue considering that according to public opinion, almost everywhere, the majority is opposed to the stands being taken by their respective national governments and would like Europe to promote peace negotiations in the Ukrainian conflict.

Moreover, the only European leader who has taken steps in this direction, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has been heavily attacked by the entire EU, which would even like to find a ploy to deprive Budapest of its prerogatives as the Union's rotating president.

As was immediately apparent, Orban has visited Kiev, Moscow, Beijing, and Ankara as an "ambassador" for a peace plan devised by Donald Trump, who, thanks to the Hungarian premier, is putting forth his agenda to end the conflict if he takes office

in the White House again. While the news coming from the Ukrainian fronts should prompt NATO and the EU to negotiate with Moscow (or at least prepare to do so), the two supranational bodies instead operate in the opposite direction by advocating an all-out war that neither the Ukrainians nor the Europeans can maintain.

"I understand Ukraine's wishes, it is a sovereign country, but Ukraine's membership in NATO is just a guarantee of World War III," said Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. Confirming that in order to find some common sense in NATO and EU member nations one must look primarily to Central Europe today, Croatian President Zoran Milanovic called on everyone not to make promises to Ukraine that one is unable to keep. Referring to the final declaration of the Washington summit.

"Ukraine is threatened by a very serious economic and demographic crisis. We must be honest with them and not make promises that we are unable to keep. It is said that Ukraine's path to NATO is irreversible, this should be taken very seriously since it is something binding," the Croatian president said, stressing that in the dangerous times in which we live "every move and every word" must be carefully considered.

Common sense is also found across the Atlantic where more than 60 U.S. academics and foreign policy and defence experts wrote an open letter to the online newspaper Politico urging NATO not to promise Ukraine membership as it would backfire on the alliance, "turning Ukraine into the site of a protracted confrontation between the world's two leading nuclear powers. The closer NATO gets to its promise that Ukraine will join the alliance once the war is over, the greater the incentive for Russia to keep fighting. The challenges posed by Russia can be managed without bringing Ukraine into NATO," the document states.

Suggestions ignored by most at a summit where new military aid was promised to Kiev including five air defence missile batteries and the 40-year-old F-16 fighter jets decommissioned by Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway but presented as yet another solution weapon in defiance of the dissenting opinions of all military experts.

Nothing to be surprised about after all: in 2002 the most relevant economic think tanks claimed that Europe could disengage smoothly from energy dependence on Russia in 8/10 years. Instead, EU leaders have tried to do it in only two years with serious damage (high energy prices and de-industrialization to start...), perhaps irreversible, without even succeeding since in May and June this year the largest gas supplier to Europe is still Russia!

At the Washington summit, Stoltenberg managed to get approval for the \$40 billion military aid plan to Ukraine until the end of 2025 and the new NATO mission deploying 700 military personnel (the Hungarians will not participate) with command at a U.S. base in Germany to coordinate the training of Ukrainian forces and the delivery of military aid.

This is NATO's first direct involvement in the conflict since until now it had been individual states handling support for Kiev synergistically or on their own. In addition, the U.S. will deploy from 2026 in Germany cruise missiles capable of striking Russian territory within minutes and state-of-the-art anti-missile missiles. A decision greeted in Moscow with strong protests but which for Chancellor Olaf Scholz is "necessary and important to ensure peace."

This initiative, along with the agreement committing Italy, Germany, France and Poland to develop and produce cruise missiles with a range beyond 500 kilometres, brings Europe back to the level of tension with Moscow that occurred in the 1980s with the deployment in Europe of the so-called "Euromissiles," the U.S.-made Pershing 2 and Tomahawk deployed in response to Soviet SS-20s. Weapons with more than 500 kilometres of range later banned in Europe by the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) from which the United States withdrew in 2019 after accusing Moscow of violating it by deploying Iskander ballistic missiles in the Kaliningrad enclave, in turn in response to new U.S. missile bases in Poland and Romania.

The NATO summit in Washington thus represents an important step in the escalation of the confrontation with Russia that began in Bucharest in 2008 with NATO's commitment to accommodate Ukraine and Georgia: almost a declaration of war on Russia.

Today, however, the Atlantic Alliance is aiming for escalation with China as well. In unusually harsh tones toward Beijing, NATO looks to understandings with its Indo-Pacific allies (Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) and states in the summit's final communiqué that it can no longer afford to ignore China's support for Russia's war in Ukraine as well as North Korea's increasing munitions supplies to Moscow.

Assessments that confirm the now total and obtuse self-referentiality that fuels the policy of a West that arms Ukraine to the teeth but censors hitherto unproven aid that other nations provide to Moscow. After all, Stoltenberg reminded us that "NATO security is no longer a regional issue but a global one," and on this point, too, it would

be useful to understand whether European governments, one by one, share the beginning of a tug-of-war with China as well.

Italy has not backed down either and has sent the aircraft carrier Cavour, the frigate Alpino and some 15 aircraft to the Indo-Pacific where they are participating in an international exercise in Australian waters and later in another similar activity in Japanese waters.

In return, the United States and NATO only symbolically accepted Italy's repeated request for more attention to NATO's Southern Flank, whose security was, after all, compromised by our own "allies" in 2011 thanks to Washington's support for the Arab springs and the war in Libya against Muammar Gaddafi.

At the Washington summit it was decided to appoint a special envoy for relations with the countries of the Mediterranean region, satisfying Giorgia Meloni. Italy and Spain are already in the race for this post, which, moreover, is certainly not a commitment for NATO, which continues to look exclusively at the Eastern Flank and at that inclusion (sooner or later) of Ukraine that is already being called "irreversible" even though, as is well known, irreversible is only death. To be precise.