

Four years later

Ukraine: Europe trapped in the logic of rearmament

We have therefore reached the point of celebrating the transition from the fourth to the fifth year of war in Ukraine, with the weariness of a ritual that hides a tragedy, the war, which sees no end and which should have been avoided. Four years that have changed Europe, exposing the weaknesses and limitations of a Union of states still tied to a nation-state vision when the challenges of the 21st century are global: the environment, demographics, rights, security. The limitations of supranational organisations and authorities have their roots in that nineteenth-century vision that fits well with the constant need to identify an enemy, invoke national security to justify the arms race, the inevitability of war and, in the meantime, reduce freedoms, rights, and repress protest.

We saw this immediately, from the day after the Russian invasion of Kiev, when part of our society took to the streets to denounce the criminal act and violation of international law by the Russian Federation, siding with Ukraine and its people, calling for an immediate ceasefire and political, diplomatic action by the European Union to avoid a dangerous military escalation. This position was immediately labeled as “pro-Russian,” naive, and ambiguously and shamefully idealistic, choosing instead the path of sanctions and confrontation between military blocs, NATO on one side and Russia and its allies on the other, with an ever-increasing military escalation and no way out, leaving the initiative for negotiations to other actors.

Four years later, we are still stuck with that model, that vision of the world and of Europe. Meanwhile, what is not standing still is the death toll on both sides, now close to two million dead, missing, and wounded, to which must be added the millions of Ukrainian refugees abroad and over a million Russian political exiles.

The Ukrainians are right to say that this is Europe's war, because we are all trapped in this destructive dynamic, from the Atlantic to the Urals, as was said decades ago.

They, the Ukrainians, directly, paying immediately, with human sacrifice and the destruction of everything they hold dear. We, indirectly, pledging our present and future in a war economy that has undermined our national economies and democracies, and the European project. We are handing over to the new generations a region that focuses on its security by investing in weapons and deterrence, a wrong choice and a useless investment in the age of nuclear weapons and hybrid warfare, because, today, war, if waged, would be either endless or fatal for everyone.

It is deeply worrying, sad and bitter to note that, after four years of war, the 27 member states and governments of the European Union, a community whose foundations are cemented in democratic and universalistic principles and values, have still not managed to open a dialogue and negotiations with Russia, putting the fundamental issue on the table: the construction of a common security system for the entire European continent, overcoming the experience of military blocs and the opposition between the West and the rest of the world, retracing the path laid out by the Helsinki Charter and the UN multilateral system, demanding justice but offering respect and trust, cooperation, and a shared future. Not wars or business committees.

Sergio Bassoli

(member of Italian Peace and Disarmament Network and IPB General Council)

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