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Europe/Portugal

Europe in the Trump-Putin Axis Trap

- Features -

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This resolution of the National Board of Portugal's Left Bloc on international politics, approved on 23 March sees "Europe in the trap of the Trump-Putin axis and argues that "US imperialism is still the most aggressive and constitutes a superpower that other imperialist powers seek to combine with the existence of world poles", a process that "advances, sometimes through conflict, sometimes through cooperation between powers and through transnational capitalist integration". For the Left Bloc, there are various imperialisms and "none of them will have a progressive role because all act according to the interests of their capitalist elites". Therefore, "recognising this reality is vital in elaborating an internationalist proposal capable of offering a future to humanity and conceiving a democratic order of peoples." [ESSF]

We publish in full the resolution approved on 23 March by the National Board of the Left Bloc on the European and international situation, marked by the return of the far-right to the presidency of the United States of America.

1. Only one law, that of force

Donald Trump's second election to the White House triggered significant changes in the global order. Awareness of the decline or dissolution of various international institutions emerging from post-World War II agreements quickly became widespread. The United Nations, frequently paralysed in the past by vetoes from the USA, Russia or China in the Security Council, is today openly despised. The United States of America and its Israeli arm or the Russian Federation and its current North Korean arm make repeated threats to the very existence of the UN. These are exactly the same States responsible for continuous violations of the Charter norms that prohibit the offensive use of force. Agencies such as the World Health Organisation or UNESCO are under fire from the international far-right. The World Trade Organisation, rammed by new customs protections, is in an induced coma by the USA, under protest... from China. Only the International Monetary Fund, an organic extension of Washington, police of the dollar as a standard currency and overseer of indebted economies, has remained unscathed so far, even if disguised as a UN agency.

2. NATO withdrawal, European orphanhood

Western European governments and public opinion reacted in shock to the collaboration between Trump and Putin. In relatively little time, Trump buried Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, disengaging the USA from military action in case of aggression against any of its members. It became evident that NATO was never a protection. Trump chose Saudi Arabia as the diplomatic seat of his partnership with Putin: this eternal vassal of the USA also crosses paths with Russia in BRICS, in addition to seeking to safeguard hydrocarbon production and definitively bury the Paris agreements. Beyond the partition of Ukraine, the White House and the Kremlin announce a kind of Treaty of Tordesillas in the Arctic.

European elites feel orphaned. More than the so-called international regulation (to whose destruction they directly contributed a few months ago, by disregarding the warrants against Netanyahu issued by the ICC), they miss the shadow of the United States' nuclear umbrella.

3. United Nations Charter - dead letter

European elites mourn this moment as the agony of a certain multilateralism, based on the promise of International Law, the United Nations Charter and numerous multilateral conventions. It is true that this order was always tied to the 1945 Bretton Woods agreements, linked to the dollar and the IMF. But, at the same time, with all the limitations and cynicism imposed by the Cold War, the United Nations is the fruit of negotiation between the victorious allies against Nazi-fascism. Sponsored by the USA and the Soviet Union (much later also by China), the United Nations Charter aims to be a democratic and peaceful "world constitution", encompassing human rights and gender and ethnic equality, as well as the equality of States. These principles for a democratic order still merit the support of peoples fighting for their self-determination and democratic affirmation.

4. From the violation of international law to its abolition

The violation of the Charter by the powers has diminished the United Nations throughout its history, as a guarantor of these democratic principles. The doctrine of "preventive wars", on the pretext of the existence (real or fictitious) of weapons of mass destruction or supposed threats to their sphere of influence, led the USA, with the most powerful army in the world, to the record of Charter violations (Korea, Vietnam, Grenada, Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan...). The invasion and devastation of Iraq was the culmination of this barbarism, with long-term consequences. However, nothing has disturbed the international scene more than the continued extermination and colonisation of Palestine by the State of Israel, under the permanent blessing of the White House. Without neglecting other invading or occupying States, Russia (of "real socialism" and real capitalism) comes right after the United States, with the invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Georgia, Crimea and Ukraine.

