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Between defeat and escalation

A year after the Nord Stream attack, the unity of the Western bloc is much less firm than is intended



Wars are exposed to all kinds of unexpected turns, but in their current phase Ukraine's military defeat is becoming clearer. As is the response of Kiev's Western sponsors: to supply long-range missiles, capable of striking in Crimea and putting Russian cities within range.



Seymour Hersh: "[Biden chose to destroy Nord Stream because he didn't trust Germany](#)"

Today marks one year since the attack that blew up the Nord Stream gas pipeline in the Baltic. With the distance of a year, the fact that the [United States attacked a strategic interest of Germany](#), its main ally in Europe, still seems one of the central data of the conflict in Ukraine. Although the procession goes inside, that attack has had a devastating effect on the leadership of the United States in Western Europe. It severely damaged the German economy and said a lot about the fragility of NATO's internal cohesion; about the extent to which the US-led military organization on the continent commands over the European Union, its subordinate political arm. The *omertá* on that fact of the affected themselves, especially of the humiliated German politicians, as well as the collaboration of their secret services and their media in the crude and diverse smokescreens launched by the CIA, to disguise and mislead the simple reality about the authorship of all that also contribute very well to draw the panorama that we have

That scenario is determined and dominated by next year's presidential elections in the United States. That country is the only power capable of forcing peace, but all the ingredients and circumstances surrounding these elections point rather towards a dynamic of war, that is, towards the escalation of the open conflict in Ukraine and the deepening of the latent conflict in East Asia. See.

At the head of the pyramid we have a senile president, Joe Biden, about whom the media would have staged the great spree if he were a Russian or Chinese head of state. In case of incapacity, Biden has at his side a vice president, Kamala Harris, who is conspicuous by her incompetence. In the second line a trio of brainless fellows at the head of the Ukrainian dossier: Secretary of State Blinken, National Security Advisor Sullivan and Deputy Secretary of State Nuland. This defective staff is, in turn, engaged in the toughest and most spectacular internal fight of the Washington *establishment* since the civil war, which includes cross-court actions aimed at putting the opposing candidate in jail. Both sides have criminalized each other and are firmly convinced that if they lose the elections they will be judged, so they cannot lose them. Coupled with the possibility of a recession, that pressure could turn the scenario of open war with Russia into the great survival resource for the Biden administration.

Trumpist journalist Tucker Carlson, who has been turned into a popular wayward dissident by the crisis of the *establishment*, sums up the situation this way: "We have already lost control of the world, now we are going to lose control and world dominance of the dollar and when that happens we will have poverty at the level of the Great Depression. We are

already at war with Russia, we finance and arm its enemies, but we can go to a direct war, we could make a '*Gulf of Tonkin*' in Poland (the false incident fabricated to justify intervention in Vietnam) and say *what the Russians did*."

On the battlefield, things couldn't get any worse for Ukraine. The voluntarist miracle of a counter-offensive in conditions of numerical inferiority, artillery and air, has not worked, as predicted by Russian experts, with the utmost seriousness and without any boasting, since before the summer. The hard-won Western *Wunderwaffens* are shown burning every night on Russian news (soldiers receive hefty bonuses for destroying Bradley, Stryker, Leopard, Challenger AMX-10 and so on). The most terrible thing that has happened has been a frightful and irreparable carnage that seems to make impossible, for lack of personnel, a new Ukrainian offensive in spring (while the Russian army has a reserve of 300,000 men that has not yet acted) and rather announces the Ukrainian military collapse. That makes it increasingly likely some kind of military coup in Kiev that removes Zelenskiy and his ilk from power, imposes realism and accepts large territorial losses that could have been avoided in December 2021 if there had been another attitude.

At the beginning of September, the most reliable sources estimated between 240,000 and 400,000 Ukrainian casualties so far in the conflict and that these triple the Russian ones (80,000 dead in mid-September according to the BBC). This uncertain general estimate has found its concrete confirmation of local character in the statements of the head of recruitment of the Ukrainian region of Poltava, Vitali Berezhny: "Of every hundred people mobilized last autumn, there are between ten and twenty, the rest are dead, wounded and disabled." In Poltava the recruitment plan has only been fulfilled by 13%, the official said, while his counterpart in Lvov acknowledged in August that only one in five calls go to the ranks.

