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The moment of truth in Ukraine

Since February 24, 2022, the eyes of the world have been on the Ukrainian conflict. The West is supporting Kiev financially, delivering incredible quantities of arms and ammunition, but is careful not to get directly involved in the theater of operations. Moscow remains patient and pretends not to see the foreign military advisors present on the ground. We are reaching a tipping point where the West could be precipitated into war by a deliberate use of their weapons against Russia on its pre-2014 territory. This is why six EU states are suddenly recommending peace negotiations and two good offices missions are being set up by China and the African Union.

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President Zelensky arrives in Japan on May 20, 2023, for the G7 summit.

Since September 2022, that is to say for 7 months, Kiev's troops have been fighting only in Karkiv and in Bakhmut/Artemivsk. The first city is not part of the Donbass. It is not claimed by the Donetsk Republic, which is a member of the Russian Federation. The confrontation was therefore quick. The Russian army withdrew from it. Bakhmut/Artemivsk, on the other hand, is located in the Russian cultural zone. The Russian army resisted. During the winter, the battle turned into a trench warfare, as deadly as the one in Verdun. So that from now on,

everyone is waiting, at least in the West, for the weather to allow Kiev to lead a counter-offensive.

Note that nobody is waiting for Russia to continue its offensive towards Kiev. Indeed, everyone has understood that Moscow never wanted to invade Ukraine and take its capital, but only the Donbass and now Novorossia; two areas of Russian culture whose inhabitants are demanding to stop being Ukrainian and become Russian. Yet Western politicians and media continue to denounce the Russian "invasion" of Ukraine.

THE HYPOTHETICAL COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

The famous counter-offensive was supposed to start in April. There is now talk of the end of May. Kiev assures us that this delay is due to the difficulty of receiving Western weapons. Operations should be launched only when all the equipment is in place in order to minimize human losses. However, never in history has a state been given so many weapons to wage war.

Unless what we denounced at the beginning of the war continues: during the first months, three quarters of the material sent from the West was diverted to Kosovo and Albania to supply other theaters of operation, in the Middle East and the Sahel. Another hypothesis is that today the Russian army methodically destroys the equipment upon delivery, before it is distributed to the fighting units.

In any case, the rhetoric of the counter-offensive applies only to the Ukrainian army, not to the population. The Nato media have stopped talking about the "valiant resistance of the Ukrainian people": there is no significant action that has been taken in this sense either in Crimea, Donbass or Novorossia. There is talk of sabotage actions by Ukrainian Special Forces in the Russian territories before 2014, but not of Resistance actions in those that have joined the Federation since.

DELIVERED WEAPONS MAY COMMIT DONORS AGAINST THEIR WILL

Weapons are not like other goods. A company that manufactures weapons cannot sell or give them away without authorization from its state. The state requires a written commitment from the recipient as to how the weapons will be used. This is not simply a matter of ensuring that the weapons will not end up in the hands of an enemy of the nation, nor that they will not violate a UN embargo, but that they will not be used to attack a third party in violation of the UN Charter.

Any other transfer is called "trafficking". It is punishable by national and international laws. Since the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, the West has refused to deliver weapons that could be used not by Kiev to defend its territory, but by the "integral nationalists" against Russia at home. Indeed, since the First World War, they proclaim that their *raison d'être* is to eradicate the "Muscovites" from the face of the earth. Their struggle has nothing to do with the current Russian special military operation. For them it is an apocalyptic struggle of Good (them) against Evil (Russians).

If the "integral nationalists" gain the upper hand over the Ukrainian civilian authorities, there is a serious danger that they will attack targets inside Russia. In that case, the states that supplied them with the weapons they would use would automatically be involved in the war. They would become co-belligerents. Russia would be entitled to retaliate against them on their territory.

This is a very serious risk. According to the *Washington Post* [1], based on documents revealed by Jack Teixeira (*Discords Leaks*), President Volodymyr Zelensky proposed to the Pentagon a few months ago to conquer Russian border villages, to sabotage the pipeline connecting Russia to Hungary (an EU member, as France and the Netherlands are owners of *Nord Stream*) and to point long-range missiles at Russia.

So the West first delivered weapons that can only be used on the Ukrainian battlefield: handguns and assault rifles. Then they moved on to guns and armour. Now the question

arises of aircraft. The Mig-29s donated by Poland and Slovakia date from the 1970s. Half a century old, they are no longer used by the Russian army and have no chance in combat with modern aircraft such as the Sukhoi-35. But they can be used on Ukrainian territory provided they are protected from Russian aircraft by an effective anti-aircraft defense.