The imperialist order subjugated the principles of the UN and liberals cannot, in the face of historical facts, mourn the end of an order of International Law that never existed. However, this observation does not allow for the trivialisation of the imperial discretion assumed under Trump's mandate and with his rapprochement with Moscow.

5. NATO: instrument of North American domination, always

The continuity of NATO (even in "brain death", as Macron says) allows the USA to sell weapons to European countries, maintain bases on the continent and counter Chinese penetration. The last few weeks make it clear, even for the classes and political sectors that still deny it, that this is an imperialist relationship without counterpart, a process of extortion over the European Union and that also subordinates countries outside the EU (Great Britain, Norway). We reiterate that NATO was never a defensive alliance but a mere instrument of United States domination. Portugal should end its presence in this militarist machine, as the Bloc has always advocated.

6. Arms race: Trump's order that Europe wants to fulfil

In most equipment indicators, the current military capability of European states is more than sufficient to support Ukraine's territorial defence; in the remaining indicators, this capability would take several years to acquire. Ukraine is therefore a simple pretext for an industrial promotion policy focused on weapons as a response to the economic stagnation of European capitalism.

Harassed by the far-right, the political bloc around Ursula von der Leyen - from conservatives to European greens - pretends not to understand the NATO trap and flees forward under the slogan of European "rearmament". The German agreement, between conservatives and greens, is especially revealing. Prevented from making 500 billion euros in loans for Germany's own armament due to the German Constitution's rule that limits public debt to a very low level and without having a majority to change it, the CDU and SPD resorted to the Greens, whose yielding is hardly surprising, given the intense militarism manifested in the previous government, where they held the foreign affairs portfolio. Conservatives (in Portugal, PSD and CDS), liberals (IL), social democrats (PS) and greens (Livre) constitute a vast front in Europe for the militarist drift, joined by Chega, despite the opposition to Orban's rearmament

plan and the far-right Patriots, to whose group they belong. The European plan, designed even before Donald Trump's election, wants minimum military expenditure targets from member states, totalling a package of 800 billion euros of investment, a value close to that calculated to fund the European Union's carbon neutrality. This armament plan is conceived as subtracting funds from European cohesion funds but the bulk of the burden falls on member states, which should go into debt for this purpose, even if they exceed the deficit and debt limits provided for in the treaties. Military spending should reach 3% of Gross Domestic Product, subsequently rising to the 5% of GDP benchmark, as Trump ordered. In fact, the biggest escalation in military spending will be Germany's, which aims to be a nuclear power in the short term, while adapting its effective force to conventional wars. France will also have a strong impulse. To finance these purposes, Merz and Macron have already warned that cuts in the Social State will be necessary.

7. European vulnerability is not in armament

The European countries that are NATO members, as a whole, already add up to a military expenditure 3.5 times higher than Russia's and which is only surpassed by the United States of America. As the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and successive episodes of external electoral interference have proven, European vulnerability is not in armament but in the enormous dependence on third parties in strategic sectors.

In the invasion of Ukraine, dependence on Russian gas delayed and discredited sanctions capable of deterring war. The breaking of supply chains during the pandemic revealed the dangers of dependency in areas such as medicine (the vast majority of active substances in European medicines are produced in India and China). To the episodes of Russian and Chinese interference during electoral periods and their support for the far-right in various member states through Telegram and Tik Tok platforms, was now added the explicit interference of prominent members of the US government, such as Vice President Vance and Elon Musk, the latter also owner of the social network X, both present at the tail end of the AfD German campaign.

The major investments that the European Union needs are in its energy and digital autonomy, in food and medicines. Retreating in the digital transition and disinvesting in innovation and cohesion is a risk to Europe's security.

8. History repeats itself

Between 2021 and 2024, defence spending in the EU increased by more than 30%. Defence spending without NATO was 326 billion euros, according to the European Council (some think tanks mention 440 billion).

A few days after the invasion of Ukraine, the President of the European Commission said that Europe had advanced more in terms of security and defence in six days than in the last two decades: an unprecedented increase in European military spending, with money coming directly from the community budget.

