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**Fascism**

# **Trump, Putin and the war in Ukraine: Europe's painful awakening to the rise of global Fascism**

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**For the past few weeks, and even more so in recent days, a state of paralysis seems to have gripped the European political landscape. Yet, Trump, Putin, and other far-right leaders have never hidden their ambitions. They have openly stated them for years, without pretense. It must be said plainly: their project is a fascist one.**

A fascist regime is taking hold in the [United States](#). In [Russia](#), it has already been in place for three years – a reality that many preferred to deny, clinging to the illusion of a smooth return to normalcy, to a status quo that was seen as only temporarily disrupted by [Russia's war against Ukraine](#).

The same status quo that allowed the European Union – [Germany](#) above all – to continue importing cheap Russian hydrocarbons while exporting high-end products to China and the United States. A world so comfortable that the Ukrainians, in their stubborn resistance, became nothing more than a nuisance. If only they had accepted to live under the occupation of a regime that rapes, kills, and tortures on a massive scale, perhaps we could have continued to prosper indefinitely... An illusion as naïve as it was cynical.

While Western Europe set aside its investments in defense, Russia, on the other hand, used its energy revenues to modernise its military apparatus. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its numerous influence operations across Europe – including crimes and assassinations – have gone virtually unpunished. In 2022, when Russia invaded [Ukraine](#), the European system of prosperity and stability, built on moral corruption, collapsed.

Yet, European leaders clung to this illusion, limiting their ability to impose swift and effective sanctions against Russia and delaying aid to Ukraine at a critical moment – when it had the best chance to shift the balance of power on the battlefield. This hesitation allowed Russia to seize territory and strengthen its positions, making Ukraine's counter offensives significantly more costly.

Having focused all our efforts on shutting our eyes to reality, we now find ourselves stunned by a situation where all our reference points have collapsed within a matter of weeks. J.D. Vance's [speech](#) in Munich is a striking example of this.

J.D. Vance made it abundantly clear: his enemy is not [Vladimir Putin](#), with whom the incoming U.S. administration shares many ideological affinities. His real enemy is in Europe – it is all those who resist the order he seeks to impose. The same man who advocates building walls to keep out migrants also wants to ban "barriers" against the [far-right](#) in Europe. As *The Guardian* aptly [described](#), it was a call to arms for populist right-wing forces to seize power across Europe, with the promise that the "new sheriff in town" would help them do so. Nothing must stand in their triumphant march.

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Yet, barriers against this assault on Europe do exist. The first line of defense is European civil society, its democratic institutions. But there is another bulwark: the effort of millions of Ukrainians who, for the past three years, have been fighting to halt the rise of Russian fascism.

This barrier could collapse at any moment, while Europe continues to watch, nodding in passive acknowledgment, failing to see that the same murky waters are already seeping in from within.

The crackdown on migrants, the institutionalisation of misogyny and homophobia, the denial of [climate change](#), the ruthless exploitation of both people and nature, the liquidation of Ukraine, the deportation of Palestinians – these are the pillars of the emerging new order, already taking shape. By now, this should be as clear as day: abandoning the victims of military aggression – just as we have done with the Palestinians and are now preparing to do with the Ukrainians – amounts to giving autocrats free rein to impose their rule through brute force.

This is a simple equation that any rational person should be able to grasp. It is all the more perplexing, then, that [Donald Trump](#)'s actions and those of his administration have apparently shocked Europeans. After all, he has repeatedly made it clear that this is exactly how he intends to act. What is truly surprising is not Trump himself, but rather the Europeans' lack of preparation and strategic foresight.

The statements emphasizing the urgent need for European countries to radically and rapidly increase their military spending are, unfortunately, correct. According to *The Financial Times*, Russia's military spending [has now surpassed](#) the combined defense budgets of all European countries. By 2025, Moscow will allocate even more funds to the war – 7.5% of its GDP, amounting to nearly 40% of the national budget.

This is one of the advantages authoritarian regimes hold over democracies: they can rapidly mobilise human and economic resources for war, imposing coercive measures without fear of mass opposition. An authoritarian state, whose population has been steeped in a late-capitalist ideology of cynicism and individualism – as is the case in Russia – can take this logic even further. Yet Europe seems blind to another fundamental reality of authoritarian regimes: once an autocrat embarks on a war of expansion, he cannot simply stop. The survival of his regime becomes inseparably tied to the war, which eventually consumes the entire structure of power.

European leaders, exemplified by Emmanuel Macron and Olaf Scholz, who now speak of the very real need to strengthen Europe's defense, are the same ones who paved the way for this crisis. They condemn abuses of power on the international stage while tolerating Darwinian logic within their own societies – sustaining a system where the most powerful continue to dominate the most vulnerable. This contradiction weakens their credibility and fuels growing distrust toward democratic institutions. Such inconsistency creates fertile ground for the rise of fascist movements, which capitalize on these fractures to mobilize a disillusioned electorate.

Widening inequalities, a growing sense of injustice, and the perception of a political elite disconnected from reality weaken their legitimacy. A society that feels abandoned or ignored will struggle to support international commitments, even when they uphold fundamental principles such as the defense of rights and sovereignty.

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Populists exploit this discontent by fueling the notion that governments are sacrificing national interests in favor of supposedly distant causes, such as supporting Ukraine. Political figures like Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France and Sahra Wagenknecht in Germany denounce social injustice while embracing the law of the strongest on the international stage, justifying the violations committed by authoritarian regimes such as Russia. Their opportunistic positioning, driven by electoral calculations, strips their rhetoric of any credibility. Yet, it is impossible to separate domestic social justice from a country's international policies. A society that tolerates or even encourages cynicism and domination on the global stage will inevitably normalize these same dynamics in its internal social relations – and vice versa.

A more just and cohesive society is better equipped to support international commitments and defense budgets – whose necessity is now undeniable. Effective and urgent redistribution policies are essential to restoring citizens' trust. Thus, the assistance that European countries can provide to Ukraine is not limited to military or economic aid; it also hinges on resolving their own internal crisis of legitimacy. However, it must be repeated again and again: the aid that truly matters for every Ukrainian is military aid. It is the single most crucial condition for Ukraine's survival as a society, as well as for each of its people.

Many, particularly in Germany, express concerns about the influence of the far-right in Ukraine. Yet, nothing fuels extremism more than an unjust "peace agreement" imposed on a victim of aggression against its will. No situation is more radicalizing than military occupation paired with systematic and brutal oppression. If Ukraine is forced to accept a peace dictated by Russia, the accumulated frustration and injustice will serve as fuel for radical movements, which will thrive at the expense of moderate and progressive forces. History is filled with examples of imposed peace agreements that have given rise to monsters – terrorist organisations born from despair and resentment.

Trump openly declares his willingness to negotiate without regard for the Ukrainian government or its people. In doing so, he aligns himself entirely with the Kremlin's agenda and retroactively legitimises Russian aggression. Worse still, by refusing to call this invasion what it truly is – an illegal war of aggression, accompanied by egregious violations of international law and documented war crimes – he sends a deeply dangerous message. He reinforces the idea that such expansionist policies can not only be tolerated but even rewarded. Taiwan, the Philippines, the Baltic states, Moldova, and Armenia must now prepare to be next on the list. In this context, it is imperative to take a firm and unequivocal stance: no negotiations can take place at the expense of the Ukrainian people, and even less so without their consent.

The time for lamentations is over. The moment to act is now. For one day, when the dust settles and the fog lifts, we will inevitably ask ourselves in horror: how could we have been so passive, so blind, so indifferent in the face of this impending disaster?

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