With its role in the Ukraine war the European Union may risk its own political future

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The deteriorating military situation in Ukraine and the United States increasing withdrawal from this war created a situation in which the EU is now pushed into the forefront in dealing with this problem.

Probably for the first time since the end of the Second World War, the EU would thus have the opportunity, independent of US geopolitical considerations, to take a lead in determining Europe's fate in such a crucial issue as war and peace in Europe.

One would hope that the EU that was once created as a European peace project, would use this opportunity to pursue a policy for finding a peaceful solution to ending the Ukraine war.

Troublingly is, however, that this is not the case. On the contrary! While calls in the American political establishment for negotiations with Russia without precondition are intensifying, the ruling politicians of the EU and of almost all its member states are taking exactly the opposite approach. They rule out such negotiations and pursue instead a policy of intensifying the war with senseless military posturing. Among EU politicians, possible venues for a diplomatic solution to the underlying conflicts that led to the war are not even considered.

This convinced a major Dutch newspaper NRC, which, like the established German media, has so far been a supporter of continuing the war, to publish for the first time a warning under the title "The Netherlands is sleepwalking into a new world war". Such a warning certainly also applies to the entire EU. Is a political elite in the EU risking Europe's future out of a false sense of self-righteousness?

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The United States increasingly withdraw from the Ukraine war

This year, President *Biden* began his State of the Union address by once again pledging his full support for Ukraine. Only, this time it sounded rather unconvincing. Two other remarks in his speech were probably much more important:

Firstly, he emphasized that he would in no way send American soldiers into the war on Ukrainian soil and secondly, he reiterated that only Ukraine could stop Russia. Biden did not explain how Ukraine should do this after two years of a war for which Ukrainians have already paid with a huge blood toll and the destruction of much of their country. Nor did he mention what form US support would take. It is therefore easy to understand why the wife of Ukrainian president Zelensky declined President Biden's invitation to attend his speech in the US Congress. The Ukrainians – and President *Zelensky* in particular – must feel quite bitter about the US de-facto abandoning them.

After all, while the Ukrainian armed forces are suffering ever greater losses, the USA had largely stopped its financial and military support to Ukraine over the last months. There is no longer a majority for this in the US House of Representatives. Even in the recently approved US emergency budget covering the next six months, no mention is made of any support for Ukraine. As we approach the US presidential election in little more than seven months, the chances that Congress would approve such a large assistance package for Ukraine are fast dwindling. At the same time, the chances for *Donald Trump* of becoming the next President of the United States are increasing. In this case, we may expect a complete change in US policies towards Ukraine. In all likelihood, Trump could negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine with Russian President Putin over the heads of the Ukrainians and Europeans. For him European interests would hardly matter. The EU could find itself left in the cold, having squandered an opportunity to take charge of its own future.

But it's not just Trump who may seek an end to the Ukraine war. Also, an increasing number of powerful US political analysts and policy makers in the anti-Trump camp now accept that this war can no longer be won for Ukraine and must be resolved through negotiations – without preconditions – with Russia. The influential foreign policy magazine Foreign Affairs has just published an article by *Samuel Charap* (RAND Corporation) and *Jeremy Shapiro* (European Council on Foreign Relations) under the title "How to pave the way for diplomacy to end the war in Ukraine". In January, *Foreign Affairs* had already published a surprisingly reconciliatory article by Shapiro and *Michael Kimmage* entitled "The Myths That Warp How America Sees Russia—and Vice Versa: How Mutual Misunderstanding Breeds Tension and Conflict".

In February of this year, the Washington-based *Quincy Institute* published an article by *George Beebe* and *Anatol Lieven* entitled "The diplomatic path to a secure Ukraine". In this article, they even argue that ceasefire negotiations would be extremely urgent for Ukraine, as "the war would not lead to a stable stalemate, but to a collapse of Ukraine".

Last year, *Richard Haass* (then still President of the US Council on Foreign Relations) and *Charles Kupchan,* also member of the Council of Foreign Relations and one of the most influential US foreign policy advisors to the government, had already appealed for a negotiated solution in their article "The West needs a new strategy for Ukraine: from the battlefield to the negotiating table". Last year, General *Mark Milley,* then still Chief of Staff of the US Armed Forces, repeatedly warned against continuing the war and suggested starting ceasefire negotiations.