In 2023, EU member states issued 33,700 licences for arms exports, representing 1/4 of global exports. France alone grew 47% in exports and became the second largest exporter in the world, surpassing Russia.

In recent years, the EU has launched several defence projects:

- European Defense Industrial Development Program (EDIDP)
- Preparatory Action on Defense Research (PADR)

- European Defense Fund (EDF)
- European Defense Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPH)
- Action Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP)
- European Defense Industry Strategy (EDIS)
- European Defense Industry Program (EDIP)

The European Peace Support Fund itself, which is outside the European budget, was used to buy weapons for countries at war (Ukraine, Rwanda, Niger)

A 2025 study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicates that two-thirds of the weapons purchased by European countries now come from the USA. Weapons imported from the United States more than doubled between 2020 and 2024. Despite calls to reduce dependence on the USA and to strengthen the European industry, European countries rushed to buy North American armament. For the first time in two decades, North American weapons flowed more to the EU than to the Middle East. All this in the period when the EU invested without precedent and most called for the strengthening of European capabilities.

In the week following Von Der Leyen's announcement, multinational war corporations saw their stock market capitalisation increase by 35 billion euros. It's clear who benefits from this remilitarisation.

There are North American military bases throughout European territory. There are North American nuclear warheads on European territory. But about this, not a word about "European autonomy". On the contrary: Polish President Andrzej Duda appealed to Trump to transfer North American nuclear warheads installed in Western Europe to Poland and Eastern Europe. What's on the table is a new model of European integration that combines market constitutionalism with a political identity based on military force.

9. Non-aligned cooperation

The Left Bloc opposes the increase in armament expenditure and the militarist drift that this foreshadows. The Left Bloc advocates policies of voluntary cooperation between democratic European states for security and defence purposes. This vision distances us from the perspective of any European army, which the elites themselves reject, such is the risk that would imply the simple installation of a military command that no democracy controls, or in which governments that may be led by the far-right in the near future predominate.

10. West in turbulence and variable geometries

The geometry of alliances in formation is unprecedented. At the recent London Summit, England, Norway, Canada and Turkey received eleven EU countries: France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Romania, Denmark, Netherlands, Poland, Finland and Sweden. This ad hoc "defence community" is not piloted by NATO, nor by the EU - although both follow it closely. It is predictable that this variable geometry of alliances will develop in the face of Russian pressure and the distancing of the USA, which affirm contempt for the self-determination of the people of Greenland (whose territory they intend to buy from Denmark) or disrespect for Canadian independence, suggesting an annexation. Turkey's presence at the London Summit, without Greek presence, also indicates a greater autonomy

from the USA.

11. "Multipolar" globalisation, the regime of powers

Under the slogan of the "multipolar world", imperial powers seek to consolidate a regime of spheres of influence, in unstable articulation with secondary and regional imperialisms. This regime of powers is very similar to that which accompanied the rise of fascism until World War II. History does not repeat itself, but it teaches. We must prevent the escalation of terror. Instead, Europe chooses the military path to stand shoulder to shoulder in the global dispute.

The regime of powers privileges bilateral bargaining - Trumpist "transactionalism" - to the detriment of rules set in multilateral agreements. The European Union itself is already part of this regime. It maintains the association agreement with Israel and finances Netanyahu's genocidal regime, while ensuring commercial exchanges that include production in illegally occupied territories. It finances the war in Congo through the trade agreement with Rwanda, from whom it buys resources looted in Congo with weapons purchased in euros. And it continues to acquire from Morocco the resources of Western Sahara (despite the sentence of the Court of Justice of the European Union that considered the agreements null), while legitimising the illegal occupation in exchange for the Moroccan signature on agreements to deport migrants.

The regime of powers privileges the liquidity of the transaction over any commitment to the general interest, to human rights and to ecosystems, accentuates the risk of war on the peripheries of areas of influence, while referring open conflict between powers to an exceptional status, even due to the existential risks involved. The regime of powers is the global coalition for carbon, in line with neofascist denialism, pushing the EU and the world to abandon even timid intentions about energy transition.