President Zelensky came to the UK to beg for F-16s. The British and Dutch Prime Ministers, Rishi Sunak and Mark Rutte, have announced that they are working on this. The F-16s are much more modern aircraft, dating from the 1990s. The question is whether they can fly into Russian territory or not. To tell the truth, no one can answer this question with certainty until they have tried. Russian anti-aircraft defenses have made considerable progress and may be able to shoot them down.

Last week, Mig-29s armed with Franco-British SCALP/Storm Shadow missiles managed to destroy an Su-34, an Su-35 and two Mi-8 helicopters at a military airfield in Russia. It seems that the Russian army did not know that these cruise missiles had already been delivered to Ukraine. They did not think that the Ukrainian Mig-29s could reach them and did not shoot them down. They will not be caught again. To begin with, the Russian army severely damaged a Ukrainian Patriot anti-aircraft battery. This is to ensure that Moscow's own planes will be able to intercept Ukrainian planes without risk of damage. In this example, Russia is legally entitled to retaliate against the United Kingdom, which delivered the Storm Shadow missiles. It is unlikely that London had been warned of this attack. It could have found itself in a state of war without wanting to. The escalation continued, with President Joe Biden announcing at the G7 that he was allowing U.S. customers to give or deliver F-16s to Ukraine. Cautiously, Washington will not transfer them itself, thus not risking being plunged into war itself. Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Poland or Norway could do so at their own risk.



The 7 major Western powers gathered in Hiroshima, May 20, 2023.

THE TIPPING POINT

So we have reached the tipping point: one more Western effort and the Ukrainian "integral nationalists" will generalize the war, with or without the consent of their sponsors.

According to Seymour Hersh [2], Poland has taken the initiative to ask Ukraine to accept a cease-fire and negotiate peace. His initiative was supported by five other members of the European Union: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and the three Baltic States.

The American journalist has not followed the Syrian war. He is not aware of the Russian military superiority and interprets this initiative as a reaction to the bloodbath in

Bakhmut/Artemivsk. The Poles know that the Russian Kinjal hypersonic missiles do not miss their target and that, for the time being, they can never be stopped. Over the past few months, they have methodically destroyed numerous command centers and ammunition depots. They are the ones who have just damaged a Patriot battery. In the current state of forces, the war is lost for Ukraine. If it is generalized, it will be lost for the West. The Poles, until now eager to fight, immediately understood that the point of no return had been reached, beyond which they would be pulverized.

GOOD OFFICES MISSIONS

Two good offices missions are currently underway: one from the People's Republic of China and one from the African Union.

On 24 February, Beijing published a twelve-point plan for peace in Ukraine [3]. Both sides agreed that it could serve as a basis for a solution to the conflict. President Xi Jinping has appointed Li Hui to shuttle between the capitals of both sides, including allies. He has already met with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, then with President Zelensky and probably with German officials.

Li Hui is a seasoned diplomat. He was for a decade the Chinese ambassador to Moscow. He was careful to begin his meetings with the Ukrainian side by noting that the Ukrainian side "would not accept any proposal that would involve the loss of its territories or the freezing of the conflict. He knows that the notion of "loss of territory" can change if one considers that the Ukrainian population is multi-ethnic and that one recognizes the right of each of its components to self-determination.

The other good offices mission is that of the African Union. Led by South Africa, it is expected to include the Congo, Egypt, Uganda, Senegal and Zambia. It is very important for Africans to show that they can play a peaceful role internationally and are no longer underdeveloped begging for emergency aid. In 2012, they had similarly designed a peace mission for Libya, but Nato had forbidden them to go to Tripoli on pain of destroying their plane in flight and killing any heads of state who ventured there.

However, their mission is less well prepared than that of the Chinese, as they have not drafted a text outlining their vision of the conflict and of peace. In addition, the United States is making every effort to undermine South Africa's credibility. Pretoria is a member of the BRICS along with Russia. It will host the summit of the organization from August 22 to 24. But it is a member of the International Criminal Court, which has just issued an arrest warrant for Vladimir Putin. He will obviously not arrest the Russian president during his official trip and will therefore be in default. In addition, the US ambassador, Reuben Brigety II, is accusing Pretoria of not being neutral and of having secretly delivered arms to Russia. He claims that a Russian cargo ship, the Lady R., came to pick them up. These antics mask the real conflict: South Africa is trying to demonstrate that a multipolar world is possible. It is not taking a position in the Ukrainian conflict, but its army is collaborating with the Russian army to train its soldiers. Thus, it asserts that it is possible to work together militarily while being politically independent.

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[1] «Zelensky plotted counterattacks in Russia, files show», John Huson & Isabelle Khurshudyan, *The Washington Post*, May 14, 2023.

[2] «[The Ukraine refugee question](#)», Seymour Hersh, *Substack*, Mai 17, 2023.

[3] «[China's "12 point position paper"](#)», *Voltaire Network*, 24 February 2023.