The unexpected resignation of *Victoria Nuland* as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs at the US State Department must also be seen in this context. With her resignation, one of the main architects of the disastrously failed US policy of expanding NATO into Ukraine and Georgia and a radical anti-Russia voice is leaving Washington's political stage. Her greatest intellectual contribution to diplomacy was probably her statement "Fuck the EU£".

European Union's irresponsible approach to the Ukraine war

This could have been the European Union's hour to take greater responsibility in showing a peaceful way out of the Ukraine war. After all, it was unresolved conflicts in Europe that caused humanity to descent into the catastrophe of two World Wars. Europe should not again be the source of such a human disaster and therefore accept it historic responsibility by taking a reconciliatory approach to the Ukraine war. After all, this is the first war in human history in which nuclear arms play a strategic role and any miscalculation could bring an apocalypse on humankind that is unimaginable greater than anything we know from the two World Wars.

And yet, peace is not part of the EU's discourse. It is the language of war that unites the majority of European governments and the established media today – and this, although there is no common EU strategy on the Ukraine war, no common approach on what can be achieved and how. The Polish Prime Minister, for example, declared that Europe was already in a pre-war situation, perhaps already at war, and Sweden's Prime Minister called on Swedish families to prepare for war.

The President of the EU Commission can think of nothing else but to demand more and more money, more weapons and more ammunition and demands a conversion of Europe to a war economy. Even Chancellor *Olaf Scholz,* who we must thank for having prevented the deployment of *Taurus* missiles so far, only talks about Russia not being allowed to win the war. Wouldn't it have made more sense for him and his European colleagues to think rather about how to win peace in Europe?

The acrimonious and irreconcilable attitude of the EU towards Russia is particularly evident in Germany in the two motions tabled by the governing and opposition parties in the Bundestag, the German parliament, on the second anniversary of the war in Ukraine. These motions read more like declarations of war against Russia, in which highly questionable arguments are combined with unrealistic maximum demands and simultaneous threats. They leave no room for compromise. Hence, any attempt at negotiations is made impossible from the outset. After two years of war, this approach is tantamount to a denial of reality. It is a policy of clinging to a continuation of the war, knowing full well that there is no realistic hope of a victorious peace in Ukraine.

This may also explain why individual EU member states are plunging into irresponsible actionism. This includes France's proposal to send

NATO troops to fight in Ukraine and its plans to station French units in Moldova. It also includes once again the believe in a miracle weapon by German political hardliners and their demands on making *Taurus* missiles available to Ukraine. Such plans appear to be ill-conceived and therefore potentially dangerous. They are also unrealistic. The EU has neither military capabilities, nor sufficient political unity nor any popular support for individual states or the EU as a whole to launch such adventurous ventures. In any case, they would be unlikely to change the course of the war but would lead to further killing and destruction in Ukraine.

Furthermore, such plans run the risk of leading to an escalation of the war in Ukraine, with the frightening prospects that this could develop into a pan-European or even a nuclear World War. When a French president claims that such considerations are just a sign of cowardice and a German Green party tells us that there is no nuclear risk at all, even if Moscow or Russian military nuclear installations are attacked, they are gambling with the survival of us all. And for what? Just because we don't want to admit to ourselves that we can no longer win this war and that negotiations are the only option left.

The EU could break over the Ukraine war

In a best-case scenario, the EU's Ukraine policy will only undermine its credibility; in a worst-case scenario, the EU could break apart over its misguided Ukraine policies. While the EU's political elites continue trying to convince us that this war can still be won with ever more powerful weapons or even direct military intervention, they are losing the support of a growing majority of the European population and with it the touch to reality. Due to the negative economic effects of this war, more and more people could turn to anti-European parties.

Time is also running out for the EU in another respect. In just a few months, political relationship with the USA could change dramatically should Donald Trump become US President. There are already considerable differences among the EU member states, and a political landslide in the USA could divide the EU member states rather than bring them closer together. With its uncompromising pro-war and anti-Russia policy, the EU will also further isolate itself from most non-NATO states in the world. There will be no understanding there for continuing to escalate militarily while at the same time refusing to negotiate with Russia without preconditions.

The EU sets itself up for a massive failure if it continues its current path of seeking solutions through ever more weapon deliveries and sanctions. In its own interests, the European Union urgently needs a change of strategy that must aim at a pan-European peace and security order based on the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe and that must include Ukraine and Russia.

The forthcoming elections to the *European Parliament* would therefore be an opportunity for Europeans to say no to the EU’s militant policies by voting for peace on June 9.