12. European responsibilities in the Ukrainian misfortune

The war in Ukraine has long been at an impasse. Well before Trumpism called the shots, the front lines moved little, always with a high number of dead on both sides. The EU, which rightly helped Ukraine resist the barbaric invasion, never wanted to confront Russia with cease-fire talks. It parroted Biden's discourse on "Moscow's defeat" and collaborated in a strategy of prolonging the war aimed at wearing down Russia. This European diplomatic passivity left the exit in Trump's hands, through looting. The partition of Ukraine and its minerals will follow the layout of the trenches, benefiting the invader and plundering the invaded, for which collaborative rulers should be installed in Kyiv. Zelensky is pressured to capitulate, withdraw from negotiations or sign blindly and leave the scene. Already the will of the Ukrainian people, that counts for nothing.

The "defence community" promoted in London promises to install and supply forces in Ukrainian territory free from Russian occupation. The Left Bloc rejects any Portuguese participation in the mission to stabilise the partition and looting of Ukraine between Trump and Putin, even if labelled as a peacekeeping force.

13. Ukraine must be compensated

Trump wants the EU in negotiations with Russia after the ceasefire, to lift sanctions on oligarchs and normalise Russian trade in Europe, also including the return of frozen and seized assets to the Russian Federation. Trump wants to prevent 160 billion euros currently frozen from being handed over to Ukraine for infrastructure reconstruction. On his side, he has the financial system, fearful that confidence in the euro will be shaken by the confiscation of Russian money. The delivery of that money to Ukraine, as proposed by Nobel Prize winner in Economics, Joseph Stiglitz, would be the most effective way to condition Putin.

14. Only a just peace can last

The Left Bloc has always agreed with sending defensive weapons for Ukraine's legitimate resistance. Similarly, we continue to defend the integrity of Ukrainian territory of 2022, negotiations for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of Russian troops. A just and lasting peace must be based on Ukraine's neutrality and the forgiveness of its debt, as well as on the recognition of its national diversity and the right of populations who inhabited Donbass at the time of the Russian invasion to pronounce on their future. In the face of the Trump-Putin deal, the EU must take an independent position.

15. The right to self-determination has no double standard

The principle of self-determination of nations is fundamental in International Law, the first aspiration of all peoples. This understanding is well present in Portugal, as we experienced the decolonisation of African countries after an unjust war of occupation and solidarity for the independence of Timor. In this sense, the Left Bloc does not classify conflicts for self-determination as "proxy wars", regardless of the intervention of international actors alien to oppressed peoples. Therefore, except for the great historical differences, we use the same criterion in Ukraine or in Palestine or in stateless nations in Spanish territory, in the Sahara, in Kurdistan.

16. Palestine, flag of humanity against barbarism

With the cover of the USA and most European countries, Israel promotes genocide in Gaza, the invasion of the West Bank and aggressions on neighbouring countries. Trump and Netanyahu, with their regional allies, seek to surround and neutralise Iran. These factors lead to increased instability in the Middle East, precisely one of the peripheries of the powers.

The Left Bloc allies itself with international campaigns for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli apartheid and defends an agreement that guarantees peace in Palestine, the end of occupation and compliance with UN resolutions. The demilitarisation of other conflicts is expected, namely the one occurring in Syria, under the auspices of countries of the global south, in respect for the self-determination of peoples.

17. Internationalism disobeys all empires

It is necessary to conclude that 21st century imperialism alters its dynamics and correlation of forces. US imperialism is still the most aggressive and constitutes a superpower that other imperialist powers seek to combine with the existence of world poles. This process advances, sometimes through conflict, sometimes through cooperation between powers and through transnational capitalist integration. There are several imperialisms in the global system and none of them will have a progressive role because all act according to the interests of their capitalist elites. Recognising this reality is vital in elaborating an internationalist proposal capable of offering a future to humanity and conceiving a democratic order of peoples.

Resolution approved on 23 March by the [National Board of the Left Bloc](#).

Translated for [ESSF](#) by Adam Novak.

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