Skimming is widespread. Ukrainian border guard says it has prevented more than 20,000 recruits from fleeing the country, and the Kiev government's demand that the more than 650,000 Ukrainians of military age registered in the EU as refugees be deported is difficult to enforce. In Ukrainian diplomatic missions abroad, between 40% and 60% of employees have not returned to the country at the end of their stay. Of the twenty who were supposed to return from the embassy in the United States last year, only one has returned and in some embassies no one simply returns. This reality of carnage and skimming has appeared from time to time in the [English press for a year](#) now, but in the EU and national press it is still rare, even though it is key to defining the situation.



In this context, the demands and recriminations of the Ukrainian authorities towards European friends are rising. The fatigue towards the pit – without bottom or results – of the European financial and military effort, has appeared in the Polish election campaign seasoned by the disagreement around the export of Ukrainian grain to Europe. President Duda has compared Ukraine to a drowning man who can drag to the bottom whoever tries to save him. Prime Minister Morawiecki has said that they will stop sending weapons to Ukraine and that those who buy new ones will be to arm themselves. A government spokesman in Warsaw announces that support for refugees that includes "exemption from residence registration and work permit, free access to education and medical and family care" will not be extended next year.

To date Ukrainian refugees in Western Europe "have behaved well" and are "very grateful" to those who have welcomed them, they will not forget that generosity, Zelenskiy said in an interview with *The Economist*, but "it would not be a good thing for Europe if those people were cornered," [he adds in what seems a veiled threat of destabilization](#).

With the Ukrainian army depleting its stockpiles and the flow of Western weapons and ammunition dwindling, the solution has been to take a new step in the risk game: supply British, French and American long-range missiles (the Germans still think so) capable of reaching Russian cities. The missile attacks on Crimea have been made possible by American and British location and intelligence information and technology. All these are incentives for Russia to extend its territorial occupation to the rest of Ukraine's Black Sea coast, reaching as far as Odessa and the Romanian border, and even to respond with attacks on NATO targets, for which Moscow seems to have plenty of missile capacity. Citing sources in the US secret services, [journalist Seymour Hersh ventures](#) that attacking

NATO targets was what Wagner's rebel boss, Evgeni Prigozhin, proclaimed, and that is why he was eliminated. Who knows, but the Kremlin's prudence is, in any case, being subjected to a risk test that continues to increase.



A view of the crash site of a private plane carrying the leader of the Wagner paramilitary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, near the town of Kuzhenkino on 23 August. / Photo by Russia's Investigative Committee/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images.

Western officials remain intent on proving the Russian narrative of the war in Ukraine. On September 7, before the European Parliament, the [eloquent Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, said](#) that "Putin went to war to prevent more NATO near his borders" and that if NATO and the United States had accepted the conditions that the Kremlin formulated in December 2021, there would have been no invasion of Ukraine.

Stoltenberg has also [reaffirmed what the head](#) of the US Stratcom (Strategic Command), Charles Richard, already said in November 2022 about the Ukraine war as a "warm-up" for the war against China. If Ukraine succeeds, that will allow the United States to focus on China, Stoltenberg said this month. "If the United States is concerned about China, it is necessary for Ukraine to win. If Kiev wins, we will have the second largest army in Europe and it will be easier to concentrate on China and less on the situation in Europe." Be that as it may, the situation in East Asia is unequivocal.

Japan has doubled its military spending and relegated the anti-war ninth article of its constitution. A native of a Hiroshima family, although born in Tokyo, and with relatives killed by the atomic bomb, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, held in May obscenely in that city the last warrior conclave of the G-7 without the slightest allusion to who was the one

who launched the bomb. In South Korea, ultra President Yoon Suk-yeol is also a staunch militarist who wants American nuclear weapons deployed on his territory (until now their existence was suspected only "in storage") and receives an entire flotilla with nuclear aircraft carriers in his waters. North Korea continues its periodic demonstration missile launches and reaches new military agreements with Moscow. In the Philippines, the United States establishes four new military bases and Australia spends billions on new nuclear submarines against China. Even New Zealand has been unable to resist and announces increases in its military budgets. Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating summed up the picture:

"Europeans have been fighting each other for most of the last three hundred years, including two world wars in the last century. Exporting that evil poison to Asia is tantamount to welcoming that plague." NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg "is a fool who behaves like an American agent instead of acting as a leader and spokesman for European security," Keating said.

Rafael Poch de Feliu, for La Pluma

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